

GHANA

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Edward Brynn

1995-1998 Ambassador, Ghana

PAUL F. DU VIVIER
Senior Consul
Accra (1944-1946)

Paul F. Du Vivier entered the Foreign Service in 1940. In addition to serving in Accra, Mr. Du Vivier served in Stockholm, Berlin, Edinburgh, Frankfurt, Marseille, Paris, Bordeaux, and Nice. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: Well let's move on, you were assigned to Accra?

DU VIVIER: Accra, Gold Coast.

Q: It's the Gold Coast, which is now Ghana.

DU VIVIER: Right.

Q: What were you doing there?

DU VIVIER: I traveled there as a diplomatic courier with a ninety-pound bag of cryptographic equipment. I went from Washington to Miami to Zanderij Field in Dutch Guyana to Belem and Natal Brazil. There I was stuck for seventeen days, and eventually via Ascension Island I was flown to Accra in a C-87. Delivered my bag to Tom Hickok the consul in Accra, I got to work on economic reporting. There was a critical shortage of cocoa before the end of the war, and half of the world's chocolate came from the Gold Coast. The crop that year -- 1945 -- was affected by two deadly diseases called swollen shoot and sarbagella. And it was essential that with American agricultural expertise we would be able to replant or save the plantations of cocoa beans. The Navy had an expert there, Commander Leonard Schwarz, who'd worked with the Rockwood Chocolate Company. Hershey did not have somebody there, but Cadbury was represented in near-by Nigeria.

Q: Cadbury being a British...

DU VIVIER: Yes, and I got very involved in learning about agriculture and visiting the plantations and seeing the native managers and so on. There was also a very vital shipment of mahogany timber for ship and boat building, and a lot of it went to the United States (to build PT-boats) as well as to Britain. There was a large colony of Greek and Belgian and Swiss merchants, each one with a department store, and we were constantly thrown together with them, but primarily we were dealing with the British. The American Air Transport Command had a base with two thousand men and twelve nurses nearby, the best airport in Africa at the time, but Colonel Nelson and the other colonel disliked the British intensely, stayed very much to

themselves. Our assignment was to be almost part of the British official colonial government. One of the peculiar things there was that we had strict instructions not to do any political reporting and not to try to contact local chieftains. The officer in charge was Tom Hickok, who was a bachelor and very pro-British. He had served in Dublin and was homesick. He was a very tall and good-looking, single man, and then I was next in rank, followed by an auxiliary vice-consul called Earl Richey, who did the visa-passport work, if any, and then there was a code clerk called Jim Mason who later joined the Foreign Service and is retired here, with a French wife. And I must say that our social life became very active when Margaret, my wife, was allowed to join me after VE Day. I returned to Washington as a courier, picked her up and we sailed together on a Norwegian 10,000 ton freighter together with ten US missionaries!

Q: That would have been April '45.

DU VIVIER: Yes. At age 25 she was one of three American civilian women in the Gold Coast. She got a great deal of attention. A tall, dark-haired ex-debutante she was bound to make an impression. Unfortunately, I got malaria, and then she got it in Togoland [Benin formerly Dahomey] about two months later. Then a junior vice-consul, called Dick Klass, got it and died with black-water fever. His body temperature rose up to 107 in five days and his body turned black which was rather disgusting, including his private parts, which somebody had to identify. Then I got it and barely squeaked through. We were not given quinine but took a daily yellow pill called Atabrine which didn't work, as it only suppressed it, and gradually your whole bloodstream was filled with this yellow dye, even your eyeballs. I was cured from tertian malignant *Falciparum malaria* with a strange diet of granulated charcoal and a concoction that looked like milk of magnesia. As a result I turned in my resignation directly to the head of the African division, Henry Villard, because Mr. Hickok was most unhelpful. Being a true friend and a gentleman, tore it up and never sent it to Personnel. This would be unheard of today.

Q: This was when?

DU VIVIER: This was in January '46, five months after V-J Day.

Q: You mailed it in.

DU VIVIER: I mailed it in directly via British postage.

Q: Well how were relations...

DU VIVIER: Mr. Villard officially called me home, "on transfer."

Q: How were relations in the consulate? It was a consulate?

DU VIVIER: Within the consulate? Good, but stiff. The principal officer, being gay, was much more interested in his social life with a British naval officer and was periodically out of reach in the northern parts of the country, so that left me in charge. Tom Hickok was cleared of charges of moral turpitude by the Department but committed suicide in 1949.

Once a strange incident happened one weekend when I was in charge. We knew that three black journalists were coming with an A-1 priority from the White House representing black newspapers in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Harlem. When they landed, Colonel Nelson, in charge of the air base, refused to let them stay on the base more than four hours, so they just barely had time to catch their breath and have breakfast. They were brought to our bungalow where Earl Richey and I were enjoying the weekend. We recruited two Army nurses and three other people to give the semblance of a party. We let them relax and gave them things to drink, smoke and briefed them on African conditions while making it very clear that the African people were hard to reach because we had to deal through the British colonial officials who discouraged any contacts between foreigners and the native population. We organized that evening a curry-style dinner, for twelve on the terrace. Johnson, the "number one boy," beautifully dressed in a white uniform, but barefoot, looked over this peculiar seating arrangement which I presided. He first decided to serve the ladies, of course, and then he served the hosts (myself, and Earl Richey). Then he picked out the lightest of the black journalists, and followed by the two darker. The darkest in fact was the guest of honor. We pretended we didn't notice all this, and tried to laugh. The next morning Johnson came to me with a grim look, and with a curt little bow says, "Massa, I work for white massa for fifteen years and I've never been so insulted in my life." And I said, "What's the matter, Johnson?" pretending I didn't know. He replied, "I never had anyone receive black men in his house before, and so I serve notice." And I said, "Why? Do you find the pay isn't adequate?" "It's not that. It's the fact that I've been insulted." It took me, I think, fifteen minutes of pleading, saying that I had orders from Washington, and was only doing my job. Since I was in charge, I needed him, and he reluctantly backed down. From there on we got along beautifully, and we never referred to it again, but there was a deep resentment, on his part - he was a Nigerian houseboy -- to being compelled to serve foreign black people. It was a very peculiar thing which today would be totally misunderstood and incomprehensible in America.

Q: But also, I mean you really were cut off, and under orders not to rock the boat, and it wasn't our job to do...And the British certainly had, I assume, an extremely stratified society?

DU VIVIER: Very. In connection with Accra, let me mention one more thing. I did have a chance to learn and presumably report on the attempt made by Winston Churchill to set up a new dominion in West Africa. He sent Lord Swinton, the former Minister of Aircraft Production, before Hore Belisha, to Accra, with a staff of about twenty top-notch civil servants and professors from Oxford and Cambridge. He set up a skeleton staff for a post-war federation of Sierra Leone, Gambia, Gold Coast, and Nigeria, the political capital to be at Accra or Atchimota a hill station with a junior college of 300 students. It sought ways to increase the production of peanuts, cocoa, industrial diamonds -- a very big item -- and bauxite. Unfortunately, several years after I left, they let out of prison Kwame Nkrumah, who was locked up in prison all the time we were there. A movement for nationalism grew up, and the British soon gave up sovereignty and let the four colonies disintegrate into a hodge podge of independent republics which prevail today.

ROBERT B. HOUSTON
Senior Consul

Accra (1945-1947)

Robert B. Houston entered the Foreign Service in 1945. His assignments included Nigeria, Ghana, Germany, and Scotland. Mr. Houston was interviewed by Ambassador Horace G. Torbert on May 14, 1990

HOUSTON: The day came to hand out assignments. When Mr. Perry Jester, who was the class monitor at the time, came to my name, he smiled and said, "Oh, this is a delightful one. Mr. Houston, you are going to Lagos." At that point I hadn't the foggiest idea where Lagos was. I had been convinced that I was going to be assigned to Rio de Janeiro, and had even started studying Portuguese on my own. I was told that until they could find me a ship to take me to Lagos I should go down and read the files at the Bureau of African Affairs. It was then in the Old Executive Office Building, just west of the White House, but it was then still called the State-War-Navy Building.

Q: I don't think it was a bureau at that time, it was probably an office.

HOUSTON: Yes, it was an office that consisted of two people, Henry Villard and Joe Palmer. I was reading the files diligently until an emergency arose in the Foreign Service. An officer had come down with malaria in Accra, and had to be evacuated. So this created sufficient urgency for the Department to go to the terrific expense of sending me by air to Accra. I spent Christmas Eve at Roberts Field in Liberia on my way to post. I arrived December 31, 1945 at my first post in the Foreign Service, Accra, then the seat of the British Gold Coast colony. We had established our first post there during the war because Accra was a landing point for ferrying aircraft across the Atlantic. The route was Natal to Ascension Island, then either to Liberia or the Gold Coast, and then across Africa and up to Iran for transport into the Soviet Union.

Although most American forces had been evacuated by my time, a small detachment was still in Accra selling off war surplus. The main *raison d'être* for a post in Accra was ceasing. The focus now was consular matters and watching the emergence of independence movements. During my time in the Gold Coast the thinking was that preparations for independence would last fifty years. In other words sometime in the year 2000 the Gold Coast could aspire to independence.

Q: Like the liberation of Eastern Europe in the past year?

HOUSTON: Yes, it came much faster. I had entered the Foreign Service not necessarily to make it a lifetime career. So much of what I had studied at Harvard in physics had been classified during the war. There were all sorts of developments that had come out, the atom bomb, radar, computers, so I thought I would get the travel bug out of my system and then go back and study physics again. But three months after my arrival in the Gold Coast, because the new Consul had medical problems, I ended up as the senior American representative at what was then just a consulate but is now an embassy. I had three houses under my control, four vehicles, a household staff of twenty. I sat on the right hand side of the governor on every social occasion. For a young man of twenty-two this was pretty heady stuff. So thoughts of going back and studying dry old physics again tended to recede in the course of this first assignment.

After I had been in charge there for about a year, the Department was finally able to send out an experienced consul to take charge. My glory days were over, but I still liked the Foreign Service. So much so that I applied for Arabic specialization. I would hear more about this later at a most inconvenient time. I would like to point out that I entered the Foreign Service before the Foreign Service Act of 1946, under the Rogers Act. Many of the things that people take for granted today did not exist at that time. There was no absolute guarantee then of home leave. While there was an "April Fools Sheet" [the Post Preference Report due in the Department each April 1st] which you could fill out, it really did not mean a thing. Travel orders, in those days, I recall, stated it very clearly: "These travel orders are not issued for your personal pleasure or convenience." The idea people have today of bargaining for where they would like to go and arranging travel to suit themselves was not a part of the Foreign Service in those days. On the other hand, some things were rather nice, too. We got maybe one pouch a month, and if we received two telegrams in one day, that was a busy day.

Q: They all had to be decoded on a one-time pad.

HOUSTON: That's right. If we needed money, we had a book of blank drafts drawn on the Secretary of State and we could fill one out and take it down to the bank and get as much money as we needed -- an element of trust that seems extraordinary today. We made out our own accounts and mailed them off once a month. Apparently the system worked; I don't recall any cases of people absconding with the Secretary of State's funds in those days.

Q: Sometimes the books got a little messed up, but you made it up out of your own pocket, I understand.

HOUSTON: This was very much a learning experience for me. Even though I had majored in physics, I considered that I had had a fairly broad based education. I do feel that I was up to the job that was required there, and decided to make the Foreign Service a career.

HENRY DUNLAP
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Accra (1957-1959)

Henry Dunlap was born in New York in 1917. He graduated from Canisius College in 1939 and from the University of Buffalo in 1941. He served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946. His overseas posts with the Foreign Service included Bonn and Ghana. Mr. Dunlap was interviewed on January 25th 1988 by Hans Tuch.

Q: Now, after your tour of duty in Washington you went to Ghana as public affairs officer. And I think this is a very interesting period because we really expanded our activities during the late 1950s and early 1960s to other parts of the world, and especially to the developing world. And in Africa you were really one of the first to run a major program on that continent in what at that time, and, of course, still is a very important country. Would you tell us a little bit about your

activities in Accra during the year, let's see, that was in 19 --

DUNLAP: 1957

Q: '57 to '59.

DUNLAP: Right.

Q: You were the head of the USIS operation?

DUNLAP: I was the public affairs officer for Ghana.

Q: Right.

DUNLAP: Well, first of all, it was a very interesting assignment. And the problems, you not only had the problems you had in one could say in so-called advanced states like Germany or France or Italy, but you had unique tropical problems, humidity, dust, difficulty in finding qualified employees only because they by and large didn't exist. Ghana did have the benefit of very amicable colonization by the British. And the British colonial officials without exception, the ones I knew there, were more proud of Ghana, or as it had been earlier the Gold Coast, than the local inhabitants themselves. Ghana had just become independent when I went there and later was a prime mover in the Organization of African States and things like that.

We had a library, a good one, which was very well used. I remember the first ambassador who was appointed by the government of Ghana to go I've forgotten where, came to visit me, I happened to know him, and asked me if I could arrange to train his daughter who was going with him as his secretary to save money. So we brought her in and my receptionist and my staff trained her which I think was very helpful.

When the Organization for African Unity had its first meeting in Accra, we lent them mimeograph machines, paper, typewriters in order to conduct the meeting properly. Of course, the U.S. was lambasted in the course of the meeting quite frequently. Nevertheless, we helped them do this. We helped new newspapers that were established. My information officer prepared a style handbook for them. We were in it sort of at the ground floor as it were and were very unhappy to see the later developments leading to dictatorship which Mr. Nkrumah did become.

Q: Was he already at that time the head of state?

DUNLAP: Yes.

Q: But his real totalitarianism came subsequently?

DUNLAP: It didn't take long. In fact, we saw it and we wrote a paper -- again, my information officer, wrote a paper, quite a long one, which we sent into Washington which I think by and large was ignored. But a funny thing triggered the writing of the paper. Nkrumah had his

mother declared a saint publicly. And we decided then that this was the beginning of the end. It probably was largely the fault of the U. S. in a sense that we never really took him to heart and tried to be really helpful. He turned to a British leftist former member of Parliament whose name escapes me at the moment who became his mentor and hatchet man and just was terrible.

Q: Your activities, your USIS activities in Ghana as you just explained, were really in part almost like an aid program, right?

DUNLAP: Yes.

Q: Instead of giving technical or monetary aid, we gave them -- what? Psychological, helped them with their psychological programs and their press?

DUNLAP: Well, a little bit. But we also had a newspaper. We published a newspaper. And we distributed pamphlets and things of that type. For example, if sometimes the newspaper, which was a monthly, was delayed a day or two because it was printed on the local newspaper press and didn't get done in time, the policemen at the roundabouts, circles, would yell at me when I went by. They'd say, "Where's the paper? Didn't get the paper today." And people in the agency later on said the paper was used to wrap fish in which was a real canard because we had 60,000 copies in Ghana. And it was the only English language document that every student in a secondary school in Ghana had, which was quite important for us.

Q: How was your overall program in Ghana organized? Did you have something like a country plan?

DUNLAP: Oh, yes. We had a country plan, you know, the regular type.

Q: Well, explain for a second because the listener or reader will not necessarily know what that means.

DUNLAP: Well, it was a document which showed what your objectives were in the country, your psychological objectives, and how you set out to accomplish it, roughly speaking. And we had an information officer. We had a cultural affairs officer. We didn't get into specialization as we had in Germany. The information officer handled films. And instead of showing films in an auditorium, we often showed them out at night under a banyan tree. It was interesting because every time we showed films in the provinces, the people watching the film would keep running around the screen to see if the people were really there. I'm not ridiculing the people. It was quite an experience.

And there were other things. I had a Polaroid camera. And I had to be very careful to get permission to take pictures because Africans, as well as other people, feel that if you take a picture you take something away from them. And, of course, you do. You take their image.

We had a good exchange program. One of our best exchange people was a policeman. He later got his doctorate. And he's now teaching; he went back to Ghana, but after a couple of revolutions I think he returned to the U. S. and is teaching somewhere.

We had good relationships with the school system, the private as well as the public school system.

Q: Your exchange program dealt mostly at the university level.

DUNLAP: Yes, we had, oh, it was microscopic in size, only five annual scholarships. And we had what were then called AMSPECS, American Specialists came there.

Q: To teach or to lecture.

DUNLAP: I remember one time the way things can go wrong. We had a need in the local secondary school, which was called I think Achimota, they needed space for boarding and there wasn't any.

So the Ford Foundation had sent two people out traveling around looking for some kind of a grant to be helpful, a Mr. Fox and Mr. Wolfe. And my CAO and I advised Fox and Wolfe very strenuously to give a \$50,000 grant to this secondary school and that would build them a dorm. They could handle the teaching but they had no place to put the kids overnight.

So they listened. And they ended up giving a grant on western cooking to the university college of Ghana which, of course, was totally asinine. And they also spent \$200,000 doing it. But in most cases, private organizations, foundations, as well as our government did things that were really truly helpful. I couldn't resist digging Fox and Wolfe because they didn't even know what they were doing.

Q: When you wrote your country plan and you delineated your objectives, how was this exercise coordinated with the Embassy, with the total overall U.S. policy as related to Ghana?

DUNLAP: Well, as I remember there was a country paper for Ghana which is like a country plan for USIS. The country paper was for the Embassy, for the mission. And we talked. When we pre- pared the country plan we let the Embassy look it over. And we never had any particular problem. The ambassador sometimes didn't understand some sort of PR type thing. But we never had any real difficulty. And I'd say we got along rather well together.

Q: For the record, who was the ambassador during that time?

DUNLAP: Our ambassador was Wilson Flake.

Q: Who were your immediate colleagues in USIS, your information officer?

DUNLAP: Howard Kirschwein.

Q: And your cultural affairs officer?

DUNLAP: David Stratmon.

Q: This was sort of your team, right?

DUNLAP: Right.

Q: Did the Voice of America broadcast to Africa in those days?

DUNLAP: Yes, but at that particular time the reception was not very good. They were always sending out technicians to listen to it. And it was amazing. They would listen to it with metering devices and tell me how strong the signal was. And I would say, "Yes, but you can't understand the words." This was improved somewhat with the construction of the relay station at Monrovia later. But that still wasn't as good as we had hoped it would be. As you know, I was connected with the Voice also broadcasting to Africa.

Q: Any other interesting observations about the tour of duty in Ghana?

DUNLAP: The thing that was very interesting to me was we made a lot of mistakes in our programs all over the world, I don't mean just USIA but AID and the Embassy. But when I was in Ghana the Russians gave the people of Guinea a huge shipment of farm tractors and they were never used because they were equipped with automatic heaters which couldn't be turned off. So they were run once and when the driver melted that was the end of that.

Another great gift the Soviets gave the Guineans, they built, I think they called it a radio of the revolution. They built a transmitter on this mountain outside of Conakry and it was a megawatt, terrifically powerful. Unfortunately, the mountain was iron ore and the signal went out of the antenna and right into the ground. So they just made me feel good that other people can make errors.

WILLIAM E. REED
Senior Officer, International Cooperation Administration
Accra (1957-1959)

Dr. William E. Reed was born in 1914 and raised in Columbia, Louisiana. He received a bachelor's degree in agricultural science from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; a master's degree in 1940 from Iowa State University; and earned a Ph.D. in soil science and chemistry from Cornell University in 1945. In addition to serving in Ghana, Dr. Reed served in Liberia, Nigeria and Ethiopia. He was interviewed by Henry E. Mattox on July 3, 1992.

REED: No, to Ghana. In this, I was asked to head the team. It was a contract program by the International Development Service. It was not AID, but the ICA Administration, wasn't it, then? The International Development Service had a contract with ICA to aid Ghana in the development of what was called land planning and control of blood disease in livestock, in cattle. This program had been recommended, prior to Ghana's independence, by the British. So they had had

to ask the United States government to provide assistance. What they wanted was a Civilian Conservation Corps type of young people to help them with this area. In the northern part of Ghana, there are maybe five months of wet weather and then about seven months of extremely dry weather. During the dry period, there is a lot of suffering because of lack of water and lack of vegetables. They could eat the guinea corn and things of that nature, but not fresh vegetables, so children became constipated and malnourished. So there was an effort to develop a system of water conservation. They called it land planning, but it was more or less like soil conservation work, where we'd build dams and improve the grazing places for pastures as well as to provide production of food. The livestock program was designed to vaccinate the animals and to dip them so they'd get rid of the ticks. When you'd drive in cattle from Upper Volta to Lagos, which is a distance of maybe 300 miles, they'd die of trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness caused by the tsetse fly) and blood and bone diseases.

Q: What years were you in Ghana?

REED: I was in there for two years, from November 1957 to the fall of 1959. That was a very successful program, but it was one of the most difficult assignments I've had in my life because of the responsibility I had. I had what you'd call planning areas, and I had an American office in each one of those areas. I had to supervise the technical aspects of the work and try to ensure that the money was properly managed and spent. The only thing the U.S. government provided was the salaries of the technicians. The Ghana government provided all of the other support, the equipment and everything that we used.

Q: You got good cooperation?

REED: I had excellent cooperation from the government. You should see some of the letters that they wrote about the success. While I was there, we built 49 dams. The results were what they considered almost miraculous in terms of the returns. Now after two years, I returned to my job in North Carolina, but the program was continued for several more years; then AID took over the program. There was no AID for people there when I arrived. The only direct support I had was through the embassy. Of course, we were American citizens and that type of thing. But the AID program in Washington was very much interested in what we did. The second year after I arrived there, a team was sent out to explore the possibilities of setting up an AID mission. A man by the name of Moffit made this survey for AID, and later he was made the mission director of the AID program for a couple of years.

Q: Originally it was a contract operation.

REED: At first, I was a contract employee. I think one of the things that attracted me to go back into the Foreign Service was the success I had there. At first, AID offered me a job to be in charge of the agricultural programs in all of West Africa. But when the administrator, I was told, got my résumé and my background information, he said, "We'd like to have Reed as a mission director." So that's when I moved really from being what you'd call a technician into administration.

JOHN J. TAYLOR
Fiscal/Disbursing Officer
Accra (1957-1959)

John J. Taylor was born in Arkansas and attended Vanderbilt University before joining the US Marine Corps and eventually the Foreign Service. Overseas Taylor served in Ghana, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, South Africa and Cuba. He also served in INR, the NSC, as the deputy assistant secretary for intelligence coordination and as the chief of mission in Cuba. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

TAYLOR: I was assigned to Ghana as the budget and fiscal/disbursing officer. I was going to be the only financial officer in the new embassy. Finance was neither my hope nor my strong suite. I joked that my only experience in finance was once robbing a bank. But that did not deter personnel.

So, off we went to Ghana. Before leaving, I was given 60 days of training in fiscal and disbursement processes, payroll, etc. That was the last type of job I wanted. But, anyway, I was finally in the Foreign Service. My Marine training stood me in good stead: you go where you are told.

Q: Was there any excitement about going to new embassies in Africa?

TAYLOR: My wife and I were very excited by the prospect of living in Ghana, a land which had been known before independence as the “Gold Coast.” We rushed out to find all the history and background information on the country that we could. It seemed an exciting place, a newly independent state with a charismatic man named Kwame Nkrumah as its first president.

Q: You were in Ghana from 1957 to 1959. Tell us a little about your first impressions of Ghana? I think you had two children with you at the time.

TAYLOR: Right. Our son was about two by then and our daughter was one-year old. We didn’t find anything shocking or unexpected upon arrival. What we found especially rewarding were the contacts and the friendships we quickly established with Ghanaians. They were wonderful, friendly people. Betsy and I were southerners - as I mentioned at some length. In the Marine squadrons in which I served, no African-Americans pilots were on the rolls. I remember meeting one African-American lieutenant at the officers’ club at Cherry Point; he was the only black officer/pilot I had ever saw in the Marine Corps. So, before Ghana, Betsy and I had no black friends.

Two African-American FSOs served in the embassy. Early on, I told the Embassy political officer, one of the African-American officers, that, if possible, I would like to do political reporting under his direction whenever I could spare the time. He was happy to become my mentor. He assigned me to work with the opposition, which turned out to be a great assignment. I began establishing contacts with leading members of the opposition parties; I had lunches with

them and Betsy and I invited them and their wives for dinner. We met a wide range of Ghanaians that way and became good friends with several of them. They loved to dance the “highlife,” and so did we. In those days, Ghana was a delight; probably still is. It was an memorable experience. Professionally, it was also a good assignment. My reporting as a part-time, volunteer political officer attracted some attention.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

TAYLOR: It was Wilson Flake. His career had been mostly in the commercial service. I believe he had been the head of the commercial section at our embassy in Rome when Clare Booth Luce was the ambassador. She liked him and especially his wife, and helped arrange his ambassadorship.

During our tour we experienced the bureaucratic and personal interplay that takes part in any office, squadron, temple, or what have you. Embassy Accra, however, was not the average post in this regard. Office politics there were especially potent when we arrived. The DCM and the ambassador didn’t get along. The DCM was Peter Rutter, a rather typical member of the old guard Foreign Service - Eastern establishment, Andover, Yale - the whole smear. But he was a lot of fun; we liked him and his wife. He had been in Ghana as Charge for about six months before Flake’s arrival. Since he was a very affable man, Rutter got along very well with the Ghanaians. In fact, all the senior Ghanaians from Nkrumah down really liked him.

Wilson Flake did not have the same personality. He was a dedicated, sincere man, but he was tense about his first ambassadorship, particularly since as an old Commercial Service officer he was not a member of the real Foreign Service “club.” Soon after his arrival it was clear he and Peter were not to get along. The rivalries spilled over to the wives, or perhaps began there. In short, for us, it was an intriguing introduction to life in the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you have to keep out of the line of fire?

TAYLOR: Yes, mostly. But at one point I did get caught up in the turmoil. After I had been in Ghana for about a year, it was discovered that the general services officer had been selling commissary whiskey to support some of his habits, like betting at the horse track. This presented a crisis. The Ambassador called a meeting of the all the embassy officers during which he announced that because of the serious breakdown in management and supervision. He intended to make major changes in embassy staffing. He seemed to blame Peter Rutter for the GSO’s failings. He in effect abolished the DCM’s role. He appointed me to be his, the Ambassador’s, part-time, special assistant - he hadn’t had one until then. He felt that he needed someone in the front office who could do a variety of small tasks for him and thus give him more time for closer hands-on supervision of the embassy. Consequently, in addition to being the budget and fiscal/disbursing officer, and a part time political officer (which I said I wanted to continue to be), I was given a little, closet-like, office next to the Ambassador’s. I liked the idea. His reorganization plan, however, went beyond this. A number of officers were to be shifted around, in effect, exchanging jobs.

After announcing his plan at a second staff meeting, the Ambassador asked the assembled staff

what they thought of it. When he came to me, I suggested that the changes seemed somewhat drastic. The malfeasance of the GSO, I said, could have happened in any business or embassy and I wondered if it warranted a major shake-up of the office. Truly, no one else in the room objected. The experience reinforced my understanding that the politics of survival in a career system easily stifle integrity. Integrity and careerism are the Jekyll and Hyde of any bureaucracy, in government or out. I promised myself I would try to call things as I saw them. The worst could happen is, if you were unlucky, you wouldn't get promoted. If you were lucky your boss would be someone like Flake, who did not object at all to my differing with him. In fact, two days later he cancelled the personnel shakeup, except for my appointment as a part time aide.

Q: What impressions did you form about Nkrumah?

TAYLOR: I didn't really know too much about him before we arrived. The local press was of course laudatory but superficial. After a while, it became apparent that he was a transitional figure half in the colonial period and half in modern times - a well educated leader taking Ghana into independence, but in many ways still with a foot in the past.

It seemed to me - and it was a view that was supported by confirmed stories - that Nkrumah had some considerable weaknesses. It was well known, for example, that he consulted frequently with witch doctors - "juju" men or women. A soothsayer had predicted that he was destined to lead all of Africa and since part of the continent was populated by whites, it would augur well for him to marry a white African woman. Consequently, he contacted the Egyptian President and arranged a marriage with an Egyptian woman. Other events indicated that he maintained a skewed view of the world, in part like that of a traditional tribal leader. This was all well and good, but it restricted his ability to control scourges like corruption.

Q: Since you became well acquainted with the opposition, did you consider the Ghanaian political system to be open?

TAYLOR: The system was in a period of transition. You could watch it happening. When I first arrived, the country had just achieved its independence. Several opposition parties existed, including outspoken critics of the regime. The opposition leaders were in general more educated than Nkrumah's senior followers. During the two years of my tour, Nkrumah began to squeeze the opposition. Some of my contacts were arrested under one pretext or another. By the time I left, it was clear that Ghana was not going to survive long as a democracy and was in fact well on its way to authoritarian rule. That transition took only two years.

Q: Ghana was viewed as a model because it was one of the first colonies to gain independence. It was seen as a model for others. Did you have a lot of visitors - media and others - to view this model?

TAYLOR: Yes. As I left for Ghana, I also shared this optimistic view despite the backsliding on democracy and other problems. We saw Ghana as being in the forefront of a bright new day for Africa - free at last. Many academics and intellectuals visited Ghana at that time. A good number of African-Americans came looking to serve or for business opportunities. They came from all walks of life - teachers, dentists, missionaries, businessmen, some after a quick buck,

others a chance to serve. Betsy and I, for example, became friends with a dentist couple from the U.S. who had moved their whole family to Ghana. They still live there so far as I know.

Q: When the political system became more and more authoritarian, was there a feeling in the embassy of disillusionment and cynicism?

TAYLOR: It wasn't overwhelming since the erosion of democracy was gradual. But eventually more and more people began to accept the changing political realities, even if reluctantly. Some viewed the process as one of trial and error; Nkrumah had to be forgiven since some of the challenges facing the country were formidable. I would describe the embassy's mood as one of resignation more than cynicism and disillusionment. Already at this point, the Soviet Union was trying to exert whatever influence it could in Africa in competition with the United States. Moscow invited Nkrumah to visit the Soviet Union. *Sputnik* flew into space while we were in Ghana and that was a boost to Soviet prestige. The Soviet Union could now trumpet its technological sophistication and power as well as its anti-imperialist record and its supposed egalitarianism. Competition and rivalry with the USSR for influence with the leaders of emerging Africa began seriously during my two years in Ghana.

Q: Ghana started out with some economic prospects. How was that when you were there?

TAYLOR: Before independence, it was the leading producer of cocoa, a status that gave it a large foreign exchange reserve in 1957. The Cocoa Board set up by the British was very efficient and effective. The system was based on small producers - not large plantations. The farmers were assisted financially and with technical know-how by the Cocoa Board. The country had a relatively promising economic future. Wilson Flake pushed hard for more U.S. assistance. Eventually this led to a commitment to build a large hydroelectric dam. This project was related to large, high quality bauxite deposits in the country. It was hoped that the power generated by the dam would enable Ghana to develop a capacity to refine the bauxite and produce finished aluminum. Just before I left, signs increased suggesting that corruption was becoming a major problem. Eventually, rampant graft and poor governance would undermine what had been excellent prospects for economic growth at the time of independence.

Q: Were the opposition leaders on a learning curve?

TAYLOR: Yes, I think so. Many of them had been educated in Great Britain; Nkrumah, as I mentioned, had an American education. The level of sophistication of many Ghanaian politicians impressed me. The opposition in particular. They operated within the boundaries of their society and culture, but nevertheless they seemed quite effective those first two years as a democratic opposition in a new Third World country. Of course, democracy served their purposes at the time since they were in the opposition. Still, they seemed to me to be genuinely committed to democratic principles.

Q: To what western power did people look for a model?

TAYLOR: Increasingly the Ghanaian people looked to the United States. Nkrumah was not that well acquainted with Great Britain; he certainly was not as knowledgeable about the UK as were

most other leaders of former British colonies. Ghanaians in general, admired American society and institutions. No doubt the British had done some good things in the Gold Coast, but they had been the rulers for decades, imposing themselves when necessary by force. The intellectual community was very Anglicized, but the U.S. was increasingly seen as the model for those who wished to see democratic principles take root in Ghana.

Q: What conclusions did you reach how the Ghanaian educational system was developing?

TAYLOR: The educational system as it had developed since the end of WWII in Ghana was quiet good. Literacy had steadily increased. Public schools were supplanting missionary education.

One was impressed with the role of women in Ghana. They were the market traders, but also fairly well represented among intellectuals and the young professional elite.

Q: Were the U.S. racial problems raised with you by your Ghanaian contacts?

TAYLOR: Surprisingly, not very often. In retrospect, it was quite amazing that in 1958, when Jim Crow was still rampant in the southern States, this was not a more sensitive issue for the Ghanaians. That was striking. It was seldom raised or reported on in the tabloid, sensational press.

Q: I know that you were interested in Asia, but after your tour in Ghana, did Africa seem to offer some attractive career prospects?

TAYLOR: I seriously considered Africa as an area of specialization. A deputy assistant secretary visited Accra when I had been there for almost two years and during a dinner conversation, he urged me to give Africa serious consideration and at least to seek another assignment in Africa. He told me that Africa was a great opportunity with new embassies opening up all the time. I was interested, but I decided that I was even more interested in Asian cultures and societies.

Q: Did your children enjoy Ghana?

TAYLOR: The children were very young, but they had a good time. We had beautiful beaches and many interesting side trips we could take with the family. We had no health problems. We took malaria pills, but beyond the occasional bouts of diarrhea, we didn't have problems.

Betsy and I traveled a bit up country, where we stayed in old colonial guesthouses used by traveling government officials. Because of the children, we did not travel to other lands, except for a trip to Upper Volta. But we did get to know Ghana quite well.

DICK ERSTEIN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS

Accra (1959-1961)

Dick Erstein entered the Foreign Service in 1951. Mr. Erstein has served in Ghana, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi), and Kenya. He was interviewed by Jack O'Brien on August 7, 1989

ERSTEIN: I received my first PAO assignment -- to Ghana. I was there for two years and the situation in Ghana changed rapidly. For the first two years there still was a British Governor General, and Kwame Nkrumah, the then Prime Minister, acted as a colonial prime minister, loving the countries of the West. The moment that Ghana became a complete republic, the attitude changed completely and the U.S. and all of the Western allies were frowned upon. And that was a period in which close ties were developed between the Soviet Union and Ghana. This was especially disturbing for us as Kwame Nkrumah the first prime minister of an independent African country, was also head of the Organization of African Unity. He exerted great influence over other newly established governments.

Q: What restrictions, if any, were placed upon USIS activities in Ghana during that period?

ERSTEIN: There were no formalized restrictions but in the press and on the radio we were attacked strongly, without any opportunity for rebuttal. The people of Ghana didn't absorb the anti-Americanism of government. It was relatively easy to work -- film shows, scholarships and many other ways that we reach people directly.

Q: Did you have an exchange program?

ERSTEIN: We had an exchange program that went on uninterrupted.

Q: What was the caliber of your local employees? Were they reluctant to work for USIS?

ERSTEIN: Not a bit. And most of the people in the Ghana government were quite friendly towards the United States. The virus had not gotten down far enough from Nkrumah to make working conditions difficult.

JAMES B. ENGLE Public Affairs Officer, USIS Accra (1961-1963)

James B. Engle was born in Montana in 1919. He entered the Foreign Service in 1941 and served in Latin America and Europe, and was ambassador to Benin. He was involved in Vietnamese affairs both in the field and in Washington from 1968 to 1973. He was interviewed in 1988 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: I want to move to the next assignment that is of particular interest in this interview, and this is going to Accra. This was in 1961. How did this come about?

ENGLE: This came about because I was walking through the hall in the Department of State on home leave at the end of July 1961, and I was seen by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Henry Tasca. Henry had been Minister for Economic Affairs when I was in Rome, and also he came in as Minister for Economic Affairs in Bonn. We were always pretty good friends. At that time he was in African Affairs. This was the time of the opening of Africa. There was this great movement of personnel, mostly from the Bureau of European Affairs, which was sort of a treasurer particularly of middle-grade officers with experience. We just rushed them off to Africa, to open up new posts and to get well-established there. Henry was looking for recruits and saw me, and that very day, he had me called in and said, "We need a man in Accra who can deal with Nkrumah."

I had had a lot of recent experience with Socialist Parties and with trade unions. I said, "Well, I just came back from Bonn after being in that job as labor attaché for only ten months, and I'm being taken back there for another two-year tour. You'll have to modify the Europeans if they want me." He went to them, and they resisted, but, "Soapy" Williams had a lot of influence. "Soapy" Williams was the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

Q: And former governor of Michigan.

ENGLE: Former governor of Michigan. He had a lot of influence in the Democratic Party. A few days later, it was confirmed that the opposition of Ambassador Dowling out in Germany and Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs also had been overcome, and I was to proceed immediately to Accra.

Q: How did you see the situation in Accra at the time you went there in '61?

ENGLE: We had very able leadership at the embassy, Francis Russell. Ambassador Russell was one of two or three people who invented the Marshall Plan, and he was a great ambassador. We had that great leadership. But we were already into a plan for supporting Ghana in the construction of a Volta River dam, which, I believe, was the first immense project of that time that we supported in Africa. It may have been the first after what we did for the Aswan Dam. It involved enormous expenditures, and as I recall, the commitment of the United States of something like a quarter of a billion dollars, it was to revolutionize the economy of Ghana based on backing up water, getting electric power, and building an aluminum manufacturing complex.

To be very honest with you, I was against the plan, in part because the Ghanaian Government, under [Kwame] Nkrumah's leadership, was aligning itself more and more closely with the Soviet Union, and Soviet influence was growing fast. Nkrumah and his government were attacking the United States all the time. This didn't seem to me to be the right sort of conditions in which we should commit such a vast amount of money. I thought we ought to concentrate on countries more willing to be agreeable to the United States, and that didn't mean we would demand that they be our minions at all. I believed that we ought to have a dignified relationship of a political and moral equality, and there had to be a sense of affability or agreeability, you might say, between the two governments, which really wasn't true between Nkrumah and the American Government.

Q: Ghana, being the first African country, really, to come out from colonial rule and also having a charismatic ruler such as Nkrumah, we were spending a great deal of time looking at Ghana, compared to other parts of Africa.

ENGLE: Yes, that was a mistake.

Q: A disproportionate time.

ENGLE: Disproportionate. We de-emphasized places like the Ivory Coast right next door. Today and ever since the early Sixties or middle Sixties, the Ivory Coast has been one of the examples, and Senegal, of countries that made sensible decisions, and therefore, they became wisely developed, and their populations gratified by the policies of their government.

Q: How did you find Ambassador Russell and then again, back in Washington, "Soapy" Williams, the African Bureau? Were they almost mesmerized by Ghana?

ENGLE: Francis Russell was not. He is an extremely able and wise man who could see all these defects, and was not very keen for us to be cooperating to this extent without dignity. He was a very dignified man himself. If it had at all been in his hands, he would have done it far more wisely, and we would have had a more agreeable relationship with Nkrumah, and quite possibly Nkrumah wouldn't have been so hunkered up to the Soviets.

Q: Where was the pressure coming from in order to be overly accommodating?

ENGLE: In part it was coming from the Kaiser Company, the Kaiser people. They had their man called Chad Calhoun. This is a big company that was going to support the dam.

Q: This is Kaiser Aluminum.

ENGLE: Yes.

Q: Often the charge is that American commercial interests or economic interests drive our foreign policy. In this case, there is probably something to it, wouldn't you say?

ENGLE: Yes. The American Government had been moving in the direction of the Volta Dam for some time, and that sympathy began when Nkrumah was more sympathetic and more moderate and less tied in with the Russians. As we moved toward stronger support, which ended up in approval of the program, Nkrumah was moving in the other direction in international affairs; he was moving toward, in effect, alliance with the Soviets and anti-Americanism.

Q: Were we able to do anything about this? You at the embassy, you particularly, but also the staff of the embassy, how could you try to counter this or change the course?

ENGLE: We couldn't very much because we were tied down with the policy that was already

approved. We could keep reporting the anti-American action of the Nkrumah Government.

Let me tell you that Chad Calhoun was sort of our second ambassador there, and this was a great embarrassment to Francis Russell. Chad would go back and forth. He had entre into the White House; he had information that was different, or at least he presented it differently, than what we had; Nkrumah used him as a special emissary, in effect, and he was really an advocate of Nkrumah, that's what he was. Quite often his judgments were exactly the contrary to the judgments of those in the embassy.

Q: What was the role that the African Bureau played in Washington under "Soapy" Williams?

ENGLE: The African Bureau's official policy was favorable to Nkrumah, and this was personified by "Soapy" himself, who came to Ghana in his first visit, he'd never met Nkrumah, and this was about May or June of 1963. At the airport, he began talking about osaygefo, which means "savior." He could have spoken of the president instead of osaygefo, but osaygefo is the expression used by the emotional supporters of Nkrumah and his party and, of course, in the press, to refer to the president, osaygefo. Well, he referred to osaygefo instead of the president, and this stunned moderate people in Ghana, those who hoped the U.S. would come back to a more even-keeled policy toward the Nkrumahan Government.

Q: Did you or people at the embassy have a chance to talk to "Soapy" Williams and try to make him understand the situation more?

ENGLE: Yes, we did. I can remember we had several meetings with him, and I can remember meeting at the DCM's residence in Accra at the end of his visit, a wind-up, where I was number three at the embassy. I felt that I had to get up and tell "Soapy" Williams where I thought we were, where I thought we ought to go, because it wasn't going to come out completely in one whole. I did that, and "Soapy" was quite gracious about it. It was a contrary view to his own, but I realized that I probably didn't have any future in Africa after this. (Laughs) Sure enough, when my orders came out a few months later, I was transferred to Managua as DCM.

Q: I recall this because I was involved slightly. I was in intelligence and research for African Affairs at this time. People were expected to "think right" about Africa. This was a "brand-new" continent and all things were possible, and the leaders were all wonderful. It was a time of really bright hope, which was not supported by the facts, even at the time. But would you say there was a certain amount of knocking down those in the Foreign Service who were trying to be more pragmatic about our approach, rather than romantic?

ENGLE: You're right. You have described perfectly the attitude that prevailed at the time in Washington and, I think, generally throughout the Foreign Service and the posts in Africa. You had to be supportive of whatever Africans did, and some incredible and objectionable things were done by many African heads of government. I personally, and one or two others in the embassy, believed that we should insist on dignified relations and that we shouldn't get out and cheer things that were wrong; we just keep quiet about those things and conduct pleasant relations and be friendly and all that, but not accept any gaff and not get on our knees and sort of pray that this dictator would be reasonable and agreeable. That's what we were doing in Ghana.

We just had too many people around there engaged in Nkrumah worship.

Q: I recall this period vividly.

ENGLE: Of course, there was a reaction later just to the opposite side in some places.

GEORGE F. JONES
General Services Officer
Accra (1961-1963)

George F. Jones was born in Texas in 1935. He graduated from Wabash College in 1955 and received a Master's Degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Stanford University. His postings abroad have included Quito, Accra, Caracas, Vienna, Guatemala City, San Jose and Santiago, with an ambassadorship to Guyana. Mr. Jones was interviewed in 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

JONES: I still had the Africa "bug". I still wanted to get to Africa. I warned my wife that if she married me, that was what I was going to try to do. The assignment came through and I was told that if I wanted to go to Africa, the only opening was as General Services Officer in Accra, Ghana. This of course was back before the days of open assignments and so I had to take the Department's word for it that this was the only opening. So it was either take what they offered or give up on Africa. So off we went to Ghana, in February 1961.

Q: You were there from 1961 to when?

JONES: Until February 1963, two years. Ghana was an interesting country, I'm glad I went there. The general services work was certainly different. If nothing else, it gave me sympathy for Administrative Officers and GSO's that I would not otherwise have had. The impatience of people with administrative support and their concept of the level of support to which they are entitled were a revelation to me. [laughter] It was not the work I would have chosen, and I certainly wouldn't have chosen to have done it again, but it was survivable for two years. It really was a learning experience.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at that time?

JONES: When I first got there it was a career officer named Russell, I think. But he was not there for very long before we got a political appointee. Kennedy was coming in as President and named a democrat named Mahoney as Ambassador, he was from Arizona or New Mexico. The thing that most impacted on me as GSO, was that we were informed that he was coming with seven children. He was a young man, couldn't have been more than in his forties. The little residence that we had in Accra was in no way equipped to house a family of nine. So a major project for General Services was renovations and expansion. I don't know exactly what we did, but somehow additional space was added to the house. I will say this, the Ambassador was a

very nice guy, and very interested in making the very best of impressions. He never complained, we never had any difficulty in dealing with the Ambassador. We had a lot more difficulty with the people lower down the food chain, than we did with him.

Q: This was the Kwame Nkrumah period, Nkrumah was...

JONES: Yes. I'll never forget, once the Ambassador very solemnly in a staff meeting said that he understood that there were some members of the American community--one of Nkrumah's title's of which he was most fond, was "Osaygefo", which I was told meant roughly the redeemer, and the Ambassador announced that he understood that there were some people and some younger members of the American community who had been heard referring to him as "old soggy shoes," and he wanted people to know that we had diplomatic relations with the government Ghana and this was improper conduct. [laughter]

Q: This was the time when the Kennedy administration was in, this was the time of our greatest interest in Africa, and Nkrumah was sort of the leader in Africa that people were looking at. What was your impression--was the Embassy sort of starry-eyed about Nkrumah did you think? What was your impression?

JONES: At that time they were not starry-eyed about him, I've forgotten exactly the period his administration was, but already they were worried about him. It was already clear that he was taking Ghana in directions that we were unhappy about, both politically and economically. He was moving in the direction of a one-man dictatorship, and slowly squeezing the capitalist side of the economy until it expired. But these trends had not fully developed yet, it was more a constant concern than it was a feeling that the war had already been lost. As you said, this was kind of at the peak of the Kennedy administration's approach, that we want to be on the side of the developing countries. Chester Bowles and John Galbraith were sent out to India and the whole object was to have the very best relations with the developing countries, not to nit-pick at them. One of my interesting experiences was the arrival of the very first Peace Corps volunteers, anywhere in the world, to Ghana. I was there at the airport when they came in. My role was to get their baggage off of the plane [laughter] and get it to the Embassy. Nevertheless I was there at that interesting moment.

Q: What was your impression of how the Peace Corps fit in? There was the episode of the post card, was that while you were there? Somebody wrote a post card which was considered to be disparaging of something, I can't remember what it was.

JONES: I don't remember that happening during the time I was there.

Q: Maybe it came a little later, I think it was Ghana but I may be wrong.

JONES: There were lots of such incidents around the world with Peace Corps volunteers. My impression is that was more true during the 1960's and 1970's than it is today. Whether they are using a different selection process today or whether the younger generation has matured, but there seems to be a greater awareness now of the fact that they can't raise waves in the local society or they'll soon be back on the plane headed home.

Q: The General Services Officer is often the person in the Embassy who has to deal with the local economy, problems of corruption, ability to compete jobs, etc. What was your impression of how the system worked in Ghana?

JONES: Our most familiar experience was being victims of extortion by landlords. My major preoccupation was with housing, finding housing for people. It made me a life-long enemy of government-provided housing. My experience has always been that it is easier and works much better if you let people go out and lease their own quarters. Then they can put up with the consequences of their own decisions. Ghana was a totally government-owned and government-leased post, which meant that me, the poor GSO, was responsible for finding everyone their ideal dream house. And if it wasn't available on the local market or available within the guidelines set down by the Department for what we could pay, then it was personally my fault. I needed to look a little harder or work a little harder. Certainly the landlords--they knew it was a tight housing market and that European style and American style housing was hard to find, and we paid enormous rents (it seemed to me at that time) for housing that was not all that good. I don't think we ever had any problem with running into fraud or corruption.

Q: When did you leave there?

JONES: In 1963.

MILES S. PENDLETON, JR.
History Teacher
Ghana (1962-1964)

Miles S. Pendleton, Jr. was born in New Jersey in 1939. He graduated from Yale University in 1961 and received his MPA from Harvard University in 1967. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1967, his postings included Burundi, Tel Aviv, Brussels and Paris. Mr. Pendleton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

PENDLETON: Well, I went home to Andover for the summer and then traveled to Hershey, Pennsylvania, for a training program for teaching in West Africa, and I went to Ghana late that August.

Q: How was this training program? What was your impression of how this one worked?

PENDLETON: The training program for the African-American Institute was not of any particular utility. It was run by a very small provincial college in Hershey, Pennsylvania, which had somehow gotten a contract to run a training program. It was not able to attract instructors, it seemed to me at the time and still does, who could give one a real insight into the societies into which we were going or the kind of cultural experiences we would be facing. The session was relatively brief, and it was innocuous and allowed us to meet each other, those who were going

to West Africa - and potentially to found friendships that would allow you to visit each other later. But I wouldn't call that one of the highlights of my academic career.

Q: How did you end up with Ghana?

PENDLETON: Well, Ghana, as I mentioned before, had become independent when I was a senior at Andover, and it had captured my imagination much more than Nigeria and Sierra Leone, which were the other two English-speaking West African countries that were part of the program. And there was no doubt in my mind (I mean, I had been reading about Ghana, not with a great passion) that if I went to West Africa, I would like to go to Ghana. And I'm glad I did.

Q: Well, you were in Ghana from when to when?

PENDLETON: I was in Ghana from '62 to '64.

Q: Were you in a particular place?

PENDLETON: The first year I was teaching at a school called Ghana Secondary School Koforidua, which was in a town 50 miles north of Accra, and I shared a house in the bush, at the outset, with a Peace Corps volunteer under rather unpleasant conditions. I eventually managed to become very ill and was hospitalized for over a month. The second year I was moved to Adisadel College, Cape Coast, on the coast, where the environment was considered more salubrious. In both places, I taught English and history and a little French, which was slightly a laugh, but I could keep well ahead of the students. I would say that in Koforidua, one of the interesting things was that I met a Czech couple and we have remained friends to this day. I visited them a number of times in what is now the Czech Republic, and they've visited us in Paris and Washington. I arranged a fellowship for him to come to Johns Hopkins for training in surgery and he's now dean of the Charles Medical School in Pilsen.

We also had the inevitable jungle experiences, such as being attacked by ants, which ate all the chickens and goats caged and tethered behind our house. I managed to escape, as did my housemate. But the thing that struck me I think the most in Ghana was the excellence of the educational system and the superb teachers, Ghanaian and from all over the world. I also worked for excellent headmasters. Ghanaians are great fun as people, and while that country's had its ups and downs, I have more faith in it than in a lot of countries.

Q: When you went there, what were you expecting from Ghana, particularly I'm thinking of Nkrumah and the system there, and how did that match with reality?

PENDLETON: I didn't quite expect to be so involved psychologically as I tended to become on occasion with the impact that Nkrumah could have on people who were considered his enemies. But as you started teaching kids and you saw them in the morning weeping because there was a picture of their father upside-down in the newspaper - which meant that Nkrumah's people probably would kill him, or at least imprison him by the end of the day - you became quite impatient (or I did) with Kwame Nkrumah. Whatever he wanted to do for Africa as a whole, he certainly betrayed a great many of his own people in the process. And I found that very hard to

take and not comment on, at least indirectly. I tried to keep politics out of my classrooms, however.

Q: When you're teaching history, what type of history were you teaching?

PENDLETON: I taught two sorts of history. One was European history, and that was required in order to pass the O-level and A-level exams, which were all corrected in England in those days, leaving the poor students to grapple with questions such as "Which side of the tree does moss grow on?" And of course in their country it grows on all sides, but they had to know that whoever was sitting in Leeds and correcting it would say the south side. Or, for example, all my students told me on one exam that the reason that some of the German princes supported Martin Luther was that in those days it "cost a lot of money to fly to Rome," whereas the textbook said that the Pope had "caused a lot of money to flow to Rome." So the students and teachers were dealing with both an alien history and an alien language in many cases. While many of these kids survived and triumphed and went on to great heights, that was part of the battle.

We also taught West African history, which I found fascinating and for which there was a tremendous thirst among the students. But of course, a lot of the history was not solidly based at that point. People were just beginning to try to untangle what had happened before the arrival of the Europeans, and one had to deal with some of the truths about slavery, which were very hard for kids to digest and are hard for adults to digest, wherever you live, on this side or over there.

It was a challenge. The number of students was a great challenge. We were teaching maybe six, seven, eight classes a day with 40 to 50 kids in a class, even at some of the best schools. If you gave everyone a writing assignment only once a week you were up to midnight (often over a candle in the first school I was at because we didn't have electricity in the house) trying to correct these things, with the bugs landing all over the papers. It was no fun.

Q: Did you find both of these servings of history, of Europe and of West Africa, highly political, and was the government's hand rather strong there at that point?

PENDLETON: There were attempts, but what everybody wanted to do was to get his or her A-levels and O-levels, and in a way, you could say that the dead hand of the former colonialists was as much in evidence as that of the government. And you couldn't, in a sense, blame the government for wanting to have an independent country (it was no longer the Gold Coast) with standards that they set. The kids were frantic if you varied much from the syllabus, frantic about not being able to get the kind of license that they would need to go on to university, which they wanted to do. So the government was always present, and it was not nice. There were strong Marxist elements. Nevertheless, there were people like Conor Cruise O'Brien, who was the vice chancellor of the University of Ghana, appointed by Nkrumah but who spoke out vigorously, as is his wont, against any intrusion into the intellectual process. And of course, Nkrumah's people were after O'Brien in a big way, and that was cautionary to some of us minor munchkins running around, that you had to be aware that your words had consequence, and you had to be willing to say good-bye.

One thing that did happen to me in Ghana was that I did get a combination of malaria, typhus,

and dengue and went into a coma and spent, really, six weeks in the hospital, which is why I was moved from the interior to the coast by the Ministry of Education. I think it really screwed up my immune system, which had some impact on me and my career downstream.

Q: You mentioned the students. Were they from any particular class or tribe?

PENDLETON: Adisadel College was a classic Anglican-based school founded in the 1840s with quite a history of being a first-class institution. It was not considered the best school in Ghana, but it was right up there, and its motto was *Vel primus, vel cum primes* ("Either the best, or with the best") (which I thought was a reasonable approach. A lot of the kids there tended to come from more affluent families, and from the south, either Ga from around Accra, Fanti from around Cape Coast, or Ashanti from the great central Ghanaian tribe that Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts, managed to subjugate in the 1890s.

And at the first school I was at, the kids were more rural and often came from more traditional villages and often from quite far away (anything to get an education. As students, they were all elitist by nature, and when the faculty thought it would be a super idea to plant trees on the new compound, it was almost impossible to get the kids to help plant. They wanted to break away from being agriculturalists, and they couldn't imagine why people with master's degrees and Ph.D.s and B.S.s and all were out there in the hot noonday sun lugging tree seedlings around and planting them. I went back there years later and stood under the trees we planted and admonished them and said, "I hope that your generation is more willing to do this than were your predecessors, because you benefit from the shade that is now provided for you."

Q: Did you at all feel that your effort was in competition with the Soviet Union's effort there, or did that not intrude on what you were doing in Ghana?

PENDLETON: Well, the Soviets actually had an AID program in Ghana that was very small, but they had a few teachers and others I met one of them in Cape Coast and later had lunch with him in Moscow in 1964. That was interesting in itself; finding him in Moscow proved to be a challenge. When I did, he was very hospitable. But in a way, for some funny, odd reasons, we were equally aware of the Chinese, who were quite active in Ghana. There was a book written by a student who attended another school in Cape Coast that I could see out the window of my classroom. He had gone on to Beijing and then wrote about his experience in China, which was not a very happy one. But there was a tremendous amount of Soviet and Chinese propaganda that floated around, and I perhaps took it too seriously. It just seemed to me that these were systems that were not going to last, and which had no monopoly on virtue. Nevertheless, they managed to project themselves as being the way ahead, which people would take seriously in a former colony (and rightly so. Ghanaians had every right to try to plot a new course. And I personally liked this less than I should have and wanted to discuss privately how much bull this was with people. I'm not sure I would do it the same way now, but I think historically some of my concerns proved to be correct, and some of my fears were perhaps misplaced.

Q: You're up till 12 at night correcting papers. What about the social life? I'm told the people of Ghana are really delightful people.

PENDLETON: They are, and social life was a little complex, because in the cities, you could go out dancing and dance the high life and be in an environment which was very casual and where Americans and Canadians would feel very much at home with Ghanaians. In the countryside you would probably not be invited much of anyplace, so that your social interaction would revolve around the institution to which you were affiliated, and that had a kind of hierarchical aspect to it -the way it would in any institution when the dean invites his subordinates for dinner or whatever we've all been through many times. There was, I think, an understandable tendency on the part of young Americans in the Peace Corps(it started there before I got to Ghana, although I had signed on to go to Ghana before the Peace Corps was founded. So there were quite a few young Americans running around teaching(very able people. Ghana was one of the first programs, and it scooped up for the Peace Corps a group of young people who really had to decide very suddenly to drop everything and go do this. And by and large, these were people who had a certain amount of guts and a certain amount of willingness to move quickly, and I found them very impressive. There was a tendency on weekends to want to go to Accra and get together with others from your own country and share experiences and find out how to teach a subject better or what to do when the students gang up on you. There was the normal human desire to interact. My rapport with Ghanaians, who often were my bosses and older than me, was fairly formal. My rapport with students was relatively informal, for better or for worse, compared to the way the British handled it, and sometimes that worked very well, and sometimes it was dangerous.

Q: *How would it be dangerous?*

PENDLETON: Good question. The students would almost instantly expect that somehow you could give them a scholarship to the States, and you would be under quite a bit of pressure to produce things which you couldn't produce. Now there were things that you could produce. For the first school, they had no library to speak of, so I wrote to Phillips Academy in Andover, and they had a book drive led by Jeff McNelly, one of my former sailing students. He later won two Pulitzer prizes for his cartoons. They shipped out about 8,000 books, which was a tremendous help. One student at the school whom I'd known at Andover, Jeff McNelly, who's won two Pulitzer Prizes for his cartoons, said, "I just went around to the desks of my classmates and poured the entire contents of the desks in the box and sent them to you." We were able to do that sort of thing, but on the other hand, I met an Anglican minister at my second posting who desperately (I thought) wanted to study in the United States, and I arranged a full scholarship for him at the General Theological Seminary in New York. And just before he was about to go, he decided, no, he didn't think he could survive in New York, and so he didn't go. I had been working so hard on this it was one of those knocks in life that you just have to learn to live with. It was probably in a way good for me he didn't go, but I'm not sure it was good for him or good for Ghana or good for God. But there you are.

Q: *Well, what about here you have a new nation which had ambivalent feelings toward the mother country, Great Britain. You have a President who was educated partly in the United States, Nkrumah, and yet you were running a sort of an old-line school with the line going back to the United Kingdom for marking and for moving up, and here you were a brash American teaching there. Was there an American-British conflict in the schools?*

PENDLETON: No, this would only have come up in the second school I was at, Adisadel College, Cape Coast. I shared a house with two young Brits who were on sort of UK Peace Corps program, one out of Oxford and the other out of Cambridge, one teaching biology and the other teaching chemistry and physics. I've known them ever since. And we got along just fine. There were some superb Canadians on the CUSO program, Canadian University Service Overseas, one of whom, David Godfrey, had had one of his short stories published in *The Best American Short Stories* of 1962. He also founded a student jazz band. I think the Ghanaian teachers recognized that those who were teaching who were younger were quite an extraordinary group, and if anything, there was perhaps a bit of generational problem amongst the foreigners from those, particularly Brits, who were older and found this infusion of 22-year-olds a little bit hard to take after they had spent, in many cases, a good hunk of a professional lifetime teaching at these schools. That struck me as being similar to what could happen in many institutions, and I didn't in any way find US-Canadian or US-British or other hostility. The few younger teachers we met from other countries, if they were dedicated teachers, were respected as being serious at their craft -if, like us, inexperienced. Enthusiasm can go a long way.

Q: *Oh, yes.*

PENDLETON: Teachers who've been teaching in the heat a long time don't stay up till midnight correcting papers, I can assure you. They're entirely too wise.

Q: *Did you travel around Ghana and West Africa at all?*

PENDLETON: Yes, on one vacation I went to Nigeria by plane since the border was closed with Togo. I took the train from Lagos all the way up to Kano in the Muslim North and then went to the old hill station at Jos, where the Brits went when they couldn't get home during World War II. I also visited Kaduna and Ibadan. During the Christmas holidays in 1963, some twenty of us -- Americans, Canadians and Brits -- went overland to Timbuktu in Mali by motorcycle, goods lorry and small river barge from the Niger River. We didn't eat well. Some got really sick. Returning from Timbuktu via Niger and Upper Volta was not easy, and when we arrived at the border with Ghana where my British housemate's motorcycle was stored (it wouldn't go in the sand of the roads in Upper Volta), we found the border closed because of an assassination attempt on Nkrumah. We had to cross by a hidden path ("the small, small Way") and ride nonstop to the sea -- no food, no sleep. It was cold, and we arrived a day after school had opened. Our headmaster was furious.

Q: *Did you have any contact with or any interest in the American diplomatic representation in Ghana at that point?*

PENDLETON: No, oddly enough, given what happened to me in the future. I went in the Embassy once or twice. I think I was more interested in the Embassy building, which was a handsome structure up on stilts. Now when Nkrumah unleashed his demonstrators, the poor folk working in the Embassy, were trapped upstairs, because there was only one flight of stairs down, and they had an unhappy time on occasion. I went once to a beach house on a weekend with some people from the Embassy, and I hardly found out who they were. I was much more interested in teaching, and yet, at the same time became more intrigued than I had been about the

nation of representing my own country abroad.

When it was coming time to leave Ghana, I knew I wanted to continue working overseas, but I knew I did not wish to work for another government, and the notion of working for our own became more attractive to me. But for some reason I didn't go and put in my oar with the folks in the Embassy and try to find out how they saw life in the Foreign Service. I was applying for law school at that point, and I can remember on the Harvard Law application being asked, "Do you plan to practice law?" and I wrote "No," which was perhaps a stupid thing to do, but they accepted me anyway. Basically, I had as little contact with the diplomatic corps as I think one could probably imagine having in such a small country where you're living for a couple of years.

WILLARD DE PREE
Political Officer
Accra (1964-1968)

Ambassador Willard De Pree was born in Michigan in 1928. He received a B.A. from Harvard University and an M.A. from the University of Michigan in 1952. He served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1944-1946. His Foreign Service career began in 1956 and included positions in Cairo, Nicosia, Accra and Freetown with ambassadorships to Mozambique and Bangladesh. Ambassador De Pree was interviewed in 1998 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

DE PREE: If we can jump ahead, when I was assigned to Ghana from 1964 to 1968, the embassy received copies of the film that USIA had put out entitled, "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," about the Kennedy Administration. You probably remember it Stu. Shortly before that film was produced, the embassy had sent the regional governors of Ghana to the United States for a tour. They had been escorted by Jack Matlock, who was then an officer at the embassy in Ghana. When the film arrived, the embassy decided to show it around Ghana at each of the regional capitals. I can recall going up to Bolgatanga with Jack Matlock. The governor put the screen in the middle of the town square and thousands of people, seated on all sides of the screen, showed up to see it. It was incredible, the reaction and feeling of black Africa toward Kennedy and the Kennedy Administration.

Q: This is a continuing interview with Willard De Pree. We are going to take you at last to Africa, to Accra where you served for four years, from 1964-68. How did you feel about that assignment?

DE PREE: Eager. As you know I waited many years to get to Africa. Finally here was my chance. I had initially been assigned to Kaduna which I think I mentioned in our previous discussion. That was broken because Bill Edmondson, who was head of the political section in Accra had to return to the States for family reasons. Oliver Troxel, the DCM, asked me if I

would be interested in going out to replace Bill. I had to be repainted but I was pleased with the assignment. Kwame Nkrumah was riding high in Ghana and that's where the action was.

Q: Ghana was sort of the focal point of almost everything of American interests at that time.

DE PREE: That's right, and Ghana was the first sub-Saharan black African state after World War II to achieve independence and Nkrumah was active not only in Africa but in the non-aligned movement. Everyone was there. All the foreign diplomatic missions had strong missions because Ghana was in the limelight. So I was pleased with the assignment.

Q: What were you doing there?

DE PREE: I was chief of the political section. Bill Mahoney, a political appointee of President Kennedy's, was Ambassador and Oliver Troxel was DCM. We had a four-person political section.

Q: Before you went out there did you talk to anyone on the desk or elsewhere in the African Bureau? What were our interests as far as you gathered from the State Department and all, when you went out there?

DE PREE: As I said, Nkrumah was active, Ghana was active, and our hope was that the policies he pursued would on balance be in Western interests. Our concern was that he was being courted by the Soviet Union, Red China and he responded positively, letting himself quite often, in our judgment, be used to promote their global interests.

We also wanted to keep tabs on what he was up to in Africa. There were reports that Ghana was training Nigerians and some Francophone Africans to subvert governments back in their home countries. It was in our interest to try to find out what he was up to.

We also reported on the activities of the other diplomatic missions in Accra, particularly the Soviets and the Chinese.

Q: What was the political situation like when you arrived?

DE PREE: It was mixed. In general, Ghanaians were pleased with Ghana's influence and the attention Ghana was receiving. But internally the cocoa farmers were unhappy. The price the government paid them for their cocoa was far less than the price cocoa commanded on the international market. The government was buying the cocoa cheap and selling it at a better price, or hoping to sell it at a better price...quite often it miscalculated and sold it prematurely. Trades people were unhappy because of regulations that were being imposed on their activities. The economy wasn't perking along as Ghanaians had hoped it would and disgruntlement was beginning to set in.

In addition, many were unhappy over Nkrumah's close relations with the communist regimes.

Q: When you got there how were the officers in the political section feeling about this?

DE PREE: We had a strong section. Foreign Service officers bid on Ghana because of what was taking place there. The number two in the political section was Jack Matlock, who subsequently became our Ambassador to the Soviet Union. The number three was Tom Walsh and there was a junior officer. All of us in the Political Section liked the assignment because Ghanaians are a delightful people, engaging, well-educated, and easy to get to know, including government officials. There was a strong cadre of civil servants, particularly in the Foreign Ministry. If we needed information we just called somebody in the Government and generally were able to get the information we were looking for.

The other diplomatic missions were a good source of information. The Nigerians, for example, saw themselves as rivals of Ghana in West Africa. Ghana at that time was supporting opposition elements in Nigeria. People in the Nigerian embassy were well aware of what Nkrumah was doing and readily shared their information with us. So Accra was an exciting place to be.

Q: What was Nkrumah trying to do as far as subverting Nigeria, or was this pretty much felt this was what he was trying to do?

DE PREE: Well, I think he was impatient. He wanted all of black Africa to be truly independent. If the government that assumed power at independence was maintaining what in his judgment was too close a relationship to the former Metropole, he was unhappy. In most African countries there were some people who agreed with Nkrumah, who talked his language. Lumumba in the Congo was one. There were some in Nigeria. Nkrumah supported these people financially and occasionally with military training.

Q: When you were there were you seeing indications of this?

DE PREE: Yes, we were getting information. Nkrumah separated his conduct of diplomacy. He had a Foreign Ministry and an African Affairs Secretariat. It was the African Affairs Secretariat that promoted Nkrumah's wishes in Africa. It was this organization that operated the ideological and military training camps that were located in the country.

In the four years I was there, there were a couple of coups in Africa that could be traced back directly to people who had been trained in Ghana. There was a camp in Winneba, just west down the coast from Accra, where African radicals received their ideological training. Some of these people subsequently led opposition movements or engaged in subversion in independent Africa.

Q: Did you find the hand of the British left wing Socialist movement coming out of the London School of Economics in Nkrumah's economics?

DE PREE: That was certainly there. Fabian socialism and the trade union movement. But Nkrumah, of course, pretended that he was coming up with something different, something unique. "Consciencism" was the title of one of his books. The political section had to try to analyze it. It was almost an impossible task, a mixed bag of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist rhetoric. A good many Ghanaians had studied in Russia and Eastern Europe. Generally we

found that these people were not too difficult to deal with. From their experience in Eastern Europe and Russia, they realized there was a wide gap between communist rhetoric and communist practice. They found racism to be very prevalent.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia at the same time and there was a revolt from Bulgaria of all the African students. They all came through my office in Belgrade asking to get to school in the West. We placed a lot of them in schools in the West. They were tired of being called black monkeys by the Bulgarians. They were not the most subtle people.

DE PREE: Ghanaians who had lived in the Soviet Union came back with their eyes open. Quite often graduates of American universities and the UK created more problems for us.

Q: What was our attitude at that time towards these efforts to subvert other countries? Did we just sit back and watch or pass word on to the other countries?

DE PREE: We were pretty much sharing information that we had with respect to what Ghana was engaged in. And, of course, we shared too what we knew about Soviet activities. The Nigerians had a very active mission and they were passing information to their African colleagues. So it wasn't as if other African governments were oblivious to what was taking place.

Q: From the Nigerians and other black African diplomats, were you getting from them that their view of Nkrumah was not a benevolent one?

DE PREE: That's right. For most of the time I served in Ghana there was division in sub-Saharan Africa between the radicals (the pro-Nkrumah camp) and the moderates.

Q: Were we being active trying to tell Nkrumah to cool it or something or at that point were we just sitting back and being rather passive and watching?

DE PREE: No, we certainly were not passive. This was the immediate post-Kennedy period. We were concerned with our own problems in Vietnam, of course, but we were not sitting back. We were frank in our discussions. Ambassador Mahoney had an exceptional relationship with Nkrumah, in retrospect, maybe the relationship was too close. Nkrumah may have felt that he could do pretty much what he wanted and Ambassador Mahoney would understand. Not that he did, of course. But if we had somebody a little more aloof who could go in and say, "Look, this is what we know you are doing and we don't like it," Nkrumah might have taken more heed. The close personal relationship may have led to some misunderstanding.

Q: Well, it reminds me of Howard Jones in Indonesia with Sukarno. They were very close and Sukarno would twit Jones and kid him, and Jones would just take it because he felt he had this very close relationship. And yet it didn't work out to our advantage there.

DE PREE: Ambassador Mahoney didn't mince his words with Nkrumah but Nkrumah may not have taken what Mahoney was saying as seriously as he would have had they not been so close. We used to talk about it in the mission.

Q: Would you talk to Mahoney about it too, or not?

DE PREE: Yes, it was something that we talked about. I had a good deal of respect for Mahoney.

Q: What was Mahoney's background? He was a political appointee.

DE PREE: He was a lawyer and had been Kennedy's campaign manager in Arizona, maybe more than Arizona. He was one of several political appointees in Africa. There was Bill Attwood in Guinea, Kaiser in Senegal. Before, as you know, most political appointees went to Europe, but under the Kennedy Administration a lot of them found themselves in the third world. For the most part they were good.

Q: How did we view the Soviets and the Communist Chinese?

DE PREE: At that time it was a confrontation, a rivalry. We concluded that what they were engaged in was not in our interests. To the extent that they were able to develop a close relationship with Ghana or other African states, we were unhappy. Many people viewed it as an either/or situation. One either had to be pro-West or one was on the other side. Oh, there was some sophistication, but this still was the prevailing mind-set in the way we looked at Soviet and Chinese activities. There was, of course, a Soviet and Chinese rivalry that developed, and you could sense that and see that. We reported that to Washington. The Soviets and Chinese were, themselves, competing for African support.

Q: What were the Soviets up to as far as we could see during this period, 1964-68?

DE PREE: I think they were trying to cultivate leaders in Africa who would side with them on global issues. They wanted to stir up trouble for the West.

Q: What were they doing? Aid projects?

DE PREE: The Soviets had a large aid program, primarily economic rather than military. A lot of Ghanaians were being trained in the Soviet Union. Our aid in Ghana captured more attention because we were facilitating funding for the Volta Dam, which in turn, generated the power for Kaiser's alumina smelter.

Q: Were we looking around and saying, "My God, the Soviets are here and we had better get into this field too?"

DE PREE: Yes, we didn't want to leave the field open to them. We were competing. We had the good fortune, of course, that Ghana is English speaking. And far more Ghanaian officials had been trained in the West and were familiar with the UK and the US than with the Soviet Union. We had an advantage over the Soviets.

Throughout my tour in Ghana, US funding and support for the Volta River project and the smelter was the most contentious bilateral issue. Kaiser had a very strong team in Ghana. We were very close to Kaiser officials. Edgar Kaiser used to come to Ghana a couple of times a year. It was always seen as a big event in Ghana. The State Department and embassy always briefed Edgar Kaiser before he saw Nkrumah so that he was privy to the state of US-Ghana relations. We hoped Edgar Kaiser would use his influence with Nkrumah to further US interests in Ghana and Africa.

A little sidelight. Nkrumah enjoyed novelties. Every time Edgar Kaiser came to Ghana, he would have something special by way of a gift or a novelty for Nkrumah. One time he presented a toy blimp that could be directed by remote control. He gave that to Nkrumah in his office and throughout the conversation that little blimp was hovering over the conversation. I guess it was rather distracting.

Edgar Kaiser was concerned too with what was taking place in Ghana, but had negotiated what he considered a very favorable arrangement both for Kaiser and Ghana, and stuck with the project, as did Nkrumah. The smelter turned out to be one of Kaiser's most profitable investments.

Q: Who was funding the Volta Dam, itself?

DE PREE: It was multiple funding. The construction of the smelter, and Kaiser's agreement to purchase the power at a fixed price made construction of the Dam viable. The US guaranteed some of the loans which financed the Dam, which was built by Kaiser. There was international funding, the World Bank, and Ghanaian funding as well. So it was a multiple funded project.

Q: With these aid projects, how did we at that time view the problem of corruption? Was it there?

DE PREE: It was there. In retrospect, looking back on my experience in Sierra Leone and Bangladesh, it was there but it wasn't as blatant or as pervasive. Some of the money no doubt found its way to Nkrumah, not so much for his own personal gain, as to promote his political wishes throughout Africa. Some of his ministers, however, were living far beyond their governmental salaries. That was beginning to irritate the Ghanaians. You could see the unhappiness setting in. Civil servants, police and military, began privately to express their concern. The army was unhappy with the creation of Nkrumah's presidential guard, which was viewed as a rival to the professional army. Senior police officials were unhappy at the way corruption was beginning to find its way into their service. And as you know, eventually some of the police and some the military, General Ankrah and Chief of Police Harley and his deputy Deku got together and plotted the coup.

Q: When was the coup?

DE PREE: The coup took place in 1966 while Nkrumah was in China on his way to Vietnam. He had approached us before the trip asking if we would support his efforts to negotiate a cease fire or settlement in Vietnam. The Johnson Administration was convinced that nothing good

would come of Nkrumah's efforts, but we didn't want to publicly discourage him, so we indicated that we would be interested in whatever he could find out, without encouraging him in any way. It was while he was in China that the police and the army moved against him and toppled him. Many of those who were with Nkrumah came back, but Nkrumah never did.

Q: For an embassy a coup is always a highlight of one's professional business. Had you, the embassy and the political section been sort of paving the way saying this could happen?

DE PREE: We reported what we were hearing in Ghana. The unhappiness with Nkrumah and rumors of some plotting had been reported back to Washington. So a coup was not that unexpected, although when it occurred it came as a surprise and caught a lot of people unaware. The army and police obviously took advantage of his being out of the country to stage and carry out the coup. There was some fighting around Flagstaff House, which was Nkrumah's offices, but for the most part resistance was short-lived.

Q: How well was the country team plugged into what the Ghanaian military was thinking? I am thinking through our military attachés and all. How were relations with the military?

DE PREE: Relations were very good. Many of the senior officers had fought in World War II in Burma. They had been trained by the British. They were friendly to the West. Our Defense Attaché had very good contacts. So too did many of us in the embassy.

Q: How about the CIA? Were they giving you information or were they sort of operating their own show?

DE PREE: They were sharing the information with us. As I say, it was easy to collect intelligence of what was going on. You just had to have stamina.

Q: Stamina meaning going to parties?

DE PREE: Partly. This was a good way to meet Ghanaians. They are an outgoing people, who generally let you know what they are thinking. Many would share information about what they were up to.

There was no division within the embassy, the country team worked together. It was a well-run mission.

Q: How about with reporting? You had Soapy Williams as head of African Affairs still at that time. Every once in a while in these interviews I would have people say that it was pretty hard to report the warts in a country because Soapy Williams wanted to hear good news of black Africa. Did you have any feeling about that?

DE PREE: No, we didn't sense that at all. There were no suggestions that our reporting was getting out of line. We reported developments as we saw them. That wasn't a problem.

Q: When this new group came in what was our immediate reaction as to where they were coming from and what they were going to do as regards our interests?

DE PREE: Many people saw the removal of Nkrumah as an advantage or plus for the West. However, a military takeover was not something we were trying to promote throughout Africa. We perceived it to be in US interest to persuade the people who took over the National Liberation Council, the military and police, to schedule elections and return to civilian rule. We pressed hard as a mission to get them to commit themselves to do that, and they did it. Again in retrospect some people think they probably moved too quickly because the government that came in after the National Liberation Council proved to be ineffective. The country started to go down hill. The Busia government couldn't get on top of the situation. But we didn't foresee that and we pressed the National Liberation Council hard to hold early elections. And they did.

Q: When you say pressed hard, here was a country where our influence wasn't great or was it?

DE PREE: It was. We had good influence. We had had access to Nkrumah and the government of the day, but they didn't listen to us. In Harley, Ankrah and Deku, we had three leaders who were close to the West. They listened. They had no experience in running the government. They looked to the West, the United States and Britain, for advice on what to do. Both the British and we urged them to schedule early elections, to get on with the job of transition and the return to civilian rule. They were hesitant, wanting to go a little slower than we were urging them to go.

Q: How about the Soviet and the Chinese when the coup came? What did this do to their activities?

DE PREE: A good many of the people in the Soviet embassy left. A number had been training Nkrumah's own bodyguards. They suffered some casualties, as I recall, when the army took over Nkrumah's residence. The new government that came in made it clear that they wanted a different relationship with the Soviet and Communist missions. They didn't break relations, but relations were much cooler.

Q: About when did Franklin Williams come in to replace Ambassador Mahoney?

DE PREE: I guess the Spring before the coup. The coup was in the Fall.

Q: What was Franklin Williams's background and how did he operate?

DE PREE: He had been active in the Democratic Party, a supporter of President Johnson. He had a law background. He came in questioning US government policy with respect to Nkrumah. I think he thought the US was too critical of Nkrumah. He was also critical of the Foreign Service. I can remember he came in and told us that he didn't think much of the Foreign Service. We were going to do things his way and we had better get on board. He was rather open about the whole thing. But over time he began to realize that he had inherited a darn good staff and that changed. He, too, became discouraged with what was taking place in Ghana. Then, of course, the coup came he developed a good relationship with the National Liberation Council.

He was not the easiest ambassador to work for. He talked quite a bit, out of school. Information that we were picking up we obviously shared with him. But he wasn't able to keep some of the sensitive information within the embassy. So we began to be a little reluctant to share everything with him.

Q: *Was anybody able to kind of talk to him?*

DE PREE: Yes, we told him he should be more careful. Some of the leaders of the post-coup government also were unhappy with his loose tongue. He would share rather freely what the Ghanaian leaders were telling him, which he should not have done.

Q: *I don't want to make a strong case for the Foreign Service, but there are times and places where it is a good idea to have a professional and this kind of sounds a time when probably a solid professional, at time of fast change and all this, would have made more sense than to have somebody who is playing the normal political game of glad-handing and going out and around.*

DE PREE: I think it would have. Franklin Williams was collecting material for a book he planned to write upon completion of his tour as ambassador. It would have better in my judgment to have had someone more professional as ambassador at that time.

Q: *What about United Nations votes before and after the coup. I imagine this must have driven us wild because this was the one place where a country like Ghana can kind of stick it to the United States.*

DE PREE: And they did under Nkrumah. Ghana quite often voted in opposition to the way we voted. After the change of government we found that Ghana was lining up with us on almost all significant issues. So in that sense we were far better off after the coup.

Q: *What was the role of the British there?*

DE PREE: The British at independence had a very good relationship with the government. The British had been helpful in moving Ghana towards independence and it was appreciated. But over the post-independence period, this relationship began to erode, while our relationship began to be perceived by Ghanaians as more important. There were several reasons for this. I think the big reason was that we were the global power. Moreover, we had funded and made possible the Volta River project, which was the biggest development project in the country. We had a very active mission, but the British did too. We shared information fully with our British colleagues. However, I think we were one step ahead of the British in knowing what was going on.

Q: *This was still in Foreign Service terms, high Africa, wasn't it? I mean Africa was still a place where the eager, high charging young officer might aim for.*

DE PREE: Well, yes, Ghana was the place to be. Certainly as long as Nkrumah was there and also in the immediate post-coup period.

Q: *Well the coup always sends adrenaline through one's veins anyway.*

DE PREE: It certainly does. I can remember the night of the coup I woke up and could hear the shooting. We lived on the outskirts of the town near the airport and from our roof I could see the tracer bullets. I decided I had better get into the mission. I decided that on the way I would drive by the Flagstaff House to see what was going on. As I got close to Flagstaff House a car about a hundred yards in front of me blew up and I knew that wasn't the place for me. A soldier came out of the bushes and told me to get the hell out of there. I didn't have to be told, and I high tailed it to the mission by way of a back road. My adrenaline was high at the time.

The final two years I was in Ghana the embassy was busy getting to know the new people. I developed a close relationship with the head of the new trade union movement, a fellow by the name of Ben Bentum, who was helpful in rallying support for the new government. But I was not happy with some of the people who were obviously going to find themselves in positions of power under a civilian government once elections took place. Many in the new government were rather vindictive. Admittedly, some of them had come out of years in prison, but it seemed to me that Ghana needed to look ahead rather than to the past.

Q: How did you find the trade union movement? I think one of the most pernicious things that the British exported has been its trade union and labor movement which tends to be very class orientated. It is divisive. How was it translating in Ghanaian terms?

DE PREE: There is a class difference. Most of the trade union people didn't have the education that people in the bureaucracy had, for example, or the military services and the police had. But in Ghana extended families had members in the bureaucracy, the military and the trade unions. Although there was a difference in income it wasn't as noticeable as you might find in Europe, for example. And, of course, trade unions at this time were quite powerful in Africa. They could bring out people for rallies and for elections. In Ghana in the immediate post-coup period the trade unions played a very constructive role.

Q: You left just before the coming into power of a duly elected government in Ghana in 1968.

ROBERT P. SMITH
Ghana Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1965-1966)

Ambassador Robert P. Smith entered the Foreign Service in 1955. His Foreign Service assignments included positions in Lebanon, Ghana, South Africa, and Pakistan. Ambassador Smith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 28, 1989.

Q: Why don't we talk about the Ghana time. You were, again, dealing with Ghana at a difficult time. Could you explain what our relations were in 1965 and 1966, how you saw it from the desk?

SMITH: Before coming back and taking over the desk I drove overland from Enugu, west to Lagos, and then all the way across the west coast into Accra for a week's visit there with the embassy staff in Ghana. I'd been there before but only briefly. We had a very fine staff there, one of whom, a junior political officer on the staff then, is now our ambassador in Moscow, Jack Matlock. That was where I first met Jack.

Kwame Nkrumah was still in power in 1965. And to say that he was difficult for the embassy and the United States Government would be the understatement of the year. He seemed to be, at times, almost losing his mind. Ghana had been left -- Ghana was the first to come to independence -- in really excellent shape by the British -- myths to the contrary notwithstanding. They had a very favorable balance of payments. They had millions and millions in foreign reserves, hard currency. And Nkrumah simply ran the country into the ground by his tortured anti-Western, Socialistic, anti-capitalist attitudes.

The strange thing about that initial visit to Ghana was, even though I was being briefed on the idiosyncrasies of Nkrumah, at the same time individual Ghanaians, even senior civil servants, to say nothing of the man on the street, couldn't have been nicer or more blatantly pro-American to the extent of their saying at times that, "You mustn't pay too much about what Osaygefo says." Osaygefo was a name he was called by the Ghanaian people. Ghanaians, perhaps second only to the Ibos, from whom I had just come, are among the most likeable, pleasant, nice people in all of Africa. They are simply an enormously likeable, warm, generous, outgoing people. I can't find enough adjectives to use with respect to the Ghanaians.

It was tragic for us to sit back and see Nkrumah running this country into the ground the way he did, and it was happening right before our eyes. When I went there in 1965, there were still a number of hotels in downtown Accra that served excellent meals. I remember having lunch on the patio of one of those hotels. By the time I went back years later as ambassador, none of them could do that. There was nothing to be had. There was nothing to eat, et cetera. And almost all of it was attributed to Nkrumah's madness. I don't mean that literally.

Q: Was there concern that there might be a mental problem there?

SMITH: I don't think seriously, no.

Q: This was an attitude?

SMITH: An attitude, yes. It was fascinating to deal with it. He was concentrating on the urban areas. And this is an age-old story in Africa where African leaders tend to concentrate on keeping their urban populations happy at the expense of their rural populations. And Nkrumah did this with respect to his cocoa farmers, cocoa being the largest source of foreign exchange. And as a result, they couldn't get people to man to cocoa farms and the country just spun out of control.

So much so that, while I was on the Ghana desk nine or ten months later, they had had enough and Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup. They did this in relatively bloodless fashion. While Nkrumah was in the air flying to Red China, he was met on the ground in Peking by his Chinese

host and it fell to them to inform him that he was no longer Head of State in the Republic of Ghana. So that was a fascinating time in a fascinating country.

Q: Was our feeling one of passivity towards Nkrumah? I'm talking about the time that you were dealing with it. Were we trying to say enough is enough because the man was attacking us, at least verbally, all the time.

SMITH: He certainly was. We tried for years to get along with Nkrumah. We would turn the other cheek at times and do everything we could to assuage his anger. Nothing worked with him, however. And, again, while I was on the Desk, I think Nkrumah dropped the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak, in that he published a new book called Neo-Colonialism. I've forgotten the subtitle, which was simply outrageous. It accused the United States of every sin imaginable to man. We were blamed for everything in the world.

The book was so bad that I remember the then Assistant Secretary, G. Mennen Williams, called me up and gave me that book and said, "Bob, I know this is bad. I don't know how bad. I want you to take it home tonight and read it. You're not going to get any sleep and I apologize for that, but on my desk, by eight o'clock tomorrow morning, I've got to have a written summary of this because I have called the Ghanaian ambassador in at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. We're going to protest this book." There had already been advance publicity so we knew it was bad, but we hadn't had our hands on a copy. And it was everything we feared it would be. It was awful.

And the next morning -- of course, he had me in on this meeting as the note taker -- a lovely, old man, Michael Ribiero, was the Ghanaian ambassador. Hated Nkrumah privately, but was a good soldier trying to put the best face on this, a career officer in their foreign service and very respected here and in Ghana. Governor Williams, of course, was a relatively mild-mannered man. I had never heard Soapy Williams raise his voice until that conversation. Neither have I ever heard an ambassador get a tongue lashing like Ribiero got from Assistant Secretary Williams that morning. He, unfortunately, tried a couple times to interrupt the governor when he was making a point. He had my notes in front of him. And at one point, when Ribiero interrupted him, said, "Just a minute, Mr. Ambassador, don't interrupt me. I'm not through." And he continued to go on. He was raising his voice. He was shaking his finger in the ambassador's face. And it was a very painful, hour-long interview. To put it mildly, he protested vigorously the contents and publication of this book.

I think the publication of that book might also have contributed in a material way to his overthrow shortly thereafter. The Ghanaian people, as I say, did not share Nkrumah's views on many things. The Ghanaians have always had a warm relationship with the United States. Nkrumah simply, as the British say, went round the bend and they got a belly full of it and booted him out of office.

I also remember, the morning of the coup, I got the call about 2 a.m. here at the house and went into the Department and immediately set up a little task force in the Operations Center. Later in the same morning, about 8 or 8:30, Secretary Rusk wandered down the hall and came in and said, "I've seen the early reports, but I just want to hear it firsthand. What's going on in Ghana?" When I related how Nkrumah had landed in Peking and had been informed by his Chinese hosts

of what had happened in Ghana, Dean Rusk broke into an ear-splitting grin. I've never seen him look so happy.

Q: Enough was enough, I guess.

SMITH: Enough was enough, yes.

Q: Again, this is an unclassified interview, and I know there's been accusations. I think, actually, while you were in Ghana they came out to the fore again that the CIA had been involved. Did you have any feel towards that while you were there?

SMITH: Yes. We had been accused of that all along. There was nothing to it. I mean, it was obvious that we were not among his legions of supporters, but neither were we involved because there was no reason to be involved. The Ghanaian military were quite capable of dealing with this on their own, as they did. Unfortunately, the government that followed was, in its own way, almost as bad as Nkrumah's. We had high hopes for it, but it didn't materialize.

In just a few years that civilian, truly democratic government, elected in a free election, was itself overthrown by the military because they hadn't been able to correct the economic imbalances and so forth, and there was corruption, which just seemed to be endemic. So Ghana then went on without any direct involvement on my part until I later went back as ambassador years later.

GORDON W. EVANS
Program Officer, USAID
(1965-1969)

Gordon W. Evans was born in New York in 1932. He graduated from Antioch College and received a Master's Degree from the University of Pennsylvania. His assignments abroad included Ghana, Nigeria, India, and Ivory Coast. Mr. Evans was interviewed in 1998 by Barbara S. Evans.

EVANS: Well, not unlike the military, the wisdom of the Agency for International Development was perhaps quite accurate in this case, though I have a few more things to say about the nine months in Washington. All of the interest in Ghana started by a colleague when we were going through the cafeteria line in the Department of State, who said, "Would you be interested in a posting in Ghana? The program officer reports directly to the Mission Director. If you're posted there, you'll probably be terminating the program, but that too will be a good experience." I did put my name into the hat. This was maybe in January of 1965. About six weeks later, the Africa Bureau and the post in Accra accepted my appointment. From a career point of view, it turned out to be the most favorable decision I made in my 25 years in the Foreign Service.

My nine months with NESACDF involved writing many letters of credit, tedious preparation of loan documents, and review of the satisfaction of many conditions precedent. It seemed to be an

effort to introduce New York banking analysis and procedures into the developing world. I personally believe it had limited applicability, especially when applied to state enterprises in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. So, the appointment to Ghana to go back overseas was very much a breath of fresh air for me and for our family.

Q: Since you went out alone due to the children coming down with chicken pox just prior to our departure, what did you find in Ghana when you arrived?

EVANS: I arrived in early April of 1965. My mandate clearly from all parties on both AID and the Department of State's side was to assist in closing out the AID program in Ghana. The Mission Director, Frank Pinder, a former county extension agent from northwestern Florida, developed a large agricultural program in Liberia before accepting the Accra directorship in 1963. In contrast to the U.S. turning down support for the Aswan Dam on the Nile River in Egypt, the U.S. had reluctantly in the late 1950s and early 1960s put a much smaller amount into the building of the Akosombo Dam on the Volta River, construction starting in the early 1960s. The Prime Minister of Ghana, Lesajfo Kwame Nkrumah, had supported the U.S. approach for this massive project. It would supply power to the largest aluminum smelter in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nkrumah supported it against the advice of his rather famous British advisor, Sir Robert Jackson, spouse of economist Barbara Ward. The approach that Jackson objected to was that the Government of Ghana would finance the construction of the dam and the power generation facility and sell cheap power to private international investment in the newly constructed port of Tema. This was very helpful to international private capital since Kaiser and Reynolds would reap the profit. But Jackson disagreed so fervently with the head of the government, Nkrumah, that he resigned his post and returned to the United Kingdom. Another important situation in 1965, particularly in the spring of 1965, is that there were over 2,000 technical advisors from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and over 250 from the People's Republic of China. In one sense, this was pure Karl Marx in that he wrote: "the way to overthrow the metropole powers of Europe is through communizing the former colonies." Tragically, Nkrumah felt the Communist Bloc would support his great dream to form a United States of Africa. He had even married an Egyptian woman as a show of pan-Africanism. His vision was global. Around 1960, however, he lost interest in the effective development of Ghana.

Ghana had received its independence in 1957. It was one of the first sub-Saharan African countries to do so. Nkrumah had been at the helm from the very beginning, a graduate of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and a very charismatic leader. Since he had little interest in development in Ghana, the vacuum was filled by a huge influx of Soviet technicians and a five year open season on supplier credits, especially from the United Kingdom. In fact, after the February 24, 1966 coup d'etat, it took almost six months to discover all of the supplier credit debts that had been established. This was one of the top priority efforts of the International Monetary Fund advisor upon his arrival in the country. So, this was the milieu into which we moved in April of 1965 with Barbara and our daughter and son arriving in May and almost crashing at the airport because they arrived in the middle of a tropical rainstorm.

Q: As you were sorting through your new responsibilities, our children were faced with an educational dilemma.

EVANS: You bet they were. In fact, the person interviewing me, my beloved spouse, agreed to teach at the Ghana International School (GIS) (and she reminds me that the pay was \$100 a month) in order to have our children admitted to that school, which was already over its quota of students. The American presence in Accra in the spring of 1965 was very modest, possibly eight Americans at the embassy and four at the USAID Mission, in addition to the direct hire technical assistance and contract staff in various parts of Ghana. The American embassy is an architectural reversal of the beautiful mosque and storage facilities of northwestern Ghana. It is suspended over a pool in a lovely, but very small building. We did have two individuals who went on to extraordinary career accomplishment. One was the political officer, Willard (Bill) De Pree, who became the first American ambassador to Mozambique and the very effective ambassador in Bangladesh. The second and his Deputy was Jack Matlock, who with no appointment in the Soviet world because of restrictions on embassies, was sort of marking time in West Africa. Here is a man, to give a little flavor of the team that we worked with (and it was very intimate because it was so small), who could speak 15 languages, was absolutely fluent in six of these. He went on to not only be President Reagan's principal advisor on the summits with the Soviet Union, but to be nearly four years the ambassador to the Soviet Union. In fact, he was the last American ambassador before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Prior to that, he was ambassador to Czechoslovakia. He is now George Kennan's successor at Princeton's Institute of Advanced Studies.

But to get back to the major thrust here, there was the Akosombo Dam project, which was also assisted by Ontario Hydro in terms of the technical assistance on developing the capacity to run the power generation project after completion. We had put close to \$20 million into this project in the early 1960s. Then we also offered OPIC support in the form of private investment insurance for Kaiser and Reynolds in their aluminum efforts. Our technical assistance program was focused largely on agricultural training, public health services including family planning (in fact, a very progressive family planning program) and limited support for community development efforts. Little additional assistance was contemplated when I arrived. These six projects would be phased out shortly - that is, within the next two or three years. Because of profligacy of the GOG, fewer resources were available to support the agricultural sector, even our AID projects. We had a presence in 1965, but little influence on developmental policy. Our projects were simple, but not far-reaching. They would not really make a difference in Ghana's developmental future.

Q: What was the development that changed very suddenly?

EVANS: The coup d'état in the early morning of February 24, 1966 really changed the western relationship with Ghana and especially the relationship of the United States with Ghana. This successful coup d'etat was launched under the leadership of a handful of Ghanaian army officers, most especially Colonel Kotaka and Captain Afrifa. Nkrumah had starved the military budget from about 1960 onward and had allocated significant saved resources to his presidential guard. This is not unlike what Saddam Hussein is currently doing in Iraq. Nkrumah was absent from Ghana to assist in ending the Vietnam War, showing his idealism and his global thoughts through negotiations with China and North Vietnam. He had felt that if he could bring about an end to this senseless conflict, in his opinion, he would again win the good graces of the West, most especially the United States. At any rate, in his absence the upcountry army contingent, a

small group, slipped through the night, secured first Kumasi, which is the commercial center of the Ashanti people, and then went on through the rainforest to Accra, arriving around three o'clock in the morning. I was Acting Mission Director at the time this coup occurred. I won't describe making the rounds and the machine gun fire and the deaths that occurred other than to say that at about three o'clock in the morning, Barbara was the first one to hear the machine gun rounds, at least in our compound. We had a capital development officer visiting from Washington. It was quite an experience to go through what amounted to our second coup d'etat in our second post. The evening of February 24, Flagstaff House, where Nkrumah lived, was secured around four o'clock in the afternoon. There was a considerable loss of life — probably 200-300 people were killed even though officially they only noted that 18 had died. The next evening, responding to a request from the government statistician, E.N. Omaboe, I met with him at his simple little office to explore how the U.S. could respond with assistance quickly and effectively. He became the Minister of Finance and Development in the new government and so was to be a very important power. That evening, in a rather leisurely but somewhat tense session, we shaped a package of at least proposals of PL480 supply for the resource starved processing plants, a \$2 million sector loan focused on planning and development of efficient infrastructure, bringing in the International Executive Service Corps (as we called them, the Paunch Corps) for assistance to five of the languishing state enterprises, (Nkrumah had given support to the establishment of over 100 state enterprises that were largely a mess), and a pledge to work closely with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in forming a western consortium for ongoing assistance.

AID/Washington was supportive of most of this package in just an outstanding fashion. In fact, the new GOG leadership felt properly that the U.S. wanted Ghana to develop and to participate effectively in the international economy, which was certainly not the case in the last four or five years of Nkrumah's leadership. His principal focus was supporting destabilizing efforts in those former colonies that did not want to join his grand plan for the United States of Africa.

Q: What relationship did you have with Ambassador Franklin H. Williams?

EVANS: Ambassador Williams arrived in early February of 1966, had been Director of the Africa Bureau of the Peace Corps, was a close friend of Sargeant Shriver, and was certainly known to President Kennedy. He was an African-American of fairly significant militancy. He had come out to work with his brothers and sisters. The first major policy difference that we had (Frank Pinder was still in Washington at the time) was whether or not to include tobacco in the PL480 package. The government of Ghana had requested tobacco because they had two cigarette and cigar manufacturing facilities and it was both an import substitution effort and it would save substantial foreign exchange. Williams was aware of the dangers of smoking. He took a strong stand that this tobacco component, which ran into a number of millions of dollars, should be deleted from the package. He directed me to draft a cable to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I came over and we sat in his office. I pleaded with him to use a more informal channel, that is, the telephone, to inquire about the feasibility of dropping tobacco. He did and, of course, tobacco was kept in the program. I think in some ways by alerting him to the fact that he would get into trouble, we formed a friendship that lasted during his entire stay in Accra. In other words, he was not recalled for consultation, which is generally a prelude to transfer. It does show the nature of the tobacco lobby in the 1960s in Washington and their hold on the U.S.

Department of Agriculture to dispose of surplus tobacco widely throughout the world. (Note: Tragically, Franklin H. Williams died of lung cancer in New York City in 1989. Bishop Tutu flew from South Africa to attend his funeral.).

The multimillion dollar PL480 agreement was negotiated by the late spring of 1966 with first shipments arriving in the summer. That whole PL480 mechanism was so impressive, it was prompt, it was substantial, and provided critical raw materials for Ghana, especially cotton for its languishing textile industry. Some of Ghana's textile plants (I think there were five altogether) turned out absolutely beautiful textiles.

Q: Who were the other people that were involved in setting up this assistance?

EVANS: The Ford Foundation with its regional headquarters in Lagos provided grant assistance to the government of Ghana. They brought in the Harvard Advisory Group to Ghana. The team's first reaction was why use precious hard currency loan money for this sector development study? They called the ambassador over and had a meeting. Believe it or not, Minister E.N. Omaboe and the GOG were adamant that we proceed with the sector loan that we had in one sense formulated the night of the 25th of February.

We were also fortunate to have Dr. Arthur Morgan visit us at near 90 years of age on his last journey around the world. I arranged a session with Ghana's then president, General Ankrah. We waited in the holding room of the castle until escorted into General Ankrah's large office. Two British suppliers had just had champagne with General Ankrah and he was in light spirits. Our discussion focused on controlling endemic diseases, especially malaria, along the newly formed Volta Lake. General Ankrah most likely preferred his earlier visitors!

Q: What were the various components of this sector loan?

EVANS: As it finally was wrapped up in the agreement, it included four sectors. It took from February of 1966, when we first thought of it well into 1967, before this was all ironed out. These four sectors were critical to Ghana's reconstruction. First was agriculture. Here, there was a central focus on a transition out of the inefficient state farms and the enhancement of the private sector with a much greater show of agricultural supplies and research. No pesticides had been imported into Ghana for four years. The marketing of crops was hampered by impassable roads. Many crops just did not get to market.

The second sector was transportation. Here the strategic plan was to build and maintain feeder roads linked to the productive agriculture hinterland. During the later 1950s and early 1960s, Ghana had some major highways, but the feeder roads were close to nonexistent. This sector study was to focus largely on those critical links to the hinterland.

The third sector was telecommunications. Here the objective was to develop and take advantage of the fast, modern communication technology which would tie towns and cities to the international network. Many would not believe that almost all international calls from even other parts of Africa would have to either go through London or Paris and then to Accra. This, clearly, Ghana wanted to change.

The fourth sector was the key water resources sector. This included both the launching of a massive village potable water well program and enhancing water supply for agriculture and industry. Probably 100 state enterprises in the food processing sector involved the construction of factories with limited attention to the agricultural raw materials, or the crops that would be processed through these plants. Three of the four sector loans focused on activating a dependable supply to be delivered to these plants and supplemental markets.

Q: All this planning you mention, was it all in Accra or were you able to get it out into the regions?

EVANS: One of the exciting things in 1967 and early 1968 was to work with E.N. Omaboe and The Harvard Group's Jan Coopman and his staff on the decentralizing of planning and project implementation in Ghana. From 1957 onward, even during the British period, all projects were highly centralized. To decentralize, there was a focus on the nine regions and 40 administrative districts of Ghana so that they would originate projects in the planning and collection of data stages. This would encourage sector development at the grassroots level. I had the privilege for almost four months of traveling about Ghana with the Economic Affairs Ministry's senior engineer, Alex Puplampu. We visited the chairmen and secretaries of the newly established Regional Planning Committees. These had been set up in 1967 with an effort to move much of the planning to the regional level. We sought their input also on how the four sector team consultants could link with them through the data collection, strategic planning and project formulation process. We also involved the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi. I believe, UST's staff were hired for subcontract work on at least three of the four sectors.

Q: In April 1969, USAID/Lagos was inquiring about your availability.

EVANS: The Mission Director in Lagos, Michael Adler, who had previously been in Liberia, inquired as to whether I might replace Bill Wheeler, who was his Assistant Director for Programs. We knew a civil war was raging in that country, but accepted the offer by extending our second tour in West Africa a third year. In fact, my spouse reminds me that having undergone the coup d'état in October 1958 in Pakistan, the coup in February of 1966 in Ghana and a countercoup later in 1967, and then to anticipate going into perhaps the most important country of Africa during their civil war, created a reputation. There were those who heard the name "Evans" and wanted no association with them at post because of the nature of the debacles that we had confronted at post.

To sum up those five years there would be: (1) the Ghanaian people, perhaps more than any other people I've ever lived with, are people of God. They are clearly fueled to enjoy life and our residence there was so enjoyable despite all of the early hardships. (2) I tended to identify with Kwame Nkrumah's exciting dream of a United States of Africa, but clearly Africa had been balkanized so severely in the late 19th century and the metropole powers had such vested interest, including not just France and the United Kingdom, but Belgium and Portugal, that Nkrumah's grand design never had a chance. His efforts to destabilize conservative regimes in West and Southern Africa were linked probably incorrectly to communist infiltration, but by the mid-1960s, little western assistance was going to Ghana. [As I said,] (3) That all changed with

the February 24, 1966 coup d'état. What that coup did indirectly, although it was probably motivated selfishly by those officers that had been terminated from the Ghanaian armed forces, is that it severed ties with both the Soviets and the PRC very promptly. In fact, all of the Ilyushin jets, and I think there were four, were flown back to the Soviet Union filled with Russian technicians that were given 24-48 hours to leave the country.

(4) The effort by the western countries was sincerely motivated. It was wide-ranging, and it was based on the need to provide substantial western assistance for a stabilization effort. Also, it was not unknown that Ghana was the first country in the post World War II era that had thrown out a Soviet presence. Suddenly the new leadership of Ghana, especially E.N. Omaboe heading Finance and Economic Affairs, committed itself wholeheartedly to a major stabilization program. It was coordinated in the first three years by the International Monetary Fund and Moeen Qureshi as resident advisor. I even had the privilege of joining AID's Haven North in 1967 in Paris for Ghana's very first consortium meeting. USAID/Accra also worked closely with the World Bank as stabilization took hold and the focus was on getting economic growth underway again in the agricultural and industrial import substitution sectors.

Q: What were the results of the 1969 elections?

EVANS: That is sad in one sense because upon our departure in July 1969, that fall, relatively free elections brought Busia to power. He had opposed Nkrumah unsuccessfully in 1957 and had as a result gone into exile. Almost immediately, it was reported, corruption returned. Colonel Acheampong led a coup in 1972 that put him in power for a decade. Again, meaningful representative government was extinguished. In turn, the dynamism and the momentum of the stabilization effort of the mid to late 1960s was largely neutralized. I would add though that today this is not the case. Ghana is beginning to build itself back into a much more prosperous economic position.

In a coup such as the one staged by Acheampong, those who are the best minds and have the best training and are prepared to put their shoulder to the wheel and really help the economy just leave the country. I do not have hard data on how many left under Acheampong's regime. He was too atypically Ghanaian. He was vituperative, irritable, and petulant. For Ghanaians, it was a 10 year wandering in the wilderness until he was set aside.

RICHARD E. THOMPSON
Diplomatic Courier
Frankfort, Germany (1966)

Mr. Johnson, a Californian, was educated at the University of Southern California, the University of Madrid, Spain and Occidental College. Joining the Department of State as a Diplomatic Courier, his career took him to diplomatic courier centers in Washington DC; Frankfort, Germany; and Bangkok, from which he serviced US Embassies throughout the world, collecting and delivering diplomatic pouches. His later assignments in Washington were of a senior managerial nature. Mr. Johnson was interviewed in 2001 by Raymond Ewing.

THOMPSON: In February of '66, I arrived in Accra, Ghana the morning of the coup, on Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM), and I ended up spending a week there.

Q: Stuck.

THOMPSON: Stuck there. There was no danger. There was a little bit of stress at the beginning, but as happened in those days, no one from the embassy came up to meet me because that was standard procedure. The driver would meet you. So when I found out that I wouldn't be able to continue on my trip, I got a hold of my pouches. Unfortunately, my suitcase was still on the plane. And all the passengers got off the plane. And my suitcase took off with the pilot and crew. I didn't see it again for a week, so all I had were the clothes on my back. So the people in the embassy were very good. They came out and picked us up and we got through the roadblocks and they took us to a hotel. Later on I stayed with some communicators until we finally got out of there.

FREDERICK E. GILBERT
Assistant Program Officer, USAID
Accra (1966-1971)

Frederick E. Gilbert was born in Minnesota in 1939. He graduated from the University of Minnesota and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Upon joining USAID in 1964, his assignments abroad included Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Tanzania, Sudan, Ivory Coast and Mauritania. Mr. Gilbert was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1997.

GILBERT: I went to Ghana.

Q: And what was your assignment there?

GILBERT: I was the Assistant Program Officer to begin with. And I also ran a training operation. We didn't have a Training Officer. Gordon Evans was the Program Officer. Frank Pinder was the Mission Director. I don't think there was a Deputy. I never worked so hard in my life as during those four years. It was especially tough at the beginning. I was spending just about every waking moment in the office and trying to convince people that we needed a Training Officer.

Q: What characterized the training program. What were you trying to do, what was the point of it?

GILBERT: You know, I don't clearly remember. There was project-related training for most projects. There was also some training that was funded out of special accounts or regional projects such as AFGRAD and ASPAU. I'm not sure I accurately remember what those initials stand for, but the former was for post-graduate and the latter for undergraduate education.

AFGRAD was very competitive and ASPAU probably was also. Over the years I met and often worked with a lot of the people who returned from AFGRAD training. In my experience all of them were extremely capable and well trained. Any many made really important contributions.

Q: In large numbers?

GILBERT: The numbers weren't large - probably fewer than ten new starts per year for a country like Ghana. But they were significant and the associated workload wasn't particularly visible. A fair amount of processing and related liaison was required for each participant in order to make sure they got passport pictures taken, got certification as participant trainees so that the right visas could be issued, got in to see the consular officer, etc.

Then, thank heavens, one day Frank Pinder, a lovely man and quite a tough one, went in to my office after hours and did something of desk audit on me. And he concluded that I should have a Training Officer. After that my life improved quite a bit.

We didn't have a U.S. direct-hire economist, but we had an FSN economist whom I supervised. One of his chief duties was to prepare a report every year on Government of Ghana public finances. Getting him to produce product that we could present with a straight face for clearance by the Embassy Economics Officer was a nightmare. It was only in about 1968 that my life was further improved by the assignment of a Program Economist.

One of my first Ghana memories was that Gordon Evans handed me an airgram about the idea of a smallpox-measles program. He said, in effect, "I don't know what this is, but figure out what to do with it." When I finally found time to flip through it, my reaction was that it was an unrealistic, lobby-driven initiative from left field. It certainly hadn't followed a normal path through the AID programming process (not that there was much definition of that). CDC (then that stood for Communicable Diseases Center) and WHO were the instigators, and there had surely been some communications from either Washington or Atlanta with the Ghanaians because one day a wonderful man named Dr. Frank Grant (a Ghanaian) from the Ministry of Health came by and wanted to talk about smallpox and measles.

Q: The first African epidemiologist.

GILBERT: I don't recall his specialty but that makes sense. He also had a message and said, "Maybe we should talk about this." That was a pain in the neck - it meant that I REALLY had to read the damn thing. It was clear that this wasn't something that would go away if we scoffed. It was coming at us a hundred miles an hour, and we really had to get moving even though we already had too much on our plates. And nobody else on either his side or mine could focus on the matter. So the two of us sat down and "whomped up" an agreement for an activity financed by AID, sponsored by WHO and implemented by CDC - thus fitting no model or guidance available in the Manual Orders - and got it signed with precious little fanfare - or, at least, none that I recall. And that exercise turned out ultimately to be a good, even fun, experience since Frank Grant was such a good guy.

And then, lo and behold, all kinds of crazy things started happening. People started arriving.

Soon CDC people were working out of a local office in close collaboration with the Health Ministry to implement the program. And that turned out to be one of the most successful things we've ever done.

Now that I think back, I remember being sent in the summer of 1966 to CDC in Atlanta to brief a group of field officers who were to be stationed in Africa. These people turned out, in most cases, to be the staff of the Smallpox-Measles Program. Yet the Smallpox-Measles Program, per se, was a surprise. I wonder now what I was told their exact functions were to be. I think I had the impression that their main function would be liaison and epidemiological cooperation with national authorities and regional bodies.

And that illustrates why being an Assistant Program Officer was always interesting; if you had enough energy and stamina, you were the de facto head of a one-person "Office of Miscellaneous Affairs." And everything that other people didn't quite know what to do with, or didn't want to deal with, found its way to your desk. And, as with the embryonic Smallpox-Measles Program, one often had a frightening degree of latitude because no one else could focus on such matters.

I guess the next such thing that came along was population and family planning.

Q: How did that get started?

GILBERT: I'm not quite sure of the chronology, but I do remember that sometime during the summer or spring of 1967 I had to go to a population conference in Monrovia. That was just when Jane and our first and second sons went back to the States so that Jane could give birth to our third son. (I remember sending a couple of toys to them courtesy of someone in Monrovia who was to board their Pan Am flight when it transited Roberts Field.) Ray Ravenholt and Philander Claxton were there. Ravenholt was AID's head of population and family planning. I think that Claxton was responsible for that subject in the State Department. I think that we had been getting messages on this. One of them called for an assessment of the population and family planning situation in Ghana.

Q: Were there any programs in that area in Ghana at that time?

GILBERT: Certainly there were not government programs. The Ghana Planned Parenthood Association (GPPA) existed and had, I believe, been getting some pretty modest financing from international bodies such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and/or U.S. groups such as the Margaret Sanger Foundation. The GPPA was a private operation whose membership was mainly confined to a very few, somewhat "garden society-type" Ghanaians. As I remember it, the Ministry of Health and/or the Medical School of the University of Ghana, from whose staff its leadership was drawn, permitted the GPPA to use certain clinics after official hours.

Q: Do you remember sending anybody on a training program on population matters?

GILBERT: I think I recall that some of the doctors and nurses in GPPA had traveled to the U.S.

under Margaret Sanger sponsorship for training on loop insertion, etc. I think that I had to facilitate the arrangements.

Let me rummage through my memories and see what else turns up. We were asked to do some kind of an assessment, and I think it was before I went to the Monrovia conference. Dr. Julius (Bud) Prince had come out to have a look at possible areas. He and I contacted a lot of people who were involved in family planning and the GPPA.

I remember that it involved people at the Medical School. The most important of these was Fred Sai, the Professor of Preventive and Social Medicine. Dr. Bentsi-Enchill, the Professor of Obstetrics, was another. And it involved people in the Department of Sociology, especially the Demographic Unit, at the University of Ghana.

And out of those discussions came some ideas. One of these led to the Danfa Project. Another concerned a demographic sample survey that Sammy K. Gaisie wanted to do. As I recall, Sammy had something quite modest in mind that Bud pounced on it and encouraged him to expand it to a scale that would produce findings relevant to national planning and policy development. And so began a dialogue on the demographic survey. Bud arranged for a guy named Abner Hurwitz (from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) to come out to work with Sammy. Ab was a sampling expert and helped Sammy with that aspect of the survey design. In those days, it would have been normal for AID to assign a U.S. advisor to watch over and support something as sophisticated as this was shaping up to be. Ab, who saw clearly what an exceptionally mature and disciplined scholar Sammy Gaisie was, said this was not necessary. He said that it would be sufficient that he visit Ghana for a few weeks every 90 days or so to check on progress and provide any corrective input that might be needed. This was viewed in some quarters as bordering on irresponsible, and I recall its being repeatedly questioned. The Demographic Survey was a complete success. It made Sammy Gaisie's reputation, and he went on to have an international career like many well-educated Ghanaians of his generation. He was extremely grateful for being given that opportunity and wrote a very touching tribute to Abner Hurwitz in the preface to the Ph.D. thesis that emerged from that research.

Q: This was a general demographic survey, or a survey of what?

GILBERT: It was a national demographic survey that illuminated the dynamics of the population in a way that wasn't possible based on any complete census. And there was a terrific amount of resistance to it in some quarters.

It was a real revelation to me to watch what happened as we tried to develop this idea. We saw a degree of professional jealousy and rivalry that I would not have credited had I not seen it myself. I soon came to realize that this was largely a function of the penury that pervaded the Ghana public service then. It was also due to a tendency — perhaps, culturally derived — of the concerned parties to see the world as a zero-sum game. Sammy needed access to not-yet-published census data in order to design his sampling framework. The responsible professional at the Central Bureau of Statistics didn't have the staff or the funds for some things that he wanted to do with this data. At the very least, he thought that all chance of his plans going forward would be lost if Sammy got at it. Most probably, as a Ph.D. demographer himself (and a well

qualified one, at that, who had gained a good reputation for his administration of the Census Unit), he may also have feared that Sammy's reputation would eclipse his own. From the fuss and the resistance one might have supposed the stakes were life and death. I'm not sure what we did to gain the cooperation Sammy needed from the Central Bureau of Statistics, but it probably involved a certain amount of "bribery" in the form of staff training and commodity support. Anyway Sammy got what he needed and the survey went forward.

I saw this "zero-sum game" behavior often during my later career. I never had time to analyze whether it was rational or irrational behavior on the part of the antagonists. It is a chilling thought, but I think one can probably demonstrate that it is rational at the level of real politik.

Q: And the government supported going ahead with the Demographic Survey?

GILBERT: Well, one could say that there was a green light and some collaboration from government agencies, notably the Ministry of Education. Primary and middle school (but not secondary school) teachers were used as enumerators. Why not secondary teachers? One of the fascinating things I learned about sample surveys was that one needs enumerators who are literate and conscientious, but not too intelligent or sophisticated. If you get people who are too intelligent, it is almost inevitable that difficulties will result. Among the "sophisticates" there are bound to be some who will interpret and improve ("spin") respondents' answers or even resort to outright falsification of questionnaires in lieu of actually conducting the interviews. Human nature is the same among the non-sophisticates, but their misdeeds are easier to detect.

So the demographic sample survey went forward.

Q: And that resulted in one of the first demographic sample surveys?

GILBERT: I believe it was the first; failing that, it was certainly the most ambitious.

Q: This was countrywide?

GILBERT: Countrywide. It was countrywide in that there were, say, 12 sample areas and they were in the key demographic and cultural zones in the country.

Q: It wasn't a census.

GILBERT: It was a sample survey that couldn't have been done had a complete census not been done earlier. The census was needed to provide a framework for drawing the sample.

Q: This was focused on what?

GILBERT: On population dynamics: i.e., death rates, birth rates, family size, age structure of the population and also some KAP (knowledge, attitudes and practices) content such as desired family size, knowledge of and attitudes toward contraception.

Q: So it was family planning related?

GILBERT: Yes. One of the surprising things was that most younger women's desired family size was something like eight kids. And some women wanted to space their births a little but they sure as heck didn't want small families. Anyway planning also began on the Danfa Project.

Q: What is the Danfa Project as you saw it at that time?

GILBERT: It focused on districts or subdistricts a bit north of Legon, not too far from the University of Ghana. And the idea was to introduce different mixes of health education, primary care and family planning services into three treatment areas. There was a fourth untreated area that served as a control. A great deal of health and demographic data was collected for analysis. The aim was to reach conclusions based on comparisons of family planning acceptance rates, fertility rates and health status indicators as to which combination of treatments was the most cost-effective.

Q: In terms of providing family-planning services, is that what you mean?

GILBERT: Yes, the design that AID bought into emphasized the goal of identifying the most cost-effective method of encouraging and supporting family planning among rural populations. For example, of the three treatment areas, I think one received only family planning education in the context of health education, a second got that plus primary health care while a third was showered with primary care, health/family planning education and family planning services. As I recall, no area received family planning services alone since that was simply "unacceptable." So the concept was centered on family planning but only in a broader health services and health education context. But as the design and implementation processes unfolded, the agenda became more and more elaborate. This was one of the first projects that I can remember where a university was given the go-ahead, subject to certain budgetary and conceptual constraints, to design a project that it would also implement. It may have been at the beginning of Title XII. Al Newman was the overall leader of this process.

Q: Of UCLA?

GILBERT: Yes, the School of Public Health. An obstetrician Jerry Niswanger led a small project design team. The first Chief of Party during the implementation phase was Dr. Irv Lourie. And as things went along, the project turned out to be much more statistically and operationally elaborate than envisioned. I left while the project was still quite young, but I definitely had the feeling that the project agenda grew "like Topsy". I wouldn't say that we were betrayed or snookered, but I would say it is a classic example of two phenomena. One is that things always turn out to be more complicated than one thinks as the outset. The more the experts got into the design and implementation of the project, the more things they found to look into or to guard against. The other phenomenon is that coalition building is essential to moving a program like Danfa forward. Coalitions form around agendas. It is very rare that an agenda can remain stable or pure as a coalition expands. The Ghanaians' original concept of Danfa was extremely modest, but couldn't remain so. And, the world is probably better because it didn't.

Q: Fred Sai was the head of the medical school, I guess, at that time.

GILBERT: He was the Professor of Preventive and Social Medicine.

Q: That is right. What was his idea originally? He was the one who originally started the Danfa Center?

GILBERT: Fred and his people conceived the project, and it was under his department. When we first talked to him he had something much simpler in mind, and I believe it was operating in a very embryonic form. As I recall, they were mainly focused on primary care and health education. They used the center as a practical training site. They may have been thinking of also developing a model rural health structure. But he didn't have funding and AID did. And we wanted to promote family planning. So I think Bud Prince drew him toward emphasizing the family planning aspect, which was pretty secondary if not tertiary until then. So the agenda shifted toward family planning when the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine entered into a coalition with the AID Africa Bureau. When UCLA joined the coalition the agenda shifted heavily toward research and from a narrow to a broader research focus.

And about when the Danfa Project was getting launched the Ford Foundation assigned Gordon Perkin to be resident Family Planning Advisor in Accra. The Ford Foundation had previously sent a number of people out to do some very good studies. One of these involved preparation by a Ford expert of a draft Government Population Policy. Gordon arrived about when agreement had been reached on the policy document. His job was to work with the planning group in the Ministry of Economy and Plan (or words to that effect) on how it should be implemented. Gordon and I began to meet frequently, including for lunch at the Maharajah Restaurant every Friday, to share information and ideas. We were natural allies, and neither of us had much of anyone else to talk to about population and family planning. A key issue at this time was how a government population and family planning program should be structured and who should be responsible for it. This, and the question of how we could encourage and support its development, preoccupied us for months and months.

On the Ghanaian side, Fred Sai, when he was Head of Preventive and Social Medicine at the University, was a pioneering supporter of family planning and one of Gordon's key interlocutors and collaborators. And out of our discussions came a shared concept of what we were working toward as well as a division of labor between AID and the Ford Foundation. Our vision was that Ford would take the lead in making punctual or targeted inputs of technical assistance that were so important to helping the Ghanaians clarify and elaborate their plans and programs. The Ford Foundation had only modest amounts of money, but they had a diversified stable of highly competent specialists in all areas of population and family planning and were nimble in a way that AID could never hope to match. On the other hand, AID potentially had significant resources available to provide sustained and substantial support to the implementation of Ghanaian programs once formulated. And I was writing up a longer-term program of support for the central government level population and family planning program that seemed to be emerging from the dialogue between Gordon and his colleagues with the Ministry of Economy and Plan on behalf of the Government. That ministry had been taking the lead on population matters. The Ministry of Health's leadership at that time had little or no interest in family planning.

Q: So Fred Sai wasn't in the Government?

GILBERT: Yes and no. He moved over to become Chief Medical Officer in the Ministry of Health (equivalent to Principal Secretary) while all this was in process.

He was still at the University while Gordon and I were doing most of our planning and design work. Gordon was working primarily with people in the Ministry of Economics and Plan - mainly with the planning and analytical staff, but also getting input from time to time from the overall Principal Secretary, B.K. Mensah. I believe the Principal Secretary for Donor Coordination, Harry Nelson, was also tracking these things as was the Commissioner, E.N. Omaboe. Their Ministry, and Omaboe in particular, had taken the first initiative in seeking help on population matters from the Ford Foundation and others because they could see that Ghana's development prospects were threatened by its population trends.

So, out of our work came an AID project proposal that involved a certain amount of technical advisory, training and financial support for a National Family Planning Program. It was to be conducted on an inter-ministerial basis under the coordination of a family planning secretariat located in the Ministry of Economy and Plan. This latter feature had been advocated by Fred Sai who said that the program should not under any circumstances be in the Ministry of Health because it would always be treated like a branch of the national pharmaceutical system in charge of a dangerous drug - something to be managed very cautiously, not to say timidly.

Q: Right.

GILBERT: So, just about the time the ink was dry on the proposals that went into Washington on this, Fred Sai was named Chief Medical Officer in the Ministry of Health. And that is where I learned in practical terms that "Where you sit is where you stand." And from that time on, Fred Sai began to lobby against the National Family Planning Program idea. He and Al Newman began to advocate the Danfa Project as a model for bringing family planning to everybody - not just the rural population - through the Ministry of Health. And overnight the idea of an inter-ministerial National Family Planning Program with a secretariat in the Ministry of Economy and Plan became anathema to Fred. For our part, Gordon and I would never have disputed that the Danfa Project could contribute importantly to effective to the development of a rural health structure to reach the average Ghanaian with health, including family planning, services. But, meanwhile, there was a great need for straight family planning information and services among urban and modern sector people. The Ministry of Health, we knew, would take forever to notice, let alone respond to, to this need. We could see no reason for the provision of family planning information and services to this population to be restricted to Ministry of Health channels.

So, just about when the project proposal that represented Gordon's and my thinking landed in Washington, this turn-around happened. And there was obviously some back (or maybe "front" from their point of view!) channel communications among the health folks in the Ghana Government and AID/Washington to which I was not privy. Fred Sai and Al Newman made a few trips back and forth between the U.S. and Ghana during this time. I began to realize from the kind of questions that were raised and the way my answers weren't listened to that Al and Fred

were busy lobbying in the African Bureau against the project proposal that I had prepared and the Mission had submitted. And so nothing was done for over a year. I don't think AID assistance really came on stream for the National Family Planning Program in Ghana until shortly after I was transferred to Ghana.

Q: Was there any national policy on family planning and population?

GILBERT: A policy document was developed with help from the Ford Foundation, and I'm pretty sure that it was promulgated after inevitable delays. The National Family Planning Secretariat was set up, and a guy named Dr. A.A. Armah became the first head of it. And there was an inauguration of this sometime during late 1970. It was held at State House. The police band played, and it was quite an elegant affair.

Q: I came in the fall.

GILBERT: You were there, I think, by then. Looking around at that inauguration observance, I couldn't help but reflect on what large changes had occurred in the status and profile of family planning during my time there. When I first arrived in Ghana people literally spoke about family planning in hushed tones and as though it were an indecent topic. But U.S. support didn't come on stream when it was needed. And so the secretariat just kind of dangled and spun its wheels. And, frankly, I think it was one of the worst AID foul ups that I ever witnessed.

We are all products of our experience, and this was a bitter experience for me. This is where I began to be highly skeptical of AID's and, especially, of AID Washington's ability to be serious about development or follow-through on its own policies, not to mention the various "emphases" that it promulgated with such tiresome regularity. The damage to the National Family Planning Program was irretrievable because the push that would have imparted needed momentum never came. And the people in the Secretariat had enemies. And one of the most implacable was the new Chief Medical Officer who regarded Dr. Armah, the head of the Secretariat, as an ungrateful former protégé and upstart.

And once the Secretariat was born weak, all those whose cooperation was needed thought its functions, and the resource allocations that potentially would go with them, were up for grabs. So we saw the old zero-sum game mentality come into full play. And Dr. Armah didn't cover himself with glory. He was not an attractive figure, and he showed no flair or creativity in dealing with the challenges he faced. But, in fairness, we'll never know whether anyone could have played the poor hand he was dealt much better. His approach was to circle the wagons and go off the deep end in asserting his de jure role as inter-ministerial coordinator. The Secretariat was actively opposed and thwarted at every turn by the Ministry of Health and other interests. As far as I could determine after I left Ghana, the National Family Planning Program had a pretty troubled life. It is easy to criticize Armah, but I'm not sure that anyone could have done much better. And sometimes there is a basis for the paranoia that can push someone who is "susceptible" over the edge into a disproportionate response. I thought it was a little like Nkrumah going off the deep end after independence. When he promulgated the Preventive Detention Act, it was in response to plots that really could have toppled his Government. And that made the plotters all the more determined and Nkrumah all the more dictatorial.

The bitterness I felt at witnessing this mess in the population sphere was compounded by the fact that it coincided with mismanagement of economic policy. And I had been so hopeful about Ghana's prospects...

Q: Let's pause for a minute and go back a minute and talk a little about what was the situation in Ghana at that time.

GILBERT: Well, it was the first time I had ever seen a scarcity economy. You could hardly ever find anything but the bare staples - the minimum necessities of life - in the stores. I remember two things vividly. One is that we had a big, dry lawn. Nobody had lived in the house we were assigned to for maybe six months before our arrival. It took me several weeks to buy and splice together enough sections of hose to make a hose that was long enough to water our lawn and garden.

It took me a very long time to assure myself of a supply of beer. You could buy beer but you had to turn in empties each time because there was a serious shortage of beer bottles. Another guy and I discovered that if you bought beer by the case they would accept your turning in a case of empties lacking two bottles (you paid for the missing ones). But if you lacked three, it was no dice. So we began a process that I referred to as "breeding" beer bottles. For a long time we would hold back two empties from each case handed in until a newcomer — beginning with me — could get his very own, very precious case of empties. And this is how I was finally able get back to buying beer without the help from my friends — a threshold I thought I had crossed for good on reaching my 21st birthday.

Before joining AID I had received a pretty extensive training in economics, including economic history and comparative economics. (In retrospect, my education in this area continued throughout my time in Ghana.) And I really came to Ghana believing that a liberal socialist model for running an economy could be made to work. It was obvious that the economy was in terrible shape, but I wasn't ready to conclude that the whole thing had been doomed from its conception as opposed to simply having been screwed up by people who were either incompetent or wrongly motivated. However, my view on this changed during my years in Ghana.

Q: What was the political situation at the time?

GILBERT: In January 1996 there had been a coup against President-for-Life Kwame Nkrumah. This brought a junta of army and police officers to power. They announced that they would hand the country back to civilian rule in three years and launched a program of economic stabilization and reform. They placed economic policy in the hands of E.N. Omaboe, previously the Chief Government Statistician. After rather rushed consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Omaboe came up with what seemed at the time like a very good program.

Q: Economic program?

GILBERT: Yes, an economic stabilization program. And they quickly got support from the IMF and the World Bank as well as the U.S. government and other donors. And this support

remained strong throughout most of my time at Ghana. It began to wear thin during my last months there – late 1970 to early 1971.

And I would have to say that it was a very good show in many ways. They launched an "essential imports program" that reduced total imports significantly. And they carried out a public sector retrenchment exercise coupled with a labor-intensive public works - mainly feeder roads - rehabilitation program. I believe they called this a public sector labor redeployment scheme. And to help in controlling inflation, they had one currency reform and at least one devaluation.

And then they began to "spin off" state enterprises. AID's assistance portfolio included a Commodity Import Program, which actually provided foreign exchange through the banking system to importers who could plausibly buy their intermediate goods or raw materials from U.S. suppliers. All of this was carried out within the framework of import licensing and foreign exchange controls as well as price controls and subsidized bank interest rates that remained little changed from Nkrumah's day. But very little was said about that in the first 18 months after the coup. And I really believe all of us - except a few hopeless cynics - really had a sense of excitement and high purpose. We believed we were participating in a turning point in Ghanaian history.

But it didn't turn out that way.

Q: They were also moving toward elections at that time.

GILBERT: Well that is right, and their timing was a key factor in determining the outcome of the economic program. The NLC had pledged an early return to civilian rule, and it gradually came to be understood that this should happen after they had been in power about three years - i.e., in 1969. They had planned elections in 1968, I think. Or was it 1969?

Q: 1969.

GILBERT: Yes, 1969. There had been a coup attempt in 1967 that was interpreted by some as an attempt to exploit impatience with the austerity of the NLC's stabilization program. As the time for the elections drew nearer, the NLC seemed less intent on straightening out the economy and more committed to ensuring that the 1969 elections wouldn't produce a return of Nkrumah's people and policies. Although the economy had improved during the NLC period, it only progressed from horrible to very bad. For example, the government never did manage to restore the economy to normal functioning. This was because they had to force imports down to a volume that permitted neither the importation nor the local production of a normal range and volume of consumer goods. And this was a matter of forcing balance by restrictive import licensing and foreign exchange controls. These allocations had relatively little to do with economic efficiency. To the extent they sustained economic activity rather than consumption, they mainly supported the largely inefficient state-owned import-competing manufacturing sector. Because production and income increased only slightly and the Government raised public sector wages in 1967, government revenues remained insufficient to cover anything like normal operating expenses. Just about every action that the government needed to take in support of the

agriculture sector misfired. A common ingredient in each instance was the insufficiency of government operating funds and foreign exchange. Thus fertilizer and other inputs never arrived until after the growing season, roads didn't receive maintenance in time to prevent their washing out during the rainy season. Except in a few areas (Ghana Airways, the State Transport bus line, radio, television) public sector equipment was non-operational or highly unreliable. Every time we wanted to take a field trip with our counterparts, we had to cover their expenses with project funds. It never occurred to the government - or with much force to the donor community until rather late in the NLC's tenure - that it might make sense to give greater scope for markets to allocate resources and for the private sector to play a markedly larger role in the economy.

But anticipation of the 1969 election was a significant influence on the NLC's management of the economy.

Q: Did the U.S. provide any support for the election?

GILBERT: If they did, I didn't know about it or, at least, I wasn't involved. Do you know anything about that?

Q: Yes. We provided assistance for registration and ID cards.

GILBERT: Oh yes. Now I remember reading about it, and it was caught up in some kind of...

Q: ...shenanigans. The contractors were supplying photographic process equipment for their ID cards.

GILBERT: Anyway the politics of the electoral campaign were quite nasty. It was really amazing to me to talk to some of my Ghanaian friends. One of the two major parties contesting the 1969 election - I think it was called the Progress Party - represented the better element of the Nkrumah forces. It was headed Komla Gbedemah, who had been Nkrumah's Finance Minister until he resigned on principle. The other important party was that headed by Professor K.A. Busia. It represented the people who regarded themselves as the natural leaders of the country. They tended to come from privileged, and often chiefly, backgrounds and were often highly educated and very impressive people. Talking about the election and the two parties with my Ghanaian friends - who were mostly from elite backgrounds - was disconcerting. They saw the contest as one between the forces of good and evil. They couldn't say enough about the wickedness of the Gbedemah party and believed that an election result that produced victory for them would be unacceptable and couldn't be allowed to stand. Busia himself was a man of powerful intellect, but rather priggish and cold. He was inclined to prattle on about democracy and the rule of law. He certainly had few of the attributes of a popular leader. He gave the impression that the main question to be decided by the election was his own and his party's suitability or worthiness and their opponents' lack of it. The Busia forces won the election and then proceeded to provide the country with poor government complete with flouting of the constitution and the rights of the opposition members of the Parliament.

But before all that happened the prospect of the 1969 elections had a negative impact on NLC economic policies. I believe it's fair to say that men who favored the Busia forces dominated the NLC. Certainly the majority didn't want the other side to win. And I think they did the classic

thing. They eased up on the austerity aspect of the economic program. Even though the allocation of import licenses and foreign exchange increasingly favored imports of consumer goods, inflation increased, and it became more and more apparent that the economy was slipping more and more out of balance.

And this trend continued after the Busia government came into power. The Harvard planning advisory group had been saying from the beginning that a major devaluation together with liberalizing reforms were urgently needed. They and, I believe, the “vanguard” of the donor community tried to convince the Busia government that this should be done early, during its honeymoon phase, when it would go down easier and they would have longer to reap the reward of an improved economy. But they would have none of it. Meanwhile the economy got worse and worse. This continued until...

Q: January 1972.

GILBERT: That's right. I was in Nigeria by then. But the devaluation occurred during the holiday season. There was precious little advance planning; I believe the Harvard team was even caught quite by surprise. One of the glaring errors was that the devaluation was only announced, not really explained to the country. This triggered a coup. And so not even two years after the return to civilian rule, Ghana found itself again ruled by a military junta, and by one whose members fell considerably short of matching the NLC in ability and unselfishness.

Having taken my generals and being thus eligible to do so, I had been thinking about writing a doctoral dissertation on some aspect of the attempt to restart economic development in Ghana. I had been reading and considering various topics, but had not managed to develop a proposal that both had scholarly merit and feasibility in terms of the availability of data, magnitude of the task, etc.

That was the state of play when I was assigned to Nigeria. When I discovered there that my work was at least as demanding as it had been in Ghana, I dithered for six months and then threw up my hands. I wrote to my thesis committee at Fletcher to thank them for their patience (they had extended my eligibility) and formally renounced my intent to prepare a thesis. Rob West, my thesis director, was a Fletcher professor who had been Mission Director in Congo a few years earlier. I thought he would thank me for being so straightforward about the matter, but instead he used a visit to Lagos on some other business to also cajole me into staying the course. I owe him a great deal for that. But the other reason I persevered was that my Ghana experience nagged at me. It was my first practical experience as a development practitioner (or, more accurately, a witness), and I wanted to understand what had gone wrong in Ghana during this period and what lessons could be drawn from the experience.

So thanks to a then brand new element in AID's staff training program, I was given six months at Fletcher with pay to do research and writing. I took an additional three months of leave without pay to complete a full academic year. That was during the academic year 1973/74.

Q: What was your dissertation on?

GILBERT: Well, the title was "The Distributive Effects of Economic Policy during a Period of Stabilization and Reform: Ghana 1966-1969". And one of the first things I discovered was that I didn't have a good fix at all at the time on whether the stabilization program was on track. And, unless I was completely out of the loop, the same was also true of the other staff in the USAID Mission. This could be seen in the statistics that were available four or five years later but not then. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund probably knew more at the time because they typically get access to statistics long before they are published for public consumption. Be that as it may, AID and the other donors - whatever their misgivings - had little choice but to base their decisions on how much or little confidence they had in the information and analysis provided by the Bank and Fund.

With hindsight, you could see that the program was slipping off track by late 1967. I didn't think to look at this again before I came down here. But I divided it into two periods. During the first period they stayed largely on track. I think that period ended in the fall of 1967. And you could see that from then on the benefits of economic policy decisions favored efficient resource use less and less and furthered political and social objectives more and more. I don't think the change in economic decision-making had much to do with explicit corruption - at least, not in the upper echelons of the government.

The elections and the consequent desire to ease austerity was only part of the picture. Equally or more important, in my view, is the degree to which this particular military government was subject to "popular" political and social pressure. In truth the pressure probably came mainly from the elites, the urban middle class and modern sector wage earners.

Drawing on Sammy Gaisie's demographic survey results, I could appreciate how few people at each age-level there were in Ghana who completed secondary and higher levels of education. Most of those who subsequently gained standing in the public service or in the commercial life of the country had attended five or six elite secondary schools, of which at least three are located in Cape Coast. After that, many would have attended the University of Ghana or the Kumasi University of Science and Technology. Thus, in Ghana the elite were absolutely as well as relatively few, had shared many life experiences and were very likely to know one another directly or by name and reputation or by knowing the family to which an individual belonged. In such a society one of the most commonly heard conversational themes among the elite is that an individual knows someone in a position of influence who can broker a solution to some problem or other. Moreover, the NLC had set a timetable for elections leading to a return to civilian government. And, as I mentioned earlier, a majority among them wished to see the anti-Nkrumah party come to power. So, even though no military government can be called democratic, it seems to me that the NLC was representative in the sense that circumstances required it to take account of, and factor into their decisions, pressures and constraints arising from public opinion. In this way, they were not in a very different position from that of an elected government facing an election. Little by little, they gave way to interest group pressures from upper and middle ranges of the socioeconomic scale. Perhaps, just perhaps, if they had been clearly aware how much the cumulative effect of some of these decisions would cost in foregone economic stabilization and reform, then they might have actually steered a somewhat different course. But they were individually ill equipped to gauge what was happening, and it is doubtful that any technocrats who might have understood were sufficiently disinterested and "staunch" to tell them what they

probably didn't want to hear. Most NLC members saw their mission as mainly one of putting an end to "wickedness" and corruption that occurred because the wrong element of society - the "half-educated," "upstart" people who predominated among those attracted to Nkrumah - gained power following independence. For these members improving economic conditions was essential to the political aim of preventing history from repeating itself. For them the need for economic reform and restructuring was something like a religious verity that they needed to acknowledge though they hardly understood it in practical terms. It was analogous to "Mom, God and apple pie."

Q: Did you have any views in your thesis about what policies might have been appropriate for better distribution and all that? Or was that not what you were focusing on?

GILBERT: Well, from an economic perspective one could see that opening things up to the market would have been better. They also should have been more ruthless in getting out of state enterprises instead of allowing that element of their program to stall after two or three relatively inconsequential spinoffs. And if they had handled those decisions more transparently, the question of privatization might not have become too hot to handle.

In particular, they should have been more ruthless in getting out of the import-competing manufacturing sector - either letting it sink or swim. And they should have been much more aggressive in promoting agriculture through a combination of economic incentives and liberalization of markets as well as privatization of agricultural processing and input distribution functions. A lot of these ideas were "out there"; I surely didn't invent them. But nobody in the World Bank or in AID was talking about them that much in those days as I recall. There were consultants in the picture - people like Scott Pearson, Gus Ranis and the members of the Harvard Team who were talking and writing about these needs - but I think it fair to say that the Ghanaians studiously, though politely, ignored them most of the time. Neither the World Bank nor the Fund openly advocated putting much pressure on the government to adopt more far-reaching reforms. To make them politically feasible would have required developing sensitive policies and implementation strategies in secret from the public but in close collaboration with the donor representatives. This would have required stronger Ghanaian economic analytical and decision-making capacities as well as more trust and frankness than actually prevailed between the Ghanaian authorities and the World Bank and the Fund. It would also have required more resources than the donors were then furnishing. Moreover, the Bank and Fund may have sensed a donor consensus that the outcome of the 1969 elections, rather than that of the economic program, was the main concern.

We need to recall that these issues were coming to a head at a time when AID was on the threshold of a decision to reduce its economics staff and rely instead on the Bank and the Fund for economic analysis and related program guidance. At the same time AID, the Bank and many other donors decided to focus assistance on the poor majority - a concept that swiftly degenerated, at least within AID, to become a preoccupation in the minds of many with "the poorest of the poor." And AID essentially went on an "autopilot"...

Q: As far as economic policy...

GILBERT: As far as economic policy issues figuring in program decisions was concerned.

Q: Were there any other program areas that you worked on while you were there? You mentioned population and training...and what else?

GILBERT: I also wound up being tapped to be the Evaluation Officer in Ghana. As I remember, I wasn't able to do much with that portfolio in Ghana, although I do remember writing a paper on monitoring and evaluation that was published in the proceedings of a symposium on population and demographic issues. I just had too much on my plate, and - since AID was just formulating its approach - there was little actual doctrine to guide a new evaluation officer. I think being named evaluation officer mainly meant that one was required to undergo training in AID's evolving methodology.

Q: What was the mission doing during those years? What was the strategy generally? What were we trying to do? You mentioned population — that is fine. What about any other areas?

GILBERT: Well, counterpart local currency funds were used to support a labor-intensive feeder roads rehabilitation program. It was in the hands of one of the talented de Graft-Johnson clan on the Ghanaian side.

Q: What were you doing in agriculture?

GILBERT: Oh, yeah! Gee, agriculture! In agriculture we had a program focused, in effect, on extension. We also had an agricultural education program that trained non-degree extension people. We were involved in five or six agricultural training schools around the country. We also had people working in several regional offices as advisors to the extension service. And, after I had been in country for a while, I formed a strong impression that our people were simply helping the Ministry of Agriculture to do a little of this and that. This was when the miracle rice and wheat varieties were making such an impact in Southern Asia and the Far East. And some of the new rice varieties were undergoing adaptive trials in Ghana. I believe there were also some significantly higher-yielding maize varieties being tried out. Meanwhile it seemed that extension service was simply marking time. Bob Jackson and I...

Q: He was the Ag Officer?

GILBERT: The Ag Officer. He was one of the best I've ever seen. It is too bad when you meet a guy like Bob Jackson early in your career. Bob makes me think of our cook-steward in Ghana, Jonathan Tonaria, an Ijaw from Nigeria. He was certainly one of the two best cook-stewards that we ever had. And I didn't appreciate either Jonathan or Bob Jackson then as much as I would later when I discovered what rare jewels they each were.

I worked closely with Bob in developing an idea that we came to call the "Focus and Concentrate" approach. (Some wags soon dubbed it "Search and Destroy" after a military program in Vietnam.) At that time we had an extension project that involved encouraging farmers to plant certain improved varieties, to use certain fertilizer applications and to follow certain methods of cultivation (called cultural practices, by the technicians). But all this was

pretty theoretical since half the time neither the recommended seeds nor the right kinds and amounts of fertilizer were available. If that weren't enough, the extension officers often weren't disseminating the currently approved advice. Of course, they mostly couldn't get out and give demonstrations and provide advice - whether correct or incorrect - because they didn't have working vehicles and, if they did, couldn't get the funds they needed to operate them. Per Diem was out of the question. I'm sure I'm forgetting the half of it.

So, we decided to select one district in each of the four regions that we were involved in and make a point of getting all the elements together in these districts so that we could demonstrate the benefits that would accrue. We also thought that trying to make this work in four "focus and concentrate" areas would yield lessons that would enable replication to proceed more efficiently later on. As this implies, we knew that there would be problems to learn from. But we underestimated the difficulties enormously.

We worked at this for several years. We - at least some of us (but probably not Bob Jackson) - thought we could make it work if we tried hard enough. After all, all the elements that needed to come together - improved seed varieties, correct cultural practices and fertilizer application recommendations, agricultural inputs, mechanization services and even transportation of produce to markets - were within the management control of the government. Our USAID extension advisors and our Mission management team worked with Ghanaians on this for years.

We could never get the Ministry of Agriculture systems to perform in even a rough approximation of the way they should have. If the research institute provided the foundation seed, then the multiplication process would break down - especially since this had to be done on state farms on a mechanized basis. State-owned tractors were always in need of unavailable spare parts and operating funds. If somehow the seed actually got multiplied, then it either wouldn't get transported or would be poorly stored and therefore go bad or would get distributed to the farmers too late in the planting season and simply get eaten.

If by some miracle the seed got out to the farmers, then the fertilizer would certainly fail to be there. The government bought the fertilizer so the farmers would not be "victimized by wicked middle men." But even if the government budgeted adequately for the fertilizer, then the actual release of funds would be late. If and when the funds were released, then getting the necessary foreign exchange allocation from the Central Bank would prove a problem. Delays in ordering the fertilizer would cause it to arrive in the middle of the growing season rather than when needed. Since it would be raining and storage (or even clearance from the docks) was always problematic, fertilizer frequently spoiled and turned into something resembling concrete.

Meanwhile it would turn out that the extension staff didn't have the means of getting to the field. If they had vehicles, the vehicles would need spare parts. If the vehicles were functioning, then they couldn't get funds released to operate them. Should they get to the field, extension advice tended to be so standardized that the recommended fertilizer applications and cultural practices didn't take into account regional variations in soil types and agro-climatological conditions.

Murphy's law operates everywhere. But in the third world its effect is squared and in a third world government setting its effect is cubed.

Trying to make this thing work was great fun in that it gave me reason to get out of the office and to get to know our agriculture field staff and their counterparts. This provided me with some of the happiest moments and the most useful learning experiences - not to mention valued personal relationships - of my career. The one with whom I became most friendly was Quincy Benbow, an African-American from South Carolina. He, his wife, Annabelle, and their kids lived in Ho, the capital of the Volta Region. Two others were fellow Norwegian Americans from North Dakota and Minnesota: Jim Flaa and Wayne Sloten. From these guys I learned the difference between analytical and conceptual ability, on one hand, and practical wisdom, on the other. It was only later that it dawned on me that even though I almost always "won" my arguments with them, it turned out that their positions proved more often right than mine. This caused me to make a point in my later career of reminding others and myself over and over again that we need to be careful not to win arguments that we should lose. Unfortunately, I sometimes forgot to follow this advice myself.

We had some limited success with the "focus and concentrate" program, but that was achieved because the American extension advisors and their counterparts would short-circuit the government systems to the point that they would haul seed and fertilizer to cooperating farmers in their pickups and that sort of thing. I don't think they ever seriously believed that "focus and concentrate" meant very much or would succeed. And they weren't trying to fool anybody. They simply cared about the farmers that they worked with and wanted to help them as much as possible. I'm not sure that I really drew the proper - now obvious - conclusions until after I saw somewhat the same thing happening in Nigeria - a country whose economy was much more functional and, compared to Ghana's, even prosperous.

Somehow the idea that the private sector, in that setting, should be allowed to handle the distribution and marketing of agricultural inputs, services and products seemed farfetched or extreme even when confronted with such massive evidence that the government could never manage it. I excuse myself and others to some extent because the visible private sector mainly consisted of large-scale international, mostly British, trading companies and small scale, mostly Greek and Lebanese, traders. Rightly or wrongly, both sectors were regarded with skepticism. The big trading companies didn't have a network that reached to the grass roots and the small-scale guys had a reputation for being "predatory". Of course, making the transition has turned out in fact to be far from simple. The private sector won't handle inputs on a completely commercial (as opposed to a contract) basis at reasonable cost until they have confidence in that government's intentions to abandon its involvement is firm. Demonizing the private sector was the cornerstone of the whole panoply of "London School of Economics" economic policies that most Anglophone countries followed after independence. And strange as it may seem now, one could not - even with the help of someone like Gus Ranis - have a genuine give and take discussion about it with civil servants or their bosses.

Q: Were you involved at all in introducing the cultivation of high-yielding rice varieties into Ghana?

GILBERT: I can remember there was a lot of discussion of this within the USAID Mission and among the Ghanaian agricultural establishment. This was just when some of the Green

Revolution varieties were becoming available from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines. There was a big convocation at the Ambassador Hotel where all the folks from the whole agriculture establishment of the country were present, including professors from the university. And there was a heated discussion of the merits of long versus short grain rice. I think this was because the highest yielding varieties were short grain and not what the Ghanaians were used to. Frank Pinder, USAID Mission Director, got so exasperated that he took the floor and said that if they didn't stop being so fussy and just get on with growing some kind of rice that they were going wind up "eating their grandpappies" in a few years. (Laughs) He was the only person who could have gotten away with saying such a thing. No one got mad. Instead, they took his point and tried harder to move forward.

Q: Was this a conference that he had organized?

GILBERT: I believe so. I'm having a hard time remembering the exact context. It might have been something we did in collaboration with the Ford Foundation.

I think we were trying to encourage them to use the new varieties to grow more rice. And one of the key constraints was rice milling. They had somehow acquired four state-owned rice mills either through supplier credits or through some kind of aid and trade deals with the Eastern Bloc. I think they might have come from East Germany. And they couldn't make the damn things work efficiently due to spare parts problems. Also, as I recall, they couldn't attract paddy from farmers at the price they could pay and still break even. This, in turn, had a lot to do with the Government's policy concerning rice imports as well as exchange rate and import duty policy. The alternative to using these rice mills was to use small scale, artisanal private mills. But rice milled by this method had to be parboiled first. This gave the rice a taste that was unacceptable to urban consumers. I'm sure urban consumers were used to imported rice – they got Uncle Ben's under PL 480 Title I. Anyway it was something that went on for several years and was never resolved. Do you remember anything about that?

Q: No. But there were issues about taste and consistency and so on. This complicated decisions concerning what kind of rice to grow and how to process it. But I don't remember the details. At any rate, any other dimensions from the Ghana experience? You can add them later if you like.

GILBERT: Well, it was my first post, and, like many before me, I fell in love with the Ghanaians.

Q: I was going to ask you how did you find the Ghanaian people to work with?

GILBERT: They were my first Africans... actually, my first Third World people. And again, sometimes you don't appreciate something really precious until later when you acquire more perspective. And it was only later that I fully appreciated the Ghanaians. One of their more interesting characteristics is their relative freedom from complexes about themselves in relation to the rest of the world — in particular, the white world. There are always exceptions to every generalization, but for the most part they seem to have a degree of self-confidence and self-esteem that permits them to accept outsiders, including white outsiders, on a friendly and

straightforward basis. By straightforward I mean with very little, if any, suspicion, disdain or deference. I am, of course, talking about the educated people. From the uneducated - especially servants - one might get the same kind of wheedling, favor — and patronage — seeking behavior that can be very tiresome in other parts of Africa. But with those on a comparable socioeconomic level with us, it was possible to form friendships that were not about anything except our enjoyment of one another's company. I never experienced that on a broad scale again in Africa except, very unexpectedly, in Sudan.

Q: How did you find working with them as regards getting things done?

GILBERT: Well, like all of God's "chillun", they talked better than they performed. On average, they were probably a little more afflicted with a disparity between what they say and what they do than Americans. But one would have to grant also that they were awfully damn articulate, and excellent debaters. Others and myself observed that something - whether education or culture or, more likely, a combination of the two - made them extremely good "in committee" as the Brits say.

Another thing I find interesting to look back on is the climate of intellectual freedom that prevailed even though coming out of a dictatorship and despite being under a military government during three of my four plus years there. I found that they were extremely frank. I also felt that most of their disagreements with us and among themselves were of a pretty high quality.

The main negative observation I had about Ghanaian society was the "zero-sum game" behavior I referred to earlier.

Q: And you saw that as pervasive in the upper caste society?

GILBERT: Especially in the government context. And it generated jealousy toward people who got ahead. I don't suppose it was worse there than in other countries, but my first encounter with it was in Ghana. I don't want to dwell on that. The main thing is that in Ghana in those days I met some of the most outstanding and attractive personalities I have ever known in my life. You and I both know many of those people. Mary Chinery-Hesse, Sam Ofosu-Armah, Fred Sai and Alex Kwapong, to name a few. And then there were many others who were just extraordinarily good, hardworking people.

Q: Did you have much connection with the Embassy?

GILBERT: Yes.

Q: Who was the Ambassador at the time?

GILBERT: The first Ambassador was Franklin Williams. That was kind of a tough time because he and Frank Pinder couldn't abide one another. And that meant that people like Gordon Evans and I on the AID side and Jack Foley, the DCM, and Charles Adams, the Economic Section Chief, on the Embassy side did a lot more running back and forth than maybe we would

have needed to do otherwise. And it wasn't much fun since, all too often, we became the bearers of unwelcome news.

Q: Why?

GILBERT: Because, I don't know...is it okay to get into personalities?

Q: For a little bit.

GILBERT: Well, Frank Williams was a...

Q: He was a political appointee.

GILBERT: He was a political appointee and, as Dick Cashin once said, you would have thought that he had a lot to be happy about in life. He had had a very distinguished career up until then. But you had the feeling that he was quite bitter - that something was gnawing at him. He seemed to be very paranoid; I suppose, you can't divorce all that from the context of the time... But this was before the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Maybe it was mostly that he and Frank Pinder really had a bitter relationship, but I don't think it was that simple.

Q: But they were both black Americans.

GILBERT: They were both black Americans. Whatever his background, Frank Williams gave the impression of being very elite — today, some might say he was "preppy." And I'm sure he had gone to all the right schools. He was an extremely bright and socially polished, though somewhat edgy, individual. And Frank Pinder was a savvy guy who liked to present himself as "down home." It was quite some time before Gordon Evans showed me in the "stud book" that he had received a Masters Degree from Cornell. He used to say things like, "That's all right for you fancy pants college boys, but I went to the Lucy Lydy Institute." That is very close to a direct quote. I don't know what the hell the "Lucy Lydy Institute" was but it was certainly meant to betoken to us some sort of third or fourth rate educational background. Frank Pinder had a warm personality and, at least compared to Frank Williams, was folksy. And he was a guy who was in touch with his roots. And I'm trying to remember if he always spoke grammatical English. I think he pretty much did, but still he was kind of a mainstream guy in his cultural context.

And the Ghanaians worshipped Frank Pinder. He had been there since ...

Q: I think it is good to talk about Frank Pinder, because he is one of the first in the world to work on international development in Africa.

GILBERT: Yes and, as I was saying, he had been in Ghana for a very long time. He had been the Food and Agricultural Officer, I think, when the program was very small during the Nkrumah period. He had had a close relationship with Nkrumah. I don't think Frank particularly

agreed with much that Nkrumah did on the economic and agricultural fronts, but I believe that Nkrumah valued his opinion. I suppose that the Frank's advice was usually sought on fairly specific technical issues rather than on broader, more political and strategic issues. And so here was a new Ambassador who arrived in Accra and found that his AID director — whose antecedents seemed inferior — had more standing and influence in many quarters of the Ghanaian establishment than he did. The Ghanaians eventually learned to check their tendency to look around when Frank Williams turned up some place and ask if Frank Pinder was also coming, but, by the time they did so, it was too late. And by then Frank Williams had gotten such a belly full, that he didn't want Pinder to get out of his box at all.

I was raised in the South and whenever I saw a house with a lot of cars out in front my reaction was that somebody had just died. And, if you went by the Pinders' house on Saturday or Sunday, it always, but always, looked like someone had just died. And it would not be because he or anyone else had done anything extravagant, let alone die. It was simply that he was at home on the weekends and all kinds of people - often people from upcountry agricultural research stations, agricultural colleges, the extension service offices or the universities at Cape Coast or Kumasi - would come by, not only to pay their respects, but to actually get advice about some technical matter or a personal issue such as which college their kids should apply to if they could afford to send them to the U.S. or, notwithstanding everything I said earlier about the Ghanaian elite, to ask for favors. Frank Pinder was viewed as an influential person and someone who could broker solutions to sticky problems within the Ghanaian public service structure. I believe he had worked for years in Liberia before coming to Ghana. I also think he came from at least a middle class Southern black background. For whatever reasons, he relished this sort of thing and handled it very well. And, from the Ghanaian perspective, I think he took on the aura of a traditional chief. In African traditional life many fairly mundane-seeming problems are brought to the traditional chief and elders for advice or decision. Frank took this role very seriously. Which reminds me, my experience was that the Americans who were most successful at developing rapport with the local people were southerners - whether black or white. I think Frank Pinder was from the south, but I also remember hearing that he had roots were in the Caribbean. That would mean that he got that touch from two sources. But even so, he was in a league of his own. Most of us who come from north of the Mason-Dixon line, tend to put simply "being there" for their fellow man pretty far down on their priority list. But in the South - especially in rural areas - investing in social and community relationships even at the cost of one's personal plans of the moment or even the day has retained a higher priority even during recent times than in, say, the rural North (where it definitely has a higher priority than in the urban North). This enables Southerners to be more genuinely graceful or even sincerely welcoming if people just drop in or if they bring uninvited guests to social functions.

Q: When you were dealing with the Embassy were there any issues on policy, on the relationship of the AID program to foreign policy interests and so on that posed problems? Were there efforts to get you to do or not do certain things? I'm thinking of broader political interests or the interaction of political foreign policy and development policy?

GILBERT: Nothing comes immediately to mind. You know, the personality factor was so strong that it may have overshadowed the real substance of some of these issues.

Q: I see.

GILBERT: Well, there was always friction because our regulations and procedures caused us to be unresponsive to Embassy "priorities du jour". But as I recall, the unpleasantness seemed mostly about operational coordination. For example, one of my earliest memories after arriving in Ghana was that there was to be a Trade Fair. It was decided that AID would have an exhibit. I was the lucky duck charged with coordinating with the technical divisions on its content. I remember tangling with a member of the Ag staff who wanted to have our exhibit be a demonstration of artificial insemination. I had to tell him that the average city-dwelling Ghanaians probably would not react as we might wish to a guy with his arm buried up to the shoulder in the rear end of a cow. I was capable of formulating this thought myself, but I remember it now in the context of playing a mediating role between Embassy "big picture" and AID technical propensities. I think that it might be a pretty representative example. As I recall, the Embassy's "big picture" concerns were not as substantive as I came to expect later. It is also possible that I was too low on the totem pole to be privy to the really substantive issues and tensions.

Q: Were you involved in the self-help fund management?

GILBERT: Not particularly. I can't remember that there was much of a problem. Whereas self-help program management was later handed to the Embassies, during my days in Ghana it was firmly in AID hands. Bob Rose had primary responsibility as I recall. He was the mission's chief engineer. During most of my time we held weekly implementation committee meetings. Once we were done with the part of the meeting that had to do with the Commodity Import Program (CIP or Program Loan), Bob Rose would walk us through whatever questions had to be decided concerning self-help project proposals. I was always struck by the fact that each agenda item received very close to the same amount of attention even though the Program Loan allocations typically concerned hundreds of thousands of dollars while the Self-Help Project proposals seldom concerned more than one thousand.

And I can remember that one of the recurrent features of the Self-Help Project was that we financed construction of municipal public latrines. One of these was in Wenchi where Landon Holman was one of our Agricultural Education Advisors. He lobbied for it long and hard. At one point he argued that it was necessary so that the sight of so many people urinating in public wouldn't coarsen Mrs. Holman's sensibilities. This proposal became known in USAID Accra as the "Landon Holman Place of Public Convenience." Thereafter, the idea of municipal latrines sort of caught on. There was a young Catholic missionary brother up country who got involved. His name was something like Brother Adrian. And I remember being treated in one of these meetings to a letter from Brother Adrian concerning the justification for one of his proposed latrines. It was a report of his having loitered in a nearby lorry park for four or five hours in order to observe the operation of the single existing latrine. He submitted tables and graphs based on his observations of the number of people who went in and the approximate time each spent in the latrine. This is how he was able to say with authority how many holes were needed in the new one. Brother Adrian had a good sense of humor, as does Bob Rose. And this was Brother Adrian's way of telling Bob he was asking too many questions. They became good friends.

Q: These were ten or twenty-five thousand-dollar projects.

GILBERT: As I recall, these were usually no more than two or three thousand-dollar projects. The average allocation of Special Self Help funds for each Mission was about \$25,000 annually in the early days. Since then, the allocations have increased.

Q: What do you think about that kind of a program? Was it worthwhile?

GILBERT: I'm not sure what I thought of it at that point. I guess I thought it was a nice public relations gesture, but a pain in the neck from a management perspective. I remember thinking how lucky we were to have a guy like Bob Rose with broad enough shoulders, enough humor and enough talent - coupled with good horse sense - to be able to handle the job without letting it drive out too much other useful work.

But later on someone hit on the ingenious idea of developing detailed ground-rules and criteria so that it could be largely administered by Embassies. I remember that it took some hapless fellow (think he was an AID guy seconded to State) a long time to develop these instructions and negotiate the agreement between State and AID. It didn't take me long to conclude that, for a couple of hundred thousand dollars per country, it was a very good way to keep peace between AID and State. Forgive me, this is an unworthy thought, but it seemed to me that an awful lot of tension between Ambassadors and AID Mission Directors boiled down to visibility issues. And the Self-Help Projects provided lots of opportunities for Ambassadors to cut ribbons and give speeches.

Q: One of the sources of friction between the Ambassador and Frank Pinder was over the self-help fund because the Ambassador wanted to use it for political kinds of things that Frank Pinder didn't approve of.

GILBERT: I guess I remember that, now that you mention it. Of course, clear-cut rules helped eventually to eliminate that kind of conflict. There may have been something about that in the guidelines even then. But another problem then was that Mission Directors were mainly accountable for compliance. I think the subsequent guidelines made Ambassadors mainly accountable. I think it may have been only at that point that it became known as the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Project.

Q: What about the commodity import program? Was that useful, effective?

GILBERT: The commodity import program was largely used to finance spare parts and intermediate goods in order to boost capacity utilization in the manufacturing sector. The PL-480 Title I Program was also used for that purpose. (Ghana was certainly the first country where PL 480 Title I was used to import gray cloth so that the local textile mills could bleach and print it.) The main aim was to maintain levels of production and employment in the domestic manufacturing sector. It was largely effective from that standpoint. The manufacturing sector had been surveyed following the coup to identify the factories that should be scrapped or mothballed pending privatization. But this survey couldn't be very rigorous owing to time pressures. Therefore, it should have been no surprise when it eventually emerged that many of these firms

being kept afloat by the CIP and PL 480 Title I programs were not competitive. The infant industry argument can justify protecting initially inefficient industries provided that they have the potential to achieve competitiveness. But that argument couldn't be sustained for many of the industries based on Domestic Resource Cost (DRC) analysis. The DRC method analyzes industries in terms of the economic (rather than nominal) costs of the resources they use. It takes into account the extent to which a currency is overvalued, which artificially lowers nominal imported capital and input costs. Output is valued at the world price of comparable imports. For many, if not most, of the firms in Ghana's modern manufacturing sector at that time, this revealed that they were producing negative or marginal value added. The World Bank and the IMF probably had the access to the data and the staff capability to conduct this kind of analysis after the initial planning phase (say, six months) of the post coup stabilization program. I don't know if they did or not. My first appreciation of the situation came from a study that William F. Steel conducted and eventually turned into his Ph.D. dissertation for MIT. That would have been after 1968.

Q: They were not competitive.

GILBERT: No, and they were not industries that merited a place in Ghana's long-term future. Reasonable people can differ on whether it was necessary to maintain production and employment during this period. We have to bear in mind that this period followed ten years of Nkrumah's experiment with African Socialism. During that period there was rapid expansion of the parastatal manufacturing, agriculture and mining sectors. The numerous employees of these enterprises benefited from levels of consumption made possible by subsidies to their enterprises and by the increasingly overvalued exchange rate, which made imports artificially cheap in local currency terms. The donors and, therefore, the World Bank and IMF wanted to promote a political transition to a stable and moderately neutral, if not specifically pro-Western, democracy. This goal could be jeopardized if Ghanaians, especially the more educated and urban dwelling elements, were subjected to a harsh adjustment process.

I don't think the donors as a group fully appreciated the economic cost of maintaining modern sector domestic production and employment. To the extent the economic issues became better understood, say during late 1967 and 1968, the political dimension was becoming more salient because there had been an attempted coup, and elections for the return to civilian rule loomed closer and closer. I think the need for fundamental economic liberalization and restructuring became quite well understood beginning sometime in mid-to-late 1968, but by 1969 the donors were dealing with a democratically elected civilian regime that was not able to understand, and distinctly unwilling to deal with, the issue. They stonewalled until Christmas 1971 when they launched draconian measures that took virtually no account of the political dimension and led to a military coup. Of course, by that time the economic imbalances had become much larger, and therefore needed much more painful measures, than would have been the case had they acted one or two years earlier.

Q: Any other observations about the Ghana time?

GILBERT: I just thought of something else that we were doing? Well, we had an activity with the Volta River Authority (VRA) that involved their use of U.S. counterpart local currency for

implementation of a program supported technically by a man named Phil Pierce. His work took place during a period when the Volta Lake had only recently filled to a much higher level following completion of the Volta Dam at Akosambo. He was a fisheries biologist and was helping the VRA with the technical problems and opportunities pertaining to the mainly artisanal fishing industry on the Lake. One of the main issues he helped with was a bit peripheral to his original mission; it involved control of the snail that was vector of schistosomiasis (or bilharzia) on the lakeshore. This became an important issue because the Lake's expansion brought both itself and the disease to a large number of people not used to either. The VRA also had responsibility for the welfare of the in-place populations newly on the margins of the lake and for those displaced as the Lake filled. As I recall, this meant that the VRA was responsible for schools and health services as well as agricultural and fisheries extension services for well over a million people. It probably doesn't redound greatly to the discredit of the VRA that the resettlement program for the displaced was widely considered to be a mess. I've never heard of a successful program of that type. The VRA had a great deal of technical assistance in the planning and execution of the resettlement program so the approach that largely failed had solid international credentials.

The schisto problem was just one element of a large-scale demonstration of the law of unintended consequences. Another example was that there was a terrific explosion of the fish population. At the same time the mix of fish species was changing. And you would think then, that this would be a great boon, but it wasn't. It was extremely hard for the fisher-folk to adapt to the new picture since it made their techniques obsolete. I can't remember the "ins and outs" of it, but it was a great lesson. It prepared me to understand the utility of social soundness and environmental impact assessments.

Q: Right. Good point.

GILBERT: That is about all that comes to mind concerning the Ghana days.

Q: You can add something later if you like. After Ghana, what?

GORDON WINKLER
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Accra (1966-1969)

Deputy Assistant Director for Africa
Washington, DC (1969-1973)

Gordon Winkler was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1948. In addition to serving in Ghana and Washington, DC Mr. Winkler served in Ethiopia and Iran. He Winkler was interviewed by Dorothy Robins Mowry on March 23, 1989.

Q: Tell me a little more now about your time in Accra. How long were you there?

WINKLER: I was there for two and a half years. That was the most enjoyable post we had, because of the people.

Q: You mean the most enjoyable of all of your posts?

WINKLER: Well, I've only had three posts. Ghanaian people are terribly attractive and warm and outgoing and direct. There wasn't the kind of elliptical personality one finds in Iran, and which is quite pronounced in Ethiopia. The Ghanaians are very open people.

In the days we were there, in spite of the terrible debt problem, they were fairly happy times for the Ghanaians. They had just thrown out a tyrant, Kwame Nkrumah, who had put an awful lot of people in jail, particularly in a place in Accra called Usher Fort, spoken of with considerable fright by everyone. When Nkrumah left, they opened the fort and these people were back in circulation. Many were able technocrats -- educated people.

The Ghanaians were different in many ways from a lot of Africans. For the British, Ghana was a kind of model colony. It was a colony -- the Gold Coast -- where it was not too difficult for the colonial power to stimulate development. It was relatively small. At the time of independence, the population was in the neighborhood of 6 million. There was gold, there were diamonds, and, most importantly, there was cocoa. The country has always been one of the chief cocoa producers of the world. One of the problems is that so much of the economy is based on cocoa, that when cocoa prices drop, the country is in deep trouble.

There was bauxite in the country. Kaiser Aluminum built and brought on stream a very large refinery in the port city of Tema while we were there. The country had the water power. They built the Akasambo Dam on the Volta River about 150 miles upstream from the Atlantic. So there was plenty of power. They had to have this, of course, for the aluminum operation.

Q: So this was all a part of development. Everything was possible in Africa at that time.

WINKLER: That's right, but in Ghana, more so. If Nkrumah hadn't put the country into such terrible debt, which exists to this day, Ghana may have achieved some of the hoped-for success that all of Africa had expected.

Q: How much of a staff did you have?

WINKLER: Ghana was a little bit smaller than Ethiopia. There were five or six Americans, and we had 22 or 23 Ghanaian employees. It was the usual configuration -- cultural, information, library.

Q: Did you have any special public-diplomacy problems when you were there?

WINKLER: No, I don't think so. That was also a pretty open situation. I've been lucky in that I've been in receptive situations wherever I've been. Our cultural programs were well received. I've never really been in a situation where we had to vet nominations for grants with the local

government, and where we did, it was usually complied with in the breach. There was more of that in Iran.

Q: I used to have to go through that.

WINKLER: But it wasn't too onerous. We had a very good local staff in Ghana. I later became Deputy Area Director for Africa to John Reinhardt for two years, and then I was Area Director for two years. So I traveled all over Africa and got a view of the local staffs. My recollection was that the Ghanaian staff was as good, if not better, than any of the other African local staffs.

Q: So you had good atmospherics and a good staff.

WINKLER: In Ghana, there were three large universities. This was in a country of 6 million people, and that's a lot of universities in a developing country for that many people. The principal one, the University of Ghana at Legon, which is just outside of Accra, was, along with Makerere in Uganda and Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone, among the best universities in English-speaking Black Africa. There also were several first-class prep schools on the English model, a famous one called Achimota near Accra, where traditions had developed, prescribed outfits were worn and generally the kids went to school like proper little Englishmen.

RICHARD M. CASHIN
Deputy Director, USAID
Accra (1967-1970)

Richard M. Cashin was born in 1924. In addition to serving in Ghana, Mr. Cashin served in Ethiopia and Libya. He was interviewed by Paul D. McCusker on March 4, 1993.

CASHIN: I was the Director of the Office of Central African Affairs. This was a geographic concept that, I think, was peculiar to AID. It consisted of Ghana, Nigeria, what is now Zaire, Cameroon, the French Equatorials, Rwanda and Burundi.

Q: That is the area that people look at today and say that all of our bilateral, multilateral aid was wasted because the Africans, particularly in that part, had not risen above their level of abject poverty and have not been able to use the foreign aid to any appreciable effect. Do you agree with that assessment?

CASHIN: The picture is mixed. I don't know of any country in Africa that has had a steady progression over this period of time. I like to think that my Ghanaian friends, where I served at a later stage, after going through really quite a bad patch, have since 1983 performed quite well. Nigeria is very much of a mixed story. I haven't followed some of the others particularly carefully...the Cameroon and French Equatorial countries. The Zaire is a total disaster. And one for which at one stage I had great hopes, Angola, is now regrettably engaged in a civil war.

Q: In Ghana, when you were director of AID there, did you feel that you accomplished something significant? Nkrumah was in power then wasn't he?

CASHIN: No, Nkrumah was deposed in 1966. I didn't go there until 1967.

No, I can't say that my time there, although we greatly enjoyed it and they were among the nicest people to live with that I could imagine...their human skills are superb...I wouldn't say that I took any great satisfaction with the accomplishments of that period. There was a military government.

There was an effort to return to civilian government but the results of the first civilian government were a great disappointment to everyone, I think. There was really no serious concerted effort to strengthen the economic management of the country. The political framework just didn't exist, the political will didn't exist. There was not a sufficient mass of understanding and of interest. Perhaps conditions had to get worse before they could get better.

Q: Dick, certainly in Ghana there was not the same type of political/military objectives on the part of the United States, so far as I am aware. What was our policy there besides trying to assure that we had an anti-communist regime there?

CASHIN: I think in terms of motive, probably our program there was as pure and genuinely concerned with economic development as any that I have been associated with. All the more discouraging that it wasn't possible at that time to do a great deal in terms of economic progress.

Q: That was because there wasn't the political will on the part of the Ghanaian government?

CASHIN: Yes. And the lack of discipline. When they finally got around to sorting things out in the early and mid eighties, they found that the cocoa marketing board which had been set up by the British to serve as a buffer between the cocoa farmers in Ghana and the world market, had been thoroughly mismanaged and exploited for political purposes. Farmers were getting something like 11 percent of the world market price of cocoa. The cocoa marketing board, itself, had something like 60,000 employees, more than the number of cocoa farmers in the country. It had just been thoroughly prostituted in terms of its original intention. It was typical of the mismanagement and corruption that affected a variety of state enterprises.

Q: I seem to remember that Ghana, even before Indonesia, was one of the first countries to reschedule its foreign debt. Is that your recollection?

CASHIN: Actually the Indonesian rescheduling came first. The first Ghanaian debt rescheduling, there have been several since, was convened in London in 1966. It shows you how new the technique was. It had been largely confined to private enterprise at that time, and largely confined to Latin America. Those of us who hadn't served in Latin America didn't know a lot about what debt rescheduling was in terms of its techniques and how the agreements were worked out. For want of anybody better, I headed the American delegation to the first Ghana debt rescheduling in London.

Q: There must have been people from the State Department who came to that meeting.

CASHIN: Yes, there was a fellow by the name of Al Gizauskas, who later went with the World Bank. We were all learning, believe me, including the people from the IMF. We finally found some friendly Dutch fellow who was there and who had been through this exercise with some Latin American countries on behalf of the Dutch government. He gave us sort of a course on how this thing was supposed to be organized. That was a good learning experience. Fortunately the United States did not have a significant debt with Ghana at the time. Our position was simply that those countries who did have a large debt should make a significant contribution in the form of rescheduling as a contribution to the total resource package, which would enable us to provide foreign aid in good conscience. It wouldn't have been very attractive for the United States government to be putting in fresh foreign aid resources while other countries were insisting on the full repayment of their outstanding debts.

Q: Were we engaged in infusion of balance of payments support to Ghana?

CASHIN: We did, partly as a matter of keeping the Ghanaian government on bit of a short leash. We were not entirely confident, as I say, in their political will and economic management. If you get into long term, large scale projects, as we had done with the Volta River Dam and the Tema Aluminum complex, these things play out over a long period of years. If you do commodity financing, balance of payments aid, this can be managed and fine-tuned from year to year or even from month to month in accordance with the performance of the government. So we were anxious not to get into long term commitments.

DAVID E. SIMCOX
Political Officer
Accra (1967-1969)

David E. Simcox was born on November 25, 1932 in Frankfort, Kentucky. He received his BA from the University of Kentucky in 1956. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956 and has served in many countries throughout his career including Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Ghana, Spain, Brazil, and El Salvador. Mr. Simcox was interviewed by Kristin Hamblin on August 26, 1993.

Q: Your next post was in the African country of Ghana, where you served as the political officer at the Embassy in Accra from June, 1967, to August, 1969. What was our relationship with Ghana at that time?

SIMCOX: I arrived there, perhaps a year after Kwame Nkrumah, the spellbinding, charismatic strong man of Ghanaian politics who had led the country since independence, was driven out of office. A military government was in charge, headed by a man named Gen. A. A. Ankrah, a soldier without too many social refinements or a deep sense of statecraft. The United States, I think, considered the overthrow of Nkrumah in Ghana as a major achievement in terms of reversing what, in those days, was regarded as extensive Soviet influence in many African

countries and a wave of Soviet-inspired radicalism. This brought an opportunity for the United States to help develop Ghana as a showplace of a free society, with free enterprise, foreign investment, a market economy, and all of that.

Well, it became clear during the two years that I was there that Ghana was a long way from any form of stability. There were constant plots, and there was one serious Army mutiny, not too long after I arrived which resulted in some deaths in the military establishment. They struggled, during the two years that I was there, to try and establish some basis for an elected, civilian government. They finally did. What I think of as the oligarchs of Ghana, whose power and influence go back to the days of the British Imperium--those were the forces which won the election. But their rule was really ineffectual. They won that election just as I left the country in 1969. A relatively non-productive government assumed office which, again, was overturned by the military within a year.

Q: What did you do to promote our policy, as a political officer?

SIMCOX: Political officers are general busybodies. Each officer decides for himself, I think, sooner or later, what his principal priority is. Is he going to be a witness to the process, to observe and report and keep Washington informed and present the situation and act on instructions he gets back from Washington. Or is he going to get out and become something of a missionary to the different political parties, urging them really to take democracy seriously, trying to put them in touch with groups and people in the United States and Europe that can also help and encourage them to move in the direction of democratic practices. There was some of that in all of us.

Q: So which way did you lean toward?

SIMCOX: I guess my concern was that it was automatically assumed that the United States was for the same candidates that the military favored, such as Doctor Kofi Busia. The other candidate, Komle Gbedemah, was tarred by his earlier association with Nkrumah. He was known as a very efficient, public administrator and a rather charismatic leader. Part of my mission, as I saw it, was to try to convince him and his followers that the United States didn't have a favorite candidate, that it was not partial to Doctor Busia.

Of course, we often hear that the Foreign Service takes positions like that. There's always a lingering doubt in your mind whether you can really say this in a credible way, because there's so much going on that we don't know about. To this day I don't know what the U. S. role, if any, was in getting Doctor Busia elected. One suspects that the powers that be, back in Washington, whether in Foggy Bottom [Department of State] or Langley [CIA] were just not comfortable with the idea of Gbedemah taking over the government.

Q: Another question about Ghana. In March, 1958, Ambassador Franklin Williams resigned and was replaced by Ambassador Thomas McElhiney. How did the Embassy react to this sort of changeover?

SIMCOX: The Embassy liked Tom McElhiney, because he was one of our own. He was a career officer. He was very businesslike and concerned with the traditional mission of the Embassy. I personally liked Ambassador Williams. He was a political appointee and had rather unorthodox ways of running the mission. His priorities were often not those of the Department of State. So I think that, generally, the mission adjusted well to the change in ambassadors.

Q: Was Ambassador McElhiney career Foreign Service?

SIMCOX: Yes.

HARIADENE JOHNSON
Desk Officer, USAID
Washington, DC (1967-1972)

Hariadene Johnson received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from University of Texas at Austin prior to joining USAID in 1967. Her career posts included Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania, and Djibouti in addition to serving as Office Director of East Africa for USAID from 1977-1982. Ms. Johnson was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1998.

Q: What was your first assignment then, regular assignment?

JOHNSON: First regular assignment was on the Ghana desk, working initially with a man on detail from State Department. His name I think was Smith and then later with David Shear and Steve Christmas.

Q: This was in 1968?

JOHNSON: '68-69. I stayed on the Ghana desk. Well, first of all when I was working, it was Ghana-Sierra Leone Desk; then it was the Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone Desk.. It sort of kept getting reorganized. With the core activities, for me anyway, were on Ghana, where I worked on the Ghana program. That was primarily working on the Commodity Import Program and Program Loan, which in an interesting sort of way was a precursor to the policy reform issues that the Agency as a whole discovered in the late '70s '80s.

Q: Let's talk about the Ghana program at that time? What was your understanding of what we were trying to do and why were we trying to do it?

JOHNSON: This is a booby trap, since I was working with you as the Mission Director in Ghana.

Q: You can say what you want.

JOHNSON: I don't know, I think originally.

Q: I didn't get there until 1970 anyway.

JOHNSON: But you were my boss in Washington. Do you realize that of my 30 years with USAID and you were my boss for 20.

Q: Right. I'll be darn. Well, let's forget that.

JOHNSON: It's all your fault. I started working on the Ghana desk and it was an extremely complex program in terms of what USAID did in those days. You had a combination of capital assistance and the big Volta Dam project, combined with private enterprise, Kaiser Aluminum Company, which was working with the power that the dam provided; a technical assistance program, providing assistance in a broad range of areas; and a policy-oriented commodity import program and PL480 program. We were trying to get the country to put together an economic policy package. At the time of independence, Ghana was very much under Nkrumah, who really espoused Pan Africanism and wound up wasting a lot of the resources that Ghana had at independence through various and assorted attempts to push Pan Africanism. By the time I started working on Ghana, it was totally broke, heavily in debt internationally and had gone through a military police coup, which at that time was unique. At that point the Ghana program was extremely complex. You were working with probably one of the better educated, trained people. In terms of most of the African countries, they did have a better formed base of educated leadership. Essentially, looking back on it, I think most of what we did was probably well intentioned, but somehow we weren't really making permanent changes. The Police Military group was followed by a national election, which was followed by a military coup. So, the politics of it were undermining most of what we did. As a general theme, I would say that what started in 1967 was a strong feeling conditioned in large part by the war in Vietnam, not interfering in internal affairs and that we were there to help them.

Q: You mean the Vietnam War?

JOHNSON: Because of the Vietnam War when we were so strongly involved, you had a mind set throughout the rest of the Agency of not interfering and not intervening. I think in Africa you had that mind set. I think for people who worked in the Middle East countries or people who worked in Asia, they were more conditioned to U.S. influencing local politics. I think in Africa that we felt very much that we were there to help other nations make choices, but not to dictate what choices they took. And, that as a result, we wound up not really being well informed, I think about the politics of what was going on.

Q: What did you work on specifically in relation to the Ghana program?

JOHNSON: We had just started the Program Loan in Ghana, which was financing for a commodity import program (CIP) where the funds were released based upon agreement to certain policy conditions.

Q: Do you remember what the policy issues were?

JOHNSON: Most of the policy issues had to do with trying to come up with a exchange rate policy whereby the Ghanaian cedi would not be artificially maintained; you would not have capital controls. The country was afraid if they didn't have controls on the flight of capital you would have capital flight where all funds in the country would go elsewhere. The Ghanaian airline, at that point, wouldn't take cedis. If you wanted to buy a Coke on Ghana airways, you had to come up with dollars or pounds or something else. They wouldn't take the national currency. Most of the big policy issues were related to the foreign exchange.

The CIP itself financed certain groups of commodities. There was an attempt to finance commodities, which then made some contribution to development within a country, which was walking a very thin line between the kinds of currency controls that the government itself wanted and an open, more liberal type of import regime, which is what we were promoting. We were concerned about how they spent our money; we got very picky and we were very tight in controlling what they could and couldn't do. For example, we also had a PL480 program there. Essentially, it was a food aid program, but it financed manufactured or semi-manufactured commodities, which were not essentially food. We financed tallow, which went into some of the industrial factories there; we financed grey cloth, which is a processed and semi-bleached textile, just cotton. Rolls and rolls of cotton as opposed to financing wheat, or corn, or vegetable oil [ed]. Even the vegetable oil, that we financed, went into industry as opposed to food aid.

Q: Was that unusual?

JOHNSON: It was very unusual for the PL480 program at the time, and even later. I think over time it probably went more and more toward being straight food aid and being tied to some type of perceived shortage in agricultural production. Ghana was very much tied into the CIP where the two, both in terms of policy negotiations and in terms of commodities tried to have an impact upon the economy. You ran into really funny things in trying to provide the cotton for the textile factories in Ghana where the U.S. Department of Agriculture would absolutely go bananas over how much cotton cloth was being used. They could not believe that a country of X million population use, X plus Y yards of cloth.

Q: The local consumption.

JOHNSON: The local consumption. They were convinced that somehow they were black-marketing it and shipping it across the border to other countries. And, just to get into this extraordinary disagreements with the Department of Agriculture, because they had absolutely no knowledge of Africa and had you know, a blouse, coats, one and one-half yards of cotton, as opposed to a Ghanaian blouse might take six yards of cotton, because of the way it was constructed and sewn and overlapped and etc. etc. etc. Also, we were trying to provide textile machinery under the CIP, which could be used in the textile factories. I found out the extent of the various U.S. agricultural lobby interests over in the Department of Agriculture was one poor man in one little office in the back of the building who worried about exporting textile machinery and tried to promote it and thought it was a great idea and it was something that we should do more of. There were 99 other people (e.g. the Department of Commerce, ed) who were devoted to not increasing the competition that U.S. cloth faced, and so they didn't want us to help in the manufacturing and export of cloth. Later, in addition to the free trade and the NAFTA free trade

zone fights of the '90s, we were exporting jobs to Mexico. In this case, the textile lobbyists felt very strongly that they wanted the textile production to be in the United States and then we could sell finished commodities to Ghana. We're talking about the difference between theoretical, logical demand in Ghana for U.S. manufactured cloth and effective demand, which was zero, the foreign exchange to pay for it was coming from the U.S. anyway. So, we were not cutting into American sales.

Q: How did they resolve the issue or did they?

JOHNSON: Yeah. We managed to get grey cloth under the PL480 program, as opposed to food, but we never managed to get textile machinery into the commodity import program [actually we did but the equipment had to be segregated in the production line for local production only! ed]. So, it was sort of half and half. For me, at that time, it was like theory logically knowing from academic studies, you know, and the different lobby groups with different positions. Knowing that in theory and seeing it in practice were two different things. As you walk into it and you see exactly what that means, as public policy is formulated and the impact, you know, long established lobbying groups and long established positions. The absolute total (disconnect, ed.).

Q: How was this textile program, as an example, helpful, or was it, to Ghana's development?

JOHNSON: Quite honestly I'm thinking I never really went back and looked to see what was the overall long term impact. I think that the time and theory was very much that it represented a low technology type of operation that could be run in an LDC (less developed country), where you had a labor force that could be trained for the tasks were required. Therefore, utilize a local product, i.e. Ghanaian cotton, provided employment or jobs for Ghanaians. In the long run, hopefully we provide export earnings as the cloth that was dyed and printed in Ghana could be exported to surrounding African nations. I don't know if any of that ever happened or not.

I ran into something similar years later when working in Uganda. I remember trying to explain it to a new Assistant Administrator that the analysis of a sugar factory for Uganda was based on the assumption that you could produce locally enough to replace all of the sugar that was being imported from Kenya, plus you could export it to Rwanda, Burundi, and Eastern Zaire which were closer markets for Uganda than Kenya. No one really ever did and this was like in the '80s and the Agency still didn't have a way to do it. The Rwanda mission was also planning a sugar factory, based on that they could then market the sugar to Burundi and Uganda. And, in the meantime, the Kenyans were trying desperately to help stabilize their economy which was dependent upon sugar exports for 30 percent of the country's earnings. Even when we got into looking more at private sector investments as opposed to government direct investments on the assumption that the private sector with realistic marketing analysis, somehow we always emphasized production, rather than marketing. Anyway, that was sort of 20 years later.

Q: That was an interesting perspective. Were there other things you worked on on the Ghana desk?

JOHNSON: I spent six months trying to convince myself that there was a difference between obligations and expenditures. So, seeing all the things that Junior Desk Officers do such as

technical assistance and PIO/Ts (Project Implementation Orders) for technical assistance and general sort of mission support. The mission would send a cable and then you'd try and find somebody in the Agency who knew something about what they were talking about. The CIP was fun, because it was not something that Desk Officers usually did.

Q: Did you write a program document for a CIP?

JOHNSON: The very first time overseas, actually. I did a couple of, I don't know if you'd say I wrote them. What I did, I took them around Washington trying to get them approved and negotiated their acceptance.

Q: Were they unusual or pretty standard?

JOHNSON: I think they were pretty standard. I don't really remember very much that was different about them. The first time that I ever went overseas in my entire life was to Ghana to work on the annual budget submission and do the commodity import portion annex of that submission; it was an absolutely, totally incredible experience.

Q: You know why?

JOHNSON: Almost every level. I guess my first feeling was, I get off the airplane and there were all these Coca Cola advertising billboards on the run from the airport into the town. It was like going to any American city. It was the lack of difference, you know struggling to see the difference. And, later when I had a chance to be more, I don't know if sensitize is the right word, I saw a broader picture than when I was sitting in a taxi and watching the billboards go past. When I had an actual chance, I sat down and talked to Ghanaians. It was very different, a very different society; very different perspective on everything.

Q: What difference did you observe?

JOHNSON: All over town as you drove around, there were these half completed buildings where someone would put in a floor or they'd get up to the bottom of the window sills and then they'd just be stopped for months at a time. As a negative construction, it certainly caused total confusion. But, I talked to some Ghanaians about why was that the way people did it. Was it inability to get mortgage funds so that you couldn't do the whole thing at once or was there a reason in back of it. They explained to me that it was very much the requirement in Ghana that if you did well that you helped out your family and they had an extended definition of who your family was. Going back two or three generations and coming forward with all the cousins and in-laws and everybody else. And, that in effect if you had a good job and you were in a good position and you wanted to build your own house, you couldn't save your money, because then people would know that you had money and they would want you to finance sister Tom's brother's second cousin's child's education fees. So, they'd put it into a house, but it was like they only had ten dollars, so they'd do ten dollars worth of work.

Q: Otherwise, a savings account.

JOHNSON: It was a savings account where your relatives could come live with you eventually, I guess after you got the house built. But, there was much a strong impact that family relations had on every decision you made. In terms of what job you took, how you spent your money, where you lived, how you lived. One other thing I remember: I was at the hotel and I was supposed to go out for dinner with a Ghanaian Police Lieutenant who was the first female Police Lieutenant that they'd ever had, period. So, she and I were going to go out for dinner and she came by the hotel and I was sitting in the lobby waiting for her to show up and there was this total complete chaos, because two of the guys, two of the doormen at the hotel, found a guy trying to steal tires out of the parking lot. They cornered him and they brought him into the lobby and had the counter man call the police and the police were going to come pick him up. This all sounds very normal, except for the fact that there were at least a hundred people who were attracted by the fact that they had arrested this guy and who started beating him up. Your two hotel people were doing their best to keep the guy from getting killed and everybody else was screaming and shouting and punching and clubbing. It was just an incredible mob scene. And, this Police Lieutenant showed up and explained to me that

As Desk Officer I was were very much into Ghana's debt rescheduling and working with the World Bank and the IMF on rescheduling a massive foreign debt.

Q: How did you find that?

JOHNSON: Debt rescheduling is very much of a challenge. I had an economic background and absolutely nothing in the banking finance area. Actually, more a trade background. I got into the midst of all the nitty gritty of debt rescheduling.

Q: What was your job? What were you doing on it?

JOHNSON: Essentially, I was the Assistant Desk Officer at the time. I think they gave it to me because nobody else had ever done it either. So, since nobody had any expertise in it, they said, "Okay, see what you can do with it." Then I developed expertise and became the rescheduling genius. I remember with a great deal of gratitude some people at the Export/Import Bank. They spent hours trying to explain to me a hundred and eighty day credits and how that differed from other things and interest rates. Everything about international banking that they knew from the export-import side.

Q: The Export/Import Bank had loans, which were subject to rescheduling?

JOHNSON: Yeah, they had exposure, which we wanted to be rescheduled. We, of course had the big Volta Dam loans that would have to be rescheduled and the Kaiser Aluminum Company was in there, just a whole ring of characters besides just USAID. I think it was unusual for a Junior Officer to have that much exposure to the different agencies around town.

Q: What were you actually doing? What was your role?

JOHNSON: I forget who was the Ambassador, but it was when the new Ambassador was first

going out. [Ambassador Hadsel ed] He made a point of getting all the different people who were called Ghana Desk Officers. You got the Ghana Desk Officer from State; the Ghana Desk Officer from USAID; the Ghana Desk Officer from Commerce; the Ghana Desk Officer from the Treasury; the Ghana Desk Officer from USDA. You know, you pulled all these different people together who were the Ghana Desk Officers, quote, unquote and tried to start up a process where we would talk to each other and partially results of that process, it really became more my role to represent Ghana. But, the other people were Ghana Desk Officers, but they really represented Commerce Department's attitude to Ghana, rather than trained to represent Ghana's position to the Commerce Department. I started in that process of all the Ghana desk people getting together and talking and recognizing what a different perspective each Agency rep had. But, it built into, the USAID Ghana Desk Officer was the representative of the country. Much more so than representing the U.S. to the country. That in effect the role of having to present the U.S. viewpoint was essentially the field missions. Frequently, whatever final paper or position we came to got transmitted out to the field, but I was the Ghana Desk Officer and I would try and make that position more flexible in terms of things that were important to the Ghanaians.

Q: Any ideas specific of what you did?

JOHNSON: The one that keeps coming back to my mind again, again and again was the PL480 program insisting that it was better to do food than it was to do commodities.

Q: I mean on the debt issue?

JOHNSON: On the debt issue, I was repeating things that the Mission sent into me. It was an area in which I had absolutely no expertise and no confidence to go with an independent point of view. It was just trying to make sure that the points that the Mission was making were made where they needed to be made to the other agencies and basically, One of the best things about working on Ghana was that you had a series of USAID Mission Directors in Ghana who had a lot of creditability in Washington. Dick Cashin, before you went out there. It made it easy then to represent things that the Mission were saying. And, then also over that time that I developed a creditability through working with the other agencies, and so that I would repeat what the Mission said, and it wasn't a question of rubber stamping something that was being said by somebody who was unreliable to begin with. It was a creditable story and you had a good basis going in for saying, "Okay, look, these are the problems." And, that if you push here, maybe the demands get accepted, but if you push too hard, all you're doing is setting yourself up for a failure, because they won't be able to meet your terms.

Q: Anything else in that particular period? This was quite an introduction wasn't it to USAID?

JOHNSON: It was an extraordinary introduction, in that I had a series of Mission Directors that I worked with. Don Brown was Zaire; Dick Cashin was in Ghana. I was working with really topnotch people overseas and had a series of good bosses in Washington, Steve Christmas and David Shear. I probably learned more from Steve Christmas than anybody I've ever worked for. Steve sat me down and he said basically, "Hariadene, it's okay to tilt at windmills. It's something that you do; it's a good part of your personality and it's something that every government agency needs, but you have to pick your windmills, you can't tilt at them all."

Q: Good point, good point. He was a first rate person.

JOHNSON: That he was.

Q: Well, and then after that where did you go?

JOHNSON: I worked on Ghana from '67 until '72.

Q: That's quite a considerable period, isn't it?

JOHNSON: Yes. It was mostly working on Ghana, but I also had responsibilities for Liberia and basically, the people didn't feel that crooks ever got punished. That if once they were arrested, he'd buy off the policeman or he'd buy off the judge and that the only punishment that would be given would be what they gave right there on the spot.

Q: Instant justice?

JOHNSON: Right. So, I took it as a lack of faith in any institution. This was very much you did it personally, if you wanted to see it get done.

Q: I understand. Were there any other observations from that first visit?

JOHNSON: I fell in love with Africa. I'd taken a couple of courses on Africa in Graduate School, but if anything I'd probably concentrated more on Southeast Asia. So, that was my first real exposure to Africa.

Q: What made you fall in love with Africa? What was it about?

JOHNSON: A feeling of being alive, a feeling very much of the newness that the world was open to anything, anything and everything. A feeling, I don't know, to me it's what the U.S. must have been like during the frontier days. A sense that it was a new country and that they could establish it and shape it, and a sense of optimism that they had no doubts they could do it. I remember sitting at the hotel getting into all these long discussions with various British expatriots who would sit around and moan about the fact that Ghanaian Africa was not ready for self-government and that they really should have maintained the colonies a little longer. My final argument use to be that Chicago wasn't ready for self government either. They didn't appreciate that. But, basically it was the view of Europeans, well the British specifically, I guess, that (the early work I did with USAID was all in Anglophone countries). The British view was that, you know, that somehow the U.S. had done them wrong by pressuring the them to turn loose of the African colonies before they were really ready for self government. A strong feeling on my part that Chicago is not ready for self-government. Today, I would probably say that Washington, D.C. is ready for self-government, but you got to wait until somebody is ready. You learn how to self-govern by doing it and it's one of those things that you just plunge in. You make your mistakes and you learn from them and you move on.

Q: Did you work on other things while you were there? How long were you there?

JOHNSON: The initial trip was just a couple of weeks. Later, I was out there for a couple of months. The desk at that point covered also Liberia and Zaire and so I did stop overs in those two countries.

JULIUS S. PRINCE
Population Officer, USAID
Accra (1967-1973)

Julius S. Prince was born in New York in 1911. He graduated from Yale University in 1932 and also received an M.D. from the New York College for Physicians and Surgeons, an MPH from Columbia University and a Dr. PH from Harvard University. Mr. Prince served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Canadian Medical Corps as a major overseas. He worked with USAID in Ethiopia, Tunisia, Cameroon, Ghana and Zimbabwe. Mr. Prince was interviewed in 1994 by W. Haven North.

Q: And in the one in Ghana?

PRINCE: Certainly, sure... Dick Cashin (former USAID Mission Director in Ghana) and the population technician on his staff who was also, I believe, an experienced program officer must have known about the Paper while it was under preparation.

Q: Was the Population Council funded by USAID?

PRINCE: The Pop Council was partially funded by USAID even in those days; they got money from USAID right from the beginning... About 1967/68 they began to be funded and they had projects in other countries in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, which I was very much involved in as a result of my being the Africa Bureau Division Chief for Population and, later, the Director of the Regional Population Office. So I went to NY several times to talk to the Population Council and Ford Foundation representatives. In addition, they had people, in situ, in various countries in Africa in those days and I met several of them during the course of my field trips. I found this most helpful as a means of exchanging information and ideas.

Q: What was the Government's reception to the policy paper? Was the Government involved?

PRINCE: They were very much involved. All the assisting agencies realized this as a necessity. Mr. Omaboe, the Minister of Economic Planning, was the person who signed off on it for the Government, but he also, I think, played a major part in writing it. However, they had substantial assistance from the Population Council and the Ford Foundation representatives. And Lyle Saunders, who, I believe, was the Population Council Representative. He wasn't posted in Ghana but he was circulating around in Africa and helped in a consultant's capacity to write that document, no question about it.

Q: How well accepted was the policy in the government at that time?

PRINCE: It was not totally accepted, I think, for example, unlike the subsequent efforts we carried out in the health planning field there was no "Operation Dialogue" connected with it. I'll explain that when we come to the health part of the program. The participation of provincial and district levels in the formulation of the White Paper was minimal, I believe, so it may not have had as much support at those levels as one would have hoped for. However, it certainly had the support of the Government leadership; no question about that at the top level. And, as you know, the Ministry of Economic Planning was one of the strongest Ministries in the whole governmental organization.

Parenthetically, I might point out that I had some discussions with the Ford Foundation Representative after Lyle Saunders left. I can't remember his name, but he was resident in Ghana for a while. I complained to him when he was visiting Washington about the time the Paper was being completed, that I wasn't sure it was such a good idea to establish the Ghana National Family Planning Program, which they had done with its roots physically, and to a large extent administratively, in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. I said, "You know the people who are going to carry this out are not mostly going to be Ministry of Economic Planning people. They're going to Ministry of Health people and their noses are going to be out of joint." Nevertheless, he said, "Well, the Ministry of Health... its organizational development is very weak and we feel that they can't surely put enough muscle into this plan to implement the provisions of the population paper. Therefore, we felt the trade off... we recognized that it would be nice to have the Ministry of Health involved but when it came to deciding... when the chips were down, it was determined that the Ministry of Economic Planning was the best place. We all lived to rue that fact for a long time. And as you know now the population program... this information is right off the top of my head and I don't know whether it is accurate or not... but I do know that the contraceptive program has been switched almost entirely to simple distribution of ... commercial distribution of contraceptives. And that work is now mostly being supervised by the Ministry of Health!

The thing has, apparently, come full circle back into the Ministry of Health; but whether or not the Pharmacy Board has approved the distribution of oral contraceptives without prescription, I have no idea. But I can say that was the major hang-up for our program for years. The whole time I was in Ghana and subsequently for many years, we never got full approval to distribute oral contraceptives without prescription. You know, it is impossible to carry out any kind of general effort to get oral contraceptives used ... to increase the contraceptive utilization rate which, you know, is the whole objective... without approval of the medical profession. It was a constant battle about that because of the way the thing started. This is one of the reasons why it was a mistake to put it into the Ministry of Economic Planning in the beginning. Dr. Augustus Armar, Director of the Ghana National Family Planning Program (GNFPP) was a very fine person, absolutely, fully committed, to the program; and I liked him personally, very much. In fact, we wrote a paper together about the physician and population change pointing out that the M.D. had major responsibilities in guiding his patients' reproductive practice and health (Armar, A.A., F.R.C.O.G and Prince, J.S., M.D., "The Medical Ostrich Has Buried Its Head in the Sands of Biological Science and Turns Its Backside to The Major Social Issues of Medical Care Today"

Unpublished, but presented by the authors at the World Population Society annual meeting ca. 1989.). (Annex 18) But, as events turned out, he didn't have good connections with the key Ob/Gyn people in the medical school, and this apparently affected relations between the GNFPP and the Ministry. Consequently, he was never really able to get the fullest cooperation from all those people, which was essential to make the program work, and particularly, to get the approval to distribute oral and related types of contraceptives without prescriptions.

That was a tremendous hang up and nobody paid much attention to it even though I was hollering about it the whole time. And I don't know why it missed the point in all of our discussions. To say that the Pharmacy Board was just a Board and not too important, that's ridiculous. First of all, the Board is composed most of all of physicians; and secondly they had the authority and responsibility to make decisions like that. The answer is that the Government was in a way behind the thing but not fully committed in all the necessary departments and Ministries. I'm afraid that this has been the story all over Africa--it always has been difficult, and the Smithsonian effort, previously referred to, was very well-conceived and totally justified.

The problem is to remember that decisions are made by people in the power structure of a country, of a community, of a district or whatever organizational development area that you are talking about. You start with them then you gradually get to the community level and to the household level. Gosh knows, I'm fully aware of the importance of the household and it is coming out in today's literature: the household is where the decision has to be made. But how are you going to get to the household and convince anybody in the household in a village where the chief is utterly opposed to something; that's ridiculous. If he's opposed to the thing that you are trying to sell forget it. I remember we went to a meeting to help in promoting the idea of the Ghana National Family Planning Program in Bawku in the Upper Region. And the only way that meeting could go, and the reason why it was successful was because the chief came to the meeting and gave the opening speech. And he supported the program very strongly. The only problem with the meeting was that they didn't have a simultaneous translator that was needed because there were people from two or three regions there and they didn't all speak the same dialect; they needed some simultaneous translation. But otherwise it was a huge success and, I think, it made a big difference in the attitude of the people in those communities towards the whole program in subsequent years. But to get the chief involved was an absolutely key element in the whole thing and I spent a lot of time and effort on that and so did everybody else; we knew by then that these things were essential. It's, thus, not as simple as throwing contraceptives out on the table and saying everybody's going to use these if you tell them how to do it. Nonsense!

With that lengthy introduction, I can now embark on the detailed nature of what we did in Ghana and when I say we, I mean the Mission Directors that were involved before you and after you and the staff as well. Nothing could have happened without the full cooperation of the entire Mission, from the Mission Director to the Program Office and to supporting logistics efforts of the Mission staff. It was absolutely fantastic in Ghana; and in all my experience in Africa, I never had a greater degree of cooperation and active support in urging forward and participation in the technical aspects of the planning to the extent that I did in Ghana. If that overall HPN program was successful and its sustainability turned out to be so, a major part was due to the efforts of the entire Mission staff.

Before Dick Cashin took over, I met Frank Pinder (earlier Mission Director) - that was during the 1967 field trip. And I began talking to him about this. The only program we had going in the population field in Ghana that early on was the demographic sample survey project with Sam Ghaisie at the University of Ghana (ISSER) that I mentioned earlier. As described below, it was a huge success.

The survey was carried out and Dr. Ghaisie got his doctoral degree in demography from the University of Canberra in Australia. One aspect of the Demographic Sample survey was detailed and publicized by Dr. Ghaisie in the first issue of the African journal Jimlar Mutane (Ghaisie, S.K., "Levels and Patterns of Infant and Child Mortality in Ghana", Jimlar Mutane-A Journal of Population Studies in Africa Vol.1, No.1 ppg. 41-55). However, the entire project was beyond the financial means of the Ghana Government or Dr. Ghaisie and required both technical and financial assistance. The former was provided through the good offices of the U.S. Bureau of the Census in a Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) with AID for one of their consultants, Mr. Abner Hurwitz, who kindly made himself available for the assignment. He came to Ghana in 1965 and worked with the, then, Mr. Ghaisie on many of the technical and operational aspects of the survey, spending, I believe, a total of some 5-6 months in the country during several visits. That project, as indicated, was financed by AID as the first in a fairly lengthy list of health/population/nutrition projects undertaken by AID, in Ghana, between 1968-1979. The project was entitled, "Family Planning and Demographic Development" and was completed in 1972 at a cost to AID of \$244,000. This was a quite reasonable cost it was felt, considering the great benefit from the project, in setting the whole background and basic framework, etc. for continued demographic sample surveys in Ghana.

The idea of national demographic sample surveys was further taken up and elaborated on by the AID centrally-funded World Fertility Survey ten years later. And then that became the Demographic and Health Survey Project, which is still going on. The effect of the use of that technique, plus the work that was done by John Rumford in Liberia, which I mentioned in our last session, to establish the value of the Chandrasekar-Deming technique for carrying out a demographic sample survey in that country to show, for example, the difference in infant mortality rates in urban and rural areas, was essential background for both the World Fertility Survey and the Demographic and Health Survey later on. So much for that.

The next project was the Danfa Rural Comprehensive Health and Family Planning Project. The story of that project is a whopper! I'll just list the major document which covers the whole project and has a complete bibliography in it. It is readily available, I would think, in our libraries here and certainly at UCLA which was the contractor for the project. It is entitled, "Danfa Project Final Report. The Danfa Comprehensive Rural health and Family Planning Project" September 30, 1979. It comes out of the University of California and the Government of Ghana. The "authors" are listed as the University of Ghana Medical School, Department of Community Health and the UCLA School of Public Health, Division of Population, Family and International Health. So there you have the final result of the Danfa Project which had its origins, I believe, not only in the early acquaintance of the project director from the University of California, Dr. Alfred K. Neumann with Dr. Fred Sai, beginning in 1965 when Professor Neumann was, in fact, working in Ghana. The opportunity I had to meet Dr. Sai at the conference at Kampala proved another ice-breaker (among others, e.g. at the APHA annual

meetings, etc.).

Q: I think they were both at Harvard's School of Public Health.

PRINCE: Yes. Both of them got their Masters degree at the Harvard School of Public Health. Since Professor Neumann had a very broad view of the practice of public health... the same as I did...and was aware of the importance of integrating population/family-planning activities into it, I think this idea was passed on to Dr. Sai. It was the research side of this program, however, that attracted Dr. Sai in the beginning because in 1968/69, he tried to obtain assistance from the UNDP to fund research training for the medical students and especially for the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health at the Medical School, of which department he was head. Because the Ghana Government expressed a lack of priority of that type, for the UNDP funds allotted to Ghana, the money was not available. Consequently, when I visited Ghana in 1967-68, it led to meetings with Mr. Cashin and his Program Officer, Fritz Gilbert, which was the "opening gun" in the planning of the Danfa Project. I felt very strongly that it was the kind of thing that should have its initiative and technical support at the Ghanaian level rather than from outside. Dr. Sai agreed with this fully... and with the concept I suggested to him of trying to settle the issue of whether or not family planning programs were better administered if they were a part of an integrated maternal and child health program or run as separate free-standing activities... something that was very important to find out because, in almost all of the African countries, it was a big problem to try and talk about free-standing family planning activities in the absence of other support. (This had been codified, as you will recall, in our message to the field in that Circular Airgram-1491.) He agreed that this was a major consideration and that we ought to try and get money to carry out such a research program. He wanted to emphasize the fact from his point of view, however, that the main purpose for the project was to provide him with a research and training facility where he could improve the capability of his medical students to carry out this kind of work when they graduated.

Q: You said the policy paper for AID had emphasized the integration of family planning and maternal/child health care services. And yet here we are coming up with a research project to determine whether that was necessary, to determine which was more effective?

PRINCE: Which was more effective, that's right.

Q: Even though we had already decided it was necessary?

PRINCE: We may have jumped the gun on that, but it wasn't entirely beyond the realms of likelihood... not just possibility... that this was the correct point of view and we certainly had this driven home to us when we made the first two visits to Africa after I became Director of the Africa Bureau's Population Division population program. We got told in no uncertain terms, in most of the countries we went to, that they weren't interested in a separate family planning program or in population control, per se. This was not even in their language. The only place where we found a fairly positive attitude towards this kind of approach was in Tunisia and, I think I mentioned in one of the earlier parts of this story, the results of that approach were not very successful, for the very reasons we are talking about. And this course of events was sufficient to satisfy me, in my judgment, to send that type of message out to the field. The reason

for the Danfa project was also nonetheless valid because the issues involved in procuring local support for contraceptive-oriented population programs hadn't been settled from a technical point of view.

The project was gradually developed and I remember Fred Sai attending a meeting of the World Health Assembly and he took some time to revisit with his old friends at Harvard and I was in the States at the time and met him in his hotel room and Fritz joined up... he was also back... and that was when we sat down and really worked out the study design which originally included the notion that we would have a project similar in principle, at least, to the one we had done in Ethiopia where we employed experimental methodology to compare "control" and "experimental" communities. The control communities in Ghana were, of course, the ones without the comprehensive approach to provision of health and family planning services, and the experimental one(s) the community with the demonstration family planning integrated maternal/child health program and comprehensive health services. This community was Danfa and, thus, the Project was called the Danfa Project (short title). The reason for its choice was also because the people in the community were willing to put time and effort and money into the construction of necessary facilities. The whole thing gradually developed along those lines and by 1969 .. early 1969.. we began looking for university support in this country. At that point Professor Neumann of UCLA and I met.

We hit it off right away and in due course, he got to meet everybody at the USAID Mission as well as in the Ministry of Health and the Medical School. He helped flesh out the research design into a project paper with Dr. Sai and his staff and particularly Dr. Fred Wurapa, who was teaching epidemiology in the Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine. The project paper reached a point where it was ready for final preparation and it was decided not to do a contract with the UCLA. The contract office said that wasn't appropriate for this kind of thing and it should instead be an international development grant. So the arrangement was carried out in that form, and it gave the University much more flexibility and freedom to make decisions as to moving funds around from one item to another and generally running the project primarily as a university project rather than under the constant watch of the AID contract office. This didn't mean, of course, that thorough oversight by the contract office was neglected, but it gave the university a greater chance to exert its own authority and responsibility to make this a successful project. This was only half the story. The other half was that the University of Ghana and the Medical School and the Ministry of Health and the Government of Ghana - all supported this approach to the project to the fullest extent possible.

The characteristics of the administration of the project from its very start in 1970 were notable in that the devolution, of authority with responsibility, to the Medical School was pronounced, from day one. The Project Director from the Medical School, who was Dr. Sai in the beginning and then Dr. Ofosu-Amah later when Dr. Sai left to join IPPF... was unquestioned and even to the point of how papers, scientific papers were to be handled. The effort was made to assure the authorship and 100% involvement in the scientific and formative nature of the paper by the University of Ghana Medical School authors. The result was that all papers were jointly authored and the senior author was always the University of Ghana Medical School scientist. About 100 such articles were published before the project was completed some 10 years later. They are all relevant topics to the project. The references are in this final report and there are too many to

even mention here but they cover the whole field of comprehensive health/ family planning services, research, epidemiology... even to the point of studies like the control and eradication of Guinea Worm, which is now a major program in many parts of Africa. Of course, smallpox eradication was certified in 1975 by WHO and the Danfa project had that as an early program; but in Ghana, it had tapered off to almost nothing before 1975 since the disease, basically, had been eradicated. All other activities in the field of health were subject to evaluation and participation by the Danfa Health Center as appropriate and consequently it was definitely a health center as well as a population center. It was a truly integrated effort. That was the way it was designed to be and that's the way it worked.

The only thing that was a serious problem with the project in my opinion was that, in the way it was originally designed, it required correct and well-carried out cross sectional demographic baseline data, including infant and childhood mortality rates in all of the communities, "experimental" or "control." And there were four of them: the Danfa Center, another community provided with health education and family planning services, a third with normal Ministry of health activities plus family planning, and a fourth with no special health or family planning interventions, just the Ministry's normal health services. In brief, it was important for the cross sectional survey to provide an accurate estimate of the demographic distribution of the population by age, sex, infant and childhood mortality in the four communities, for this research design to work; so that we would be able to measure the change that occurred in those same parameters four or five years later.

Unfortunately, UCLA had a major part to play in this, i.e., in generating the problem, if I may say so. To wit, the University apparently came to the conclusion that it would be too expensive to pay registrars to carry out the surveys; so they recruited volunteers from the University to do the work. It wasn't until the thing was well along that they discovered that the work was not accurate; and consequently, the results could not be trusted from a statistical point of view and the study had to be changed from a true "research design" to a "panel study" where you use the baseline status of each of the "cells" of the study as its own control; that is not as accurate as comparing one community, the experimental community, with a control community or with a different "service-mix" community. And you don't get a good proof of the thesis that the comprehensive approach program either works or doesn't work better than the other program. You get a proof of whether it works or not, as compared with the way things were before, but it is very difficult to draw conclusions about the relationships. This was the only major weakness in the study... in the technical aspects of carrying out the project. For those who might be interested in knowing how much something as complex and as astronomical in size and detail costs, with all the people who had to be involved in it, all the program elements, etc., it was expensive... \$6.0 million for the whole business from start to finish. And, in those days, that was a whale of a lot of money and, incidentally, a little more than six times what it cost to do a somewhat similar study in Ethiopia from 1961-67, the Demonstration and Evaluation Project, which I have already mentioned and which from a methodological point of view was quite significant in leading us, at least in the beginning, to the conclusion to use the experimental study design in Ghana as well.

Q: In the original design, wasn't it supposed to be much shorter?

PRINCE: Yes that is true. I guess as nearly always in projects of this type, where you are talking

about research you can have many complications that develop in the course of the research. In fact, you can almost expect that they will develop. It was probably a rash idea to say that this should be done in three years, which was the original proposal...in retrospect "no way."

One big problem that was neither avoidable nor foreseeable was a kind of a joke: the demographers began to find out that the populations in the experimental and control communities were unstable--there was lot of movement in and out of the communities. They couldn't figure out what in the world was going on until they suddenly woke up to the fact that the men were literally "all going fishing" down on the coast, after the first couple of years. So, they left, went down there and fished for two or three years and came back again; it really loused up the statistics to a fare thee well and they had to make all kinds of adjustments to accommodate that! And, of course, they were never able fully to accommodate for it and the result was another problem with the statistics of the study. As a result of that, and it is recorded in the report... other people shouldn't make the same mistake. It was not just fishing for fun but commercial... the idea being is "that's how they fed themselves!" The importance of fishing as a means of providing good protein for the Ghanaian population, in fact, cannot be underestimated; it was of major importance and these people were just doing what they normally do; but our cultural/anthropological studies in the beginning just somehow missed that point!

Q: What do you think are the main benefits; did we get sufficient benefits to justify the \$6.0 million investment?

PRINCE: I feel that we not only derived benefits that led us to be able to support the original contention but that they were sufficiently definitive to stimulate the whole concept of integrated maternal/child health and family planning programs in progressive African circles, and even in many places around the world. Obviously, these results were appropriate to the considerable U.S. taxpayer investment.

Q: Were these benefits really stimulated by this program?

PRINCE: Oh, yes, sure. The paper is quoted all the time, and if you ask Dr. Mahler who was Director-General of WHO at the time where some of these ideas that led to family health care came from, he would say, "You know perfectly well, Dr. Prince, we stole it from you," from us, "you" meaning the whole of Ghana. He said that "there was no question that the work in Ghana was fundamental in supporting some of the basic ideas that went into the concept of primary health care."

Q: How was that specifically; what did the Ghana experience demonstrate?

PRINCE: Because we included in the whole project these other projects that I'll tell you about in a minute. It wasn't looked at as a separate isolated effort to establish satisfactory decentralized/generalized health programs in a country that didn't have one previously. Because one of the problems with Ghana, and just about everybody else in Africa and in the developing world, was that historically, they had never had decentralized/generalized health services; they were always curative medicine oriented. It took a great effort to change that around to the true approach to an adequate emphasis on the preventive/promotive health component of the

program, in other words the “decentralized and generalized” part, and to be sure that these people in the rural and isolated parts of the country nevertheless had qualitatively and quantitatively adequate health services--the decentralized component. Those two concepts were part and parcel of the Danfa effort and of all the other HPN work we did in Ghana.

Q: Were there both technical learnings from the project as well as organizational or administrative lessons that were useful to people?

PRINCE: Yes. It was clear that the use, for example, of locally trained midwives - traditional birth attendants (TBAs) - was very effective in promoting the maternal and child health component of the program and, specifically the reduction in infant and childhood mortality and reduction in female morbidity and mortality from pregnancy. The use of various kinds of health educational techniques was also very helpful in laying out some of the problems, so mothers in the village could understand them. For example, the family health aides were part of the project in the outreach component to the villages within the health center catchment area, if you can call it that, of the Danfa Health Center. There were many villages where people couldn't get to the health center easily so we found out that the only way to handle this problem was to have an outreach component of the Danfa Health Center's activities. So this was established, and the effect on providing services to rural communities that were in the "water shed" of the Danfa project was very important. That kind of action was based on a simple but logical kind of approach... everybody thought this would be true; but to really show that it would work as well as it did was very important; and it had a major influence on establishing this concept of outreach. The general idea about how far people will go, or can go, since illnesses may seriously restrict their mobility, to really have access to good health services was therefore important to determine within some degree of accuracy. So this became part of the project objective. The answer was - no more than 5 kms! in this (the average) type of Danfa-area terrain and available transport.

Q: Eventually this was adopted by the Ministry of Health?

PRINCE: From what we determined, as just noted, this particular kind of "friction of space" still constitutes a major obstacle to establishment of truly accessible decentralized/generalized health services. In Ghana, or almost any other developing country's rural areas. And I don't know of any specific plans that the Ghana MOH or any other MOH in the African diaspora has been able to develop to solve the problem. The obvious fiscal and logistic parameters are almost overwhelming at present. It appears to me that the very recent suggestions and technical developments in the communications and computerized information systems may be the only answer. However, one runs into the usual African problem of adequate and reliable supplies of electrical power. Solar powered units may be the ultimate answer.

I know that this sort of distance teaching and/or service delivery system has been discussed for a long time. But the fiscal and related problems remain daunting for the foreseeable future. However, the Ghana MOH has, I understand, begun to "nibble at the edges" of the problem by increasing efficiency of its health services and, indirectly, of their accessibility.

Well, what happened before we got to the point of adoption of the whole idea by the Ministry of

Health [MOH] was that we had to assist them in two major areas, namely, organizational development and planning... the two go together of course. This led to a project which was called Management of Rural Health Services and, in the beginning, the idea was to emphasize the management part of organizational development; but the Government decided that really the thing that was at fault was the lack of an adequate mechanism, to plan health services not only from the point of view of the health services themselves but also in their relationships to the overall development efforts and constraints in the country. You remember there was an effort made in another project called Development of Integrated Planning and Rural Development (DIPRUD) and it didn't work because the Government didn't have an adequate financial basis, hadn't planned for adequate financial support for the rural development of the area which was near Tamale, if I'm not mistaken, in the Northern Region. This led, among other things, to the conclusion that planning was a more important part of management of rural health services than management per se, at least, to start with.

The result of this conclusion was that the Government felt it should have a National Health Planning Unit (NHPU). We went along with that because we felt it was our part to follow the lead of the Government in the ideas that were considered by the Government to be appropriate for the development of the health program in Ghana, and not to be imposing ideas from the outside. Sure enough it worked out fine and one of the things that was so important about the creation of the NHPU was the fact that the contractor - Kaiser Foundation International Health Division - decided at the very beginning that they didn't want to make the mistake of imposing this idea on the districts and provinces and regions of the country. So, they were all involved in what they called "operation dialogue" in the very beginning, before the Unit was established and before the whole concept of how it was to be established, and what its function was to be. They had these meetings with people all over the country and, of course, starting with the Ministry of Health. This, I think, established the philosophy that was so important, of true participation and decision-making about what was to be included in the project, on the part of every body who was going to be responsible for implementing it. So the people who were implementing it couldn't say, didn't want to say, that they didn't want to have anything to do with the project since they were not involved in its planning. Quite the opposite! They all thought it was "our" project, meaning, of course, their project.

This was another characteristic of the whole business in the Danfa and following projects. They were all done with the idea that the Ghanaians who were involved in running the project, would feel that those projects belonged to them and not to somebody else. They had an ownership; "title guarantee," that those projects belonged to them. And they were also responsible for publishing the results; so they had official recognition as the technical leaders of these projects in refereed journals, where appropriate, as well as being recognized as the people who designed the project from the beginning: that was the philosophy that we pursued throughout the entire experience in Ghana. And as I pointed out in the paper on "Sustainability" of these projects, I think this was the most important factor, if you can say that there was any one most important factor, that led to their sustainability. (See Annexes 19 and 20)

The next thing that was decided was that if the Planning Unit was to be effective and the management programs could be developed it would be necessary to train the people who would be leading the project. The health projects in the Governmental Units that would have primary

responsibility, because it was clear that the Ministry of Health in Accra wasn't going to be able to run the whole health program for the whole country. It had to be decentralized; (obviously, part of the "decentralized/generalized" conceptualization) Decentralization to the district level had already been established by government decree around 1974. It was therefore logical to assume that it would be appropriate to decentralize health program leadership to the district level, as well.

In order effectively to do that, it was felt it would be necessary to post a physician trained as a public health administrator to head up the district level effort to run the decentralized health program. And efforts were then established to secure the participation of the Medical School and the Planning Bureau and every body who could possibly be involved in setting up this kind of program. We discovered that the Medical School didn't have a curriculum properly suited to this requirement. So, with the help of the Overseas Development Agency of the UK and its operating health arm...the West African Health Secretariat, under the leadership of Dr Nicholas de Hesse, the Executive Director of the Secretariat, they were able to provide the University of Ghana Medical School, Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health with a "ready-made" curriculum for public health specialists. Establishment of this curriculum became one of the objectives of the Community Health Team Support project - CHETS. Annex 21 must be read for full appreciation of the detailed way in which the decentralization of the health program in Ghana was implemented.

To sum up the basic philosophy of the CHETS project: it was clear that there had to be a health management focus at the district levels, run by a fully qualified public health physician, and a management team. Ideally, this was the way it should be done. This management team, which we called the District Health Management Team (DHMT), would include all the disciplines that would be necessary for a properly run public health generalized health program, i.e., public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, etc. along with the Public Health Physician in charge. They would then work closely with the communities that were within the District and hopefully, in time, they would be able to convince the communities that they ought to have public health committees which could be represented at meetings at the district level to discuss, a possible plan for providing health services to the district. The budget that was involved... would then be passed on up the line through the regional level to the central level. In that way, the Ministry of Economic Planning would get involved, because they would have some confidence in the validity and value of the budgetary estimates that were coming down from the Districts and Regions. The way it was before, they felt that these were not very well worked out and had too much emphasis on curative services, just as I was saying earlier, whereas this system, of having a well qualified person and a team working on the matter, with the local communities and at the district level was the way to get it done properly. Consequently that project... the CHETS project... was sort of the cap to the whole idea of the real establishment of an organized program for providing primary care health services to the people of Ghana. In my opinion we all had a great deal to learn from experiences in other countries and that's what led us to these conclusions.

And I particularly refer to experiences in the United States and within that, my own State, New York State, because, in 1913, New York was pretty much in the same condition as Ghana. They didn't have any well organized way of transmitting health services, either authority or responsibility, from Albany the capital of the state, to the towns and counties around the state.

And it was a disorganized program. When, in 1923, Dr. Herman Biggs was made Commissioner of Health for the State of New York, he saw this problem and decided it could be settled in very much the same way that we did in Ghana... District Health Departments and District State Health Officers. He also set up the requirement that the District Health Officer would have to be a physician with a Master's Degree in Public Health; how about that for way back then?!

This was followed, up to the present time, except that in addition to decentralizing to the districts, it was shown through a demonstration project, under the aegis of the Kellogg Foundation in 1934, that an even better way to handle it was to decentralize the services to county level, because in a state as large as New York, the counties are also quite large. The levels were set, population-wise and funding-wise, at an absolute minimum requirement for establishing a county health department in any county. There were some counties, however, that did not have a big enough tax base, and, therefore, had to be combined. This was discussed in a famous paper by Haven Emerson, a great public health physician in the United States, in 1945, for the American Medical Association. It's entitled "Local Health Units for the Nation" and led to the codification of the whole idea of the district and county health departments which we found to be applicable in Ethiopia, where the administrator I told you about earlier had been to the United States studying for his Master's at the Maxwell Institute of Public Administration in Syracuse, New York and gotten the idea from them. And again in Washington, Dr. Mahler told me much, much later (1989/90) at a meeting of the National Council on International Health that the main ideas re District Health Services had come from us. (See next chapter for more details).

DANIEL O'DONOHUE
Political Officer
Accra (1968-1971)

Ambassador Daniel A. O'Donohue was born in Michigan in 1931. He received a BS from the University of Detroit in 1953 and an MPA in 1958 from Wayne State University. He served overseas in the US Army from 1953 to 1955 and entered the Foreign Service in 1959. His assignments abroad include Genoa, Seoul, Accra and Bangkok, with ambassadorships to Burma and Thailand. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Ambassador O'Donohue in 1996.

Q: Next you went to Ghana. When were you there?

O'DONOHUE: I was in Ghana from 1968 to 1971. I was chief of the Political Section.

Q: How did that assignment come up? How did it come about?

O'DONOHUE: Well, I had decided by then that to get ahead in the Foreign Service, you had to be a supervisor. In those days, for a Political Officer like myself, it meant being chief of a Political Section. With that in mind I would have been happy to have been chief of a Political Section at an Embassy in East Asia. However, the posts there were too big for someone as junior as myself. An assignment like that wasn't going to happen, so I looked for a post in Africa. It

was a different period. In my view the personnel system we had at that time [1968] was the most responsive and worked the best, although some people thought that it was too dominated by the regional Bureaus.

This was a period when the geographic and functional bureaus had the major role in the assignments process. Personnel functioned as more than “first among equals,” but it was less than dominant. The assignment panels were usually made up of a senior Personnel Officer from M and the Executive Officers of the relevant, regional bureaus. Each bureau had a Personnel Officer. In fact, the Office of Personnel had a role a little stronger than “first among equals,” but the bureaus, one way or another, handled an immense proportion of the assignments.

So, in effect, this was what I was interested in. To my surprise, and certainly for someone of my rank, I got a gem of an assignment, which was what Accra was in those days. In fact, the Political Section that had been there before I arrived in Ghana was unbelievable for a small Embassy. It included Bill Dupree, who was later an Ambassador. At that time he was probably the best Political Officer of his rank in African Affairs. He was the chief of the Political Section. Jack Matlock, later our Ambassador to the Soviet Union, was Labor Officer. Alan Berlind was an exceptional officer, but he retired in his early 50’s. These were three Political Officers assigned to Accra who were immensely productive.

When I arrived in Accra, the officer who succeeded Jack Matlock outranked me, so the understanding was that he would serve as the chief of the Political Section until his tour was up. Then I would take over the job. We also eliminated one job.

At this time Kwame Nkrumah had fallen from power in Ghana, and the gloss was off African Affairs. African Affairs, say, from 1959 to 1964-1965, was of high interest as far as the United States was concerned. African Affairs was a glamour area. That feeling had gone, but there was still some residue there. There was interest in the Department in having Ghana succeed under its post-Nkrumah leadership.

To my surprise, I received this assignment to the Political Section in Ghana. I had three years there [1968-1971], which I much enjoyed. My own impression is that, until recently, these were the last three years when you could describe the country as “tranquil.” There had been a coup led by the police and military which had deposed Nkrumah. Then the coup leaders returned the country to civilian government, led by a group of educated people who felt that they should have inherited power from the beginning of independence. They felt that Nkrumah, whom they considered a “demagogue,” had usurped them.

This was one of those times in your career when you live in a highly corrupt society. I was fairly close to a number of Ghanaians and found that, for them, corruption was an accepted part of life. When I left Ghana, it was with a sigh of relief that I would be out of the country before the inevitable coup took place. The coup did take place, followed by the downward spiral of violence and repression which has characterized Ghana for about a decade or so.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

O'DONOHUE: The Ambassador was Tom McElhiney. Originally, his background and focus had been Europe. In fact, at the only time previous to this assignment that I had met him, he was the desk officer for Germany. He was one of those officers who were pulled into African Affairs, when it was considered a high profile area. Jack Foley was the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]. I thought the two of them had immense ability.

Q: Well, how did you operate as a Political Officer? Can you talk about "contacts" and what you were looking for?

O'DONOHUE: Very easily. In South Korea we had always had wide-ranging contacts. That had been my modus operandi. You go out and meet people, focusing on people who count. For me it has always involved a very conscious effort to get as close and as high as I can in whatever areas are of importance.

However, I had always been known as a workaholic and an intense person. Well, about a month after I got to Ghana, I had to sit down and assess the fact that, if I continued at the pace at which I had normally been doing things, I would be like a whirling top, against the backdrop of a country which was running at a much slower pace. So I changed then. If you didn't get a cable done by the end of the day, it didn't go out that day, and nobody really noticed. I consciously slowed down.

The Ghanaians are gregarious people. Under the government led by the military and police I developed contacts and friendships with people who later held many of the senior jobs. So I'd established these relationships before the civilian government came to power.

In some respects I thought that Ghanaian society was appalling, in terms of its polygamous aspects. However, you take what you have. With this gregarious group, if you sat around and drank and designed your social events, to be sure there were always more Ghanaians than anyone else, they would want to come. What they didn't want to do was to come to events where they were "tokens." So our social events were always rather large and always had many more Ghanaians than anyone else. They were always fun.

Then, during the day, if you went out and visited the Parliament, you were risking your liver. The Ghanaian politicians drank heavily. You would go to see someone in Parliament, say, at 10:00 or 11:00AM. They would always invite you to go down to what they called "The Library." In fact, it was the bar. You would end up putting away, maybe, a liter of Heineken's or some other beer, while you were talking to someone or, perhaps, to three or four people.

I think that I did very well. I believe that I had a good reputation in the Foreign Service and I was blessed, on the face of it, to serve under an Ambassador and DCM who knew African Affairs well. The DCM [Jack Foley] had a reputation as very demanding. What I found was that the Ambassador and the DCM were fully supportive of my efforts. They not only never hindered me but gave me, as far as I could see, all of the freedom that I could want. They were both people that you could go in to see and kick things around with.

I couldn't get over the talent we had in this Embassy. The DCM, Jack Foley, bloomed very late

in career terms. His career really didn't take off, until he was already very close to retirement. He was about the best DCM that I had ever seen in the Foreign Service. He kept a firm hold on things, but he had confidence in me and gave me a free rein.

Q: Did we have any issues outstanding with Ghana during your tour of duty there?

O'DONOHUE: No. Ghana was the first place that I had served where we were not the dominant foreign influence. There were some issues outstanding. We had some interest in promoting democracy and we were interested in seeing Ghana succeed.

We had a significant aid program and played a fairly substantial role, in this respect. I think that we were much more effective than the British were. They never seemed to be able to adjust to the change in their status in Ghana, which had been a British colony prior to its gaining independence in 1957. Assignment to Ghana was sort of "fun" in that respect. We pursued all sorts of objectives. We tried to get the Ghanaians to support us in the UN and elsewhere. We had a continuing interest in the country, but it was nothing like our relationships with East Asian countries.

Q: Nkrumah, Tito, Sukarno, and, I guess, Nehru were the leaders of the "non aligned movement" which we tended to see essentially as tilting toward the Soviet Union.

O'DONOHUE: This assignment was my "African interlude." I went to Africa in 1968 and left in 1971, and that was it. I think that our view of Ghana was more in terms of the African competition between ourselves, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and China, on the other. Nkrumah had been a Marxist and was clearly heavily influenced and supported by the Russians and, to a degree, by the Chinese. I think that we saw him in that Cold War, African context, and not the broader, "non aligned" aspect.

Q: Was there much Soviet influence in Ghana by this time?

O'DONOHUE: No, quite the opposite. The group that had seized power from Nkrumah was composed of older military and police officers who had only modest educations. These men had been corporals and sergeants during World War II. Indeed, it was interesting that all of their military bases were named after places in the British campaign in Burma. There had been two West African divisions in General Slim's Fourteenth Army. There were younger police and military officers who were somewhat better educated, but these older men at the top had been non-commissioned and warrant officers under the British.

These older men were no less corrupt than others but I had a fair amount of respect for them in the sense that they had to pull the country away from Nkrumah. If you were a Ghanaian patriot, this was the time to do it, because during the seven years that Nkrumah held power, he had ruined it. In their own way, these older leaders had then worked to put back democratic rule, for which they later got nothing but abuse. As I said, these older leaders were not men of any great stature, but, in their way, they tried to do the best that they could.

Q: I always find it interesting to discuss corruption, particularly if corruption is pervasive in a

given country, You can send in a cable, talking about corruption. However, if you put it too strongly, back in Washington it will affect everything that you talk about. The country concerned tends always to be called "the corrupt regime..."

O'DONOHUE: Corruption is a relative thing. It was a "given" of the situation in Ghana that corruption was endemic. This wasn't a country where we were deeply involved or had a great deal of responsibility. Of course, we didn't want our own programs to be corrupt. We were working to ensure this. However, Ghana was not a country where we felt that its institutions were either of our making or dependent on us. So, objectively speaking, corruption was not our problem in Ghana. We described it. Frankly, you would be hard put to ignore it. However, the existence of corruption in Ghana didn't carry with it any connotation of a US policy failure.

In South Korea corruption was always a strong thread there. However, in South Korea my view had been that the basic economic decisions by President Park and his technocrats were sound. Secondly, the existing corruption always related to who got what. The "what," or whatever was at stake, met their needs. By contrast, in Ghana you had cases marked "machinery." They would open these cases and would find just so much junk. Every aspect of the transaction had been fraudulent. In South Korea that wasn't the problem. The airplanes flew, and the machinery worked. However, the question of who got what, in connection with a given transaction, was obviously what was in question. In Ghana corruption was endemic. However, we were not that deeply engaged, and the institutions were not of our making. So we had no difficulty in reporting on corruption.

Q: This was a major period in terms of the civil rights movement in the United States. Did that have much of an impact in Ghana or, more generally, in Africa?

O'DONOHUE: At the time Jesse Jackson was a very young leader. This was only a couple of years after Martin Luther King's death. From time to time Jesse Jackson would come to Ghana. That had more to do with emphasizing his own African roots.

My own view is that "incomprehension" is too strong a word. However, in essence, at that time in Ghana the civilian leadership was British-educated. The Prime Minister had been a professor at Cambridge University. All of this, as I said earlier, was to no avail. They were incompetent. Furthermore, the leadership was rather supercilious.

It wasn't that there hadn't been discrimination in Ghana prior to independence and that the Ghanaians didn't resent it. However, they didn't have the same experience as blacks did in the United States, and tribal differences were always more important. American blacks tended to see themselves as playing a leadership role vis-a-vis Africans. However, American blacks never seemed to have any immense rapport with the Ghanaians. Now with Nkrumah it was a very different kind of situation. He had been to the United States and had experienced discrimination. He had gone to Lincoln University in the US, and had experience of a completely different situation than that in Ghana.

At that point the Ghanaian civilian leadership saw themselves as having been educated at Oxford and Cambridge and felt that this system was immensely superior to the American system. There

were occasional American black figures visiting Ghana. Their meetings would be “amiable” but they were just talking different worlds.

CECIL S. RICHARDSON
Consular Officer
Accra (1968-1971)

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.

RICHARDSON: I went back to Africa. I went to Accra in Ghana.

Q: Yes. Was this by request or ...

RICHARDSON: No, that was an instance I didn't volunteer, that was what came up and it was very good. It was very good. I ended up spending 3 years there ... what was a 2 year assignment.

Q: This would be '68 to when?

RICHARDSON: '71.

Q: '71.

RICHARDSON: Yes. I enjoyed the tour because of the people. I still find it to be true, because I meet a lot of Ghanaians here in Washington, they were, without a doubt, among the most gracious people I have ever worked among or worked with. They're delightful.

Q: What were you doing in Ghana?

RICHARDSON: In Ghana, very small consular section, I was it. It was a light consular workload. I had two employees, two national staff, that's all. This was before visas became a problem in West Africa.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

RICHARDSON: McIlhenny.

Q: Where stood the government of Ghana when you were there ... things fluctuate ... ?

RICHARDSON: By the time I got there, was it Nkrumah?

Q: Nkrumah? Was he still there? No.

RICHARDSON: No. It was the military police coup, which evidently didn't cause us any problem and there didn't seem to be any serious abuse of human rights and there wasn't evidently much to steal so it may really have been typically political reasons for getting rid of Nkrumah.

Q: Well, was it, you were saying the Ghanaians were an easy people to work with?

RICHARDSON: Gracious, really. I've never served or worked with people more gracious. For me, they're an outstanding quality of the time I spent with them. And I was there ... I had originally gone for 2 years, and I spent a third. I spent a third, you want to know why I spent the third?

Q: Yes.

RICHARDSON: When I went to Ghana, I went there first and my wife followed me by about a month or so because she had gone to Tunisia and Libya because we had both gotten very interested in French North Africa and Libya. We had read a book on North Africa written by one of the Sitwells. He'd written a book called Mauritania. Not what we call Mauritania today, but evidently in the Roman times, it was much of the Northern tier and we had read about, in his book, about it was a trip in that area. And we'd gotten interested in it, particularly in reference to some underground dwellers called Troglodytes. I couldn't go because I had to get to post. You know, you should have arrived yesterday. My wife stopped off, and when I met her at the airport in Accra, almost her first words to me were, "I will never set foot in Libya again unless my plane is shot down." No problem. There's no chance of me going to Libya so ... well, almost two years later, I get a cable from the department, and guess where they're sending me to ... Tripoli, in Libya.

Q: Oh, boy.

RICHARDSON: Suddenly that conversation comes back to me: "I'm never going to set foot in that country again." Well, I wasn't all that keen on going there either so I went to my DCM, McFarland and said look at this. And he said, "So." I said, "I can't take this home." [Laughter]. He says, "Okay, I'll fix that." So he got me a third year in Accra, which couldn't have pleased me more.

Q: Well, what was the consular ...

RICHARDSON: But, I later met the man who got that assignment.

Q: And what did he think of it?

RICHARDSON: I didn't ask him, I didn't want to hear. He might have said he liked it.

Q: What were the consular problems of Ghana?

RICHARDSON: Very few. Very, very few. There were no visa problem. And the one plane crash I had was a DC-3 put down on a beach somewhere, but the one American on the plane walked away from it. The only other, I don't remember, oh, there was one incident of a group of African-American youngsters who had come out on a charter flight, whole bunch of them, with not too many supervising adults, but enough. They weren't a problem as delinquents or anything like that, but the charter went bust and they were stranded. And so, they were anxious and their parents were anxious and the American woman who was in charge of them was very anxious so that was a problem. But, they finally got some transportation arranged for them. But my DCM was concerned they were demonstrating outside and inside of the embassy. The embassy wasn't one of these fortress things like we have now, this was completely accessible to the street, no physical security, you could, anybody could walk in, walk up the stairs. It was one of those showcases of American architecture.

Q: Oh, yes. It looked like a drum.

RICHARDSON: Yes. And set up on piles. Well, it was a beautiful building, but lousy office space [laughter]. You could, if it's raining, you could not go from one office to another without getting wet. So they were demonstrating and McFarland took them, the whole bunch of them who were demonstrating, got them into cars and took them home and fed them hotdogs and defused the situation. I thought that was very good. But, there were no notable consular problems. The highlights of that tour was a long conversation with Sidney Poitier. He played the young man in, "Guess Whose Coming to Dinner." Well, Sidney Poitier calls up and asks for an appointment with me. Wow! So, sure he could come in, you know, fix the time. And I'm apprehensive because my idea of what celebrities are, like you know, coming in and making demands because of who they are. This could not have been more different from the way he was. He was one of the sweetest, most gracious people I've ever dealt with of any importance. No, his daughter was marrying or had married a young Ghanaian engineer and he wanted to know what was involved in him getting a visa to come to the United States. And he didn't really make any demands, he actually just wanted to know what's involved. He wasn't demanding any special speedy service or anything of that sort. I would have given him the store. He, oh he, was charming. And also his daughter was beautiful and the young engineer was handsome. They made a beautiful couple. So that was a high point of my consular work in Accra.

Q: [Laughter].

RICHARDSON: Well, something else must have happened in three years, but I never had to increase the staff. As a matter of fact, I fired one of the two of them for malfeasance, for work that was so sloppy it had to be deliberate. Anyway, I fired him. So I ended up with one clerk, so you know we weren't very busy, nothing very serious happened. My office was beyond the clerk's office and the public entrance so I heard somebody come in and so I called out to them and I said, "Well the clerk's not here. Come in. What can I do for you?" Not looking, you know, hollering because it was a short distance ... they could hear me. I do this two, three times. Finally in exasperation, I get up and I go to the door and there I'm looking at two deaf people who are talking to each other with their hands. I felt like a horse's rear end. I forget why they

wanted to see me. But I felt terrible. [Laughter].

Q: Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop and we'll pick this up again in 1972.

RICHARDSON: When I went to Belgium.

Q: So we'll pick it up then. Well, I'm off for the next week, but how about the week after?

RICHARDSON: Well, the week after is when I'm leaving for Europe ...

Q: Today is the 6th of October, 2003 and you were mentioning, you met the American movie actor, Sydney Poitier. You might have mentioned this.

RICHARDSON: Well, I got a call one day and the person identified himself as Sidney Poitier, this was in Ghana. In Accra and asked if he could come in to see me. Well, of course he could come into see me. When would you like to come in? He said his flight leaves tomorrow, 10:00, fine. But, I'm a little concerned because this is a big, high powered guy and I didn't know what he wanted and he might very well be someone difficult to deal with. He turned up and he wasn't at all difficult to deal with. He was one of the most charming, delightful, sweetest person I think I've ever dealt with in the Foreign Service. And what his problem was wasn't a problem, he just wanted information. His daughter, beautiful girl, was marrying a young Ghanaian engineer and he wanted to know what was involved in them getting a visa to go to the United States and that's all it was, but it was a thoroughly delightful, oh 35, 40 minutes I spent with him. [Laughter]. Memorable because I had been apprehensive of what the person was going to be like and he turned out, he charmed me, absolutely. You could tell he is a real gentleman.

JOHN D. STEMPEL
Ghana Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1970-1972)

Dr. John D. Stempel served in Guinea, Burundi, Zambia, Tehran, and Madras as well as at AF (Ghana), Operations Center, DOD, and NEA. This interview was conducted in 1993.

Q: After that, you went on to become the Ghanaian Desk officer. How did your experience in Guinea help prepare you for that job from August, 1970 to 1972?

STEMPEL: I had, of course, had experience in West Africa in Guinea and in Central Africa in Burundi. And I had met other African figures, including the Ghanaian Ambassador to the United States when I worked for Elliot Richardson. It was a great opportunity for me. I had studied under one of the premier American scholars on Ghana, David Apter at Berkeley, so I probably had a much better academic background on Ghana than other people. Plus, my boss in that job

was the first career black Foreign Service officer, who had been a USIA officer and was working for the State Department, Rudolph Aggrey, the great grandson of J. F. Aggrey, who had been the minister in the first Ashanti government when the Ghanaians tried to break away from the Brits. So, within that office we had a lot of plus factors, plus the government in Ghana, when I came into the job, was a democratic government which had been elected following Nkrumah's overthrow and a brief military government. One of the sad features of that job was that government was overthrown in the spring of 1972 by a colonel who felt life was a little tough. At that point it brought home to me the fragility of governments in some of the newly independent states. There was no particular reason for the coup.

I had done a paper on saying that the major danger for most countries, given the weak economic position, was the captain, the major, and the land rover, on the idea that if some captain and a major got drunk one night and decided to overthrow the government they could take the land rover down to the radio station and declare a coup and if they had people willing to go along with them, it would work. Well, that was about what happened in Ghana, except that it was a Lt. Colonel who did it. The military took over and the civilian government just melted away. There were no major riots. That was in effect a sad part of that period. Later the paper came back from the then Assistant Secretary for Africa, David Newsom, who said that I had been more prophetic than I knew.

I had worked with African affairs, I knew what some of the problems were and I was very quickly introduced to some others and worked with the deputy assistant secretary and later our Ambassador to the Ivory Coast, Robert Smith, to develop the first debt relief package. When I was in Iran four or five years later, I got a cable from Ambassador Smith, who said that it had taken five years but we had finally signed the Ghana debt agreement, almost as you and I drafted it four and a half years ago. Now, I have always had the feeling that if the United States had been a little quicker and the other countries more receptive, and we had the debt agreement in place, it would have given democratic government a new lease on life. But we learn our lessons about timing, slowly and with difficulty sometimes.

But it was an interesting assignment. Rudy Aggrey, my boss, was one of the four or five outstanding people I worked with. He had balance and was a thoroughly great person to work for.

WILLIAM HAVEN NORTH
Mission Director, USAID
Accra (1970-1976)

William Haven North was born in 1926. In addition to serving in Ghana, he served in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Nigeria. Mr. North was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 18, 1993.

NORTH: My work on Ghana started just two years after Nkrumah had been overthrown and the country was going through a major economic structural adjustment. We didn't call it that in

those days, but economic reform with debt rescheduling was a major issue. I became involved in the debt rescheduling meetings. For some reason in those days State and Treasury allowed USAID to take the lead on debt rescheduling issues. My predecessor started the U. S. participation in the rescheduling meetings, and I picked it up after he left. I had people from Treasury and the Economic Bureau from State, working with me on the debt rescheduling exercise. It was one of the first of this kind. This was before the Paris Club on debt reschedulings had been set up. It was a fascinating experience.

I had to do a lot of fast learning...to learn about the esoteric aspects of debt negotiations and rescheduling, determining what the debt was...Ghana at that time had about \$800 million in debt that it was unable to pay- mostly short term and medium term debt. There were issues of how much leeway creditors should give the Ghana Government, what the schedule arrangements would be, and getting the European creditors to agree. A lot of the debt was in the form of suppliers credits, which were eight-year high interest credits. They were used for a number of terrible projects that the Europeans had sold the Ghanaians such as cocoa silos that were never used, tomato paste factories that never functioned, etc. The Ghanaians had thought, and been advised by international economists during the early days of the Nkrumah period, that industrialization was the way to development. But the country didn't have the economic and technological base for it nor the infrastructure; the Government was, in effect, being ripped off by Western and Eastern European supplier/creditors. When Ghana became independent, the country had half a billion dollars of sterling reserves from their cocoa marketing; Nkrumah went through that in a hurry. Then there was another \$500 million dollars in credits for these industrial activities. The greedy Western and Eastern European governments with their export credits and government guarantee programs enabled the suppliers to make major equipment sales and undertake major turn-key projects at little or no risk to the suppliers. The result was a lot of very bad deals, some of which were corrupt-a point of major contention later on. When Nkrumah was overthrown, the Government attempted to pay off the debt, but couldn't do it. As a consequence, there was a long process of determining the size and make up of the debt as there was no systematic record keeping as each government agency made its own deals. The rescheduling went on in several stages.

I remember leading a delegation with people from the Economic Bureau and Treasury to one of these debt rescheduling conferences in London. The UK, as the principal creditor, chaired the meetings. We had 12 creditors, who were hard-nosed, tough, poker playing types, sitting around the table with the Ghanaian representative. Everybody had their positions and held their cards closely. It was a very curious affair because during the meetings and negotiations agreements had to be reached on what debt would be included, what would be the grace period, what would be the interest rate during the grace period, what would be the repayment period, and endless other components of the debt process. Each creditor was trying to end up in a favorable position for his government. Being from USAID, I was under instructions to get the most beneficial terms, i.e., long repayment periods and low interest rates, that would assist Ghana's development, while the others were Treasury types who were determined to give Ghana the minimum debt relief possible. They didn't want to let the Ghanaians off-the-hook by allowing them to pay off their debts over the long term.

It was an interesting process; the US position was particularly awkward because we had a very

small amount of this debt, less than \$1.0 million-we were really a minor player. Our only major debt was for the Volta Dam and that was a long-term debt and was not included in the rescheduling process. We had the awkward position of trying to argue that we should be excluded from the debt rescheduling under a "de minimus rule" because we were so minor. But at the same time, we were pressing the other creditors to be generous. Along with the World Bank Representative we tried to place the debt rescheduling in the context of development resources as a form of long term aid to help meet balance of payments deficits. The other creditors would have none of it, which has been the U.S. Treasury's position for many years as well. It was an interesting and tough negotiating process. I recall the French representative participating throughout the negotiations in English in a relatively constructive manner. And then just before adjournment, he blasted the whole process and terms in a fiery diatribe in French. Clearly his instructions were to be helpful and not block the process while showing strong French Government opposition to the rescheduling because of precedents for Francophone countries. The U.S. position was also constrained by our interest in obtaining British support for tough terms in a Colombia rescheduling where we were the major creditor while the U.K. was the major creditor in Ghana. This was a small but interesting example of the inter-relatedness of foreign policy actions that I came to experience over and over in many different settings.

These debt rescheduling exercises were repeated two or three other times. In fact, there was one more round which took place in Ghana, but that is stepping ahead a bit. The debt issue hung over Ghana's relationship with the US into the mid-70s and was a constant stumbling block for the assistance program, even though Ghana in the early days had been a favored country.

My work on Ghana and the other West African countries was soon overwhelmed by the Nigerian civil war, the Biafran struggle.

Q: We will pick that up next time. Great. Haven, as a non-economist, non-development person let me ask a question. What was in it? You said that everybody was lined up ready to give aid to Ghana. What was in it for first world countries to give aid to Ghana? Why was their eagerness to get involved?

NORTH: That is an interesting question. I think part of the answer lies in the fact that Ghana was looked upon at that time as a leader in Africa, one of the first to achieve independence. It had, of course, very articulate leadership including Nkrumah's leadership of the Pan African Movement and the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Although his rule deteriorated resulting in his overthrow in 1966, he left a legacy of Ghana being one of the leading countries in Africa. The principal competitor for this role was Nigeria, which also was a major recipient of external assistance. But Nigeria was quite preoccupied with itself so it was not as identified with Africa-wide leadership as Ghana had been at that time. Ghana had, of course, a history of considerable British investment in education at the higher levels with a prominent university and many Ghanaians in U.K. universities. When I was there we were working with the second, possibly the third generation of highly educated people. The Ghanaians are very articulate, very outgoing, hospitable and, of course, just delightful people to work with. They were quite popular on the world scene, at that time.

At the time of independence (1957), Ghana was relatively well endowed and had substantial

resources in sterling reserves and gold mining and cocoa exports. Thus for the early years after independence, Ghana was attractive, in part because of these resources, to those within and outside the country who favored rapid modernization and industrialization, following the prevailing development theory of that era and the lure of Western export sales opportunities. It was at that time also that the United States was heavily involved in the construction of the hydro-electric power plant-the Volta Dam- on the Volta River at the urging of Kaiser Industries, which was constructing a aluminum smelting plant-VALCO-in Ghana's port city of Tema. The relatively low cost power from the dam was the key to the smelting operations. Because of the major private US investment involved and the appeal of the dam which had World Bank backing, both President Eisenhower and President Kennedy became involved in approving US participation with financial assistance and a political risks guarantee. This added to the visibility of Ghana in high level circles of the U.S. Government.

Ghana was a symbol of Africa and African leadership when the U.S. was becoming more aware of the continent. Also the U.S. was experiencing a growing interest in assisting the underdeveloped countries of the world. "A new direction" in assistance policy was unfolding; a major shift in the rationale for assistance...the alleviation of poverty by direct assistance rather than relying on indirect "trickle down" from general economic growth. As a consequence, assistance to Africa was generally expanded. I will come to that when I get to the next stage. But it, in general, was the growing momentum of the U.S. discovery of Africa in the early sixties, the attractions of independence movements, and the beginning of American relationships with the continent, that, in addition to Ghana's own attractiveness, helped to place Ghana high on donor lists.

My task, shortly after arriving in Ghana, was to reorient the program from a traditional technical assistance program with a large number of individual specialists, with many U.S. Government employees located throughout the country (29 different posts), to one largely focused on economic policy reform, balance of payments assistance, and debt reschedulings working closely with the IMF, World Bank and other major bilateral donors. This was during the time (1970-71) of President Busia's administration following a return to a democratic government.

Q: In those days we were always keeping an eye on the Soviets and what they were doing. Was that a factor in the 1970-76 period when you were there?

NORTH: Well, Soviet influence was something of a factor but relatively minor in my recollection. If there was anything going on in Ghana, it was largely clandestine with links to some of the dissident groups.

Q: In other words, you weren't looking over your shoulder...if we don't do this the Soviets will do that?

NORTH: Right, but it was an overriding rationale for everything you did. It was assumed that if you relaxed anywhere, the Soviet influence would move in. In Ghana, during Nkrumah's time, an important part of the country's industrialization and its indebtedness problems resulted from deals with the Eastern Bloc countries and with the Soviets in barter arrangements (cocoa for equipment) greatly to Ghana's disadvantage. I mentioned the Yugoslav tomato paste factory ,

the Czechoslovakian tire factory, large imports of useless farm tractors, etc.

Q: Designed for a different type of...

NORTH: Yes, they just didn't fit the situation. Among the embarrassments were the large piles of Eastern European farm equipment which had never been used and was rusting away. (We made an inventory for the Government with the view to seeing how much could be repaired and used for farm machinery centers...not much, as it turned out.) So I think the subsequent administrations in Ghana after the Nkrumah period were a bit chary about relationships with the Soviet Bloc countries because of these bad barter deals. The Soviets, however, were never 100 percent off the stage, they were nibbling around the edges and with the coups and other instabilities in the African countries, there were always opportunities. Soviet influence became a major issue subsequently during the early period when Colonel Rawlings took over and was flirting with the Libyans and the Soviets. But that was after my time. Of course, the Soviets were more active in other parts of Africa such as Guinea (off and on), Angola and Mozambique after independence, Somalia and later Ethiopia, and so on.

Q: Back to your time. The debt problem had more or less been solved and everybody was rushing off and we had a new look in the thrust of our foreign aid. What did this mean?

NORTH: That's right. In 1972, Colonel Acheampong threw out the elected government of President Busia, while I was there; it was a bloodless coup largely explained as an "amenities coup" as the military had been squeezed pretty hard in the economic reforms of the Government that were being pressed on them by the IMF, World Bank and the donor community. We had \$30 million in PL 480 (agricultural commodities) and commodity assistance pending the implementation of the economic reforms which were very controversial in the government, particularly a major devaluation. When Acheampong took over the Government, he reversed the devaluation and repudiated the debt and declared that Ghana would be self-reliant; as a result, all external assistance was placed on hold. It took almost two years of a painstaking negotiations to sort that out. At the Government's insistence, as part of its non-alignment policy, and much to the displeasure of the creditors, the last round of debt negotiations was held in Ghana. In order to ensure secrecy for the creditors caucus meetings to develop their position while in Ghana, I arranged for them to use a small office building behind our USAID headquarters building, after having it searched for "bugs" at French insistence. I recall writing Washington (just before the final debt agreements were signed in 1974, I believe) that the donors were lined up like restless, prancing horses at the gate waiting for the starting bell; eager to restore positive relations with the Ghana Government. The U.S. was one of them. At the same time and coincidental with the debt and aid question in Ghana, there was the U. S. shift in foreign assistance policy called "New Directions." Our task in the field was to develop a New Directions, Basic Human Needs program. The "New Directions" philosophy repudiated the concept of "trickle down" economic growth. Essentially, what this meant in Ghana was a shift away from macro-economic reforms and balance of payments aid to assistance directed at the rural poor. We spent a lot of time working with the Government in trying to shape this program. While philosophically we were not far apart from the Ghanaians in the Acheampong administration, it was very hard to pin them down on what they wanted us to do or how to work out a program. There was, initially, considerable distrust by the Government of U.S. intentions resulting from our support of the

earlier economic reforms. I remember the Government officials asking: "Where has all the money from commodity assistance and PL 480 gone that was provided during Busia's administration; what do we have to show for it?" The economic policy reform orientation to our program was no longer acceptable in Ghana and in Washington!

As a result, we took a fair amount of initiative in trying to work with the Ghanaians in the conceptualization of the type of program that fit Ghana's self-reliant policy and Washington's "New Directions." I remember roughing this out and, when the Assistant Administrator Sam Adams came to Ghana, using his calls at the higher levels of the Government to establish a dialogue on future assistance. Because of the Ambassador's role, my access to the higher levels of Government, apart from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Economic Development was limited. A traditional USAID Mission Director/Ambassador concern.

Q: The Ambassador was Fred Hadsel at that time, wasn't he?

NORTH: Yes, he was.

Q: He was there from 1971-74.

NORTH: Fred was a great ally and supporter. We had no real differences. It was probably just the tradition of the function. I recall Ambassador McElhiney in an earlier period questioning our efforts on economic reform. In retrospect, he may have been more right than anybody in saying that there was no point spending a lot of time on Ghana, it was just going down hill, while the rest of us were trying to push it back up hill. He, however, supported us in our negotiations with the Government.

The main point was that we had difficulties formulating a program with the Government which was still making up its own mind what it meant by self-reliance and the type of programs it wanted to carry out. The Government wasn't clear what it wanted. We continued working with the officials with Washington pressing for evidence of the program changes to the New Directions philosophy. It was a very formative but trying period. But, we did have a number of important projects that we had started before to build on, particularly in population and health.

One of our new projects was a multi-component agriculture project, which was a major effort to get the Ministry of Agriculture to articulate a program that we could help with. The Principal Secretary at that time-there were two-or three during my stay in Ghana-was not very communicative. This was very frustrating. Also the Ministers of Agriculture kept changing-4-5 during my time. Every time I was able to develop a rapport with a Minister of Agriculture, he would be removed and another one would come. So it was very hard to provide any continuity to our planning and negotiations. When I asked them what they wanted, I got a long list of equipment for research centers, some vehicles and things like that. None of it constituted a program. I said it wasn't acceptable; that we couldn't just provide a miscellaneous assortment of equipment. We had to have some kind of program with well defined objectives for what we were trying to accomplish together.

Eventually, we were able to put together a \$30 million multi-faceted project called Management

Input Deliveries of Agricultural Services-or MIDAS! I am afraid the acronym was a bit of an exaggeration. The project had components in credit, agricultural research, agricultural extension, agricultural development focused on women, fertilizer supply and seed production, studies of marketing strategies-all focused on small farmer development. The fertilizer component was intended to be a privatization of the fertilizer business to get it out of the Ministry of Agriculture. Similarly, the seed component was aimed at commercializing seed production outside of Government management. The project also included measures to strengthen decentralized agricultural credit administration. However, it was pretty complicated.

My concept was to try to get something of sufficient size and scope that would attract attention, attract involvement, bring together the several project components and actors so that they could be mutually reinforcing rather than ad hoc. In the past at various times, we had worked a little bit on credit, a little bit on research, fertilizer distribution and so on without an overall framework. It took a long time to put this together, but we did; I still think it is a valid concept. My strategy was to attempt to develop the separate components, moving each ahead as they were ready while placing them in the overall framework of a large funded coordinated program addressing the needs of small farmers in selected parts of the country-an approach which did not fit well with USAID's programming processes and Congressional notifications requirements.

But the project, really a program, met with a lot of problems. One of the problems ...and I won't tell you the story of delivering and bagging bulk fertilizer; that was a nightmare...a major problem was trying to get the Government to setup a private company to run the fertilizer distribution services. We had invited with Government agreement some representatives of private U.S. agricultural supplies cooperatives to explore this idea, design the system, and serve as a management contractor to get the company started in handling fertilizer procurement, supply and delivery outside of the Ministry of Agriculture. Well, we were ran smack into the vested interests of Government officials and departments. While the Government gave lip service to this change and we had the full support of the Central Bank, the privatization goal kept slipping away from us. Every time we thought we had an agreement and were moving in the right direction, why suddenly nothing would happen. It was very frustrating. It was clearly a classic case of trying to privatize an enterprise that had strong Government interests in controlling it. That was one major problem.

In the credit area, the country was moving into a period of high inflation; the country's economic situation was going down hill. (This helped scare off our private investor's interest in the fertilizer operation also.) As a consequence, the issue of viability of the credit scheme was increasingly present. We tried to make arrangements with Central Bank guarantees to avoid decapitalizing the credit program, but it was hard going, we were working against the rising tide of inflation. So developing the core components of this program was difficult.

However, the major problem came from another direction. We had worked at great length with the Government and the several Ministries and agencies involved in putting together and agreeing on the \$30 million MIDAS program. Then the word came that Secretary Kissinger was making trip in Africa and would be visiting Ghana. This was May 1976.

Q: He was Secretary of State by that time.

NORTH: Yes. So obviously when you have somebody at that level coming you have to have something for him to sign, something for him to do. This seemed like an excellent opportunity for launching the MIDAS program during his visit. So the Government accelerated its efforts to get all of its agreements and approvals completed in time. My colleagues on the Government side were very responsive and cooperative; we worked closely together and finished the negotiations and got the program agreements ready for signature. (At this time, Shirley Temple Black had become the Ambassador replacing Ambassador Hadsel.) We were poised for Kissinger's arrival. The advance parties for Kissinger's visit had come with all the elaborate equipment for Kissinger's communications and related support requirements. We had all been given our assigned jobs. My staff was converted into baggage handlers and that sort of thing, much to their distaste.

Then the Government said, "Don't come." It disinvited him. The excuse being that Colonel Acheampong was not well, he was sick. (The story was that he had a boil and could not sit down.) Kissinger had been in Zaire and had finished the Zaire trip and was ready to come on. It was very embarrassing. Ambassador Shirley Temple Black was negotiating with the Foreign Office trying to get a clear answer because the Government's decision was off again, on again, as to whether Kissinger should come or not. The Foreign Office favored the visit; others in the government objected on the grounds that the Government was yielding to pressure from the U.S. Government and weakening its non-alignment stance. This debate went on for quite a while. Finally, the Ambassador gave them a deadline. The response never came, so the visit was canceled. Well, that, of course, infuriated Secretary Kissinger and was taken as a "slap -in-the-face" for the United States. As a consequence, the MIDAS project, on which we had worked for months and months, was suspended. Signing that agreement would have not been consistent with this insult to the U.S. So this major, long term, important development effort was suddenly pushed aside as a political demonstration of U.S. Government disapproval..

Q: Was the cancellation of the visit a political move, the Colonel didn't want to be too close to the United States?

NORTH: I don't remember what all the reasons were. My impression was that Kissinger's visit conveyed an image of overwhelming Western influence at a time when the government was trying to assert itself and show it was not going to be pushed around, to show that it was non-aligned and self-reliant. I was never quite sure what all the motivations were. There were those who felt it was symbolically wrong, that we must stand on our own feet...the revolutionary, Marxist types who wanted a more radical government position, possibly aided by Soviet influences. What was directly involved in this, I don't know. About all I know is that there was the combination of feeling that they were overwhelmed or being pictured as being dominated by the U.S....Kissinger would be a very dominating factor in this; there were factions arguing strongly against this display of US interest in Ghana. (I have been told that the Nigerian Government was working behind the scenes, pressing the Government to cancel the visit. The Nigerians were objecting to U.S. policy on Angola.)

Q: From what I gather he was almost dragged kicking and screaming to Africa. He was not that interested in Africa.

NORTH: I am sure that is true. Neither Africa nor assistance to developing countries fell within the scope of his global strategizing. The cancellation, in fact, probably came at a propitious time for him because he became ill in Zaire and would have been in bad shape if he had come.

The incident was a minor speck in the world of international affairs, but for those involved in the program it was a traumatic situation. That was in the spring of 1976 and the program was put on hold with the exception of a few on-going activities. I was able to get agreement with the Embassy and Washington that we continue those programs we already had in the pipeline. It was the new commitment that we could not undertake, although this was the centerpiece of our program. Meanwhile the economy was continuing to go downhill, so the situation was not as attractive as when we started out to design this program. But it had been approved by Washington and we were ready to go. It was quite demoralizing given my staff's and my efforts to get a solid program underway.

I don't know what the timing was, but at some point during 1975, Dr. Sam Adams, the Assistant Administrator for the Africa Bureau, asked if I would be willing to come to Washington to be his deputy. I remember meeting him in London, walking down the street after dinner. He was talking about this position he would like me to take; but he implied that if I really wanted the job, I would have to register as a Republican to be cleared-not Dr. Adams' requirement. Well, I don't think I said anything one way or another at the time. The position appealed to me; however, I didn't like the idea of registering Republican just to be accepted. It didn't sit well with me at all; not just because I had to become a Republican, but because I had to play politics to get the job. So nothing came of it. But then Dr. Adams left and was replaced by Stan Scott as Assistant Administrator in the last year of the Republican administration under President Ford. I was sorry to see Dr. Adams leave; he had been very supportive; a thoughtful, knowledgeable and considerate administrator and friend.

Q: USAID in this period was highly political wasn't it?

NORTH: Political manipulation under Nixon was a very dominant factor at levels well below those normally considered appropriate for political appointments and clearances. That seemed to have changed under the Ford administration. In any event in the Spring of 1976, I received another request as to whether I would be interested in taking the job as Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa. I had been in Ghana almost six years at that point and increasingly discouraged about the future of the program in that country. So I left in May 1976 but not without mixed feelings. On the one hand, my family and I had many good Ghanaian friends and a warm memory of our time there. On the other hand, however, the situation with the Government, the deteriorating economy and the program on hold left me discouraged. "What had I been doing over the last six years? Had anything useful resulted from our work; anything worthwhile?"

Given repeated upheavals and corruption in political leadership,... and this is one of the themes that threads through much of my work experience.. development programs will not be successful. Positive, capable leadership which is committed to the development of a country is a sine qua non for development. Political policies not centered on development issues, whether

internal to the developing country or as part of U.S. international policy, can undermine constructive development efforts. The political dynamics of a developing country as well as the rationale for donor assistance have to be addressed in ways that make them compatible with long term development objectives. Otherwise the investment in development activities will be largely lost. This relationship, i.e., when development assistance is subordinated to the short term political interests of either the donor or recipient or both, seems to be forgotten when the effectiveness of foreign assistance is challenged. The failures or weaknesses of a foreign assistance program are rarely related to the driving force of foreign policy demands that have, in fact, contributed to these failures or weaknesses.

In the past, the international community has been supersensitive about avoiding an "interventionist" approach in foreign policy, the concern about national sovereignty being compromised. Well, I have come to develop a feeling of "heck with the sovereignty issue" in certain situations. If the country can't manage itself and serve the interests of its people, then the sovereignty question should not be an impediment for action. Our support for unprincipled, corrupt leadership should not be sustained to achieve some tenuous political/security goal. But I think we are much more willing to confront the political issues of a country than we were in those days. Moreover, much of foreign assistance is interventionist in character, for example, population programs, although rarely portrayed as such. However, and in any event, little can be accomplished in the absence of capable, dedicated leadership with a broad-base of popular support.

Q: Before we leave Ghana, two questions. Just to get a feel of the times because it became very political in the eighties, what were we doing concerning population controls?

NORTH: Yes, Ghana was the first country in Africa to adopt a comprehensive population policy (see its White Paper on Population about 1970). My predecessor along with representatives of the Population Council and a Ford Foundation had worked with the Government to develop an exceptionally farsighted population policy. This was quite a remarkable accomplishment in the African scene. They started a population program, one part of which was the Danfa Rural Health and Family Planning project-another story in its own right. There is a lot of documentation on that project. Essentially, the project focused on the question of research on how different interventions in family planning and health services could be interrelated to get the most effective acceptance of family planning services. Do you provide family planning services exclusively? Or do you provide them in conjunction with a comprehensive health services program? Which would be the most effective? What variations and combinations would be most successful? The research provided an opportunity to explore these options as well as learn about the requirements for alternative rural health services. It was really quite a pioneering effort though some have criticized the project as being unsuccessful and not worth the cost. Over time a number of very able world leaders in public health came out of that project. Many others from around the world came to visit the project and took away new insights. A great many articles were written by the research staff on their findings and experiences. The prevalence of specific diseases such as polio and Guinea Worm were identified. The complex question of how one manages and supervises health services, etc. was examined. I think the project has had a substantial influence in turning around the old Ghanaian medical community on public health services. The World Bank has recently featured the project in one of its reports on innovations in

public health work in developing countries. It was a very innovative effort. (For more detail see the interview with Dr. J. S. Prince)

In addition, we had a large population-contraceptive supply program at that time with the Government. But it was also clear to me that population projects and this research activity would not succeed without also engaging and having a more effective Ministry of Health, university participation in public health, and some expanded private endeavors. So we tried to develop over time a complex of projects. We had had a very successful project in nurses training that had been started back in the fifties. We had been involved in a small pox eradication program as part of the world-wide endeavor. There were bits and pieces of health activities that we tried to build into a more structured, systematic strategy for addressing primary health care tying in family planning. The situation was complicated because the Ghana National Family Planning Program (GNFPP) was placed in the Ministry of Economic Planning with the view that it should be integrated into all sections of Government development activity. While some useful work was done through this arrangement, it was not well managed. The problem was further complicated by the considerable personal and institutional animosity between the Ministry of Health and the GNFPP staff. Moreover, the Ministry of Health was poorly managed and was not in a position to provide effective direction to the family planning program at that time. Also the need for a population program and family planning services was not well recognized in Government and society, in general. I remember one well educated and articulate Ghanaian saying to me: "We don't need this program; we have plenty of land in Ghana."

Ghana had some able medical personnel and a few outstanding professional leaders but its lack of capacity to manage, plan and organize and carry out health programs was a constant problem. The Ministry of Health also was reluctant to cooperate with us. However, we kept working with Ministry officials trying to develop different ways to improve and carry out health activities and strengthen the Ministry's management, etc. But it was hard going. The major theme was an integrated health and family planning program. In sum, the population program had its ups and downs. When Colonel Acheampong came in, the Government wanted to throw out the population program because it was a vestige of the old administration, but, in the end, it was salvaged. The population program has had a rocky time and it has not been anywhere near as effective as we had hoped it would be in the early days, but it is still going and substantially improved, I think.

Also, the public health program is beginning to gain momentum. However, I was recently reading a World Bank report about Ghana's Ministry of Health and felt I was reading a report on the situation 20 years ago. It was, in many ways, the same report I would have written in the seventies about the inadequacies of the Ministry's leadership and organization. This was kind of sad but probably understandable given the major political and economic crises the country experienced in the years after I left. However, we had helped build a core of professional capability and introduced some basic concepts of public health service and family planning programs, particularly the decentralization of services to the districts that, I think, they are building on and extending throughout the country.

In addition to our work in health and population, we had several other innovative projects. At the time, the Government was talking about decentralization; really more talk than action. To

assist with this aim, we developed a project called Economic and Rural Development Management (ERDM). It was basically a project to help set up a Ghanaian program for training district councils in planning for local development activities: to help these district councils bring together their district teachers, agriculture extension officers, and other community leaders with the district administrators and learn how develop district plans and programs for their areas. It was clear to me and others that one couldn't push the decentralization of development activity out to the local areas if there was no capacity in the local areas to receive them and make use of them. So it was a matter of trying to build from the bottom up as well as from the top down—building local capacities to plan for, use, and demand services from central agencies. That project was enthusiastically accepted by the Government with many Ghanaians trained at the local level. We had a follow-up project, in mind, in rural development support to provide resources to help the districts carry out their plans but it never got off the ground. After I left, the ERDM project carried on for a while but with the economy going downhill and the political situation deteriorating, it did not have much of a chance of being sustained.

A similar innovative approach was tried in agriculture applying a practical approach to development administration. It had been my view that the training of program managers tended to be too narrow; those who were sent abroad for training had difficulty making use of their new skills and knowledge when they returned, because their staffs and supervisors with whom they worked did not have the same understandings and resisted change. Significant changes in program management could only come from an integrated approach that addressed program management requirements at all levels of an operation from the top administrators down to the field supervisors. We had an excellent staff in the Mission in development administration and related training (quite uncommon for USAID Missions at the time) who went to work on the approach. The subsequent project provided training at the university level for a M.A. in agricultural administration and planning, a diploma course for middle level administrators at the Government Institute for Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), and a certificate program for field supervisors. The focus was on practical measures, solving problems while training and developing a common understanding of improved management practices.

Another initiative grew from our work with the National Academy of Sciences. The aim was to improve the country's scientific and technological capacities to support its development programs; specifically, to get the Ghana Council for Industrial and Scientific Research (CSIR) more closely linked with the economic problems of the country and to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to scientific and technological research. Ghana, during the Nkrumah period, had, in its efforts at modernization, created a large number of independent research institutes—institutes for fisheries, for crop research, for nutrition, soils research, for atomic energy, and so on. Each one was thought of as a symbol of modernization. But they were highly compartmentalized. There was almost no horizontal cooperation. I remember one colleague saying, "It is like a bunch of iron boxes that are open only at the top." There was no communication or collaboration among them even though their leaders knew each other well through the "old boys network." Each institute had its own political ties to Government leaders and thus would not respond to attempts at collaboration on development problems. Many of the research activities were of limited merit or usefulness to the country.

Our effort was aimed at promoting a multi-disciplinary approach to some of the country's

development problems and get the institutes and scientists to work together on priority development problems; to breakdown the barriers which were inhibiting useful research and effective development activity. So with the help and leadership of scientists from the National Academy of Sciences and the University of Arizona, we worked with the CSIR leadership to develop a national strategy and planning capability for scientific and technological research emphasizing multi-disciplinary approaches. One pilot effort was a study of an area in the northern region which was particularly poor and had famine and desertification problems. I thought this was a natural for a pilot approach leading to a multi-disciplinary program. As a result, we were able to get geographers, demographers, soils and water resource scientists, and economists and other social scientists to work on a study of the area preparatory to developing a long term rural development program. Again I believe the work never fully jelled because of the changing political and economic situation in the country. Also the CSIR leadership was weak and could not overcome the independent political linkages of the institutes with Government politicians.

There were a number of other innovative activities that we were trying. We attempted to work closely with the Peace Corp on various rural development initiatives. Also, we started a special project to engage American and local PVOs in development projects.

Q: That is private voluntary organizations.

NORTH: Or NGOs as they are now called ...non-government organizations.

We had a project administered by the USAID Mission which gave small grants to these organizations. At that time, we were not allowed to authorize any activity directly over \$5000 without Washington approval! Ironically, under the commodity import program, which was \$10 to 30 million, we were able to sign off on multi-million dollar procurement actions without Washington being involved. But when it came to \$10,000 for a little project, we had to get Washington's approval. It was one those tiresome bureaucratic situations. In part, as a consequence, we designed this project to give us more flexibility to respond to small project requirements as well as help promote private voluntary development activities.. There were a number of other ventures of that sort; perhaps, the most significant was Reverend Sullivan's Opportunities Industrialization Centers project for vocational training.

This was the time when Women in Development was becoming an important interest in foreign assistance as a result of the Percy amendment. The Ghana Mission sponsored one of the first studies and strategy statements on introducing women in development in our programs. Jeanne North, as a volunteer-spouses were not allowed to work for USAID Missions in those days-led a group to prepare this study and wrote the report. She had been involved with providing technical assistance to the Ghana Assembly of Women and other groups on a volunteer basis.

Also we still had the residual of the commodity import program. When the log jam on the debt rescheduling broke, we had on the shelf a \$19 million commodity import program, which had been already funded. There was only the question of releasing that money in response to economic reform actions of the Government. There was considerable concern over the selection of the imported commodities for advancing economic growth. For example, we got into the

middle of a commercial conflict between U.S. businesses that sell textile equipment and those that sell textiles; we were providing foreign exchange financing for textile equipment for a local manufacturer but the U.S. textile lobby objected claiming that the textiles would compete with U.S. domestic production. I believe, something was worked out that resulted in the USAID financed looms being walled off from the other looms with the product from the USAID-financed looms not for export! Meanwhile, we had under PL 480 provided major quantities of cotton and thread for local textile production; a major factor in developing the textile industry in Ghana. Also we were not allowed to assist with local cotton production. It was more complicated than this but it is indicative of the conflicting policies one confronts in assistance programs.

In sum, there were a lot of interesting ideas and projects being initiated in that period, in addition to the MIDAS project, which I have already mentioned. But with the economy deteriorating and the political situation getting worse, the chances for their being successful grew dimmer and dimmer. There may be some remnants here and there, particularly from the training programs but a lot of it, I'm sure, was lost.

Q: Well, let me ask one final question on Ghana. Shirley Temple Black came out there. This is her first assignment abroad. Obviously everybody of our generation knows her as the number one child star during the thirties. What was your impression of her as an ambassador?

NORTH: Well, it was an interesting experience. I remember her arrival. She was, of course, a celebrity and attracted a lot of international press and TV coverage. Her arrival was quite an event; we were, as part of the senior staff, lined up at the airport to greet her as she came in. The TV cameras were recording every moment; then and for some time after. She was serious about her job, worked hard at it. She used her celebrity status to further the interests of the U.S. and our program. She was not, as one would expect, substantively very knowledgeable, but very determined to be in charge and resented very strongly anyone who thought that here was somebody who didn't know the business and tried to manage her. It was a very delicate relationship. At functions and receptions I learned, not that I had tried it myself but others had, not to talk to her about her films. She didn't respond to that, although she used that reputation to great effect. But she was the Ambassador and not the child star and therefore for somebody who met her to say "I remember your film"...she didn't take to that very well and cut them off. But she used her talents to establish that she was progressive and vigorous when addressing the Government and worked to build a good rapport and I think was quite popular.

As with a lot of political figures, there were many stagings of special events. But for my purposes we got along quite well. She was very supportive. I would keep her informed on what we were trying to do and I would ask for her help to support some ideas in her conversations with the Government, with the ministers. When I had a log jam in the health program, she pitched in and talk to the Minister and Government about moving ahead. She didn't have to get into the technical details, it was just a matter of making a point about the basic concept of what we were trying to do. We had, for example, a well drilling rig that was brought in to do some demonstrations and training. We needed a public event to publicize this activity. She came out and wore a hard hat and talked to the drillers with all the press around. Similarly, she was on hand to welcome the arrival of our bulk fertilizer shipment and publicize the aim of having a private company. These were just a sample of many such activities. So she was very helpful in

promoting what we were trying to do and being supportive.

In sum, she was conscientious in doing her paper work and leading the U.S. Mission and making representations to the Government. I think she was quite popular in the country and brought a certain amount of recognition to Ghana. I am afraid some programs like "60 Minutes" dwelt on the wrong things, distorted her role in Ghana and showed it in a less positive light than we had thought might be appropriate. But because of the incident that I mentioned about canceling Kissinger's visit, which was going to be a big event for her as Ambassador, she was recalled from Ghana. She flew to Liberia where he went next to speak to him and then went back to the States. For a long time she was not allowed to return but she was determined to have one more visit to Ghana and say good by to many friends. She did get that opportunity, but for a long time we were without an ambassador- another demonstration of our displeasure; she was unfortunately part of that.

I don't know how she views her experience. I heard something subsequently when she went to Czechoslovakia as Ambassador that she was very unhappy with USAID and didn't want them involved. Her only other experience was in Ghana, as far as I know, and I don't recall anything there that would have suggested she had a problem. But at any rate, from my perspective it was an interesting and positive experience, i.e., apart from the events that led to the suspension of the program which had nothing to do with her role in Ghana.

FRED L. HADSEL
Ambassador
Ghana (1971-1974)

Ambassador Fred L. Hadsel was born in Ohio in 1916. He graduated from the University of Miami and received a Master's degree from Clark University and a PhD from the University of Chicago. He served as a captain overseas in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1946. He served as the ambassador to Ghana and Somalia. Ambassador Hadsel was interviewed by Edward W. Mulcachy in 1989.

HADSEL: The next phase of my career started with my transfer to Ghana as Ambassador from 1971 to 1974. Just as we were to go to Ghana, my eldest daughter married an extremely attractive young man, Bill Mabers, who is now a member of the Vermont State Legislature and a writer of considerable ability. She is the director of a Foundation dealing with museums.

Ghana was very different country from Somalia. In the first place, the Ghanaians had had decades of experience with Europe. It had an educational infrastructure that was extensive; they were by nature one of the most generous, hospitable, relaxed group of people in all of Africa. They had a sense of humor, they had a complex religious pattern of Catholics and Anglicans and other Protestants. They burst with vitality. However, they had gone through the shock of Nkrumah's deposition in the Spring of 1966. They had reestablished in due course a parliamentary government under the very able scholar rather than politician, Busia. He was Prime Minister at the time of our arrival, but he too was overthrown by a coup six months later.

My friends noted jokingly that every place I was sent had a coup. They questioned where else I might be sent.

The military coup had some interest. The leader of the coup was the leader of a regiment which had been trained by our CIA to be the special unit available to the Busia government to prevent a possible coup. So when the coup started, Busia pushed the button, but there was no answer because the coup leader was the officer in charge of protecting the government against such actions. He was a man who had gone through Fort Leavenworth's Staff and Command College without leaving a trace. No one could find a record, good, bad or indifferent. His name was Acheampong, a man of adequate intelligence, modest education whose eventual downfall, long after I left, was due to the avarice of his wife. In fact, he and his wife were the first Ghanaians to be killed as result of the first counter-coup in the modern history of Ghana. Up to that point, coups had been bloodless.

Our Embassy in Ghana was a large one with 75 to 100 AID staffers, over 250 Peace Corps members, a half-dozen in the Information Service, a small defense Attaché Office and a sizable Embassy staff. The administration of such a large group was a challenge. It was not a great difficulty because I was blessed with able people. The AID Director, Haven North, before his recent retirement, was certainly the most experienced single AID official in the entire organization. My political staff, headed by Robert Bruce, was again absolutely first rate as was my economic officer and even my Chief-of-Agency was man I could trust. The Peace Corps staff was very good. One of the youngest staff members is now of the senior planner of the Department of Energy in Washington. Consequently, the job in Ghana, though more complex on paper and with more potential problems than Somalia, was not as difficult as the job as Ambassador in Mogadishu. I could take advantage of this to join with another old Foreign Service colleague, Dwight Dickinson, who was the Ambassador in Togo, to see parts of West Africa which I had not seen or knew at all. The opportunity to travel in the area was a pleasant addition to the assignment.

There is an unwritten, often unspoken dictum in the Foreign Service of the United States which says that the more senior your position is, the less you are told. The only person in the Department of State really sure of his instructions is the messenger boy who delivers envelopes to the various offices. I didn't feel impelled to try to ferret out the political complications of the last part of my tour. One self-evident complication was that for a least a year I had heard the rumor that Shirley Temple Black was interested in becoming the next Ambassador to Ghana and that she stood very well in the Nixon White House. At the same time, this was the year of Watergate and Nixon's resignation occurred less than two weeks after the end of my tour of duty in July, 1974.

Q: I had the pleasure of preparing Shirley Temple Black for her assignment.

HADSEL: My departure, in fact, was delayed by the paralysis of the White House with respect to appointments during that period. In the meantime, the Assistant Secretary had passed from David Newsom to Donald Easum, both very able men of different temperament. It was made clear to me by the Director of the Foreign Service, Bill Hall, that the opportunities of a two-time Ambassador were so limited at that time that he could not even faintly promise an on-going

assignment. Rather I would be walking the halls of the State Department looking for a job. At this time, I was 58 years old. I had almost accidentally thought to myself that if I were going to change careers, that was the year to do it. I claimed no great prescience; I believe that this was another element of chance. About six or eight months before my departure from Ghana, I was back in Washington on consultation. On the spur of the last moment--I was to leave Sunday afternoon--, on Sunday morning, I drove to Lexington Virginia to be interviewed by a search committee for the post of Executive Director of the George C. Marshall Foundation.

I put this aside and had not paid much attention to it, but in the Spring of 1974, their interest became serious. By March, it was clear that they were getting ready to offer me the job and by that time, it was also clear that my Ambassadorial appointment would be terminated within a very few months. I was therefore able to make arrangements to complete the selection interviews for the job and was offered the position on June 1, 1974 to be effective in the Fall. I think I was very fortunate, particularly having seen the travails of senior Foreign Service officers who through no fault of their own came from responsible assignments to face a situation in which there very few opportunities for another assignments of comparable responsibility. Had I waited until I was 60 or 62, the transition would have more difficult and prospects for an effective service diminished. The twenty year period during which I served in the Foreign Service was a period of dramatic growth in which we, the African Corps, as we might be called, had an esprit, a comradeship, a feeling of joint effort which was unique. We were free of the trauma of Vietnam; we were in a period in which the expansion of posts was commensurate with any reasonable man's ambition; and we were at a point at which young officers could assume major responsibilities. The fact that this has changed since then is again a part of the evolution of a large foreign policy institution. These opportunities made the 20 years of service in Africa an exciting and challenging career.

Q: Do you have any comments on the Kissinger 1973 "global outlook" policy which inundated Africa with people who were assigned there unwillingly? This had been the case before the mid-50s, when I was in Personnel, when I saw a large number assigned to African for punishment.

HADSEL: Commensurate with this in 1973-74, there was what might be called a "diaspora" of the African officers. Three years later I took a trip to Europe on behalf of the Marshall Foundation and in every European post was an old friend from African days. I think the influx of people who did not want to come to Africa was real blow to morale. It is true that I could point to almost twenty years of experience either with or connected to Africa, but there were others by that time who had far more experience than I. It was a period of morale, of confidence, of change, of new assignments, challenges. The feeling of being "under-dog" created a certain amount of determined optimism. I remember one of the cliches of the Corps that was "If you are dealing with African affairs, you must assume that every disaster is a glorious opportunity".

I left the Foreign Service officially on the last day of August, 1974 which was a Saturday and started in Lexington, Va on Monday. That was a mistake. I didn't realize that after the years in the State Department I needed and even deserved a significant break between the two jobs. Coming down to Lexington, I was the first resident director of the George C. Marshall Foundation. This was an organization established about twenty years earlier by friends of General Marshall. Originally it was an effort to collect documents about him, gradually

developing a capability to build the present Foundation building in 1963. By 1974 it found itself at a cross road. It did not have the funds to keep going; at times it couldn't even pay the due salaries. The director "in absentia" was the very able scholar, Forest Pogue, the biographer of General Marshall. Forest, whom I have described as my oldest living human friend. But he was no administrator. Things were in difficult straits. When I saw the director of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation, Robert Lovett, he gave me one simple task: prevent the Foundation from becoming a polite mausoleum. Consequently, my job was to build a program, because it became clearly evident that you don't get significant funds if you don't have a significant program. I was with the Marshall Foundation for almost eleven years. During that period we have moved from a budget of \$125-150,000 to \$ 800,000. This increase was not possible without the development of a program. We had a traditional museum; we had a good, if limited, archives based on Marshall's or copies of Marshall's papers and some related collections. But in terms of programs that would attract major funding and be of values themselves, were deficient. Within three years, we established the Marshall ROTC award program. This was done with the assistance of one of our Board members, General Maxwell Taylor whose aide in 1950s was the Chief of Staff of the mid 1970s, General Bernard Rogers. My staff work and the Taylor-Roger relationship ended up with the Army supporting two-thirds to three-quarters of the costs by bringing the best Army ROTC senior students from all over the country to Lexington for a conference on the national security of the United States. There was considerable organization required. The Army played a full role which it is still continuing to play. The program took place every April. It began with about 150 award winners and now numbers about 250 as the ROTC expanded in the US. We have the Chief of Staff as a speaker; Dean Rusk spoke once; we were fortunate to have local institutions--VMI's ROTC unit provides the administrative assistance, and Washington and Lee, on vacation during that period, provided the dining facilities. The program is now in its twelfth year and continues to be a major contribution. We notice the quality of the ROTC winners increasing. The Army, as one four-star general said to me, thinks that this is the greatest thing that ever came down the road.

The other program began at the end of my stewardship to reflect Marshall's contribution in international affairs. We are now in the fourth or fifth year of a smaller, more select conference in the Autumn in which various major political-diplomatic problems are studied. This Fall, it will be the Pacific Basin; next year, it will be European security, etc. My successor, also a former Foreign Service officer, Gordon Byron, took over in the Summer of 1985 and is carrying on with this program. The planning and the acceptance of this program was done in the last year of my term and I look back at this tour of duty as a period in which we indeed put the Marshall Foundation in a solid financial condition which continues today.

Since my retirement in the Summer of 1985, after Gordon had been selected, I have returned to Africa, both in 1986 and 1987. I toured a total of ten or twelve African countries for our Information Service, speaking on U.S. policy towards Africa, both in a historical context and in terms of the area's problems. This got me interested again in African affairs and scholarship and now I am in my second year of writing an intellectual history of the growth of African studies in the United States, Britain and France. At the moment, I am beginning the United States. With luck, I will finish that by then end of 1990. I hope then to move to England as a subject and then on to France. It is a long project in which one of the fascinating things is to renew old friendships with the early scholars of Africa. Like Rip Van Winkle, I came back to Africa after my eleven

years with the Marshall Foundation. Here I am at the doddering age of 73 and with luck I have ten years ahead of me to complete this book.

Q: It is very interesting that you have found enough in the field of African affairs to write a book. I must confess that when I tell people that I am writing a book, they assume that it is about Africa. I am not sure that I have anything to say about Africa.

HADSEL: This is why I have no intention of writing my memoirs. But the other project is dealing with intellectual thoughts of leading African scholars and I find that very interesting. One problem is that many of the younger Africans have come to the States and that raises the question of who is an African scholar? With a typical Foreign Service attitude, I have postponed dealing with that issue because I don't know how to handle it.

Q: At this stage, I would particularly hear your views on the evolution of African affairs while we were in the State Department and then I would like your views on the Foreign Service as a career.

HADSEL: Recently, I gave a speech Monday to a Washington and Lee class on the Foreign Service, which I do regularly. I always end up as a strong supporter of the Foreign Service.

On the first subject--the whole relationship of the State Department hierarchy and African affairs--to my surprise in 1955 in the recent edition of the "United States Foreign Relations" there is the first volume on Africa. To my even greater surprise, the memorandum that sets the framework for a discussion of the African policy was, as I noted in a footnote, written by Fred Hadsel. I had, of course, forgotten it completely. I made the brash, revolutionary statement that within ten years, the United States would face a crisis of colonialism in Africa. Of course, we faced it in five years. The other interesting thing about that long forgotten memorandum was the footnote in which Mr. Dulles said he had read it, but he didn't think that any action was necessary on it. And that indeed represented Mr. Dulles' attitude towards Africa. He was so preoccupied with other things that Africa was not an element in his perspective at all. So if you are dealing with Secretaries of State--leaving Christian Herter aside since he was an incumbent for a very brief time--you do not have a Secretary considering Africa until the Kennedy Administration--Dean Rusk. Rusk, however, was a man who was basically uninterested in Africa. He could be interested in certain specific problems, but as a professional he had a very limited restricted view of his role as Secretary of State. He was the advisor to the President. If the President didn't accept his advice, all was well and good, and he would continue to do his best. He avoided the bureaucratic in-fighting which gave the Defense Department a tremendous advantage when it came to relations with the State Department. He delegated, to the extent that it was done, either to Chester Bowles, George Ball--who was not interested at all in Africa--Averell Harriman, under certain circumstances and Nick Katzenbach--as an after thought. Because Rusk was not interested in Africa and had no confidence in G. Mennen Williams, who was the Assistant Secretary from 1961 to 1966, the Bureau of African Affairs had to sink or swim on its own activities. It was often sunk because of the over-riding French and European accent of the Department, as the critics used to say. This gradually changed, but it did not change as international development changed. There was a time lag.

The next Secretary of State was William Rogers who was a marvelous nineteenth century gentleman, not in any way capable of engaging in guerrilla warfare against Henry Kissinger at the National Security Council. Under these circumstances, the Department was fortunate to have David Newsom as Assistant Secretary, who was probably the single most competent Assistant Secretary of State we had during my time. He had to carry the burden with occasional help from the Seventh Floor, but not very much. Rogers, as far as I was personally concerned, couldn't have been more congenial, more sympathetic and he did go to Africa. He opened a meeting in Kinshasa. As an illustration of Roger's gentleness, I remember that I had taken Omar Arteh, a somewhat fiery Foreign Minister under General Siad of Somalia, to see Rogers. To my utter embarrassment, as we sat down Omar Arteh launched into an oration, in which he compared me to George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. I was sitting there, squirming. Rogers wasn't phased at all. He listened with a pleasant attitude and as soon as Omar had finished, he quickly picked up the subject that he wanted to talk about and we went on. He never teased me about it because that was Roger's benign nature.

His successor, Henry Kissinger, never visited Africa, except for Egypt.

Q: He told me once that he had spent 36 hours on the Continent, giving a speech in Johannesburg and visiting Nairobi.

HADSEL: Kissinger, as far as I am concerned, ranks along with Mr. Dulles for entirely different reasons as the Secretary of State for whom I have the least sympathy. I accepted his brilliance--there was no doubt about that. But I deplored his vast comprehensive egotism. I felt that he was both self-serving and devious--all those things that I didn't want to see in a boss. Interestingly enough, I never met the Secretary of State while I was his Ambassador in Africa. David Newsom, in fact, forbade me to ask for an appointment feeling that that would just invite disaster. I almost got myself fired during Kissinger's regime by a slip of the tongue which was fortunately not reported. A National War College group was visiting Africa. They wanted to go to the "Shining Light of Sub-Sahara Africa"--the Ivory Coast. With some dint of effort, I managed to persuade them to stop over for a few hours in Accra on their way. We had a meeting in the Embassy and we talked about Africa. At the end of it, with this group sitting around the living room, I got the following question: "Sir, what do you think of Secretary Kissinger's African policy?"--the question obviously came from a military man since he addressed me as "Sir". Before I thought, I replied: "The best thing about African policy is that Secretary Kissinger doesn't know where the Continent is". It brought a hoot of laughter and I saw myself like the man at the guillotine putting my neck in the rack and having it cut off. Obviously, if Kissinger had heard that, he would have me fired immediately. Fortunately, the National War College was sympathetic, I guess, because it never got back to him.

I had no personal relations with the subsequent Secretaries, Cyrus Vance, George Shultz and General Haig. I shake my head over Haig. I do have one reflection however and that is on Chester Crocker. He is the only man to serve longer as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs than Mennen Williams. He was a complete contrast to Williams in every way possible. I think upon reflection that a statement made by an author in politics may be an epitaph for his policy of constructive engagement. "Crocker's policy was one which was doomed to failure, but should, in any case, have been tried". Crocker brought such a different dimension of ability, quite aside

from constructive engagement, that he certainly ranks as the single most influential Assistant Secretary for African Affairs that we ever had.

Q: He ended up in a blaze of glory.

HADSEL: Yes, although the Angola withdrawal may not work in the final analysis. The Kennedy Administration I knew only second hand. It did give support particularly to broadly, sympathetic public relations gestures because as Kennedy once said "We really don't have the money to do very much else". Johnson was swamped with Vietnam, but he gave the first speech any President had ever given solely on Africa in May 1966--he was giving the speech in effect on the Anniversary of the Organization of African Unity. He emphasized the need for African cooperation. I worked very hard on the memorandum for that speech and was very pleased that, particularly under Bill Trimble's supervision, it was sent to the White House. Because I was the lowly drafting officer, I attended the preceding reception. At first I was appalled when I heard that Bill Moyers had completely rewritten my memorandum because I, of course, felt that every word was a pure jewel. But I was greatly impressed by Moyers' touch, putting the memorandum in Johnson's manner without destroying any of its substance. Johnson's attitude was reflected in a tiny incident at the end of this. He did his duty. He was tired and exhausted. We were the last to leave and I did permit myself to say to the President that I was very grateful and pleased that this event had occurred because I was the State Department man who had drafted the original memorandum. Johnson clearly spotted a potential voter. His eyes lit up. He grinned, he took my hand in both of his and said : " Ah am so grateful". That was a purely political response and that was his attitude toward Africa. That memorandum which was classified "Confidential" has not been located although I have requested it. I told this story a couple of months ago to a young English historian on African affairs who is been down working in the Lyndon Johnson papers in Austin. He thought that he had seen that memorandum. He went to the stack of papers that he had reproduced from the Johnson files and there, lo and behold, was the memorandum. So now I have one copy no thanks to the State Department, but thanks to an English historian. The other memorandum that I would like to recover is one that I wrote to Nick Katzenbach on which he wrote a sympathetic note, but that is still lost to posterity.

Q: I think it is a shame that we are not allowed to keep a record at least of the titles of things we had written.

HADSEL: We could have done that without damage to national security, but we were all too conscientious.

Q: One of the striking things about your career is that you were one of the officers who went to the top rank without ever having a sabbatical. You didn't at any time go to the National War College nor to the Senior Seminar.

HADSEL: I would have liked to have done that, but I think it was decided in the labyrinth of personnel policy that I was over-educated when I came into African affairs and under-experienced. That was something to this since I was teaching during my career and had a certain amount of graduate work. I therefore never had the opportunity. I did teach once on home leave

and I continued to teach both during and after State Department. This was therefore the decision of the powers-to-be.

There is one thing that I would like to add. It concerns the role of families in African affairs. It is to the credit of the Bureau of African Affairs that its administrative-executive sections worked very hard to make living conditions as supportable as possible in Africa. The policy of permanently renting or buying houses so that you didn't have to wait six months for your household effects, the policy of improving living conditions each time an officer arrived resulted in living conditions in Africa by the end of the 1960s were by and large were quite supportable--with the exception perhaps of Ouagadougou and some other places. This doesn't mean that role of the wives wasn't exceptionally difficult. Because of education problems, the paucity of recreation, the chance of relief from the climate--the husband went to a usually effective air-conditioned office and he always had his in-box to console him--the wife had a much more difficult life. I found in my own experience that my wife did a remarkable number of activities in part because if she hadn't it would have driven her up a wall and in part because she is a very competent person. We personally were fortunate because the chance of education meant that we didn't have to cast off except one daughter. She was here in Washington at the National Cathedral School and then Northfield Mt. Hermon in Connecticut Valley. That prepared her to go on to Harvard, Hartford College in Oxford and then graduate school in architecture in London. We were lucky. When I think of my colleagues whose children got involved in drugs and had broken families. I consider myself extremely fortunate and blessed. Education of children was and still is a hazard of service, but we were extremely fortunate. I am full of admiration for wives and families.

As far as relationships with the Central Intelligence Agency were concerned, I was blessed because the men I had in Somalia and Ghana were able; I had confidence in them. I think they had confidence in me. Consequently I ran into none of the trouble that "wheelers and dealers" create, of which there were an appreciable number in Africa. I have only good to say about my relationship with the representatives of the Agency and I say that with pleasure.

As far as my advice to student at Washington and Lee on making the Foreign Service a career, I am of course a representative of the Wristonization process, which involved for me the first ten years as a State Department employee with relatively good promotions and responsibilities. I therefore came in at one and perhaps even two grades above colleagues of my age in the Foreign Service. I felt and observed that the impact of Wristonization on State Department employees was very much a shot-gun marriage. A certain number of them succeeded quite well, but there were a number of failures, misfits and in effect, careers if not ruined, were cut short by those who were not able to become a full Foreign Service officer. I look back on my own career and realize that particularly in the early years, there were a number of things that I did through lack of experience that I wished I hadn't done--judgements, administrative procedures, things like that. In my case, I hope they weren't fundamental things. I would argue that what a person of reasonable good fortune coming from the other side of the railroad tracks could contribute was something that I certainly was never defensive about. I could have considerable sympathy for those Foreign Service officers who fell behind in their promotions. Loy Henderson got a number promoted very rapidly, some to their serious detriment. The double shot gun marriage was necessary; it did not succeed in gaining for the Department of State the effective leadership in

foreign affairs. It succeeded in getting it partial leadership and the failure, if you look at it from a Foreign Service point of view, to gain more complete leadership lies in the policies of the Department and the government of the 1960s. I have little to say about that because I wasn't involved. It seems to me that the very traditional Foreign Service--the old, old Foreign Service--indeed had some serious handicaps. Some of them were social--they came from a type of institution in which social relationships were more important than the rough and tough economic or political competitions. This group retired or died in due course. I think in balance the combination, as uneasy as this marriage was, Wristonization was probably an enrichment of the Foreign Service from those who survived from the Department and those who survived in the historical traditional pattern. I can't speak of the present decade since the mid-70s. The single most important thing, and this is what I said to the W&L class, in retrospect was the quality of my colleagues--the men, the women, the wives. I do not know of any other group in which ability is as widespread. Of course there were duds in the Foreign Service and some of them got along far too well. But the incidence is small. I, therefore, put that on the top of my list as I look back into the period of almost three decades. The present Foreign Service has tremendous problems, but it is still an excellent career.

In the Foreign Service, I did have my quota of illnesses, not only tuberculosis, mononucleosis and tuberculosis, and on my latest trip for the Information Service, I managed to pick amoebic dysentery for the first time. With the latest pills, I got rid of it in six weeks without any difficulties.

ERNEST WILSON
Controller, USAID
Accra (1971-1975)

Ernest Wilson was born in Louisiana in 1925. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1949 and served in the U.S. Air Force from 1943 to 1946. His assignments abroad included Ethiopia, Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, and Egypt. Mr. Wilson was interviewed in 1998 by W. Haven North.

WILSON: From there, I went to Ghana in 1971.

Q: It's a shift from being auditor to being controller. Is that a fundamental shift?

WILSON: It was a fundamental shift.

Q: How would you characterize the change in your function and role?

WILSON: I had more supervisory responsibility. As an auditor, you are a member of a team. You get an assignment, you complete it and move on to the next job. As a controller, you're responsible for staff, the accounting functions, the reporting functions, the entire financial management of the mission. So, it's another dimension.

Q: What were the main issues you had to deal with when you became the controller in ROCAP?

WILSON: I still had to run the audit function for ROCAP. The accounting and bookkeeping functions were transferred to the USAID mission. The deputy controller was the controller for the USAID mission. So, ROCAP and the USAID mission accounting was done in the USAID/Guatemala mission. The audit and financial analysis functions were accomplished by ROCAP.

Q: Financial analysis means what?

WILSON: Financial analysis encompasses the contribution of the Controller's Office to the analytical work required by the Mission, for example, the financial analysis portion of the project paper, costing out projects, working on the project development team in the preparation of the PP. Conducting pre-award surveys of potential grantees. Conducting special financial analysis of on-going projects. Audit tracking and liaison.

Q: Did you find that function well received by the project development people?

WILSON: Yes. At that time, in order to get a project approved, you had to have a strong financial as well as economic analysis. You had to cost the project out. So, the effort was welcome. They were glad to have a financial person on the team that could cost out the project; set up the time phased implementation plan; suggest methods of financing and cost sharing, etc., as well as drafting financial reporting provisions.

Q: Were there any particular issues in doing financial analyses in terms of AID projects?

WILSON: Not unless you came into revenue producing entities - a utility or power plant or something like that, where you had to get into sophisticated analysis. Then you needed a strong individual.

Q: Did you do cost-benefit analysis?

WILSON: Yes, and income analysis if it were called for in the type of project being designed. There was more of this later on in Egypt, where we had a lot of income producing projects.

Q: You finished up in ROCAP as controller.

WILSON: And went to Ghana.

Q: When was that?

WILSON: In 1971. I was there for four years.

Q: How did you find Ghana? It was quite a different situation, I guess.

WILSON: It was more concentrated in one country, as opposed to being in five countries. A

entirely different set of circumstances. When I got there, the program was not as large as some of the programs I had been associated with. The Ghanians, as I recall, had a lot of outstanding debt from some of the Western countries such as Britain and some of the other Western donors. There was a wait and see attitude on providing more assistance in the hope that Ghana would continue to repay debt owed the U.S. and other western donors. So, for a portion of the time we were there, the program didn't move along as rapidly as we would have wished. But in the last two years, things began to pick up. It was a pleasant place to be.

Q: Did you have an audit function?

WILSON: By that time, no, the Auditor General, which was established in 1969, took over the audit function from the mission controllers. The function was with the Auditor Generals located in regional offices overseas.

Q: What was your understanding of how all of this changed? It was a pretty basic change, I guess.

WILSON: My understanding is that they thought that the audit function should be more independent. The mission audit function reported to the Mission Director through the USAID Controller, while the Auditor General reported to the AID Administrator. So, that gave it greater independence. But this was a movement that was common throughout the U.S. government. It ended up in the Inspector General Act, which established IGs in all U.S. government agencies.

Q: Was there any particular situation or event that triggered this?

WILSON: I don't think that there was any one event. It was just the recognition that, as long as audit was localized in the missions with the responsibility with the controller, who in turn reported to the Mission Director, there would be the question of whether true objectivity could be achieved.

Q: Did you find that this was necessary? Did you think that this was a desirable thing to do?

WILSON: I thought that it got better recognition. It became more professional compared to 100 different approaches with each mission having its own staff and limited guidance from Washington.

Q: It took the function out from under you.

WILSON: There was plenty left to do. We went into financial analysis to a larger extent than when we used the auditors for that type of work... and we began to plan for the computerization of the accounting functions.

Q: So, you thought it was a desirable shift?

WILSON: I thought it was a desirable shift.

Q: How was it structured in the Ghana situation?

WILSON: We got audits from North Africa. The Auditor General for Africa maintained two offices on the continent. One was in Nairobi and the West Africa Auditor General was in Morocco, soon to relocate down to Liberia and then eventually it ended up in Ghana in 1974. Each office was responsible for the programs within a given geographical area. They sort of split Africa down the middle. West Africa was responsible for all of West Africa down to Congo or to Zaire and up to Morocco and Tunisia. The Nairobi office was responsible for East and Southern Africa.

Q: How was your relationship with this audit function since they were located in Ghana and you were located in Ghana?

WILSON: At that time, there was no conflict, they had their responsibilities and we had ours. Our job with them was to facilitate their work and to try to ensure to the extent that we could that the programs we suggested were scheduled for audit on a reasonable basis. I would describe our relationship as cordial and correct.

Q: In a way, they were auditing your function.

WILSON: Not so much the Controller's Office as such, but they were doing more management type rather than financial audits. They were auditing projects and programs. The Controller had the financial records and was responsible for liaising with the auditors and for follow-up on audit recommendations.

Q: What does that mean?

WILSON: It means that they were not emphasizing so much accountability as, did the project achieve the objectives that were set forth in the project papers?

Q: Did you think this was a desirable shift?

WILSON: I think something needed to be done in that direction. I don't know if the way they approached it was the right way.

Q: What do you mean?

WILSON: Prior to the Auditor General, as I had indicated before, we were concerned primarily with where did the money go, was it accounted for, were these things accounted for, and that sort of thing. We were not too concerned about the broad picture of whether what we said we were going to do was accomplished at the end of the project, was our progress toward those objectives being achieved, was the project doing what it said it would do, was it reasonably conceived and administered? I think it's fair that somebody looked at that.

Q: Wouldn't that be an evaluation function rather than an audit function?

WILSON: It could have been, but apparently we were slow on the evaluations. The evaluations varied from mission to mission depending upon who and how much time was available. The evaluation function was never or seldom adequately staffed, and again, it was a staff function reporting through the office director to the Mission Director.

Q: Some people have raised the question of whether an auditor with financial paperwork really had the background and orientation to deal with health or education project objectives and things of that sort. Did that strike you as a problem?

WILSON: I think it's a reasonable concern. Maybe the IG [Inspector General] should have considered supplementing audit staff with persons in other fields, the way the GAO eventually started to work in teams. They not only had auditors on the teams, but they had economists and whatever skills they needed depending on the nature of the review. But that never happened with the OIG [Office of the Inspector General]; so there was some concern.

Q: Do you remember any particular issue in that respect during your Ghana time?

WILSON: Offhand, I don't remember any particular audits where that was an issue, but it was an on-going, Agency-wide issue.

Q: In what way?

WILSON: The missions always felt that the auditors should confine themselves to the financial areas and not attempt to evaluate or consider themselves experts in the technical areas. The auditors didn't have that expertise. The auditors felt that the project paper set forth project objectives and whether or not these objectives had been achieved, you didn't have to be a Ph.D. in a given field to determine that. The documents that implemented the projects had timetables for implementation and achieving objectives. Their feeling was that they were holding the mission to what it had established as objectives and time frames. They were not saying whether it was a good or a bad project, but whether it was achieving what it had set out to achieve in the beginning.

Q: How sensitive were the auditors to circumstances and situations?

WILSON: Not very sensitive, I suppose. They came in and looked at a particular function/project. The record doesn't always show the entire picture, the sequence of events, a contractor that was supposed to be on duty, but was not in place at a given date, because we didn't have the money or Washington was late giving the allotment to the field or executing a contract these things. I don't think they worked these things into the equation.

Q: Because it wasn't documented?

WILSON: Probably because it wasn't documented.

Q: Did you find that there was some pattern of issues that the auditors kept coming up with?

WILSON: I'm not aware of any. They started to do functional audits. Instead of doing a

project by project audit, they started to do audits on certain functions on a worldwide basis, trying to draw conclusions from what was happening across the Agency in a particular field.

Q: What kind of field are you talking about?

WILSON: I'm talking about sectors (health, agriculture) versus projects. Instead of individual projects in individual missions, they would do an agricultural audit in several missions worldwide and try to draw conclusions by looking at the agriculture sector across the Agency.

Q: Do you recall any issues that they brought up in those audits?

WILSON: No. I didn't follow those. My concern was more with the accounting, to facilitate the auditor's entry, and to connect them up with the people who were managing and implementing those things, and to see that replies to findings were made on a timely basis, that sort of thing.

Q: You were responsible for following up on the audits?

WILSON: No. The Technical Office was responsible for seeing that the audit recommendations that came out in the report were implemented. But they were to be implemented in a time phased fashion. The Controller's Office was concerned with reporting on the status of audit recommendations, reporting back to the auditors on what had been done to implement those recommendations, and reporting to the bureau and to Washington on the status of implementation. At one time, if the recommendations in an audit had not been closed out or implemented within a certain number of months, then responsibility for implementing those moved from the mission to the bureau. The bureau tried to get the missions to resolve them in order that the IG's periodic status reports to Congress would not show a large number of recommendations outstanding for long periods of time.

Q: It became a much more formal system of reporting, follow-up, and so on.

WILSON: Yes.

Q: Than the early days, which were more localized.

WILSON: That's right. The missions, naturally, attempted to get these resolved before they were transferred to Washington. So, they were much more responsive. There were quarterly reports to the IG on the status of open audit recommendations. Tracking systems had to be set up. That was my concern.

Q: Were there any particular audit issues that stand out in your mind that were in common or were they just all particular to the activity?

WILSON: They were particular to the activity and to the place. There does not stand out in my mind anything that came up where the Auditor General or the Inspector General came up with anything that was germane across the board in the Agency.

Q: Or just in Ghana.

WILSON: On several occasions, the IG conducted reviews of the validity of obligations/commitments recorded in AID's financial records. They were never satisfied that the missions and FM [Financial Management]/Washington, where AID/W was the Implementing Agent, ever conducted rigorous reviews of obligations/commitments to determine whether they were valid and therefore could continue to be carried as obligations. As a result of these audits, FM/Washington issued a directive on how to conduct Section 1311 reviews, which are reviews of the validity of obligations/commitments, and the necessity to retain work papers as evidence that these reviews had been conducted.

Q: That is one major issue that became evident.

WILSON: That is one example that readily comes to mind. I am sure that there were others.

Q: Did you have any experience with any outside auditors that were doing reviews, the Inspector General, the GAO, and all that who came to the field to look at things? Was that happening during your time?

WILSON: That happened. It was on an ad hoc basis in response to the concern of Congress or concern over charges of waste, fraud, and abuse in the AID program. The GAO particularly would come out. In those cases, again, the controller's responsibility was to facilitate their work, to put them in touch with the office that had responsibility for the function in which they were interested.

I remember their coming by a number of times, but I don't recall that there was anything that a subsequent report leveled any requirements on us. We also got a number of State Department inspector teams visiting the embassy and other agencies at post. When they were looking at the embassy's operations, generally; they touched base with USAID and sometimes they were interested specifically in certain AID programs or projects.

Q: What was their interest in mission functions?

WILSON: Program coordination, administrative support.

Q: Did you work with the Ghanaian government officials?

WILSON: Yes, trying to upgrade their audit capabilities in the Auditor General's Office.

Q: What were you trying to do there?

WILSON: They needed training for some staff members to give them a better perspective of auditing standards in the U.S. I think we trained two or three Auditor General staff members at universities in the U.S. Two of the Auditor General staff who came to the U.S., I think, went to the University of Connecticut. They were there a couple of years and went back to responsible positions on the Auditor General staff. We had close contact with the Controller and Accountant

General of Ghana. We had to follow-up with them on loan repayments. We also had special accounts into which local currency that had been generated by AID assistance had to be deposited. The local currency could only be released for purposes that were jointly agreed upon by the USAID and the government. The mission approved the releases from those accounts. So, there was a fairly close relationship there. They often checked with us on loan repayment schedules because their records were not always reflective of the current status of loans.

Q: How did you find their accounting and tracking competence? Was this a big issue for you or not?

WILSON: It could have stood considerable improvement. They did a lot with what they had, but a lot more needed to be done. They needed more staffing. They needed better equipment and systems and that sort of thing.

Q: Were there any instances where their auditors audited an AID program?

WILSON: Not actually. We had an Operating Expense Trust Fund. Under the trust fund agreement, they had the right to come in and look at the uses to which the trust fund had been put. On at least two occasions, staff did come over and review our records to determine that they were in agreement with reports submitted to the Government of Ghana.

Q: Were there any particular issues in that respect?

WILSON: No, there were no real questions. I think we were very cautious and judicious in the way we used the trust fund. We had good records. They were used in accordance with the trust fund agreements.

Q: You had a Ghanaian staff in the financial records?

WILSON: Yes. I didn't have any what I would call financial analysts, but in Ghana we had a staff of 8-10 persons - accountants, voucher examiners, cashier, secretarial/clerical personnel.

Q: Any particular issues that you had to deal with while you were in that role?

WILSON: I don't recall having any major issues. It was just a matter primarily of training and trying to upgrade the staff, trying to give them experiences that would broaden their horizons. The chief accountant went back to Washington a couple of times to work in the Controller's Office there. He was well received and well respected for the work he did there. We didn't have a complicated program in Ghana. We were able with the staff that we had to do a decent job without too many problems. The last year I was there, I had responsibility for the Controller's Office as well as the Executive Office. That was an experience!

Q: You became executive officer and-

WILSON: Controller.

Q: That's quite a change in functions.

WILSON: Yes. There were some headaches because of the overlap of the two functions in certain areas.

Q: Such as?

WILSON: Contracting. You execute a contract as Executive Officer and then record it in the financial records and disburse against it as Controller. But I tried to resolve that by pretty well staying away from the accounting. I had a deputy controller and I let him handle the financial end of the operation. I tried to concentrate on the Executive Office, where I was less experienced and which was more problem prone. So, that worked out okay.

Q: What kind of issues did you have to deal with in that role?

WILSON: We had to phase down the staff. We thought that it was a good idea at that time to consider savings that we could make by combining positions and eliminating functions. But as soon as we implemented it, we ended up having the Inspector General move in to Ghana. We had given up a lot of housing. Then we needed to go back out and find more housing in a very competitive market. So, it was those sorts of problems. But it all went well. We got permission for the auditors to locate in Accra. We housed them. They were reasonably satisfied operating out of Ghana.

Q: But was this a pattern elsewhere of combining Controller and Executive Office functions?

WILSON: I think that, at the same time, the same thing was happening in Nigeria. I think did the same thing there.

Q: This was part of a staff reduction initiative?

WILSON: Yes. In fact, I guess, Nigeria practically phased out as a mission in the mid-1970s. But the Agency later decided that, except in instances where missions were just starting up or missions were just phasing out, they would not combine the two functions because of the possibility for conflict of interest.

Q: But did the people in Washington, in the Controller's Section and the Executive Office Section like this?

WILSON: I think the Management Office liked it less because in these combined operations, mostly the financial types got the positions because they had the type of training and experience that made it more likely they would be successful in those positions.

Q: So, the controller-types took most of these positions.

WILSON: All of them that I knew of.

Q: So, the executive officers were sort of pushed aside.

WILSON: Yes. They were generally the deputies.

Q: Having been in that role, did you think that was a good way to operate?

WILSON: In that particular situation at that time and in that place, yes. There was a deputy controller and a deputy executive officer. So, what was eliminated was really the executive officer's position. I became the controller/executive officer and I had two deputies. That way, I think it worked okay. You can deal with the conflicts because you've got two deputies. If there was something that I felt the executive officer shouldn't be involved in, I delegated it to the deputy executive officer.

Q: You had to be super-sensitive to conflict of interest issues.

WILSON: Yes.

Q: Did you find that those arose frequently?

WILSON: I didn't find that they arose except in the local contracting area - housing contracts, guard service contracts, and that sort of thing. That's what we were engaged in. We were supposed to be able to get contracting help for large contracts from REDSO, but REDSO was busy with its workload in the Sahel. They seldom covered the full service missions, which Ghana was at that time.

Q: How did you find living in Ghana?

WILSON: Lovely. I was able to not only do things in the mission, but I worked on the school board. There were certain regional organizations in Ghana that were operating with AID funding. Often, I got requests from the Controller's Office to go out and work with these organizations on reporting, setting up letters of credit, and that sort of thing. So, while the program may not have been as complicated, complex, and demanding as some other programs, I had a chance to do more things inside and outside the mission. That was a nice experience for me.

Q: Do any particular Ghana program stand out in your mind ?

WILSON: The one that stands out most in my mind was the one that UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] had in public health/population. The university had its own administrative office under the Chief of Party. I guess we gave what support we could to it. It was a research project, as I recall. I think it was quite successful technically. My only problem was not with the project itself, but with the flow of financial data from the university to the mission. The non-profits and the universities operated under a letter of credit where they drew money when they needed it out of Washington and they didn't necessarily file financial reports with the mission. Where expenditures were at a given time was difficult to ascertain until we got them to report to us on a quarterly basis what their expenditures had been, and what they

expected to expend during the next quarter so that we could furnish better budgetary figures to the program office. But they had a good group of people there. It seemed to be a well-managed program. The concept of contractors providing their own support rather than looking to the mission to fully support them was sort of unique at the time. But it worked quite well.

Q: Anything else on Ghana?

WILSON: I think not, except that it was a nice experience. It was broadening. I enjoyed it all.

Q: After four years, you moved on where?

JAMES K. BISHOP, JR.
Desk Officer: Ghana and Togo
Washington, DC (1972)

Ambassador James K. Bishop, Jr. was born in New York in 1938. He received his bachelor's degree from Holy Cross College in 1960. His career has included positions in Auckland, Beirut, Yaounde, and ambassadorships to Nigeria, Liberia, and Somalia. Ambassador Bishop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 1995.

BISHOP: The Ghana desk job was most remarkable for its economic aspects. The Acheampong regime repudiated its foreign debts soon after I became the desk officer; it also nationalized many companies including Union Carbide. It had "seized the commanding heights of the economy" as Ghana's leaders put it. Such action was unheard of at the time. I think it was the first African government and perhaps the first Third World government which repudiated its external debts. The creditor community reacted in a very hostile manner. The British, as the most significant creditor, formed a "Creditors' Club", headed by Martin Le Caine from the Channel Islands, one of Great Britain's senior diplomats. We met every three months in London, Rome--or Ghana. We tried to develop a unified creditors' response. Ultimately, the negotiations ended up in a rescheduling of Ghana's public sector debts. We also valiantly defended our US based multi-national company Union Carbide. It gave us every assurance that it had not engaged in the tax evasion which was the justification Ghana had used for its expropriation. After we had stoutly maintained Union Carbide's innocence--both within our creditor community and in Ghana--the company settled out of court with Ghana conceding that it had indeed for years under-invoiced its exports in order to minimize the export taxes due to Ghana. That taught some of us a lesson about big business!!

During the four years that I was involved in Ghanaian affairs--this was after Nkrumah's overthrow--Ghana ranked quite high in the interest level of the Bureau, primarily because of the debt repudiation and nationalization process. The bloom had gone off the rose about Ghana's position in Africa. Nkrumah's overthrow in 1967, the series of lackluster military regimes which followed, compounded the waste of resources which Nkrumah had inherited when Ghana became independent in 1957, greatly reduced Ghana's influence on the continent. Nkrumah

spent the country's considerable resources on an attempt to industrialize the country--on facilities that made very little economic sense and on other showcase projects. The government ignored the agricultural sector which was actually the underpinning of the country's economic base--cocoa in particular. The countryside was exploited for the benefit of the urban population and in particularly the swollen bureaucracy of a state modeled on the socialist pattern of Eastern Europe. The bureaucracy inserted itself into the economy in a manner that was well beyond its competence to manage. So Ghana was in an economic decline and political disrepute, but it was prominent on our foreign policy agenda because its economic policy initiatives might be replicated in other countries on the continent to the detriment of creditors in both the public and private sectors.

I found that the African countries which we I dealt had a very mixed bag of representation in Washington. Ghanaian Ambassador Deborah was very well known in Washington; he was extremely articulate and had excellent connections in the black community, academia, the religious and political communities. The Francophones were most often lost. Few of them spoke English; most of them were accustomed to authoritarian political structures--and I include France in that group. In those contexts diplomats dealt only with the Foreign Ministry; that doesn't work in Washington. To be successful in Washington, a foreign representative had to have good connections in Congress, the press, various parts of the bureaucracy (AID, the Peace Corps, Export-Import Bank and perhaps even the NSC), the non governmental organizations. It was not enough to just be in touch with the State Department. Most of the Francophone country representatives didn't have a clue on how Washington worked. They literally could not find their way around Washington.

BISHOP: At the end of his tenure, Kissinger did go out to Africa. He decided that he had not paid sufficient attention to that part of the world. I think Rhodesia and its unilateral declaration of independence was the stimulus because that became a focus of international attention. That issue was resolved through the Lancaster House negotiations under British auspices. I may be being unkind to Mr. Kissinger, but I suspect that there may have been a little bit of professional jealousy involved. With the South Africa problem still to be resolved, there was a potential for greater US involvement in that country. So Kissinger took off to Africa--specifically South Africa. But because he had visited South Africa, the Nigerians refused to allow him into Nigeria. I can remember Shirley Temple Black, our Ambassador in Ghana and a very fine woman, being bitterly disappointed because the Ghanians, who had received her with the warmest of embraces and whose friendship she had reciprocated whole heartedly, let her down at the last moment. They had told her that they would let Kissinger into Ghana, but when Nigeria said "No", they refused to let the Secretary's plane land.

JOHN A. LINEHAN, JR.
Deputy Chief of Mission
Accra (1975-1977)

Ambassador John A. Linehan, Jr. was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1924.

He entered the Foreign Service in 1952. In addition to serving in Ghana, Ambassador Linehan served in Washington, DC, France, Canada, Australia, and Liberia, and was ambassador to Sierra Leone. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: What was the situation in Ghana at this time?

LINEHAN: It was a sad situation, in many respects. Ghana, as you know, became independent in 1957 with a parliamentary form of government under Kwame Nkrumah. He was overthrown by a military coup d'etat which worked out not too badly. I have to give the military credit for preparing for a return to a democratic form of government and elections. And this did take place. However, the democratic government was again overthrown by other military. When I was there, the government was run by the military. The head of state was Colonel Chumpong Acheampong. The cabinet ministers were primarily -- though not all -- military men.

The problem was, as the old adage goes, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. That's exactly what happened. The economy was really going down the drain. Ghana had been the largest producer of cocoa in the world, but in terms of the centralized-socialistic, if you will -- type of economy set up, which the military still operated, the farmers were not paid sufficiently for their cocoa. And the currency began to slip, too. So what happened was that much of the cocoa went over the border to the Ivory Coast because the CFA franc [in use in the Ivory Coast and elsewhere in francophone Africa] was a hard currency. In addition to that, the military would take over the manufactured goods and itself take them over the border and sell them. There came a period when you could not buy matches, canned milk, canned fish, or batteries, all manufactured in Ghana. They were over the border. The minute you crossed the border into Togo, say, three hours away, there these items were on sale. But they were sold there because the CFA franc was hard. It got very bad while I was there, and after I left, far worse, to the point where the Embassy, I understand, used to send a truck over to Togo weekly to buy rice and staples for the Embassy Ghanaian staff.

Q: When you were there, what was it like, dealing with the Ghanaian Government?

LINEHAN: We dealt -- at least the Ambassador and I did -- primarily with the Foreign Ministry. And that was staffed by civilians. They were very cooperative. They'd been around a long time, they were pleasant, and we had no great problems. They, on the other hand, had to report to the military, so they didn't have total flexibility. I might add here that Ghanaians are known by some people as "the Latins of West Africa." They are ebullient, hospitable, fun, wonderful to entertain. So we had very few problems dealing with them. We had some aid activity. We dealt with, again, a civilian economics minister. But there was always the heavy hand of the military.

Q: Didn't Kissinger plan a visit? Could you talk about that? Was Ed Holmes there at the time or no?

LINEHAN: I was. Ed followed me. Yes, I can indeed talk about that. Henry was going to make his first visit to Africa. The Ambassador was very insistent that she wanted him to come to Ghana. Now, I should say that, by contrast to many ambassadors who serve in countries which

are not, shall we say, on the front burner, when she went to the States, she would say that she wanted to call on the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, of course, the NSC [National Security Council] chairman, and all of these people. I would say, "Gee, I don't know whether you will get these appointments. Well, look, we'll ask, anyway." Well, she did, and everybody would see her. And, apparently, Henry was very fond of her. So she insisted that he come to Ghana, and he agreed. Having been through Presidential, Vice Presidential, and Secretary of State visits, I had no interest whatsoever in having one of these. But she insisted, and the Embassy was turned inside out. At 5:00 PM on the day before Kissinger was due to arrive at 10:00 AM, we were called to the Foreign Ministry. I went with her. They said, "Unfortunately, Colonel Acheampong, the head of state, is ill and cannot receive Mr. Kissinger. Therefore, it wouldn't be appropriate for him to come." The real story was, apparently, that the Nigerians had sent a plane and a delegation to convince Acheampong not to receive Henry Kissinger because the Nigerians were concerned about our involvement in Angola at that period. The fact of the matter was that the head of state did have a boil on his rear end, but I don't think it was all that serious.

We sent a "Flash" message to tell Kissinger that he could not come. He asked Ambassador Shirley Temple Black to meet him in Monrovia, which she did. She came back, three days later, with orders to return to the States. I was told that our relations would be cool. No signing of aid agreements, etc. So, she took off, and I was chargé d'affaires, basically for six months. She was permitted to return briefly for July 4, which was the bicentennial celebration [of the Declaration of Independence], and which was also her farewell. She left and became Chief of Protocol.

Perhaps at this point I should go back and tell you that when I arrived in Ghana, within two weeks something odd happened which raised my eyebrows. I looked into it a little bit more. I called the Regional Security Officer. We had turned up a "crook" who was the Embassy Administrative Counselor. Within three months I had to advise Ambassador Shirley Temple Black to call him in and tell him that she was sending him home, which she did. The Department invited him to retire, deciding not to prosecute him. What we could prove was enough to show that he was not doing his duty, but not enough to make it worthwhile to take him to court. Charlie Black, Shirley's husband, was rather suspicious of Foreign Service types. However, later on we became good friends after she sent the "crook" home. He felt that I was protecting his wife from embarrassment from dishonesty, and all that sort of thing.

I was chargé [in Ghana] until December [1976]. Well, how do you play things "cool"? I guess you do the best you can. I stayed on pretty good terms with the government. By September I was told, "You can warm up again."

Q: Do you feel that anybody paid attention to our playing it cool or playing these games?

LINEHAN: No, it was a farce. But I don't think that too much damage was done, either.

Q: Did the Ghanaians know that we were doing this?

LINEHAN: No. I think it made Henry feel better.

Q: Well, what were we doing in Ghana? What were our AID, Peace Corps, and other activities at that time? Again, we're talking about the 1975-1977 period.

LINEHAN: We had a reasonably large AID operation there. We were doing such things as Family Planning, a lot of agricultural instruction, some medical training. Speaking of Family Planning, I might add that I had a visit from Congressman Scheuer of New York, who is a strong supporter of Family Planning. And fortunately for us, in Ghana the Ghanaians were very responsive to that. So we were able to set up a good program for him. I had him to lunch, along with the man in AID who had been handling this program. Congressman Scheuer said at lunch, "Well, now, when you see the head of state, do you discuss Family Planning with him every time?" And I replied, "Certainly not." And the Congressman continued, "Well, you should." The AID man concerned with the Family Planning spoke up and said, "Well, there's no need to because we get all of the cooperation we need." But I thought to myself that it is sort of weird to ask whether I talk about Family Planning with the head of state. I thought, "Hell, on those rare occasions there are other things to talk about."

We had a Peace Corps contingent of about 150, I think. A very large Peace Corps group. Heavily into teaching. And that, I found, was a problem -- for me, at least. At one point, when I was chargé, the Peace Corps Director, a very good person, came to me with a new plan for the following year, providing for an increased number of teachers. I objected to that, because Ghanaian teachers were going over to Nigeria to teach because they weren't paid adequately [at home]. I said that I didn't see any point in our bringing in more teachers, just to fill the gaps. We ought to leave it to the Ghanaians to pay these people. So we changed the proposed Peace Corps plan.

Q: Did we have concerns about the role of the Soviets or the Chinese Communists at that time in Ghana?

LINEHAN: This was the period of "detente." The Soviets at that time were being friendly. They invited us to movies, and our people played their people in volleyball -- but it was all very superficial. On the face of it, everybody was good friends. But sure, we were much concerned about what they were doing in Ghana and what they were doing in all of Africa. It was the same old game -- they said that they were competing, essentially. What they were competing in -- and pretty successfully -- all along the coast there were the fisheries. They were robbing the [local] fisheries blind. They had agreements with the host governments to help them to develop their fishing industries and so on. And meanwhile, of course, they had their big ships down there, taking loads of fish.

As for the Chinese Communists, we had not yet recognized the People's Republic...

Q: But we were beginning...

LINEHAN: We could be friendly at other people's parties. As a matter of fact, when my mother-in-law, who was in her 80's, came to visit us, the first party we took her to was one given by the Australians, I think, who had recognized the Chinese. I might add that she was a life-long Republican. I said to her, "You've heard about these Red Chinese Communists. Would you like

to meet one?" She said, "Sure." I took her over to meet the Chinese Ambassador, who was very pleasant. His interpreter, a young fellow, said to me, "How old would she be?" I said that she was about 81. The interpreter gave her a big bow. When we left, he came running over, wished her a happy day, and made another big bow. My mother-in-law said, "Well, these Chinese Communists aren't bad." We didn't have much to do with the Chinese. They were not as active in Ghana as they were in other places, for reasons that I am not clear about.

Q: What was your impression of our aid program in Ghana?

LINEHAN: I have two concerns about our aid program. I think we try to do too much and go off in too many directions, in part responsive to people here in the U.S. Secondly, no matter how you put it, building something that people can see means a great deal, a point brought home to me subsequently by President Stevens in Sierra Leone. He said, "You're doing wonderful things." We were doing some major agricultural training and so forth. He said, "You know, the Chinese come here and build a bridge and they're now building a stadium. I want something that I can point to and say to my people, 'That's American!'" You can argue this question back and forth, but he had a point. I felt that the program was much too diverse. We were putting bits of money here and there. I also found that dealing with AID -- certainly when I was ambassador -- was very awkward. For example, the CARE [Cooperative American Relief Everywhere] organization was building feeder roads very successfully. We certainly supported that -- farm to market roads and that sort of thing. Well, one year -- I've forgotten which year -- the fiscal year had begun, but no money had come through [from AID] for the CARE organization to continue its road program. The money had been appropriated and was in the budget, but the money just didn't come through. I sent telegram after telegram to AID but no answer. Finally, the CARE guy came in and said, "Look, I simply can't maintain my organization any more. I have no money." So I called my own office director [West African Affairs] in State and said that this is the situation, but AID is totally unresponsive. He said we'd have the money the following day. And so we did. I just didn't see the need for this kind of bureaucratic hangup.

I found also, when I was home on leave, that attending AID committee meetings was a dreadful experience. There were 25 people in one meeting which I went to where the chairman didn't know what it was all about. He found it very difficult to chair. I was pretty annoyed. In fact, I just left one such meeting. It was just a waste of time and a waste of talent. After 22 months, my shortest tour, I left Ghana for Sierra Leone.

Q: Could you talk about that? We might as well talk about that. How did you get that appointment?

LINEHAN: I've never quite known. I know that Shirley [Temple Black] was fond of me and I suspect that when she was back in the States, she said good things about me. But, of course, it was a different administration. I was appointed by President Jimmy Carter. All I know is that a new Ambassador came to Ghana in December [1976].

Q: That was Robert Smith?

LINEHAN: Robert State Smith -- sorry, Robert Pretoria Smith.

Q: There were two Robert Smith's [as ambassador]. Robert P. and Robert S.

LINEHAN: We called one Robert State Smith because he was in the Department, at least initially. The other had been DCM in Pretoria. The latter was a good friend, and I was very pleased to see him. He came [to Ghana] in December [1976]. Along about March [1977] I went into the office one morning. My driver had a flat tire, so we were late. When I went into my office, my secretary said, "The Ambassador wants to see you right away." The Ambassador gave me a telegram, which said, "The Secretary proposes to recommend that the President name you as Ambassador to Sierra Leone. Let us know if you agree." I said [to Ambassador Smith], "What is this?" And he said, "Stupid ass! You're being offered an ambassadorship." I thought about it for 30 minutes and said yes. It came totally out of the blue. And then it was another couple of months before any action [followed]. I should say that when Ambassador Smith came, he said, "Well, you've been running the show. Just keep on running the show." Of course, it was inevitable that a career man will get his fingers in the pie. I was beginning to feel, not unhappy with him, per se, but, having been running the show, I felt that he didn't need me any more. I seriously thought that I would ask for a transfer. I do like Bob. He's a friend to this day. But he didn't need me. In turn, when I got to Sierra Leone, I had a DCM whom I did not know but who was recommended to me. He had been there with my predecessor, who was a political appointee and who gave him good marks. I told my DCM the same thing: "You've been running the show. Continue on as before." Later, he said to me, "Jack, you want me to run the show, but you're doing things that I don't know about." And I said, "Mea culpa, mea culpa."

ROBERT P. SMITH
Ambassador
Ghana (1976-1979)

Ambassador Robert P. Smith entered the Foreign Service in 1955. In addition to serving as ambassador to Ghana, he held positions in Lebanon, South Africa, and Pakistan. Ambassador Smith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 28, 1989.

Q: Then you moved to another difficult assignment, and that was Accra, Ghana.

SMITH: Yes.

Q: We're talking about 1976 to 1979 when you were ambassador there. How did this come about?

SMITH: I was on home leave after two years in Malta. I was in the West visiting relatives. The Department tracked me down in a motel in Boulder, Colorado and it was Bill Schaufele calling, who was then Assistant Secretary for Africa, saying, "Bob, would you be interested in Ghana?" And oh, boy, would I. I loved Ghana despite all the trauma. So I jumped at that and said, "Yes, go with it." They put my name forward and we went back to Malta to pack up. We only stayed

there another couple of months, I guess, before we left.

Q: You went back to Malta?

SMITH: To Malta, that's right, to say good-byes and so forth. So we went on to Ghana. I was very, very glad to get back in Africa. I felt a little bit out of it in Europe, frankly, delightful as it was from a physical standpoint. I went on to Ghana and found that the country had just gone from bad to worse in the intervening years since I had been there. Nothing in the stores; indeed, many of them were boarded up. Only one operating restaurant worthy of the name in the whole city of Accra, which is a very large city. The economy was in a shambles.

By the time I got there, of course, they had been through a number of coups and a General Acheampong was the Head of State and Chairman of the Supreme Military Council, a rather unprepossessing military type who was struggling along. But I had so admired the Ghanaian people, and still do, because they had retained their wit, and charm, and humor despite all the privations piled upon them. They have, in short, been badly served by every government they've had since Nkrumah.

Q: Is it somehow endemic within this charming people or is it just fate?

SMITH: I don't know. It's difficult to answer because the Ghanaians, like the Ibos, were among the best educated in Africa, again, a plethora of lawyers, doctors, engineers, even scientists, and so forth, most of whom now are working and living abroad. There may be some dribbling back now, but most of them got out while they could, further running down the economy. Nkrumah quickly went through the British reserves I alluded to earlier.

Under the Acheampong regime, which was a military regime, I was greeted with open arms, literally with open arms, most warmly, our relations with it were very good. But corruption was rampant in the country, as it is in many places in Africa. We had a modest AID and Peace Corps program there. And again, because of the greed and the corruption, there were, not one, but two coups during my three years stay in Ghana leading to still other military regimes, each one no better than the last.

As I say, even the civilian regimes have not been able to repair the damage and really put the country back on its feet. The only hopeful sign I can point to is that the current regime, headed by Jerry Rawlings, seems to have finally gotten its act together, despite his early rhetoric of anti-Americanism, a la Nkrumah. He has reached agreements with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and the Ghanaian Cedi, the currency, is again worth something, I gather. He is making it worthwhile to be a cocoa farmer again. He's making it easier for foreign businessmen to do business there. And in short, this young ex-flight lieutenant in the Ghanaian Air Force now seems to be doing a much better job than he did at first.

Q: When you came there what was American policy towards Ghana? We're talking about 1976.

SMITH: Our relations have traditionally been warm and close. There were a number of Americans living there, in fact. Huge numbers of Ghanaians had emigrated to the United States

either legally or illegally. Our policy was to try to help Ghanaians do what they could to get the country back on its feet and make it economically viable through our Peace Corps, and AID programs, and so forth. But again, the needs were so great and our means were so limited there wasn't a great deal we could do.

Q: What were we doing in AID at that time?

SMITH: Largely in agricultural development, economic development in general, health, the Peace Corps, in education.

Q: How do you deal with the problem? You've got an AID project and, obviously, this is, in one way, funneling equipment, or money, or something to a place that is full of corruption. I mean, people must have come up and said, "Look, we can't do this unless we pay off so and so."

SMITH: Then we didn't do it. Then we just didn't do it. We monitored the AID programs closely to prevent that sort of thing on a virtually daily basis. I have no hesitancy in saying that none of our AID money was siphoned off.

Q: How effective was it? I mean, if the atmosphere was corrupt, how do you operate in those circumstances?

SMITH: Well, you operate through non-corrupt officials or you design the projects in such a way so that it doesn't lend itself to that sort of thing. I think most of the money was made off commercial enterprises, commercial deals, certainly not our AID programs, perhaps with others. Difficult, difficult years, a tragedy.

I think our AID programs were making some impact in the short run. But if I take the long view, if I go back to 1960-1961 and look at what I found in Africa then and look at what I find in Africa today, I have got to be terribly depressed. Our AID program has not really worked that well, in my judgment, in Africa or, indeed, elsewhere in the world. The Ghanaian people are, in fact, worse off today than they were at the time of independence. The same thing is true in many other African states.

Q: Well, I mean, in the first place, it's obviously the fault of people not getting their act together. But looking at our AID, when you were looking at these programs, were we doing the right thing or the wrong thing?

SMITH: I thought, at the time, we were doing the right thing. I think, in retrospect -- and I don't want to single out the particular projects -- unfortunately, they were not self-sustaining to a sufficient extent or self-perpetuating.

Q: Could you give some examples?

SMITH: Well, I mean by that, simply that we didn't have enough projects that were sustainable over the long haul after the American technicians departed. Now there are a lot of exceptions to that and there are a lot of projects operating in Africa today, I'm sure, under purely African

direction with no American technician in sight. So I don't mean this to be a blanket condemnation, far from it. But I have to say I'm terribly disappointed when I look at the status of African countries and their peoples today from what I anticipated it would be back in 1960 and 1961 because, given their human and natural resources, many of these countries should be much further ahead. So I don't think Western aid programs -- I shouldn't even single out the West -- aid programs, in general, have not been nearly as effective as they should have been, sad to say.

Q: Again, maybe there are certain things that aid can't do unless there is the proper infrastructure to support it. I'm talking about the human infrastructure to support it.

SMITH: Yes, perhaps not. I'm reminded of a conversation I had with Premier Okpara in Eastern Nigeria early on in the '60s, who was also the head of the political party in Eastern Nigeria. I remember him slamming his big fist down on the table once and saying, "Mr. Smith, please, no more feasibility studies. You send people out and they do a study. Then three months later you send another team of Americans out and they do a study of that study, all of which is designed to come up with a feasibility study. You're studying us to death and nothing gets done." He was ranting and raving, but all in good fun. He was grinning as he was saying this, but there was a barb in it because our AID programs were excruciatingly slow and hemmed in with all sorts of bureaucratic restrictions and caveats. It was a tremendous frustration to African leaders to deal with our AID people.

I don't have the answers. I know now, in 1989, they're looking at the whole AID program again. I think they've reached the same conclusion that I just articulated, that it has not been as effective worldwide as we wanted it to be. I think we bit off more than we could chew in many of these places. You can't undo it. I'm not saying we did any damage, it's just that they were not self-sustaining and viable in the long run, which is very sad.

Q: Were we concerned with Ghana as being an African leader? Or by the time you got there, had Ghana's role become less important?

SMITH: Ghana, until recent years, certainly through the Nkrumah years, always had a leadership role in Africa quite disproportionate to its relatively small size. You have to give Nkrumah credit for that because they led the way to independence. They were the first independent black Africans, other than Liberia and Ethiopia. So they did have a major leadership role. Therefore, we paid a great deal of attention to it even while I was there because their voice in the councils of the OAU, Organization of African Unity, and others was quite loud and often strident while Nkrumah was in power. So yes, they very definitely had a leadership role and we took cognizance of that.

Also, they had been blessed with an excellent foreign service and civil service all these years who had managed to hang on and survive these various regimes that were doing them such damage. And they've got tremendous human resources. If we could get all the Ghanaians living abroad, especially in England and the States, to go back and put their talents to use, they could turn it around in a hurry. But you're going to have to have the right government in power to make that happen.

Q: Speaking of governments and power, when you were there you said there were several coups. Could you describe what happened, and what you saw and did, and what the embassy did?

SMITH: Strangely enough, and this is a source of great amusement with some of my colleagues, I happened to be in the States, either on medical leave or consultations, when both those coups happened. I got back on the first commercial flight but I was not physically there for the coup. It had very little impact on the embassy or the American population. This was an internal squabble among the military in the case of Ghana, and having to do with corrupt practices and not sharing the wealth with the right people. Each new man pledges to correct these wrongs and it doesn't happen. Liberia was a very different case. We should get to that in a moment, I think.

Q: Were there any particular problems that you had in Ghana that come to mind?

SMITH: No. No. It was a most enjoyable tour of duty except for the privations being suffered by the Ghanaian people themselves. And, indeed, because of our insistence that Peace Corps volunteers live as their indigenous counterparts live, we had real food problems, almost amounting to malnutrition, among some of our Peace Corps volunteers. We had to start shipping sardines and other canned goods up country to some of our Peace Corps volunteers just to keep body and soul together. Things were that bad in Ghana and that was a source of great concern.

But politically, no. Ghana, during my tenure there, was behaving itself on the international scene and they didn't have the voice in international councils that they once had. We had very friendly relations. It was just the frustration of being unable to cut through the graft and corruption internally. Not that we were affected by it, but it just prevented a lot from getting done. It prevented American firms from coming in and investing there. The economy just kept going downhill while I was there.

Q: Were you getting any pressure? While you were there the Ford Administration went out and the Carter one came in with a new emphasis on human rights and all that. Did this cause you any turnaround or reactivate you on things?

SMITH: No turnaround, certainly. I welcomed this new thrust and it gave me a lot of additional ammunition to use in various conversations with the head of state, with the foreign minister, and other cabinet ministers who would give me a very polite, even cordial, hearings and make all the right noises, but very little real change.

Q: What sort of things were we concerned about in the field of human rights?

SMITH: In Ghana there were some political prisoners and that sort of thing. I can't remember many others. Most of that came in the years in Liberia, as a matter of fact. Why don't we go on to Liberia?

Q: All right. Why don't we go on to Liberia. In a way, it's rather remarkable in this day and age, where ambassadorial assignments are getting scarcer and scarcer as far as professional officers, that you had three. So many people have had distinguished careers and they are tossed a year and a half in Rwanda or something like that to end off their career and they're supposed

to depart the scene as quietly as possible. And this was your third ambassadorial assignment.

SMITH: Yes. I was very fortunate, indeed, and I think it was just the question of, quite literally, being in the right place at the right time. First of all, let me back up to Ghana just a minute. I forgot one major thing. I followed Shirley Temple Black but there was about a six-month interregnum. We pulled Mrs. Black out in anger when the Ghanaians, to show their displeasure over some American policy -- I forget now what it was -- at the last minute would not let Secretary Kissinger land in Ghana. So my marching orders in Ghana were to go back in there and patch things up, which didn't take long because the Ghanaians were already predisposed to resume friendly and close relations.

Q: How effective had Mrs. Black been?

SMITH: Quite effective. She's not the dilettante that some, at least, would have you think she is. She was popular, very popular not only among the Ghanaians, but among our own embassy staff. And the fine DCM I inherited from Shirley was very high on her. There are obvious limitations on any political appointee who knows little or nothing about the foreign service. But Shirley was very, very bright, and dedicated, and sincere. She had had experience at the U.N. Even if she didn't, I'd have to give her very high marks. As a matter of fact, because she then came out of Ghana and was made chief of protocol, she swore me in when I went out there.

IRVIN D. COKER
Mission Director, USAID
Accra (1976-1980)

Irvin D. Coker was born in Petersburg, Virginia in 1935. He graduated from Howard University and served in the U.S. Military in South Korea. His postings abroad included Ghana, Uganda, and Nigeria. Mr. Coker was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1993.

COKER: However, prior to being drafted into the military service in 1958, I had been keeping up with the independence movement in Ghana, with President Kwame Nkrumah, and what they were doing.

Q: How did you become acquainted with that?

COKER: Well, it happened that, as I was at Howard University, there were a lot of discussions on campus with some of the African students on what was going on in Africa in general and Ghana in particular. There were quite a few Ghanaian students at Howard University, whom I had gotten to know. They talked about the independence movement in Ghana. I knew some Black Americans who were making plans to go to Ghana to assist Ghana to obtain its independence.

I developed a liking for what I heard about Ghana. I did not have an opportunity to work with

Ghana and especially with Kwame Nkrumah in the independence movement. I had been keeping track of that movement. I then decided that, at the first opportunity I had, I would try to go to Ghana. I kept track of what was going on in Ghana, which became independent in March, 1957. I finished college in June, 1957. Then, in February, 1958, some 11 months after Ghana became independent, I went to the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, DC, and talked to Ghanaian Ambassador Chapman about my wish to go to Ghana. He was the first Ghanaian Ambassador to the U.S. At that time, since I had a undergraduate degree, he encouraged me to go back to school and work on my post-graduate degree before actually going to Ghana. He said that the Ghanaian Government would be glad to have me go to Ghana, but I believe that he thought that American students going over to Ghana should have at least a graduate degree.

Q: Now let's shift to the period when you were in Ghana. What period was that?

COKER: I was in Ghana from June, 1976, until the end of August, 1980.

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

COKER: Before I went to Ghana Ambassador Shirley Temple Black was the U.S. Ambassador there. General Acheampong and the Supreme Military Council still provided the ruling leadership of the country. Just prior to my going to Ghana, there was also the historical trip to Sub-Saharan Africa, planned for Secretary of State Kissinger. This was the first time a Secretary of State had visited the area. In the planning stage that trip also included a stop in Ghana. All of that was to take place before my arrival there. However, as I had been approved to go to Ghana as the next AID Mission Director, following you, Mr. Haven North, I was keeping track of what was going on.

Lo and behold, before Secretary Kissinger was scheduled to arrive in Ghana, he was disinvited, supposedly by Gen Acheampong and the Supreme Military Council. So Secretary Kissinger was not able to make a stop in Ghana. I understand that he sent a message to Ambassador Black to be given to Gen Acheampong and the Supreme Military Council, expressing his regret at not being able to visit Ghana at that time. It is my understanding that Gen Acheampong may have had an illness which might have consisted of a boil on one of his buttocks which had become inflamed. Whether that was true or not, I don't know. I do know that the students at the University of Ghana staged a march in Accra, the capital, and expressed some of their displeasure, not only with the Supreme Military Council, but their displeasure over having Secretary Kissinger come to Ghana.

Q: Do you have any idea of why they were opposed to his visiting Ghana?

COKER: I wish I could tell you. I don't believe that I ever found out just exactly what their opposition to the Kissinger visit involved. It seemed to me that if Secretary Kissinger's coming to Ghana would have brought some attention to the ills of having a military government, then that should have been a favorable development, from their point of view.

Several years later I had a conversation with a person who had been a student at the time of the cancellation of the Kissinger visit. This person was later a professor at Howard University. At the time he participated in the student marches against the Kissinger visit. He later told me that the students were marching because of a general dissatisfaction with the Ghanaian military government. He said that they felt that there was no need to be showing further respect for the military government by having the U.S. Secretary of State come to Accra to meet with the leaders of the military government. He said that he thought that the marches against the Kissinger visit were a way of showing to the United States and to the Supreme Military Council that a country as large as ours should not be extending what appeared to be favors toward the Supreme Military Council. So that was the extent of the views of one of the students who participated in the demonstrations against the Kissinger visit. However, I did not talk to any of the other students while I was in Ghana, with reference to this matter.

Q: What was the situation in Ghana when you arrived there in June, 1976?

COKER: I arrived in Ghana on June 13, 1976. Ambassador Black was back in the U.S. on consultations. Prior to my leaving Washington to go to Ghana, it appears that she had asked for her transfer from Ghana. She had asked this of Secretary Kissinger, while he was in Monrovia, Liberia, because he had been disinvited from visiting Ghana. I had several meetings with her in Washington while we were trying to decide what action to take in this regard. She thought that she should ask for her withdrawal from Ghana. Then, when she got back to Washington, she met with Donald Easum, then the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and other officials in an effort to find different ways of hitting Ghana in the pocketbook, as it were, because the Ghanaian Government had disinvited Secretary Kissinger.

AID officials in Washington were impressing on her the view that the economic assistance being provided to Ghana was basically for the people, and not for the government of Ghana. Therefore, if you talk about withholding economic assistance to Ghana, you are basically talking about denying to the people things that we thought they needed. This assistance was being provided under a government to government program, but it was also from the people of the United States to the people of Ghana.

Knowing that the 200th anniversary of U.S. independence was coming up in July, 1976, in one breath Ambassador Black would be regarded as saying that we should hit the Ghanaians and the Ghanaian Government so that they would feel the pressure and be hurt for having disinvited Secretary Kissinger. At the same time she was saying: "I really want to be back in Ghana to participate in this historic, 200th anniversary, birthday celebration of founding of the United States."

At this point Don Easum, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was saying to Ambassador Black: "You just can't have it both ways." He was somewhat reluctant to go back to Secretary Kissinger and say that maybe Ambassador Black ought to be allowed to return to Accra and have an opportunity to have an orderly end to her diplomatic mission in Ghana.

In the end Secretary Kissinger approved Ambassador Black's return to Ghana so that she could participate in the 200th anniversary of the independence of the United States and have what she

called an orderly withdrawal from Ghana and to say her farewells.

When I arrived in Ghana, Jack Linehan was the Charge d'Affaires. I was therefore greeted by someone I knew from Washington, where he had been working on the Ghanaian desk. It was a good reception for me. Subsequently, Ambassador Black returned to Accra, and we then proceeded with the plans for the 200th anniversary celebration of the independence of the United States. Meantime, there were to be no new obligations to Ghana. This was also the time and the same year when Congress had agreed to change the ending of the fiscal year from June 30 to September 30. So, when I arrived in Accra in June, 1976, I wasn't faced with the end of the fiscal year a few days later. In fact, the fiscal year did not end until September 30.

As I was not able to obligate any new funds, the basic job was to get on top of my duties and learn what the U.S. aid program consisted of and what things we could do, especially in terms of the operating budget and the programs that were already under way. In other words, what kinds of things could be done from that time [i.e., June 13, 1976] and the end of the fiscal year [on September 30, 1976].

During that period I received a phone call and a visit from the Director of Ghanaian Medical Services about health conditions that might affect the AID Mission. He mentioned a problem that was being experienced in the northern part of Ghana, basically in the Northern Region, in the Bolgatanga area. There had been an outbreak of measles, poliomyelitis, and malaria. The Ghanaian authorities needed money from the U.S. to purchase medicines to treat the people in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Since this was a humanitarian need, I felt that this would probably fall outside the prohibition against incurring any new obligations in Ghana. So we quickly wrote up a justification covering about \$300,000 and sent it in to Washington to enable the Government of Ghana to have medicines that could be used for treatment of people in the Northern Region who had fallen ill with these diseases.

When this justification was approved and I received notice of approval, I asked for and had a meeting with Doctor Beausoleil, the Director of Ghanaian Medical Services. I received what was probably the biggest shock and disappointment in my life. Dr. Beausoleil said: "Well, thank you very much for the United States being willing to make this money available. However, I have reconsidered and have decided that people have to die eventually from something and so this is just another of the natural causes of death. Therefore, we do not want this money." I could not believe that this was coming from the mouth of a trained, medical doctor and the Director of Ghanaian Medical Services in the Ministry of Health. He was the Director of Medical Services for all of Ghana. There he was, making this statement.

That was my initial, rude awakening in dealing with a Ghanaian Government official on a matter which was very much humanitarian in nature. Also, at the same time, it dealt with a situation which could become life threatening.

Q: Do you think that he had other motivations?

COKER: At the time I thought that the motivation was more personal than a matter of anyone in the government pressing him to take this position. I wondered why he was doing this.

Q: But he made a request for help to you?

COKER: He made a request, and that was official. He received an affirmative response. Then he personally told me that he had decided not to accept it. There was nothing that indicated to me that this was a government decision. I saw it as an individual decision. I became more convinced about this because of the second incident that occurred during that same, three-month period. That is, between July and the end of September, 1976. We had a delegation from ORT-America, now ORT-International...

Q: Who is this?

COKER: ORT-International is an organization which is based in the United Kingdom. It originated in Israel.

Q: This was an organization for rehabilitation and training, I believe.

COKER: That is correct. They had been requested to come to Ghana to assist in rehabilitating and re-equipping the operating theaters of several of the hospitals there. That included the Korlebu Hospital. The ORT-International team leader arrived not only with a team of experts but also with the necessary equipment to put the many, non-functioning operating theaters in the various hospitals back into operating condition. He happened to know the Minister for Community Services in Ghana. Therefore, when he arrived in Ghana, he called on the Minister for Community Services, rather than calling on the AID Mission and the Director of Medical Services.

Q: Was this visit funded by AID?

COKER: AID had some involvement with this visit, through funding that was going directly from AID to ORT-International.

Q: But not from the AID bilateral program as such.

COKER: But not from the bilateral program. So when the Director of Ghanaian Medical Services discovered that the ORT-International team had started out by calling on the Minister for Community Services, and not on him, he became highly offended. He called me at my office and wanted to know whether I had arranged this call. In fact, I hadn't. He demanded that the ORT-International team be sent out of Ghana immediately. Apparently, it did not matter to him that the operating theaters at the hospitals needed equipment to be able to function properly. He was just concerned that protocol had been breached. Once again, you're talking about something personal.

So I finally talked with the ORT-International team and asked them why they called on the Minister for Community Services first. They said that they happened to have a personal

relationship with the Minister and, when they arrived in Ghana, they decided to call on him first. However, their job was to restore the six operating theaters in Korlebu Hospital, train the personnel at the hospital, and leave a stock of spare parts for the equipment which they had brought, so that local personnel could maintain the operating theaters.

The team was also going to go out to major, secondary cities in Ghana where there were hospitals and work on the operating theaters there. However, Dr. Beausoleil, the Director of Medical Services, decided that, since the ORT-International team had violated something that was sanctified, as far as he was concerned, he didn't want the team in Ghana and therefore demanded their departure from the country. And they did depart.

So that was the second incident. In my view that reinforced the view that this was more of a personal, rather than a government decision. Since I knew that the Ghanaian Government hospitals were in such disrepair that many of them could not be used to perform surgical operations, the government would not normally have allowed that decision to be made. I think that the one regret that I have is that I did not immediately take that problem to Dr. Gardiner in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, one of the principal ministries that we were dealing with. I happened to mention that to Dr. Gardiner several months later. He was furious that Dr. Beausoleil did either of those two things.

There was yet a third decision, in my dealings with Dr. Beausoleil during 1976. There was an outbreak of onchocerciasis in the Lake Volta area. Our AID Mission was again approached to provide some assistance. We contacted the CDC [Center for Disease Control in Atlanta]. We were given approval by the CDC for a program of furnishing personnel and some commodities and equipment. A CDC team would come out and assist the Ghanaian Government with this. When I approached Dr. Beausoleil about approval for this project, he said: "We do not want your personnel here. We only want your money. So if you would just keep your personnel at home and turn the money over to us, we will find ways of taking care of the problem." Well, the Ghanaian Government didn't have a large enough number of competent, staff personnel to do the various things that needed to be done. This was another case where a problem was identified that needed very serious attention. However, at the same time, Dr. Beausoleil did not feel that he could accept that assistance if it were not provided in the manner which he wanted.

Q: Did we have any ongoing health projects at that time?

COKER: We had ongoing health projects because we had a very large Health Office, headed by Dr. Prince. We not only had health programs. We also had a population program going. We had also commenced the retail sales of contraceptives. From a regional perspective we were benefitting from a regional health project dealing with onchocerciasis, as related to...

Q: Dr. Beausoleil did not interfere with those projects.

COKER: No, he didn't interfere with other projects. There was no interference with the projects that we had ongoing on a bilateral and regional basis.

The other thing that we had which he did interfere with was that, within the first year after my

arrival in Ghana, I met Dr. Oku Ampofu, who happened to be running a center for the scientific study of plant medicine, up in Mampong-Akwapim. As I had visited Dr. Ampofu and his center and had looked at the documentation on how he had described the importance of using traditional healers and traditional plants to treat people and when I heard that this center needed to expand their operations and especially their research, I felt that this was a good area to look at.

While I was doing that, we had a delegation from NIH [National Institutes of Health] come out to Ghana. They were also interested in what Dr. Ampofu was doing. Since we had contacts with Dr. Phillips and Dr. Ofosu-Amah, the Dean and Assistant Dean of the Medical School of the University of Ghana, I had some discussions with them. There was a mixed reaction from the Western trained medical profession as to the suitability of dealing with traditional medicines and how valuable this practice was. They had reservations about whether any resources should be expended on traditional medicines.

I had the feeling that the non-traditional approach to medicine ought to receive our attention and support. So we wrote up a grant for \$300,000 to provide funding to the center for the scientific study of plant medicine and to do further research into how traditional, tropical medicines could be used to treat certain known illnesses. Since Dr. Beausoleil, the Director of Medical Services, was in the approval chain for this program to provide his concurrence in providing this money to this center, when the grant for this center was approved, once again he objected strongly. He solicited a large number of modern, medical practitioners to express their opposition to any donor funding for the center to support research into traditional, tropical medicines. Once again, this was Dr. Beausoleil at work.

Q: Is there anything more you would like to say on the health side of the AID program in Ghana? What about the other projects?

COKER: I think that as far as the other projects are concerned...

Q: What were they?

COKER: We had one project dealing with trying to help the Ghanaian Government decentralize, from the capital to the rural areas, in the economic development field.

Q: Perhaps you could first mention the health area.

COKER: In the health area, as I mentioned earlier, we had one person from Kaiser Permanente helping to improve the planning and management capacity of the Ghanaian Ministry of Health. Dr. Hall and his staff were working on that. I thought that they were doing an excellent job in improving management and policy planning in the ministry. There were some very good, Ghanaian counterpart personnel working directly with Dr. Hall and his staff. These Ghanaians, headed by Dr. Adibo, were very good. They worked very well together.

One thing that we hadn't anticipated was that many of the Ghanaians, when they went to the U.S. for training, did not return to Ghana. At the same time a nucleus of professional personnel trained under this project did return to Ghana and worked on improving the planning capacity of

the Ministry of Health. We followed this project to a successful conclusion.

We also had a project with UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles], with Dr. Laurie and his group. They were working on a very large part of this project, which attracted a lot of notoriety. They had a very large staff.

Q: What do you mean by "notoriety?"

COKER: Notoriety, in that they attracted a lot of publicity, and there were a lot of visitors from other countries coming to see them. These visitors wanted to come in and see what they were doing under that project. I couldn't find my records to give you more detail pertaining to this project. I remember the kind of contract staff we had. They were quite active and quite dynamic. We had a fair representation of good projects that were already being implemented in Ghana. They were being implemented throughout the country, to a great extent. They were helping the Medical School of the University of Ghana in several areas. We worked very closely with the Dean and the Assistant Dean on that project.

By the way, Dr. Phillips, who was the Dean of the Medical School at the time, was in Ghana in private practice. Dr. Phillips passed away this month while in London. I ran into him from time to time. In fact, I've been treated by him, since he went into private practice. I also encountered Dr. Phillips' deputy, the former Assistant Dean of the Medical School of the University of Ghana, Dr. Ofosu-Amah, in New York, where he was working for UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund]. He is now retired from UNICEF and is back in Ghana. Whether he is also in private practice or not, I don't know.

Q: I think that he is at the School of Community Health in the Medical College, University of Ghana.

COKER: Yes.

Q: Well, you may want to talk about ERDM [Economic and Rural Development and Management] or talk about other aspects of the health situation in Ghana.

COKER: ERDM was one of the other projects. It consisted of assisting and aiding, on a decentralized basis, the people in other secondary and tertiary cities in Ghana to manage their affairs and be involved in obtaining services and other economic and social benefits from the central government. We had four people involved, working directly with the community. We were teaching them about the ERDM effort. We had good Ghanaian Government counterparts. George Cann was the Ghanaian Government representative working with us on the management of the ERDM project. We also had people posted in Takoradi, Koforidua, Accra, and Kumasi. They were quite an active group.

Q: What was their function?

COKER: They were functioning as training facilitators for the ERDM project. They were able to work directly with their government and community counterparts. They were almost like

community organizers, getting the people to appreciate that there is a role that they could play, on a decentralized basis.

Q: What was the model of the decentralization program? Can you recall any features of it?

COKER: One feature that I recall about it was the question of how you could get decent, community health care in the respective areas. Another question was how could you get transportation services brought to the community level. Another question was how to promote economic activity at the community level. One aspect in particular that I recall is that there were several areas in the country which didn't even have a gasoline station. At the same time, we were being told that many communities had no transportation services because they have to travel so far to get gasoline. They were using their gasoline to go to get gasoline pumped into their vehicles.

Then there were various government services which were being rendered for the larger cities but, at the same time, were not considered for tertiary cities. That is, cities that would be considered at the third and fourth levels, or small towns.

Q: Who were they working with? What were the entities that they were considering?

COKER: They were working with local citizens who seemed to have enjoyed some respect by people in the community as movers and shakers. That is, people who had had some positive impact as leaders in their communities.

Q: Did they have a planning committee or something like that?

COKER: The idea was to encourage them to form planning committees. The purpose was to get these people to understand that there was a need for planning and to train them on how they could plan and how they could participate.

Q: Was there no local government, then, in these areas?

COKER: There wasn't much in the way of local government. There was the central government giving lip service to the idea of local government. However, in fact, local government did not exist, except on paper.

Q: What was the reception for this project in government circles?

COKER: There was a good reception at the local level. There were some doubts as to whether or not this idea could make a difference. In most cases the advisers we had working out there at the local level were able to convince the people to give these ideas a try. Without any doubt they were able to see that the involvement of local people could make a difference and was meaningful because it was possible to get people from Accra [the national capital] to come out to listen to the problems. Several delegations were formed from the decentralized locations and went to Accra to talk to officials at the central level of government about what their needs were.

Q: What was the reaction of the central government? What central government ministry had responsibility for this?

COKER: It was a combination of the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. Policy and guidance were coming from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. This ministry worked closely with the Ministry of Local Government. Those two ministries worked very closely with our AID Mission and our project people on the staff. We received mixed reactions on the part of the people in the Ministry of Local Government. This ministry did not want to give up some of its powers.

There were people out at the local level who recognized that certain things needed to be done and, therefore, were looking for more power to implement them. We worked on that matter for about four years. When I left Ghana, this effort was still going on. I subsequently talked to some Ghanaian Government officials about it, and I was told that they were still working on this matter. This was as late as October, 1997! The Ghanaian Government felt that it had still not completed the process of decentralizing power to the local governments.

The principal person on the government side, under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, was George Cann, who oversaw this project. He was finally seconded to the Ministry of Local Government in 1997 and was asked to find a way of revising the effort that was started back in the 1970's!

Q: Good to have that kind of input.

COKER: Exactly. That was good to know. The government had not given up on this effort.

Q: So, while you were there, the seed of local government reform continued to grow, although slowly.

COKER: We were able to make use of an excellent project design. We were able to get this design staffed out and to get the process of implementation started. So this process was continuing.

Q: What about some other projects?

COKER: If I'm not mistaken, we had an agricultural research project. We were trying to find ways of improving the productive capacity of the farmers. We had agricultural research under way in those geographic zones where many farmers were involved. However, at the same time we had...

Q: Was this part of the "MIDAS" Project?

COKER: It was part of the "MIDAS" Project. I'm glad that you mentioned the name, "MIDAS." I was trying to think of the title of the Project.

Q: "MIDAS" meant "Manage Input and Delivery of Agricultural Services," or something like

that.

COKER: Yes.

Q: Maybe you ought to talk about that a little bit, if you remember it, because I think that it was important.

COKER: We had a fairly large division dealing with agriculture. MIDAS was one of their big efforts. There was not only the work directly related to the Ministry of Agriculture. We were also doing work associated with the University of Ghana School of Agriculture. We were also doing some things pertaining to research on how to improve the output in certain areas of Ghana. We did research on the capacity to turn out agricultural produce in certain zones.

I recall the work of the agricultural research people who were stationed in Atebubu. This was a small research station which we had set up, located North of Kumasi, on the road between Kumasi and Tamale. Cotton was being produced in Nigeria. The agricultural research institute down there was named IITA (International Institute of Tropical Agriculture). It provided researchers to operate out of there. We showed a lot of ingenuity in being able to go to a remote area to get this agricultural research started. We brought in about six, very large house trailers from the U.S. and transported them up to Atebubu. They provided not only housing for our staff, but we also had offices and research, all taking place up there in these temporary facilities. We put in electric power, using generators, and dug deep wells to make sure that there was an adequate supply of water.

We were able to undertake a decent amount of research on the various kinds of crops. We wanted to help improve the quality and quantity of the crops produced in Ghana. I'm trying to think of some of the other aspects of the MIDAS project.

Q: Wasn't it "frozen" as a new obligation at the time you arrived in Ghana?

COKER: Money was still available to MIDAS, which was an ongoing project. We had money in the pipeline. Not only was money in the pipeline for MIDAS, but we had money available in the health area as well. So those projects continued on. We just weren't going to be able to put in any new projects. As for the frozen aspect of your question, there was a temporary freeze on new obligations due to Ambassador Black's insistence that the GOG [Government of Ghana] be punished for having disinvited Secretary Kissinger from stopping in Ghana in 1976. The freeze was lifted October 1, 1976.

I recall one of the projects dealing with women. We even started up what I considered to be one of the first small-scale enterprises in the East of Ghana. This involved a cassava processing plant. We had local sheet metal workers down in Tema, producing simple devices to grate the cassava and turn it into powder. This saved local women the time that they were spending, pounding the cassava into powder form for cooking and, ultimately, consumption. The small factory that we put up served the villages in a 26 mile radius around it.

We monitored the operations of this factory rather carefully and discovered that, eventually,

every woman producing cassava within that 26 mile radius was bringing cassava to the plant for processing into powder. As a result, the women found that they had extra time that could be devoted to their children. The women had time to have access to pre-natal care and to health care for their children. In addition, there was an opportunity to teach the women remedial education, working with them on improving their ability to do other work. In short, this freed up a lot of time which the women had been devoting to processing cassava, a key element in the local diet. So it was a worthwhile project. We categorized this project as part of our women's development effort. That was a highly successful program.

We provided a lot of money for applying various kinds of inputs to assist in improving the quantity of crops produced.

Q: What kind of inputs are you talking about?

COKER: Basically, they included fertilizer and insecticides that were not on the banned list of products here in the U.S. We could bring those insecticides in. The idea was to work with the farmers to show that they could increase the yield of their crops by using fertilizer and insecticides. What I don't recall is the cost of the fertilizer that we made available to the farmers.

This was another attempt to privatize the economy. We wanted to have private companies involved in the overall productive process. We provided seeds and fertilizers as well. In some instances there was resistance by the government to our using this private enterprise approach. Their feeling was that this was taking power away from the government. However, we were able to stick to that approach.

Q: Were you able to privatize any of these operations at that time?

COKER: From what I recall, we did get some of them privatized. A few companies were privatized. We had some difficulties when it came down to the kind of capital they needed, especially using the local banks to provide financing. The interest rates that these local banks wanted to charge were excessive. That made it difficult to get some of the privatization operations going. However, we were able to end up privatizing some of the companies, in cooperation with some companies from the U.S. However, that was a condition that we applied. I don't believe that much of that privatization effort continued on after 1980, particularly when there was a lot of instability with the new government under Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings.

Since I have gone back to Ghana, I have not even looked into whether or not some of those companies which were privatized, dealing with fertilizers and seed at the time, have continued in that status. I assume that they did.

Q: Let's talk about other sectors, and then we can talk about what happened on the general political and economic side of things. Were there any other areas of the program which you focused on?

COKER: We had the DAPIT project and the WHIP project.

Q: I don't understand what that stands for.

COKER: The DAPIT project dealt with developing enterprises concerned with small-scale entrepreneurs and intermediate technology. We had several things going that involved the private sector, including ways to try to get private enterprise accepted and operational in Ghana. DAPIT was one of the efforts that we were trying to work with. I'm trying to remember some of the elements involved.

Q: Well, we'll come back to that. What happened in terms of the political and economic situation during your time in Ghana? You were there for four years [1976-1980].

COKER: I was in Ghana for four years. Regarding the political aspect, I found that, even though we started out under General Acheampong, a year later [1977] there was a "gentlemanly" coup d'etat, under which Akuffo, and the rest of the Supreme Military Council overthrew General Acheampong. Akuffo and a new Supreme Military Council started work to see whether or not they could carry out certain reforms requested both by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and some of the aid donors. The new Supreme Military Council proceeded to try and work positively with the international financial institutions to bring about some reforms.

At the same time, the new Supreme Military Council was listening very carefully to popular demand for a new constitution that would lead in the direction of civilian government. A new constitution was developed, and the people approved it in a referendum in 1978. The new constitution called for elections to take place in 1979, using political parties. So, in 1979 the Supreme Military Council allowed political parties to be formed, in response to the newly approved Constitution.

This process took place at a time when there was a lot of dissatisfaction within the military itself. This dissatisfaction developed between the Supreme Military Council and Flight Lieutenant Rawlings and some of the enlisted men in the military, who were very displeased with the leadership of the Supreme Military Council. They considered the Supreme Military Council detrimental to the interests of the ordinary citizens of Ghana.

So a situation developed in which Rawlings was arrested and put on trial by the Supreme Military Council. The Council decided that Rawlings would appear to be a madman if they tried him privately. Therefore, the Council felt that it might be to their benefit to try him publicly. However, when Rawlings was tried openly, he began to talk about the evils of which the military was guilty. He succeeded in damaging the image of the military in the eyes of the people, because they were regarded as more corrupt and therefore were considered to have stolen from the general welfare of the nation. That process played into the hands of the enlisted men in the military, who began to sympathize with Rawlings for his initiative in staging a coup d'etat. It was the view of the enlisted men that the military should be removed from the government, and a civilian government should be put into power.

Rawlings was eventually freed from detention by a group of enlisted men and junior officers, after he had made a widely reported speech at his trial. So that was the beginning of the first Rawlings administration. Rawlings then overthrew General Akuffo and the Supreme Military

Council. The enlisted men in the military formed what you might call a kangaroo court, which then proceeded to run the country. They then organized trials without proper representation for the accused. Then the next thing they did was to execute General Acheampong and the former Border Guard Commander.

Because of protests over this action, a group of ordinary citizens, carrying out their first coup d'etat, staged a series of public marches. They marched first on the Nigerian Embassy, then the British High Commission [equivalent of a British Embassy], and then on the U.S. Embassy. At the time of the march on the U.S. Embassy we happened to be holding a Country Team meeting.

The old American Embassy at that time in Accra was built on stilts. It only had something like a two feet high wall around it. The Embassy grounds and other parts of the Embassy compound were quickly taken over by Ghanaian citizens, most of them students. As a result, we couldn't get out of the Embassy, and they couldn't get in. The students took down the American flag and tore it into little pieces. They came up and knocked on the door and asked to see an Embassy representative. They wanted to send a message back to the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter at the time.

The Political Officer, Edward Perkins, who answered the knock on the door decided that it would probably be best for him to receive a student delegation. He happened to be the tallest person in the Embassy. He asked me, since I was the second tallest person in the Embassy, to join him. So the two of us unlocked the door of the Embassy, and we went out on the first landing of the stairs in front of it to receive a delegation from the students.

The students told us how displeased they were with the American Government which had protested against the executions that had taken place of former government leaders. They said that they felt that those executions were justified and that the Ghanaian military had damaged the good will in which they were held by the people of Ghana. They said that the executions of former government leaders were necessary. They wanted to convey this message to President Carter and asked us to transmit this message to him. They apologized for having torn up the American flag but said that they felt that this was one of the ways of getting our attention.

While we were in front of the Embassy, the second in command to Flight Lt. Rawlings, Bwachi John, flew in by helicopter to a position right next to the Embassy compound. When the people saw that John had landed, they left the Embassy compound and rushed over to where he was, chanting their greetings to him. He came over to the Embassy compound. We let him into the Embassy. He came in and apologized for the actions of the students. He asked that we convey his apologies and those of Jerry Rawlings to the Secretary of State and President Carter. He then dispersed the crowd. So we got off a message back to the State Department reporting what had happened.

Q: Did you accept the petition from the students?

COKER: We accepted the petition and transmitted it to Washington. The Department of State sent back a cable saying that, rather than presenting a demarche to the Ghanaian Government and in the light of the fact that John, the second-ranking official in the new government after Flight

Lt. Rawlings, had come personally to the Embassy to apologize, we should accept his action and go on from there.

Q: It was a nervous moment, wasn't it?

COKER: It was a nervous moment. We didn't know whether the students wanted to burn the Embassy down or whether or not they had guns. Fortunately, they were not in a violent mood. The most violent thing that they did was to tear up the American flag, but nothing more than that.

When the fact that John, the Vice Chairman of the Supreme Military Command under Flight Lt. Rawlings, had come over to the Embassy personally and extended his apologies for what the students had done was reported to the Department of State, we were told by the Department that there was no need to make any statement on what had happened. The Department felt that the statement by John, when he came to the Embassy to apologize for what had happened was a high level message which closed the matter.

In any case in view of the attitude of Flight Lt. Rawlings in coming to power at that time and the fact that the Ghanaian people had voted on a new constitution, providing for an elected government, it was decided that we would support a continuation of the political process in Ghana.

The political parties then took part in national elections. However, no party received a majority of the vote, as required by the constitution, so Rawlings permitted a second round of elections, at which time Limann won enough votes to be considered elected. Somewhat surprisingly, Rawlings kept to his word and allowed the transition to an elected government to go forward.

On this occasion a very colorful ceremony was held in front of Parliament. Rawlings sat in the place of honor, and next to him, on his left, was President-Elect Limann sitting in a noticeably lower chair.

Rawlings got up to speak and talked about the reason why the Ghanaian military had taken over the government. Then he said that he wanted to be very respectful of the wishes of the people. He said that he was turning the administration of the country over to the democratically-elected government of President-Elect Limann. Rawlings held a symbolic staff of presidential authority in both hands. In the military fashion he stepped forward, made a right turn, stepped over in front of President Limann, made another right turn, and reached out with the staff and turned it over to Limann. Then Rawlings backed up, drawing Limann up from his seat, and they reversed positions.

President Limann then held the staff and walked over to the big chair where Rawlings had formerly sat. Everyone applauded, and this ceremony was carried on television. Limann was then sworn in as the President of Ghana and the new chief of state.

We on the U.S. side, because of the stagnation in the Ghanaian economy, felt that we needed to encourage President Limann to take some very firm action to reverse the downturn. There was runaway inflation, already in triple digits on an annual basis, and interest rates were extremely

high. Therefore, the value of the assistance that we were providing was essentially less and less significant with the passage of every day. This especially applied to the money which we were providing to re-stimulate the private sector.

In this situation we were fortunate, as you may recall. The Embassy asked for a rather senior U.S. economist, Gus Ranis (Yale Center for Economic Studies), to come to Ghana for a period of time and to be a "senior advisory economist" to President Limann. It appeared, after Ranis arrived, that he was having some success in getting Limann to understand the problems with the Ghanaian economy and some of the macro economic decisions that needed to be made.

Then the Ambassador and I, along with Gus Ranis, were called in by President Limann. He told us, quite frankly, that he was a little afraid of implementing some of the changes that were being suggested. We had also told him, and rightly so, that when the economy was bad, as Ghana's economy was at the time, the situation would not turn around and become favorable overnight. It was necessary to adjust his grip downward a bit. Therefore, it seemed to him that the advice he was receiving was not working, at least initially. A political leader, understanding what this kind of situation required, had to be extremely strong. He also had to have his party very strongly supportive of him. However, he had to understand that we were talking about a situation which would make matters worse, at least in the short run. It would turn around later on in the medium term (two years or so). President Limann said that he could not accept that. He asked us whether we had heard what President Rawlings said. He said: "We will be watching you." He said: "What do you think that meant? That meant that he would be watching what we do, and if the economy and the people are hurt, he's going to come after us and take us out to the beach and shoot us."

Q: Did he really say that?

COKER: He said that and added: "Under the circumstances, I'm afraid to follow any of the advice which you are prescribing."

Even before we had that kind of discussion with President Limann, we had gotten permission from the U.S. Director, who was in the Department of the Treasury, to meet with World Bank and IMF [International Monetary Fund] officials. We met with them in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to discuss various measures that could be taken by Ghana, short of devaluation of the currency. We wondered what kind of backdoor measures could be taken which would help the economy and take some of the weight off President Limann and his government, while at the same time accomplishing some of the economic stabilization objectives which we all felt were needed.

None of that served to persuade him that this was the direction he should go in.

Q: Did he ever talk to Flight Lieutenant Rawlings about it?

COKER: He never talked to Rawlings about it. I don't recall that the Embassy was able to have any general discussions about the fact that Rawlings understood what needed to be done. What we discovered was that, when Rawlings launched his coup d'etat, he made the first one of insisting that all essential commodities that were in the retail stores as well as those stored in

warehouses should be brought out and put on sale at government-controlled prices. That resulted in depleting all of the consumer goods immediately. So in a matter of a couple of weeks time after Rawlings took over, all of the consumer goods were gone from the market at the controlled prices. At the same time, there was no credit available for the replenishment of stocks. Rawlings had no understanding of economics whatever.

The perceived wisdom among the whole diplomatic community and among the economists was: "How do we get through to this guy? He is completely lacking in any knowledge about economics. What he had done was a clear indication that he lacked any understanding. He completely burned down one of the markets, saying that they were the reason why the national economy was what it was. We clearly knew that that was not the concern. Rawlings just didn't understand the situation. We didn't see that Rawlings had any trusted lieutenants around him. We didn't feel his immediate entourage knew anything about the economy. But this was a serious problem which I kept out of.

When I left Ghana, on September 2, 1980, discussions were still being held with President Limann, in an effort to persuade him to undertake some major economic reform measures. We felt that "hard decisions" would have to be made. Otherwise, we would not see the bottom of the pit in Ghana. The economy was nothing but a big hole. Virtually all of the shelves in the stores were empty. We were still sending 5-ton trucks down to Lome, Togo, once a month, to buy essential commodities as part of the payment for our Foreign Service National staff. We were not going to be able to let up on that. That was still going on when I left. The commodities brought back included soap, sugar, salt, and a variety of other things, which were distributed to our Mission employees. In addition, we gave them a certain amount of money in local currency.

Q: You mean that you gave this to the Ghanaian staff of the Embassy? This amounted to payment in kind.

COKER: Yes.

Q: Because they couldn't buy essential items in the market?

COKER: They couldn't buy it locally, and therefore we gave them a certain amount in local currency, which was small by comparison to the value of the essential commodities. We had to buy these commodities on a monthly basis.

Q: There was no problem about bringing these essential commodities into the country?

COKER: No problem. We had worked this out with the American Embassy in Togo. At the same time the economy in Togo was booming. Togolese merchants needed to have people buy all of these commodities that were being shipped into Togo.

Q: I gather that the Ghanaian Government didn't object to your bringing these items in.

COKER: No, because it was making things better for some people. All of the staff that we had also had family members, so this practice was helpful to them.

Q: What happened to the AID program, in that kind of situation?

COKER: It made us decide, early on, that we had to downsize significantly our effort to try and privatize the Ghanaian economy and to make credit available. There was no point in making credit available when, in fact, the capacity of local currency to be productive was being lost. So, basically, the AID program went from a rather sizable amount of money, on a yearly basis, amounting to about \$40-\$50 million, down to about \$12 million. That happened more or less overnight.

We had one of the AID economists from Washington come out, look seriously at what was going on in the Ghanaian economy, and relate it to the programs that we were trying to run. We wanted him to give us his prognosis of whether or not we were getting any kind of positive results out of the money being invested in the various projects.

The economist happened to be Jerry Wolgin. This was my first encounter with Jerry. He did an excellent job of analyzing the situation. The bottom line he reached was that we might as well eliminate or downsize significantly a lot of the projects which were non social in character. He concluded that there was enough reason to continue with projects which had social significance. These projects were mostly in the health, agricultural, and education areas. In the agricultural area we were doing research.

Q: What was the effect on the projects, even those that you were trying to keep going, given the economic situation?

COKER: Basically, we could not see where we could spend any more money in the credit area. People did not want to take the money offered, since it was repayable at extremely high rates of interest. It was just too costly for the companies concerned.

Q: What about technical assistance activity?

COKER: Technical assistance activity involved our own people, and they were able to continue. Some of these activities were reduced in scale. For example, there was the ERDM project. We continued that. We still had four consultants in Ghana. What they were trying to do in the field of decentralization basically had no negative impact, such as that which affected the economic projects. The same consideration applied to the agricultural research project. Benefits were derived from this research, but there was little or no cost impact from this project.

There was no negative impact even from the health project, where we were trying to improve health management practices. We already had a certain number of Ghanaians who had been trained in the United States and had returned to Ghana. However, because of the cost structure in Ghana, we had some turnover in terms of personnel. Much to our surprise, many individuals whom we were counting on to return to Ghana after their training in the U.S. did not, in fact, come back. They evidently felt that the economic situation in Ghana was very bad and they wondered how they would be able to help their relatives. If they returned to Ghana, they would be in the same position as their relatives who had remained in Ghana.

So we saw some programs being affected by the situation to the point where we were required to reduce the number of advisers we had in Ghana.

Q: The cost of doing business in Ghana must also have gone up, due to inflation.

COKER: The cost of doing business in Ghana was extremely high. Therefore, we were getting less output on the ground. Rents on properties went up, and the cost of utilities went up. I would say that it was virtually impossible to buy any kind of locally produced commodities for the projects. Everything had to be shipped in, so we had added costs associated with that. We had been doing most of this, in any case, by importing commodities.

Q: Did you have any programs that were dependent on imports? For example, PL 480 commodities [surplus agricultural commodities from the U.S. which were sold in country].

COKER: We had PL 480 commodities brought into the country. These commodities were provided under the WFP [World Food Program] to assist in reforestation, for example. Many of those commodities, to our surprise, were being sold in the commercial markets. This caused a problem for us because we had Peace Corps Volunteers in Ghana, many of whom were really suffering. They were buying U.S. donated commodities in the commercial markets in the various villages. Some of the Peace Corps Volunteers were writing letters to their Congressmen about the apparent diversion of U.S. commodities. These commodities said: "Free" on the outside of the packages and sacks but were actually being sold on the local market. These sales involved vegetable oil and other commodities, which they were able to buy in the market.

As you may remember, many Congressmen got in touch with your office to complain of this situation. As I was USAID Mission Director in Ghana, I was asked by various Congressmen to prepare suggested replies to letters sent to them by their constituents living and working in Ghana. Fortunately for us, a Regional Office of the IG [Inspector General] was located in Accra. So I persuaded the head of that office to send a couple of their investigators out to check into the situation in the commercial market and buy some of these commodities. We then took down the stock numbers, because we wanted to find out exactly which program these commodities had come from. We were able to trace some of these commodities to the World Food Program.

Q: The World Food Program?

COKER: Exactly. The fact is that this WFP and was related to the cost of rehabilitation of the forestry program. I confronted the local representative of the UNDP [U. N. Development Program], who, in fact, was the director of the World Food Program in Ghana. He arranged to have the director of the World Food Program, who was actually his deputy, look into this operation. [Ginni Brodersen] Holthausen was the UNDP Permanent Representative at the time. I brought all of this to his attention and indicated that he should monitor the traffic in these commodities much more closely.

We received strong objections from the WFP Director in Ghana, Holthausen, saying that this was not their responsibility and that we should not be concerned. Once the commodities were

received by them from the ship in the harbor at Accra and they released these goods, that was the end of their accountability. I reported on this situation back to Washington and asked that our concerns should be conveyed to our representatives in Rome, at the headquarters of the FAO [Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations].

The next thing I heard was a letter from Holthausen in which he howled and screamed that we were traitors and were causing the WFP program unnecessary grief because the headquarters of the FAO in Rome had gotten in touch with him on this matter. FAO headquarters in Rome had indicated to the WFP in Ghana that they had a responsibility to monitor the disposition of these commodities. I think that that was the end of the initially cordial relationship that we had with the WFP. However, I could not have cared less. My job was to make sure that there was proper accountability for these commodities.

At least we were able to show that the commodities involved in this traffic did not come from the AID-run PL-480 programs.

Q: What was our PL-480 assistance being used for?

COKER: We still had the maternal and child health project. Part of that was involved in this program. Despite the problems, there was no famine in Ghana.

Q: Were we still conducting school feeding programs?

COKER: Those continued, as did the maternal and child health program. So education and health related programs were still in operation.

Q: There was another project which you might have become involved in. It was providing support to locally-active NGO's [Non Governmental Organizations], particularly in the field of agriculture. What happened to that project? Could you describe it to some extent?

COKER: We were able to get one particular organization, TECHNOSERVE, up and running. We had one project in which we used TECHNOSERVE as a U.S. resident NGO. It was well respected in Ghana. It was given an umbrella-type grant to assist in building up the capacity of the local NGO's. This also included its being able to provide assistance in organizing and running projects and programs that not only were related to agriculture but also to technology transfer in small-scale, micro type businesses. We had a good relationship with TECHNOSERVE, which has continued even until today, from the standpoint of the relationship between TECHNOSERVE Ghana and the USAID Mission.

We see this relationship today. We have seen it over the past five years, as far as USAID use of TECHNOSERVE in the micro-enterprises program in Ghana is concerned.

This week, just to digress a bit, our company, AMEX, is launching a workshop for the implementation of the second phase of the private enterprise project. We need to work on small and medium scale enterprises. We deal with micro-entrepreneurs in the areas of agriculture, wood, metal, and textiles. It is TECHNOSERVE that identifies the micro-entrepreneurs in the

agricultural business and determines whether or not they are suitable to go into the export field. TECHNOSERVE then identifies the companies it considers suitable and refers them to AMEX. All of this activity is funded by USAID. So the relationship with and the use of TECHNOSERVE has continued.

We also had a project in which we funded a large scale farmer up in Ejura [central Ghana], who identifies certain plots on this farm. He was able to furnish certain services to smaller scale farmers in his area. In that situation we learned how to teach farmers who are not accustomed to the use of modern technology and who have not learned the value of properly using production inputs. We used experienced farmers for this purpose. In this case we had the use of an area of farm land close to 5,000 acres in extent for demonstration purposes. All of the farmers in that geographic area offered to participate in this demonstration. The farmers in the Ejura area, regardless of what we thought of them, were able to plow the land and otherwise prepare it, as well as provide the production inputs. And, lo and behold, we got sizable production out of each one of those farms.

What these farmers said to me was: "We could, in fact, use a large and more successful farmer, if he were truly willing to train and bring smaller farmers along to the point where they understand and appreciate the kinds of 'inputs' and technology they need to use to achieve greater production." Those farmers were able to pay back the credit that they had received. In fact, everything was based on credit. What they produced they were able to sell and pay off the loans that they had received.

We had problems with the Ejura farm people, the major project that they were trying to run, and the resources they were trying to get from AID. However, there was one component that...

Q: I'm glad to hear this. They went bankrupt three times during my time in Ghana. It was an example of large unit, private agricultural investment. It was a sad story. Extraordinary efforts were made, but there were problems with it.

COKER: But there was one good aspect...

Q: I'm glad to hear that.

COKER: That came out of it. I was quite reluctant to have any dealings with the Ejura farm people. I just felt that they were a bunch of shysters. However, when they came in with that idea, Oleen Hess, a few others, and I decided to use this as a demonstration activity.

Q: Hess was the chief of the Agricultural Section of AID, wasn't he?

COKER: Yes. He was extremely good. Fortunately, he was there, and I was able to use him to work very closely with this.

Q: You had an OICI [Opportunities in Industrialization Center International] project there, I guess. How was that working?

COKER: That continued to be a very effective program.

Q: What was its role, what was it doing?

COKER: OICI ran a program of vocational education and, at the same time, various kinds of training related to different industrial skills. These skills included those of electricians, plumbers, brick masons, auto mechanics, and all down the line. We had probably one of the first examples of taking in females as well as males. We took in more people than we had slots available.

We saw a willingness on the part of the Ghanaians to learn vocational skills, because these were skills truly involved with building a nation. There were many areas in which the graduates of this program could then go out and start small scale businesses on their own.

Q: Did that happen?

COKER: It did happen. Numbers of people were trained as plumbers and electricians, auto mechanics, and brick masons, and they established their own businesses. They added a component to that OICI program on how to become an entrepreneur. So many of these people also took advantage of receiving training in entrepreneurship. What they discovered was that, with a small amount of money, they could go out on their own and start up these enterprises. That was a very effective program, and it is still going on today.

Q: Do they have more than one training center now? It was just based in Accra in the early days of that project.

COKER: The center was based in Accra, but the Board of Directors voted to open up two additional centers. If I'm not mistaken, one was located in Kumasi, and one was for the Cape Coast. They were working on expanding those when I left Ghana. However, this expansion had been voted on and approved by the Board of Directors, which had a majority of Ghanaians on it. The different communities had also formed governing boards and had approved the expansion. There was a requirement for some government input, which was very slow in coming, because of the tightness of resources available.

Q: Was this largely a USAID plan? Was there no other funding source?

COKER: There were some funds coming in from private enterprises which also were concerned about being able to have access to some of the graduates of the center. However, most of the resources came from USAID, through OIC-International. If it were not for that, the OIC center would have foundered long ago. Now there is no USAID money flowing through OIC-International. All of the funds are being generated locally.

Q: From AID locally?

COKER: No, generated either by government subsidies or money generated by the Board of Directors, from local resources.

Q: Potentially, this is locally financed and self-financed now, and no longer based on AID support.

COKER: Yes.

Q: So it has sort of spun off into...

COKER: It has spun off into a self-sufficient, locally financed type operation.

Q: Do you know the number of people who are going through this program?

COKER: I talked to John Moses, who was, as you recall, the dynamic chairman back in our days. He is still intimately involved with it. They still have a very large intake of people, over 200 annually. They've been able to graduate over 6,000 people who are sought often for jobs, even while they are in training. They get jobs as apprentices as soon as they finish the course. They are given regular jobs, making good money. Many of them are self-employed. They don't have enough slots for trainees. OIC-International was fully subscribed.

The Ghanaian Government was finally convinced that there was a need to add vocational training to the national educational program, because we were not coming anywhere near the needs of the nation in teaching the kinds of skills being generated by OIC-International. However, at the same time, the national economy has been in a boom and has experienced strong growth since about 1986. When you go to Ghana, you see all kinds of job vacancies being advertised on all kinds of construction sites. There are signs out on the road, saying: "We need plumbers, electricians, and brick masons." Yet, at the same time there are large numbers of recent graduates from the schools, standing around on the street corners, selling merchandise of one kind or another. They would love to be attending one of these vocational schools, doing meaningful work. However, there was no national system for training them. The Ghanaian Government had not been able to develop additional, vocational schools and fund them to the point where they could have a meaningful number of graduates who could be employed in jobs of this kind.

Q: The government does provide subsidies to the OIC.

COKER: The government provides support to the new, vocational education schools...

Q: But no government funding for the OIC schools?

COKER: Not for the OIC schools. If there is government funding, it would be infinitesimal.

Q: Could money for the OIC schools be privately raised?

COKER: All of the money privately raised that I know of, when I talked to people about this, was provided for certain services that they rendered, in the form of fees paid for those attending. That was another way of generating funds. However, I wouldn't be surprised if by now there

were small, government subsidies for these vocational schools. I haven't heard any details of such subsidies.

I went to Ghana in July-August, 1997 to do an evaluation on a sustainable employment-generation project. This was funded by the UN. That's when I got to know about new Ghanaian Government policies to start up and expand a national system of vocational education. At the same time I saw controversies going on in the government ministries on how to handle this matter and who should be responsible for this program. Here in the U.S. vocational education usually comes under the local educational authorities.

Over in Ghana they're still arguing about which ministry should be in charge of vocational education. If you go back to the colonial days in Ghana [or Gold Coast, as it was formerly called], the Ministry of Education had responsibility for one form of education. Vocational education was not a part of this program. Vocational education was looked down upon. So they were talking about forming a separate, autonomous body to be responsible for vocational education. However, this proposed new body is still trying to get off the ground. It doesn't have the necessary clout. It can't compete for resources with the national Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education has substantial resources, since it is an established government department.

Q: Do you know whether any of the approaches or concepts that the OIC was using in its vocational training program were being picked up by the national, vocational training program?

COKER: The national, vocational program had adopted some of the curriculum from the OIC vocational training schools. There was a lot of respect for OIC-International. However, I felt that with that much respect, the national vocational program could have put money into the OIC vocational training program, effectively saying: "Why don't we just spread this program across the country?" But the political infighting was an obstacle to that kind of approach. What the educational authorities concluded was that they should form another institutional system parallel to the system of the Ministry of Education, but devoted strictly to vocational education.

Q: I recall that OIC people were fearful of government funding because of earlier experiences in which the government simply took over vocational training and de-emphasized it. So the OIC people were not eager to seek government support. I don't know whether you picked that up or not.

COKER: I didn't hear that, but I know that the OIC people didn't discuss government involvement in the vocational training program. They didn't seem to want government involvement. So I would think that this feeling is still there. However, everyone seemed to agree that vocational education should be greatly expanded, if they were going to get on with the job of nation-building and, at the same time, provide jobs for the unemployed.

Our evaluation committee made a strong recommendation that responsibility for vocational education at the national level should be transferred to the Ministry of Education. We recommended that every effort should be made to ensure that vocational education is truly and substantially funded, so that it can be an effective force in the community and get people trained.

Q: Well, were there some other projects of interest to you at that time and which you were concerned with? You've covered quite a few.

COKER: Education and human resources were always a big part of our effort in Ghana. You may remember that we had a Ghanaian training officer, we had a "Women in Development" program, even though we were trying to include women in our main effort.

Q: Were you able to do that even in the "Women in Development" program?

COKER: Fortunately for us, we had hired one of the Head Mistresses from La Croix Academy, Joanna Laryea. She was a very dynamic person who truly had good contacts among the powers that be in Ghana. She came to work for AID in 1977. She just retired last year, in 1997. I happened to be in Ghana when she retired.

We had quite an involvement with Ghanaian women. We were funding what I considered micro-enterprises for women. It was easy for Joanna, who knew many Ghanaian women. We had a considerable number of delegations of Ghanaian women come to our office, or we were invited to meet with them elsewhere, and discuss the ideas which they had. We had a very strong following among the Ghanaian women. You probably remember a little, dynamic woman, Esther Ocloo. We were considerably involved with her in her food processing program. She has acquired recognition and even world renown in this respect. Even the World Bank and other institutions have sought her views on the role of women.

We had some textile projects that were also funded. What we attempted to do, as part of the program for bringing women into the mainstream of our efforts, was to make sure that we had components, within our projects, for women and which we could finance. I'm sorry to say that I can't recall many of the detailed efforts we made in this connection. However, I remember that most of them were related to identifying some kind of employment opportunities on the ground, dealing with micro and small scale programs for women.

At the same time we had Joanna Laryea working very closely with the other sectors in the AID Mission. We had divisions in the AID Mission dealing with educational resources, agriculture, and health. Joanna also worked out of the AID Program Office, so she was working with most of the line divisions, as well as the staff divisions, to find programs to improve ways of getting women involved. There certainly was nothing political about this. Everything at the time was simply how we could get more women to recognize how they could participate in the various projects. Joanna became a very good source of advice for that.

Q: How would you characterize the impact of the kind of development programs we had? How did you see this impact then and also later on? We could cover that later, but since you're talking about it now, in what ways do you consider that these programs contributed to Ghana's development?

COKER: I had very different views of our aid program prior to my arriving in Ghana, during my time there, and even afterwards.

Out of the number of people that we sent off for training, some of them returned to Ghana. Some left the country because of the economic conditions there but subsequently returned. When you are in Ghana, you run into a lot of people who are pressing ideas on you, ideas that we think may have come from exposure and involvement in the AID program. This is particularly true for those people who were involved in the educational process in the U.S. They were necessarily involved with the leadership of Ghana. They were among the reasons for Ghana's economic growth, if not where it is now. They had some ideas on private enterprise.

I found that the Africans were very much oriented toward entrepreneurship. If they had the means, they had no problem in getting on with entrepreneurship. I think that the Ghanaians probably have a fear of economic downturn and changes in government. They really want to see things work well. Many of them have been exposed to the way things are run in the U.S., especially how dynamic the U.S. Constitution is. They're looking for something quite similar to take hold in Ghana.

We have seen many of the physicians who were somewhere associated with the project over in Ghana. Others might have come out of Ghana and gone through their medical training in the U.S. They were very much private enterprise oriented. They opened up their own medical practices.

There are a lot of positive things that seem to be going on, including economic decisions and the view that it is better to leave decisions regarding growth in the hands of private entrepreneurs, rather than in the hands of the government. So you have a tremendous divestiture effort under way to see how they can get the private sector involved. We would like to think that we had some measure of success in the approach that the Ghanaian Government is taking now in getting itself out of running enterprises which can best be operated by the private sector. These ideas relate to agriculture and farming. I think that some of that has rubbed off on the Ghanaians. They have a lot of private, seed companies and other companies related to agribusiness now, which is important. You see things like that taking place.

Overall, there is a very positive image that we have left with the Ghanaian people. We can be thankful that the Ghanaians who left the country have since observed a change in the attitude of the government, which is now much more open. They are willing to go back. You can run into Ghanaians all over the world. If you ask them whether they are anxious to go back, all of them will tell you that they are willing and want to go back. They just hope that they can go back and survive. So I find that a very positive development.

Q: Well, let's just leave it at that for now. You can add to it if you like. What month and year did you finish your tour of duty in Ghana?

COKER: I finished up at the end of August, 1980, and came back to Washington to be the Director of the Sahel Program.

EDWARD WARREN HOLMES
Deputy Chief of Mission
Accra (1977-1980)

Edward Warren Holmes was born in Beverly, Massachusetts in 1923. He received a bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1945 and a master's degree in international law from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1946. Mr. Holmes joined the Foreign Service in 1946. He served in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Israel, South Africa, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, and Washington, DC. Mr. Holmes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Your last post was Ghana, where you served from '77 to '80. How did you get that, and what were you doing?

HOLMES: Well, as usual for DCM positions, I happened to know the ambassador. I had served with him in South Africa; he had been in Cape Town as political officer, way back.

Q: Who was this?

HOLMES: Bob Smith, a wonderful, capable, outstanding officer, I thought. When I was back here and my two-year tour was coming to an end, I was looking for what was going to be next, and I got this marvelous cable from him, saying would you like to come here as DCM? His DCM was leaving and there was an opening. And I said yes, not that I knew Ghana very much. I had been there on that African Seminar, and I had visited there a number of times in my USIA job. As a matter of fact, I had seen Bob Smith there, as part of my visitation. So I went as DCM there. And it was very interesting. I remember my arrival, Bob met me at the airport and said, "So glad you're here. I'm leaving in five days for delayed home leave. At last, I'm going to get my home leave!" So I was chargé for two months, when I barely knew the names of the people in the various divisions of the embassy. But I got through it. It's not the best way to become chargé and run an embassy, which was very active, with a military attaché, with a large AID program, with the other agencies there and so forth.

Q: What was the political situation in this period, '77 to '80?

HOLMES: There was an unstable situation. When Bob was transferred to become ambassador to Liberia in '79, I was chargé once again. Then there was a revolution and President Hilla Limann came in. It was a military coup; rather severe fighting all around the embassy and around the various homes and so forth. We came awfully close to evacuation, very, very close, but we didn't do it. But that was an exciting period, wondering whether we should evacuate Americans because of safety concerns.

Q: What were American interests in Ghana when you came?

HOLMES: Well, I guess, no specific strategic interests. It was part of the general thing of maintaining good relations with Ghana, which has been a traditionally important country in West

Africa, I guess because Nkrumah was one of the very first leaders when Ghana became independent, and he was a symbol of African independence, in a way, and he was involved with independence movements all over Africa. Ghana traditionally has had a large, well-educated community. Under British days, it happened that way, that there were a large number of Ghanaians who had university educations overseas, who now serve in the United Nations, for instance. There are a lot of Ghanaians who serve as economists and whatnot.

But not specific strategic interests, not like Kagnev Station in Ethiopia and that sort of thing. But it was helping them, and we had an AID program. It was sort of the typical things of relationships with this sort of important country. We had a lot of visitors from the States come to Ghana. So I would say, just sort of normal relationships, helping where we could. Their economic situation was not the best.

Q: Before the revolution, how did you find dealing with the Ghanaian government?

HOLMES: Ghanaians, as a people, are wonderful. They're open, they're friendly, they're pro-American. An awful lot of them have been to the States, or if they haven't been, they have relatives who are here, or have been, or hope to come. There's an enormous looking toward the United States. Although it's a former British colony, of course, and there's still British influence there, particularly the older people, the younger people look toward the States. It's the mecca. They're really wonderful people -- open, friendly. So it was great.

My wife took a great interest in African dancing, and as a result of that, we used to go sometimes into the interior to small villages where they were having festivals. We'd be the only white people there, and there'd be large numbers of African people who had assembled for festivals. And they would treat us so well, just wonderfully; they couldn't do enough for us. They were delighted that we had come. As I said, my wife was studying African dance, under a teacher and so forth. She arranged these things, mostly, because dancing is part of their festivals, always. They're wonderful dancers, and they're wonderful musicians. They have very, very intricate music, particularly percussion, drumming. We got involved in that sort of thing, but my wife said she never felt ill at ease in Ghana, as sometimes she had felt in some other countries, at different periods. If she got stuck, there would always be somebody who would appear, to help her to get the car started, or fix a flat tire. She would go with some of her Ghanaian friends. She was very active in the Ghanaian-American women's group, sort of got that going. So she would get invited to these places. Sometimes I went with her, and if I couldn't, she would go with her Ghanaian friends and just loved it. She just loved Ghana.

Q: Would you talk about what happened during the revolution? Embassies in crises are always an important thing. How did this coup, or revolt, come about, and what were we doing?

HOLMES: I would say, with all its wonderful attributes, Ghana has an awful lot of corruption, which is not unique to Ghana, certainly, this is endemic in many parts of the world. But the corruption got really pretty bad. Then, in 1979, the government of the generals was overthrown by young officers and noncommissioned officers, led and inspired by an air force flight lieutenant, Jerry Rawlings, who wanted to put basically an end to the corruption. That was, I

think, his main thrust. And to do that, he simply took over, in a typical military coup. There was some fighting in Accra. What can I say? He was successful. And we very soon established contact with him.

But this did delay the arrival of our new ambassador, Thomas Smith, who had been named. He [Lt. Rawlings or President Limann?] didn't want to think about such things as giving the agrément to a new ambassador. He was very busy with lots of other things, and so he said, "I'll get to that, I'll get to that," when we talked to him. But there was a long delay as he tried to take over the reins of government, to try to bring in reforms. Then there were trials of some of the previous people, and seizures of ill-gotten assets, including houses and so forth. So that it was a period of turmoil, and he just didn't want to have a new ambassador, at that point, arrive.

Q: Were we concerned, after a change in government... I can't remember, had the Liberian overthrow happened before this?

HOLMES: No, it hadn't. No.

Q: Were you, either under instructions or on your own, saying, I hope it's not going to be a bloodbath that won't do any good?

HOLMES: Yes, I think we took it very much in stride, the change. I think we recognized the new regime, a de facto recognition, fairly soon. I was permitted to deal with him as the power, the de facto head of government, which he was. We did counsel restraint, as we always do. I don't think there were any executions at all. [Generals Acheampong and Akuffo were executed.] I think there were some jailings, which is not so bad in Africa, because the full term is rarely ever served. I think we did counsel restraint, as we, I think, always do in cases like this. We're not in favor of executions, although there were gross transgressions, let's say, of fiscal sanity. There were people put in jail, and there was some grabbing of houses, ill-gotten gains. I don't think we got involved in that at all.

Q: When the coup happened and the firing went on, what happened to you all?

HOLMES: No Americans got killed, but there were some escapades where Americans were in the way of things. So we urged Americans to stay at home, the usual thing. We assembled a few who were in places that looked rather dangerous. But there was fighting in the streets, different elements of the armed forces. It wasn't a smooth, easy takeover. It got dicey at some points, because the water went off, the electricity went off, that sort of thing. We considered evacuation, but we didn't have to.

BERNARD F. SHINKMAN
Junior Officer Trainee, USIS
Accra (1978-1979)

Bernard F. Shinkman was born in New York City and raised in Vienna. He

graduated from Dartmouth College. After entering the Foreign Service in 1978, he served in Accra, Mindanao, London, Belgrade and Ottawa. Mr. Shinkman was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

SHINKMAN: It was excellent training. It really was something that obviously should be replicated today, I believe. We had training in Washington for six months. Basic public diplomacy and diplomacy training. But when you went out on your first JO tour – we were called JOTs, junior officer trainees – you spent a month in each of the other cones. To apply for our first assignment, we were given a list of possible posts which we could rank order according to our preferences. I think there were 15 posts on the list and I came up with what I thought were very good arguments for why I should go to London or Rome or someplace like that. In the event, I got assigned to my 11th choice, which was Accra, Ghana, which turned out to be a fabulous assignment. We've loved all our assignments so I don't rank them. But if I had to, Ghana would be right there at the top. We just had a fabulous time. But to get back to training, USIA sent you off to a post, and then you did a whole month in the political section, and a whole month in the consular section, a whole month in econ and a whole month in admin. So you really got a feel for what the other sections of an embassy did. And the consular section was very small at the embassy in Accra.

There was one consular officer, who was the consul, David Lyon, who is now chief of mission in Suva, Fiji. And we've been friends since then. But I arrived in his section as fresh meat – he had not been able to travel outside the capital because he was the only American consular officer there – immediately after my arrival, he jumped on a plane or took the car or whatever and traveled all over northern Ghana. And I sat there as acting consul for a month. No, he wasn't gone a whole month, for a couple of weeks. It was probably some of the most strenuous work I have ever done in the Foreign Service. Interviewing people. We had non-immigrant visa applications every morning for three hours, I guess 9-12, something like that, five days a week. And doing those interviews – it is what everyone who has done consular work knows – was just exhausting.

And Ghana was in terrible economic difficulties at that time; people were desperate to get out. So there was an enormous volume of applications for non-immigrant visas. A large amount of cheating. It gave me a lifelong respect for our consular colleagues and how important the consular function is to the U.S. – to our culture, our society and certainly to our government. The hard thing, as I recall, was knowing that when these people came to the window, you had the power to change their lives. If you said, "yes, you can go to the U.S.", people stood a great chance of their economic fortunes blossoming. But if they stayed in Accra, their prospects were much less promising. And so given that and given the large amount of falsification of documents, trying to keep your mind clear, judging each person . . . you had to clean the slate, not pre-judge them, and interview them. And it was hard, hard work. It really was. But I found it enormously rewarding and, as I said, it gave me a lifelong respect for the importance of the work our consular colleagues do.

Q: *Who was the ambassador at the time?*

SHINKMAN: We had two ambassadors. As a JO, I didn't spend much time with them. They

were both named Smith. This was just after Shirley Temple had left. She was enormously popular as ambassador.

Q: She had done a very good job.

SHINKMAN: Very good job. But she left and we had a couple of Smiths. One of them was Robert Smith and I can't remember what the second Smith's name was.

Q: There was a Thomas S. Smith and some other Smith. I can't remember.

SHINKMAN: Maybe the other one was Thomas. But Robert was the one I remember. My wife and I got to know the DCM and his wife more, who was very kind to us. They live near us out on Massachusetts Avenue. I haven't seen them for years, but I see their names in the little phone directory for our neighborhood. Ed and Mary Holmes.

We had a delightful tour in Ghana. We traveled a certain amount. We got to the Cote D'Ivoire. We got to Togo. We didn't get as far as Nigeria, which I wanted to. But we drove around a lot. Ghanians are just wonderful, wonderful people. We loved the country, loved the people, loved the culture. But they were in terrible economic straits. About once a month we would drive to Lome, Togo, immediately to the east - which I think is a two or three hour drive over pretty rough roads - just to go to a country where they had fresh food. And they had big tourist hotels there. There were jumbo jets full of French and German tourists coming down. We would take a cooler with us, a large cooler in the car, and come back with cheeses and French bread and things like that. But as I say, Accra was a fabulous assignment. And we have Ghanaian friends to this day. We were there just one year - '78, '79.

Another interesting aspect: you asked about training. USIA was very thoughtful. In those days, before you could be tenured, you had to get off of language probation. So they sent me - even knowing that I was going to an English-speaking country - they sent me to a French language brush up course for 12 weeks so that I could get my 3/3 in French and get off language probation before I went to my first assignment. So I was tenured - in those days the procedure was common - I was tenured before I went to my first assignment.

Q: Were there any unrest or any problems in Ghana when you were there?

SHINKMAN: Well, there were indeed. They had the first violent revolution in the history of the country. They were the first country in Africa to gain its independence. And Ghana's first leader, Kwame Nkrumah, had a very Socialist orientation and it not surprisingly didn't really work. So, the country went downhill and was taken over by generals. And they had panels of generals who would run the country. And they would run the country for a few years and then get increasingly corrupt. And the leader would be told politely by another phalanx of generals "it's time for you to go. Please leave." And then some new generals would come in.

Well in the summer of 1979 there was an uprising in the military lead by a guy called Flight Lieutenant (pronounced "Flight Left Tenant" due to the country's British connection) Jerry Rawlings. Flight Lieutenant is equivalent to a Captain in our Air Force. Not a high ranking

officer. And he led a revolution of junior officers and enlisted men. And they took over the country.

I remember many things. It was a very exciting time. How many people get to live through a revolution? But one of the things that struck me then was how easy it is to take over a country. The revolutionaries took over the airport, the Ministry of Defense, the equivalent of the White House - where the general who was in charge, was chief executive of the country, lived – and of course took over the military bases by having all the enlisted troops and junior officers on their side. It really didn't take long and they had the country in a matter of 24 hours.

We lived in a diplomatic enclave half way between the international airport and downtown Accra. And adjacent to the international airport was the major university, Legon. During that day, we would watch a helicopter flying back and forth over our house. And it was Jerry Rawlings going to talk to the students at the university to make sure they were on board with this revolution, and then going back downtown to be in charge of the fight to take over the TV station, the airport and the military headquarters downtown. But the insurgents had the country in not much more than 24 hours.

The end of the second day, they went on national television. I will always remember that. I took still photographs of the TV screen because it was so interesting. And I tape recorded on audio tape the broadcast. But here was this array of people in military uniform. In rank – literally – from privates to the most senior being Jerry Rawlings, a Captain in the Air Force. No two uniforms at the table matched. There were people – probably the Privates – couple of them with their heads down on their arms on the table. Perhaps even asleep. It was not an impressive array of strength or authority. But these guys ran the country, had taken over the country.

Our ambassador, Ambassador Smith, was extremely active all during this period, of course, and was very successful in talking to the new leaders and helping them to understand the consequences beyond those local to Accra: that you can't go out and shoot everybody that was here before. The international consequences of that would just be too great. You have to understand the consequences of now being in charge of this country.

The ambassador was not acting alone. Also with him were the British High Commissioner, who was very influential; and other ambassadors and high commissioners. In the whole coup, I think that less than six - maybe three or four generals, previous rulers – were taken down to the beach, tied up against poles, and shot. And the fact that those three or four people were shot absolutely sent shock waves through the country. It was so un-Ghanaian. Now for an African coup or a coup in any other country, you often expect hundreds if not thousands of deaths in the process of a coup d'état. In Ghana, to its credit, the fact that three or four people were killed was absolutely a shock to the country.

It was a very sophisticated country, a very culturally rich country. I can remember meeting Ghanaians who, not only had they gone to Oxford and Cambridge, but their grandparents had gone there. Think of a black West African in the early 1900s who can get to Oxford or Cambridge, he or she has got to be a pretty special person. It's a very rich culture. Very established culture. Very sophisticated people. And as I say, these very few regrettable deaths,

but really very few in number, caused absolute shock waves across the country.

Rawlings then came in. He had some senior advisors among the students at Legon University – the University of Ghana at Legon – who were very left wing, some of whom had gotten their undergraduate degrees in Soviet bloc universities. And some of his economic policies really were very unfortunate and did not help the country. Ghana had a long struggle with the IMF, the World Bank. But now, apparently – I have not been back to Ghana since we left in 1979, but we follow Ghanaian events – they really are doing well and are one of the more prosperous countries in Africa. And now, just as we used to go to Togo for the weekend to stock up on fresh food and have a swim in the ocean and have an air conditioned hotel room, people now come from Togo and I suppose even more from the Ivory Coast to Ghana for the weekend to do that.

Q: You mentioned your Ghanaian friends. Was the United States at all seen as important, or was it mainly British?

SHINKMAN: Well I think both. I think almost of equal weight. The Brits because of the extraordinary historic links and the United States because of its position in the world. For any foreign diplomat that any of us has met from any country in the world, an assignment to Washington is the dream assignment. Even in the old Soviet bloc, unless they were idiots, they wanted to serve first in a Western country, but particularly in the United States. So I think there was great respect for the United States in Ghana. Some resentment, as I say, among left wing students. Again, you've had that in every country you've served in. I've certainly had it in every country I've served in. Sort of a fact of life and not something you get too excited about. But no, general respect for and affection for the United States.

Q: Did you get any feeling for U.S. information work?

SHINKMAN: Well, I was a junior officer. I was made an Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer in charge of the American Center, which was in its own compound. A library, multi-purpose room, we had speakers programs, a lot of the traditional things that USIS does in posts. And had a very active program. We traveled around the country, had visiting lecturers, and it was a lot of fun. It really was.

Some of the things I remember, again minor anecdotes from the revolution. As is often the case in countries like this, the waterfront in the capital is not terribly attractive. But Ghana is on the Gulf of Guinea. The whole expatriate community would drive every Sunday out to a beach about 30 miles east of Accra where they all had little cottages. When a new officer came in you would take over renting a little cottage for the year at a nominal cost. The Sunday after the revolution we had gone out to the beach for the day and we were coming back into Accra at about four or five in the afternoon. We came up on a long, long queue of cars. And the rebel forces – the new authorities, they were at that stage – had set up a check point. I had diplomatic plates on the car and I was certainly too full of myself. I thought, I don't need to stay in this queue of cars. So I pulled out and went shooting up to the front of the line. And a soldier comes over and waves me down, says "where are you going?" I said "I'm going to the American embassy. I don't think we need to stop at your checkpoint." And he said "well you have to stop. If you hadn't stopped, I could have shot you." So again, being young and not very bright, I said to him "do you have any

bullets in your gun?” And he said to me, “that’s a secret.” In retrospect it sort of makes my blood go cold. He was right, he could have shot me and would have got away with it completely. And it was not a very bright thing to do. But it’s what I did.

And the other thing, we were in the house during the coup living below window level. As my wife recounts, that also happens to be the time we conceived our first child. There wasn’t a lot to do at home. As I mentioned, we were in a diplomatic enclave where there were a lot of foreign businessmen – and as is often the case in the developing world, when things start to go bad economically, everyone looks for a scapegoat. And it is usually the foreign businessmen, the Lebanese businessmen, the Pakistani businessmen, who are in fact keeping the economy running. But they are the target because they are living well it’s easy to say “they are breaking down our economy.” So a group of rebel soldiers in a big truck, like a deuce-and-a-half, came driving through the neighborhood looking for foreign businessmen to take off somewhere. I don’t think they killed them in the end. But they did take them off for interrogation. And this was a little bit disconcerting.

But our gardener Al Hassan was out mowing the lawn with his hand mower when these guys came back. Things had quieted down a bit, and we were peering out the window. The truck comes roaring up and screeches to a halt in front of our gate. And the guys start talking to Al Hassan, and we don’t know what they are talking about. Well what they were saying was “who lives in this house.” And he said, “Oh, they’re Americans and you don’t need to worry about them.” And the guys got back in their truck and drove off. So Al Hassan after that could do no wrong. He was not the greatest gardener in the world but, boy, we were sure going to keep him onboard.

The embassy had given us a letter, given everybody in the embassy a letter, that you stuck it in the window of your front door. It was on embassy letterhead and it said “these are diplomatic premises. You may not enter here without the permission of the U.S. embassy.” And then there was a big red seal at the bottom. Everyone agreed that the text was meaningless but that when people saw that big red seal, that would probably stop them from coming into the house. And it did.

Q: While you were there, was there any concern about Soviet influence?

SHINKMAN: Not so much directly. I didn’t get so much into the intelligence aspect of it, so I don’t know how active the Soviets were. But there was a strong strain in the student body of students who had been educated in bloc universities – because the Soviet Union gave enormous grants. As I understand it, it wasn’t that difficult to get a grant of tuition to go to a university in Eastern Europe, so a lot of the graduate students in the Ghanaian universities had got their undergraduate degrees in the Soviet bloc. There was a definite influence there. But it was not something that I particularly was aware of.

The closest I came to anything approaching intelligence work, which was not intelligence work happened the day after the coup. Jerry Rawlings called a press conference at which he was going to meet the foreign press. Well, there were almost no foreign press in Ghana, but some had flown in for the event. And the embassy was very keen to have a representative in this press

conference. So since I worked for USIA, we thought it wasn't completely implausible that I had a connection with the Voice of America. So I went in. I put myself down as a Voice of America correspondent, for whom I could have easily filed a report, and went and covered the press conference. I got back to the embassy and everybody wanted to know who was there? Where were they sitting? And who seemed to be in a position of authority? And that sort of thing. Having been, again, a junior officer, I wasn't intimately aware of the faces of all the senior people in the Ghanaian government. So I wasn't much help. But it was an interesting experience. And one of the things that struck me about it was, what a charismatic guy Jerry Rawlings was. It was like when I came in contact with the Pope, you just felt when you were in a room with him this charisma. He was a very attractive personality and you felt it.

PARKER W. BORG
Country Director, West African Affairs
Washington, DC (1979-1980)

Ambassador Borg was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Dartmouth College and Cornell University. In 1965, after a tour with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During his career he served in Vietnam and Zaire, and in the State Department in senior positions concerning Vietnam, West Africa and Counter Terrorism. He served as US Ambassador to Mali (1981-1984) and to Iceland from 1993 to 1996. Ambassador Borg was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: You hadn't mentioned Ghana until just now. At one time Ghana was seen as one of the first Anglophone states to cease being a colony and all and there was a lot of anticipation when Nkrumah came in and all. By the time you got there, where was Ghana?

BORG: Nkrumah came to power as a revolutionary leader much as Sukarno had done in Indonesia and others who had fought for independence for their countries. He was a firebrand first and not at all an administrator. He wanted to see Ghana in the ranks of developed countries and he wanted to see this happen quickly. The focus was on industrialization and building steel mills and building a prosperous industrial Ghana. This was 1957. I think Guinea became independent in '58. Ghana became independent in '57, and by the time I came in '79 - that would have been 20-years-plus later - Nkrumah was no longer on the scene, but the remnants of his rule were still there. There had been almost no attention to agriculture in the country, an over-concentration on industrialization, and the country had descended into a very sad level of poverty. There was a coup that had taken place against the elected leaders, maybe in May of 1979, and a group of sergeants had taken over, had selected from among themselves a young flight lieutenant by the name of Jerry Rawlings, a flight lieutenant or something, very low ranking, a half Scottish/half Ghanaian individual that the former government had tried to arrest and execute, but he'd been so eloquent at his trial that he inspired the rest of the army to rise up against the government. They assassinated the former head of state - executed, I guess, is the correct word since they had already removed him from power and then they decided to execute

him. So Ghana was very much in a situation of chaos and uncertainty about what was going to happen next. There were talks of elections. There were elections that were scheduled, the elections were postponed, and eventually Jerry Rawlings emerged as the leader of Ghana and proved over the course of the next 15 or 20 years that he was in fact a very effective leader and put Ghana on a path that it followed for a good period of time. It was interesting to contrast Ghana with the Ivory Coast. These were neighboring countries that had similar people, but the different French and English colonial experience and the fact that Ghana had - to make aluminum you need bauxite - Ghana had bauxite and it had some potential for hydropower, and this was going to be the fuel that made Ghana rich. Ivory Coast had nothing except its agriculture to rely on. If you looked 20 years into the independence, there was no question as to which country had succeeded and which one had not. Ghana was a total failure, and the Ivory Coast was doing very well. Abidjan was a very attractive city, it had a very stable leadership, and it showed the difference between what could be done by a government that was management focused rather than rhetorically focused. So Ghana was in very tough shape when I was there. There was nothing available in the market. The soldiers were going around looking for hoarding, arresting people, making life very difficult for Ghanaians. I also developed another political theory at the time, and that was that those people who are truly nice and truly decent end up with the most awful government, and the Ghanaians, as contrasted with some of their neighbors in west Africa, were really friendly, open people, the kind of people that, when you sit down and have a conversation, you felt I'd really like to be a friend of this person. They're really nice people. You really didn't feel this way with some of the other countries where there were people who seemed to have chips on their shoulders and were abrasive in just so many different ways. I didn't meet a single Ghanaian I would have characterized as abrasive.

Q: Well, in '81 you left.

BORG: In '81 I left.

ROBERT S. ZIGLER
Agricultural Management Training, USAID
Accra (1979-1982)

Robert S. Zigler was born in Illinois in 1920. He received his bachelor's degree from Manchester College in 1942. During his career with US AID he served in Laos, Vietnam, Philippines, Washington D.C., Ghana, and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). Mr. Zigler was interviewed by W. Haven North in November 1998.

Q: You went to Ghana in what year?

ZIGLER: I went to Ghana in 1979. This was a project that was part of the Ministry of Agriculture's to improve the performance of their field personnel. These are people that we might think of here in the United States as county extension agents. There were two courses that were offered, one in project management which used the concepts of the log frame in budgeting and procurement. The other one was in personnel management which had to do with job

descriptions, utilization of personnel, budgeting too. It was in Quadaso near a major city called Kumasi. This Quadaso school was an AID funded agricultural school. We used on a two week basis, classrooms, dormitory rooms, kitchen, and dining room. We had a special group of cooks. We used two classrooms. It was quite an acceptable facility there. I, Bob Zigler, was the last in a line of three Americans. I was to phase out and the Ghanians were to phase in. Those that preceded me were Bill Berg, Jerry Woods, and Bill Fuller. In my second year there, two Ghanaians arrived who had come back from the United States, returned participants with graduate degrees, to phase in as I phased out.

Somebody went back there a year or two after I left and the program was still going. That was commendable. The Ministry of Agriculture was willing to maintain it.

Q: What level of people were you training?

ZIGLER: Well, most of them were college graduates, they were field people for the ministry.

Q: They were out in the districts?

ZIGLER: Yes, most went through the School of Science and Technology at Kumasi.

Q: They were district managers,

ZIGLER: Yes, or county agents. We taught in English because that is the official language of the country.

Q: How did you find them as students?

ZIGLER: Well, that is interesting because now we are back to this diversity of a nation. There are a number of ethnic groups in Ghana. They all have opinions about each other. It's true they associate together. They don't fight or brawl or anything like that. In one particular class, there were a couple of students joking and laughing. This other student who was from the coast, the sophisticated coast, said, "Well, that is the way those guys are, bumpkin types." From the point of view of working in the classroom, there was no problem. The Ministry assigned them throughout the country. There may have been some concern about the person's ethnic group and his work community, but it didn't seem like that was the case.

Q: Were they good students by and large?

ZIGLER: They did well. What we did we used some of that strategy I told you about with the IDI's. We had a videotape camera there and chairmen and rapporteurs. All that was fascinating to them because they learned how to videotape it and see themselves.

Q: How many people?

ZIGLER: Well, I was there for three years and we usually had about four classes I'd say eight classes a year. Eight times 20 is 160 times three is 480.

Q: Did they go back for another round?

ZIGLER: Yes, they could come back for the other program.

Q: You said the other program; was there a second program?

ZIGLER: Yes. One in project management and one on personnel management and two weeks for each one.

Q: How do you relate personnel management particularly in the Ghanaian system with what you brought from the US?

ZIGLER: I would say our course was “theory” and the students would have to adapt. You have got a problem, and this right back to basic considerations in AID project management and development. We are backing up all the way to the beginning. I think in the early days in the 40's and 50's, the only things those AID technicians knew was what they did in the plains of Arizona or the farms of Indiana. So, that is what they tried to introduce which was perhaps questionable. You may run into stories, and I remember one about Greece which had to do with an UNRRA combine. Now, for combines, at least a good combine you should have at least 100 acre fields. Now how many 100 acre fields are there in Greece? So they sat there and rusted away. Now then for the realities. It is true you can go to school and learn the theory, but now we are talking about practice. Now related to your question, we did the follow up. I can remember several times we went to visit a trainee sometime after. We had a questionnaire. We asked, “Would you fill out this questionnaire?” He said, “Sure I'll fill it out. Do you have a pencil or pen?” We'd find one. “What is the date?” I looked up at the wall and there is a calendar there that is two years old. Here you have a man trying to do a job. He didn't even have a pencil or pen. Here you have this old calendar; how can you expect a man really to do much. This was one of the Ghanaian problems of the time. This was the status of the national government. Then we'd talk about procurement methodologies and come up with a procurement plan. It is true you can learn the process and hopefully then maybe you will apply it.

This is in another day, but I was, in my earlier days, involved in what was called a Polish program. This would have been now in the 50's. About eight Polish agriculture students were brought to the United States by the Church of the Brethren, and they were assigned to different farms or schools for a year and then they went back home. One man was interested in the vegetable production. He was from a farm outside Warsaw where they grew vegetables in the summertime. The Polish farmer learned about greenhouses or hothouses. He wanted to go home and do that. His father was opposed. I think it was something like seven or eight years this man had this objective and never realized it until Papa died. Then he built a hothouse and changed the whole production of the farm. So here you have competency or familiarity unused until the times are right.

Q: Did you find that was a problem with the people you were training in terms of getting them to learn the theory of the project and the ministry and the culture.

ZIGLER: Well, to me they learned it but they didn't apply it. They had no project, no reason for procurement practices. I think on the personnel side, that was limited because most of these were one or two man field operations. Writing job descriptions were not too consequential. The intellectual stimulation may have been a good thing.

Q: Did you visit them at their posts, I guess you did.

ZIGLER: Yes and I recorded this absence of physical equipment.

Q: This was part of a larger project was it?

ZIGLER: Yeah there was another one in Erdum. I don't know if you remember that one.

Q: That was in agriculture wasn't it?

ZIGLER: They were trying to improve the local government. Now this was during the first Jerry Rawlins administration.

Q: How was it then, was it positive?

ZIGLER: As far as acceptance, no problem. The economy was bad, as I said before. There were people with bright ideas that could be used. Maybe the Polish reference provides hope.

Q: Anything else?

ZIGLER: A couple of things on the human side. I was a member of the Rotary there in Kumasi. I was the only non-Ghanaian member at that time. These men had traveled all the world, maybe educated outside of the country. Usually in the Rotary meeting you had a toast. We never ever had lunches because of the economic cost; we had evening sessions and we didn't eat. We might have a toast with a glass of beer and we might not. We might not even have a glass of water or a glass. Then we would raise our hands as a toast. These were managers of banks, superintendents of schools, professionals. We'd toast the Rotary worldwide with a symbolic gesture.

Q: They didn't have any resources.

ZIGLER: Right. You couldn't buy the beer even if you wanted it. Another interesting thing about me, I lived in a house in Kumasi. You may have gone up there; it was the first stop going north. I had two bedrooms available in this house for field trip people. It was common practice going north to come to Kumasi on Monday or Tuesday and spend the night, and then return on Thursday or Friday. I had a social situation which was very appealing. Many times the Ambassador would be one of these people, the head of USIA or the AID Director. In terms of isolation, it is true, I was the only US government person there. There were some missionaries and another AID contract person in the area. No, I wasn't really alone at all.

Q: You make any friends?

ZIGLER: Quite a few. Once again, you still had a problem with them. If you were willing to take them out to a restaurant or over to your house, they were willing to come along. They didn't have this reluctance of the Vietnamese people. A lot of them were very interesting as you would imagine, for example, a manager of a bank. There was one man there who was a Ghanaian veteran who fought in WWII in India and Southeast Asia, the Burma Trail. Here he is at your house in Africa, incredible.

Also, I did some training in the villages. For some people this was unbelievable and difficult because I had to live in the village. I would go down the street and here was a woman selling those little old cones of peanuts, a banana. Breakfast eaten. I'd go off to the project.

We had a Fourth of July event for the Americans which I hosted on my front lawn. We had sack races and pot luck. Mostly the dishes were beans because that is about all you could buy in the market for a party. Three Americans went to some fame. One guy was Ray Silverman who is now with the museum at Michigan State. Craig Woodson is an expert on African music, and another named Mike Warren, you may have heard of him (he died), was on the University of Iowa faculty. He had a considerable involvement in Nigeria, too. He married a Nigerian woman who was in Ghana. At his funeral ceremony, people from both countries came to it.

I also taught a time management course in Accra to AID personnel several times. On my way home, I also stopped off in Ivory Coast and Senegal and taught time management and AID history and programs to the local employees. In Senegal, I taught French.

Q: What was there reception to the time management course?

ZIGLER: Well, you know how it is, everybody listens to you. I forgot the director's name in Senegal. I think it was David Shear. He was a hustler type. I taught it to him and his deputy, just the two of them. They sat there and listened. You know how it is. Well, I would say that is essentially it for Ghana, so we can move on now to Upper Volta.

LAWRENCE H. HYDLE
Political Officer
Accra (1981-1983)

Lawrence H. Hydle was born in Indiana in 1940. He graduated from Occidental College in 1960 and also attended Columbia University. Mr. Hydle entered the Foreign Service in 1965. In addition to serving in Ghana, he held positions in Vietnam, Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Kuwait. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 21, 1994.

HYDLE: I went to Ghana.

Q: You were there from 81 to 83, what were you doing?

HYDLE: I was the political officer in Ghana, also labor reporting was included in my duties.

Q: *What was the situation in Ghana in that period?*

HYDLE: When I went there, Ghana in 1979 had had a multi-party election and had elected a president, vice president and, I think, it was a single chamber legislature. It was really a multiparty democracy in that period. It was friendly with the United States, but it was ineffective in terms of dealing with the economic problems, in particular, that the country like most countries in Africa was facing.

Q: *When you were there, what did you see as your main task and how did you go about it?*

HYDLE: At first it was just a classic political reporting job, where I would get in touch with different factions that were in the legislature and party leaders exchange views with them, and report back on what they were doing. We had the usual run of demarches that we were suppose to make to the foreign ministry, saying what the US position was on an issue and why they should support our position and all that sort of thing.

Q: *The UN*

HYDLE: Yes, the UN issues especially.

Q: *Were there any serious problems with that during this period?*

HYDLE: No serious problems. That was a period, in late 81 we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Peace Corps which had come to Ghana first, I guess, after it was created. We had a ship visit by, frankly I don't remember but it was a US ship.

Q: *A navy ship.*

HYDLE: Yes, a navy ship. That was all very nice. Everything changed dramatically on December 31, 1981 when Rawlings and his friends launched a coup against the elected government. The new government, you may remember that Rawlings had been Chief of State in 1979, he was a relatively young army officer but he had then turned over power back to what was then to become an elected government. Well, he was disgruntled because he hadn't been treated well enough by the elected government since then and, of course, there was a lot of discontent in the country because of economic problems.

So when he launched a coup it was a fairly small affair, not many Ghanaians, my view then and still is that the coup itself was not that popular but neither was the government. So it was kind of a small scale dispute between a few people who wanted to get rid of the government and fewer who wanted to keep it in power. But those guys had become radicalized and they were anti-American. Several of them, people at the heart of the coup, were anti-American and would like to have aligned Ghana with the Soviet Union.

So we were in for a very rough time. They started out trying to attack the US as a way of rallying nationalistic support behind them. We were just bystanders, too much so I felt. Here was an elected government, inept as it may have been, it was overthrown and we tried to just carry on without missing a beat. Some people hoped that the new government would be more resolute about dealing with economic issues. Certainly Ambassador Tom Smith, I think, was of that school. He was more focused on economic issues. He wanted, above all, to get the Ghanaians to get together with the World Bank and with IMF, and to get their economic act together. He was less concerned than I was, certainly, about the rape of democracy.

So we just carried on as best we could and we turned the other cheek, pretty much, when they attacked us and criticized us and blamed us.

Q: One of the things that can happen is if you have something such as this, that knowing what you report in Washington has pretty wide dissemination, that there maybe, that you maybe sort of hurting your cause if you do feel that you want to try to maintain relations by publicizing all the slings and arrows of a government that's trying to use you as its whipping boy. Did you find that you all were sort of pulling your punches as far as reporting goes or not?

HYDLE: I felt that Ambassador Smith did want punches pulled because he wanted to keep things going, to maintain relations, and that he was sympathetic to the Ghanaian people so he wanted US aid to Ghana to continue. He also didn't want to be the bad guy who would be cutting them off.

It was kind of a classic ambassador thing. To my mind it's what one hears about US ambassadors wanting their countries' relations, bilateral relations, to be good even at the expense of US interest.

I felt that here was a government that was anti-American, that had overthrown a democratic government, it wasn't even popular in Ghana nor was it doing anything good for the Ghanaians, even things that might be unpopular that would eventually be good for them. What was the redeeming social value of this government? Why should the US not pursue a rather cold and hostile policy toward them? Not that we had a vital interest which compelled us to overthrow them, but just that our whole manner should be cold toward the government.

Q: Did you get any of this from, I mean this is the Reagan administration, was the feeling that there really isn't any great interest in this sort of thing. I thought this anti-American rhetoric would stir the Reagan administration to get really annoyed.

HYDLE: One would have thought so but there were other factors at play. One was that Ghana really was pretty unimportant to the Reagan administration, inherently. Second, I think, although I couldn't tell this directly, I think in retrospect that Jim Bishop, who was then the deputy assistant secretary responsible for Ghana, had been, I guess, a former Ghana desk officer and was kind of pro-Ghanaian somehow. He also had an attitude that he didn't want problems. There was only a certain number of problems he could deal with and Ghana should not be a problem. So we should muddle through somehow and not go for a confrontation with them. This is just my impression of his attitude at the time.

So they would do things and we would have to respond to it. But basically we didn't have an overall policy of much of anything other than avoiding a confrontation and maintaining relations and that sort of thing.

But then in June of 1982 there were 3 judges who were murdered by persons unknown, but who appeared to be close to the government, and who appeared to be directed by the government's national security adviser, Kogo Tchikada, who was the leading bad guy in the administration. So we got involved at least to the extent of calling for an investigation of the murders. Rawlings, in response to domestic and foreign pressure, appointed a former supreme court justice to conduct an investigation but Tchikada remained in office as the national security adviser and obstructed the investigation whenever he could.

The sequence of events is not that clear to me but I remember at the time there was a constant drumming of attempts by the government, and by government supported radicals, to blame us for all sorts of things. I was one of the targets-by name-they would say I was interfering in their foreign affairs. There was one headline on a paper that said, "Lars Hyde must go!"

The problem with me was that I was doing my job. I would try to meet with government officials but, in general, they didn't want to be seen meeting with Americans so I didn't get much feedback from them. On the other hand, I would be sought out by people who hated the government and wanted to urge us to take some action against the government. I would meet these people and I would report what they said. So I was seen as consorting with these guys. I think Ambassador Smith at times didn't like what I was doing. He kind of reined me in at times because of his desire to keep relations on an even keel.

At one point there was one Ghanaian who kept coming to us and talking about an impending coup. At first we reported what he was saying, then we began to become a little cynical about nothing ever actually happened. But then one day he reported that there was going to be a coup attempt that weekend. To our surprise, there was. We were caught up in it because the guy came to my house and said that things had gone wrong, and the government was after the small band of soldiers who were involved, and that he was on the run. His common law wife was an American citizen so our defense attaché went over to her house during a lull. Their house was where the plotters had been and they were taken away by the government forces and, I think, executed.

During a lull, the Defense Attaché went to her house, picked her up and whisked her out of harms way. She went over to his house initially then briefly to my house, and then finally we decided that since she was a US citizen that we would get her out of the country. We gave her a passport, the Ghanaians put a visa on it, the Ghanaian arm of government not knowing about the other arm that was looking for her. She left the next day or so.

Meanwhile, this guy was frantically calling from in hiding, wanting to meet with me. Of course I was instructed to put him off. Eventually he left the country. A few days later the Ghanaian press had a report about how a US diplomatic car had been involved, that would have the attachés' car.

Then there was also an attempt, by a Ghanaian using a forged German document, to say that the US ambassador himself, in connection with I think Mossad and Togo or a neighboring country, was trying to support some kind of invasion by exiles to overthrow the government. A total fabrication. Supposedly a German ambassadors' dispatch had fallen into their hands. I think the ambassador then realized that the problems with Ghana were not just because of me but they were really after the United States, even after a well-intentioned man, namely himself. So we insisted that we cut off aid and we insisted that they had to retract this allegation. They did retract it in a press report but then Tchikada, the bad guy, got in and sort of shut off the press reports.

So in 83 when Ambassador Smith left and when I left, relations were extremely bad.

There's one other thing I wanted to mention. At one point I was sort of set up by the supporters of the government of Ghana. I was interviewed by a British journalist. He asked when a report of this commission that was investigating the judges' deaths would be finished. I said something like, "I heard it would be soon." I had no inside information but the general talk at the time was that it would be soon.

Then he talked to another Brit who was advising the government and I guess had mentioned me as a source. So they put in a paper that I was saying that the commission's report would be out soon, as if the US and I personally had some special inside track to this commission that was likely to come up with conclusions embarrassing to the government. So then that was what triggered this "Lars Hyde must go" campaign that I mentioned before.

Eventually we did get an explanation from the journalist that I had talked to saying that he had talked to this other fellow. But Ambassador Smith never used that with the Ghanaian government to show that I had done nothing wrong. So there was a press in the diplomatic campaign for awhile to get rid of me which was kind of superseded by the bigger campaign to get rid of Ambassador Smith.

I was rather dissatisfied with Ambassador Smith's position on that. He did defend me but on the other hand he seemed to think that somehow I might be partly at fault for what was going on until he, himself, got under the gun and realized that the problem was bigger than me. Also, Jim Bishop when he was under pressure from the Ghanaian ambassador in Washington. Jim Bishop, once again was the deputy assistant secretary in Washington. He told them that I would be leaving that year but they had asked me to stay an extra year for purposes of continuity. So, in effect, he was undercutting the effort for us to show them that we wouldn't allow our diplomatic personnel to be picked on.

Q: What happened to the Peace Corps while this was going on?

HYDLE: They were still there but they were cut back some. Of course they always resist being linked with diplomatic considerations but they were being reduced. There was an overall reduction of US presence in Ghana around in 1983. It was just in the Spring of 83 that the Ghanaians finally launched an economic reform package which eventually made them sort of the

darling of the IMF and World Bank in Africa, and which, I hear, has made them one of the relative success stories.

Q: I saw that in the paper recently, something has happened. Was corruption a major problem there?

HYDLE: Yes. One of the criticisms of the previous elected government was corruption but it was an endemic problem. Rawlings was popular among some Africa watchers because, at least, he was against corruption. At times he had taken action. In 1979 he had signed the death warrants for several high ranking generals who had been involved in corruption in previous administrations.

Q: Were the Soviets involved there much?

HYDLE: The Soviets were there and the Ghanaians wanted to get closer to the Soviets but the Soviets seemed skeptical. They never helped the Ghanaians very much. I remember meeting a Soviet diplomat, probably actually a KGB person, who expressed the kind of skepticism about whether the Ghanaians were truly socialist and whether they deserved Soviet help.

If I may, I'd like to mention this diplomat whose name I forget. In November of 1982 we had then aloof relations with the Soviet Union because of Afghanistan. When we were invited to their national day, Nov. 7, they sent me as the senior US representative as an indication of their disgust. So I went there and I was chatting with this Soviet diplomat that I met earlier, that I just mentioned to you, and he started talking about how Brezhnev had been a war hero of some kind, (I think he was political commissar) whereas Reagan was just a movie cowboy. So I left.

Ironically I returned 3 days later on behalf of my government to sign the condolence book for Brezhnev. During that time Reagan was still very much alive. So I kind of enjoyed it in a very macabre way.

Q: Did you find, because I'm always interested in how the Foreign Service responds, did you find that when you left there, did you feel that you had blotted your copybook or something like that, or not?

HYDLE: I felt that some people felt that I had blotted my copybook. Ambassador Smith, I think, remained somewhat dissatisfied with the role that I had played even though he had come under the same problems. Jim Bishop, I thought, blamed me for creating problems when the problems were really inherent in the situation in Ghana. On the other hand, Ambassador Fritts who was the incoming Ghana ambassador, told me that I had done on my tour a good job and could hold my head up high. I took some comfort from that.

NICOLAS ROBERTSON
Office of African Affairs, USIA
Washington, DC (1981-1984)

Mr. Robertson was born and raised in California and educated at the University of California. Joining the Foreign Service of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1978, he served abroad as Public Affairs and Cultural Affairs Officer in South Africa, Barbados, Argentina, Nigeria, Ghana and Venezuela. In his Washington Assignments, Mr. Robertson dealt primarily with West African matters. Mr. Robertson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

ROBERTSON: A bunch of Ghanaian taxi drivers in Atlanta had a group where they bought a bunch of lottery tickets every Thursday or Friday when they went on sale. Once they won the lottery, but then there was a fight about who was actually a member of the group. Some guys weren't on duty the night the tickets were bought for one reason or another, but otherwise were regular members of the group. They never sat down to figure out any structure for the group because, after all, it was a lottery and their chances of winning were low. So some of these taxi drivers who were not scheduled to get any money took the others to court. Nobody could get any money unless they were included - "I would have been there except I was sick that day," that kind of nonsense. The ethos was to not allow anybody to have the money if they could not get full shares, and it was not amenable to negotiation. Rather than collect the \$25 million and share it out, they would rather argue about it for five years. It was strange.

Q: What about the universities?

ROBERTSON: The universities had been anti-government centers but they were becoming less politicized. Rawlings' opponent in 1992 was a distinguished Ghanaian historian, Prof. Adu Boahen.

Ghana was able to keep its universities small. Ghanaians aren't as forceful as Nigerians. There was a lot of pressure on Nigerian governments to expand the university system to create more opportunities. Nigerian governments could not fight off the kind of pressure brought to bear by the Nigerian public - even military governments, not to mention elected governments hoping to be re-elected. So the Nigerian university system expanded, and it more or less killed the universities, but governments could not resist the pressure. The Ghanaians over the years did not expand their university system significantly - they had limited universities, educated relatively few people. A lot of Ghanaians went to school elsewhere and a lot went to Nigeria at different times. But Ghana ended up with universities that functioned like universities and more or less had academic years, and were not so subject to strife. They were good institutions. Oddly enough, one of the things that you have to really look at in terms of the cost to society and all that was that Ghana maintained good public schools and good public universities but the cost of keeping those functioning was to keep them small. Small universities and small public schools became much more preserves of the elite than private schools were. Here you have a left wing government with a commitment to equality; it keeps the public schools good and the top Ghanaian public secondary schools, which are boarding schools, are outstanding but if you don't have really good connections and pay a lot your children don't get in. So private schools were actually sort of the option for the hoi polloi.

Q: The second, yes.

Well did the universities during this time, had they been infected with Marxism or-

ROBERTSON: Oh sure, sure, they were big centers of Marxist- opposition to earlier Ghanaian government. But they always became an opposition. Nkrumah set up his own party schools, indoctrination schools, because the universities weren't Marxist enough for him. It's in the nature of the university to be sort of anti-government. Ghanaian universities were anti-government when it was Nkrumah with his sort of quasi Marxist orientation, anti-government when it was Rawlings with his initially Cuban-Marxist orientation. They opposed the conservative military governments of the late 60s and 1970s. They weren't ideologically as rigid as universities might be in parts of South America, in parts of Europe, even maybe in parts of the U.S. They were opposition centers but they were well behaved and orderly and fulfilled a social role.

Q: Going back to Rawlings, what got him off the Cuban kick?

ROBERTSON: It was a disaster.

Q: Yes, he was an air force lieutenant, wasn't he?

ROBERTSON: Yes, flight lieutenant. This is funny but his father was a Scot, his mother was from a group in Eastern Ghana called the Ewe, who are found from Ghana east to the Nigerian border. Togo was split between England and Germany, and the German part was given to France after WWI. After WWII, before independence, in a referendum, the people of British Togo voted to join their Francophone cousins in Togo, so some Ewe remained Ghanaian, some became Togolese, and a few were in the Benin Republic. When Rawlings was elected, when they went back to constitutional rule, his opponents went to court to argue that he was unqualified to be the president of Ghana, not because his father was a Scotsman, but because his mother was Togolese. In 1992 Ghana had sort of the equivalent of our own "birthers,"

Anyway, Rawlings was impetuous, he was immature, with a taste for violence, a proclivity for violence. A bit of a bully as a student, a bit of a bully as an officer. He was certainly charismatic, he certainly could sell himself well to foreign audiences. He's a very good looking man. He had crazy ideas. He knew that the Cubans had the cane cutting campaigns through the late '60s, so just like Castro he said, "We have to get so many hundred tons of cocoa." But cocoa is different from sugar, it's a small farmer thing, most of the labor is done by families. There were never cocoa plantations in Ghana, ever, because there is no economy of scale, much less the kind of labor requirements that a sugar harvest has. So these poor cocoa farmers were saddled with groups of 50, 100 students that they had to take care of, and they didn't want them anywhere around.

And so the cocoa farmers, in addition to their other grudges, they were being paid at the official rate instead of the black market rate, also had to support vast numbers of useless students.

Q: Yes. What about, I mean, one thinks of Ghana as having peanuts, ground nuts or cocoa; what sort of economy did they have?

ROBERTSON: Well, in addition to other bad ideas they had when they started off in the 1980s, they were trying to pay farmers for cocoa at the official rate, which was one cedi (the national currency) for one dollar, at the time you'd get 30, 40 *cedis* for the dollar on the black market. And so suddenly Togo became one of the world's largest cocoa producers; everybody took it over the border.

Q: It was the same stuff, it just went over the border.

ROBERTSON: Yes, it was exported as Togolese cocoa. Then they rationalized that, and went back to the state purchasing boards which still kept a large percentage of the profit. They did serious damage to the cocoa economy over the years, and it began reviving in the '90s.

They had had electrical power generated by the Volta Dam, Alcoa Plant. The dam was built and justified by the Alcoa investment in an aluminum plant. They had a revival of mining industry gold. But it was a very small industrial sector. The aluminum plant was the big hirer and that had only about 3,000 workers. After all these years of coddling by the international community, the NGO sector was far bigger than the industrial sector in Ghana. And they were trying to boost the farm economy, which still provides most of the employment. They came up with elaborate schemes for farm incentives, but all you had to do was pay them for their produce and provide credit and stuff. The Rawlings Government began reviving the agricultural economy and the mining economy. But from the colonial times it had been a very state centered economy, and as a smaller economy and a more quiet economy the state really did exercise control, and may have done some long-term damage to Ghanaian society. Nigeria never really had a dictator, until maybe Sani Abacha, because it's tough to dictate to people in a large country heavily populated by Nigerians. Ghana has tolerated more than its share of dictators.

Q: How about some of the neighbors of Ghana? Were they a problem?

ROBERTSON: It's hard to believe now that in 1995 Cote d'Ivoire was still a regional center for everything, for finance, airlines, everything. Ghana has since picked up most of that. In the 1980s Togo still attracted a lot of European tourism, but fell apart while we were there. The government refused a political opening, refused an ethnic opening, and kicked off a sort of slow-burning civil war. Talking about misconceived international projects, the UN High Commission for Refugees had big refugee camps for Togolese in Ghana, but of course everybody just went to work in Togo and then went back to their camp at night. There was very little incentive for the refugees to go anywhere else. Ghana was very active in Liberia; at one point, some of you may recall, a ship over laden with Liberian refugees landed in Ghana and we persuaded the Ghanaians not to send it back to sea, to let us take off the refugees near Takoradi and put them in a camp. I was made head of that delegation and every time I went to Takoradi they said "oh, let's go visit your people, Nick, and maybe they'll steal your car instead of mine this week." But we burned the Ghanaians on that episode. We promised them that if they allowed the Liberians in there would be international money to take care of them and we wouldn't just leave them on the outskirts of the city. We said this wouldn't happen.

Q: Well then, did- how about culturally with Ghana?

ROBERTSON: You know, you had this massive investment by AID in the former slave castles that Obama visited earlier this year and encouraging sort of cultural tourism, which worked to an extent, although, they don't get tourism like Jamaica. But they get a few hundred thousand people a year coming for cultural tourism and for their Pan-African cultural festival, Panafest, every two years. Panafest has been hard for Ghana to maintain. Ghana had the most exceptional of the Pan African cultural productions, Soul to Soul, in 1973. There was no government money, it was all private money, all private investment, and they got Ike and Tina Turner and a whole bunch of soul music stars out to Ghana and filmed it. A friend of mine who lives in Alexandria, a percussionist with Hugh Masekela, still gets residuals (royalty checks) from Soul to Soul in 1973, but then they had all these fantasies of making it a government operation; it never quite jelled.

But some of their thinking was a little old fashioned; they were talking about sort of new world information order stuff about how the international news agencies, more powerful then, international news, dominated African cultural reporting. I pointed out to them that they had not covered the death of a friend of mine, a great Nigerian artist, but I read about it in Newsweek.

It's a small country with small cultural markets and you can only do so much with that. They produced some good playwrights, a couple of novelists, some excellent painters, sculptors and ceramicists. It was a great country for music. I loved it with high life, then they developed new forms of reggae and hip hop; I stuck to the high life.

Q: These are dances or-

ROBERTSON: Yes.

Q: Song dances.

ROBERTSON: Sort of big band African music for the 1950s and '60s.

Q: Well, was the Internet coming into that area?

ROBERTSON: In Ghana I got to see the big revolutions in communications. First I mentioned FM radio and cell phones. The other two were the emergence of international broadcasting with CNN, and finally the internet.

When the first Gulf War opened up in August of 1990, we set up an Embassy situation room to monitor the situation. After a few weeks of that, we closed the situation room and the duty officers and other embassy staff were just told to watch developments on CNN.

Which we still got from AFRTS (Armed Forces Radio and Television Service) at the time.

In Ghana, many Ghanaian academics and journalists got their first taste of the Internet in our USIS library. At the time we had some sort of low speed interconnectivity; we got it off the satellite. We used to get a shortened version of The New York Times sent by satellite. It seems

pretty small potatoes now, but then we were still awaiting the International Herald Tribune to come a day or two late from Europe, and we'd get the Sunday New York Times a week late through the pouch.

It was just the early days but we would have people over to show them what could be done. We had a few terminals that we'd allow certain selected friends to use and introduced it. This reminds me that I caused a small scandal by allowing senior Fulbright people to use the email, but I wouldn't allow the junior Fulbright researchers to use it.

Q: Did you get a good number of African Americans coming to look for their roots? I would think this would be a prime spot, English speaking and all that.

ROBERTSON: Oh, it was. And we had the president of Lincoln University out there.

Q: And that's where, of course, Nkrumah had gone.

ROBERTSON: Yes. Yes, it was quite an event. This sort of "bridges over the Atlantic" had been really a theme of Ghana even before Nkrumah, with Dr. Aggrey, the founder of Chamita College in Ghana, another U.S.-educated African who advocated strengthening those ties. His son, Rudolph Aggrey, was U.S. Ambassador to Romania and after retirement became a highly respected scholar on Eastern Europe. This relationship between Africa and its diaspora had a long history in Ghana, and cultural tourism is an important sector of the Ghanaian economy. Of course, the most important element for some of the Africans and African-Americans never did jell; you didn't have as many people moving back to Ghana as they had perhaps hoped. There remained up until the '90s more Americans living in Nigeria, a much rougher place, but Americans married to Nigerians could make a living there. Ghana's comfortable, but there's no money there. This talk of the relationship between Africa and the African diaspora that has been a theme of a number of Ghanaian governments makes Ghana loom large in U.S. views of Africa, but thus far it doesn't involve that many Ghanaians. So I think it looms large in American views of Africa but that doesn't involve that many Ghanaians, and it certainly doesn't employ many Ghanaians.

Q: Yes. So in some ways I take it, I mean, it was a nice, I won't say a comfortable spot, but it just didn't have the storm and drang of Nigeria, for you.

ROBERTSON: Look, I loved it, it was the nicest four years our family we spent in the foreign service. My wife works over at SAIT (a nearby office in FSI), and you can ask her about it. A wonderful place to live, lovely people to work with but a small society and a society very dependent upon the generosity of strangers. And it's done very well; it's a real success. I hope it continues.

Incidentally, I wrote a play in Ghana, under a pseudonym, teasing the Ghanaians because of their loss of self-confidence, their unwillingness to take risks. In the 1880s a Ghanaian named Tetteh Quarshie discovered how to plant and cultivate cocoa. Nigerians and Ghanaians had been working in cocoa on Fernando Po, the former Spanish colony just off the coast of Nigeria. Europeans, missionaries as well as business people, had been trying to cultivate cocoa for about

20 years but were unable to do it. Tetteh Quarshie took the seeds back to Ghana from Fernando Po, and figured out how to cultivate it. He launched a real revolution in West Africa, with hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers in Ghana and Nigeria developing a cocoa industry, and putting their money into schools, and hospitals and churches and roads, paying for the first generation of Africans to study in the UK and the U.S. And so you had this explosion, this wonderful success story, an industry that African peasants developed on their own with no foreign involvement until the ships came to pick it up off the docks. And I wrote a play teasing the Ghanaians that the country that revolutionized itself like this, that had entered the 20th century riding this tremendous success, just didn't seem to be the society around me. They were much more cautious, and that is part of the long term damage that years of misrule left.

Q: Okay, let's come to the ill fated trip; how did that develop?

ROBERTSON: It was a real surprise to me. All of a sudden Ambassador Ed Brynn called all the agency heads in and said "Nick, you've got to be on a plane out of here in 72 hours.

Q: Well you were getting pretty close to your time, weren't you?

ROBERTSON: Yes, I would have left in July in any case and this all happened in May. I don't know why they did it. It made no sense to anybody. I was leaving anyway; why do this? What was in it for them? And nobody ever really could tell us.

Q: How did you relate to the government?

ROBERTSON: I was fighting all the independent journalists, so-called independent journalists who all hated Rawlings, about the election that had taken place in December of 96. I said Rawlings did not steal the election. I was there, I was a monitor; there was no election stolen here, you guys. So a lot of journalists considered me a shill for Rawlings, and I thought I'd get an award from Rawlings when I left, which would have been slightly embarrassing. I had no idea I'd be expelled.

They charged me with inciting the press by saying something about the criminal libel laws in public. There was a World Press Freedom Day celebration at the headquarters of the Ghana Association of Journalists and I was invited as a guest speaker. I think that Mr. John Mahama, who is currently the Vice President, was there that day. The speech really hit out hard at the irresponsibility and lack of professionalism of Ghanaian journalists. I knew these guys; they were over my house all the time. There was a regular Sunday brunch with a group of senior journalists. After almost four years, though, I was getting exasperated at their collective failure to behave like serious journalists. I prefaced my speech by noting my view of criminal libel, there was no secret, I had told all of them plus every government official I knew that I think it's a disgusting law. Having said that, why don't we inaugurate a press responsibility day? How about a press responsibility day? Why don't you guys start paying attention to business? And I was quite surprised to find that that had been used as the reason to throw me out.

Q: Did you- Did the embassy have any input in the give and take about Mrs. Clinton's trip or not? I would have thought Ghana, you know, particularly you had Shirley Temple there and

Ghana, for a small country, has a fairly high profile.

ROBERTSON: Ghana had a very high profile, but there was a particular problem with a possible visit by our first lady, Hilary Clinton. The problem was her counterpart, the First Lady of Ghana. A lot of the nasty stuff that was being done by the Rawlings government was done by her and her cronies in their "NGO," the December 31 Women's Movement. Whatever her gifts, whatever her leadership qualities, they were involved in a lot of funny stuff.

Q: This is Mrs.-

ROBERTSON: Mrs. Rawlings, yes.

Q: What was her background?

ROBERTSON: Educated middle class Ghanaian, very smart, very attractive. Rather like a certain lady in Argentina once upon a time, perhaps much smarter than her husband, certainly much more energetic in pursuit of her interests. Insofar as you would look at illegitimate use of incumbency advantages in an election, it was her and her NGO. Funny business involving privatization and contracts was also done in her office. We did not think it's appropriate for the First Lady to salute that. And President Clinton himself was coming the next year. It wasn't that big a deal.

Q: This is sort of a minor lashing out and you were the lashee?

ROBERTSON: A little bit like that. Actually, Ambassador Brynn said, how come I was getting credit? Because everybody in the embassy agreed that a visit by Mrs. Clinton would be a bad signal to send.

ROBERT E. FRITTS
Ambassador
Ghana (1983-1986)

Robert E. Fritts was born in Illinois in 1934. He received his B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1956 and served in the U.S. Navy overseas from 1956 to 1959 as a lieutenant. His postings abroad have included Luxembourg, Sudan, Rwanda, Indonesia, and Ghana. Ambassador Fritts was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well, in around '83, you left. Whither?

FRITTS: To Ghana as ambassador.

Q: From when to when?

FRITTS: 1983 to 1986.

Q: Before you went out to Ghana, what were you getting from the Department, from the African Bureau, about our interests in Ghana and what needed to be done?

FRITTS: Ghana had a very long history of a close relationship with the United States. It was the first country in Africa to become independent, in 1957. It was the first country to receive American Peace Corps Volunteers. Ghana under its first prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah, had become what was called the "Black Star of Africa." During those early years of promise, he had attracted many of the best and the brightest of the American African community to look upon a new day in Africa with Ghana as the potential leader of a unified Africa. None of that came to pass, of course.

By the time I was preparing to go out, there had been a number of governments in Ghana, often short-lived, led by military generals, and even under occasional parliamentary processes, there had been endemic corruption and malfeasance. That had led to a coup earlier in the year by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, who had taken power briefly and then turned it back over to a civilian government. A few months later, in Rawlings's view, that government had also not measured up, so he staged a second coup on the same grounds as the first. He then executed two previous military presidents and imprisoned the latest elected president. He was embarked upon a revolution under what was called the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). It was radical socialist in its approaches to the country's economic, social, and political problems. Rawlings saw Libya and Cuba as models. The Soviet Union had rising influence. Rawlings was intrigued by radical revolutionary regimes in Africa and the world.

So our previous ambassador...

Q: Who was that?

FRITTS: Tom Smith. He had worked very closely with the previous parliamentary government overthrown by Rawlings. Tom was crestfallen over developments. He waited and waited for the opportunity of a normal farewell call on Rawlings as the new head of state/head of government, but it never happened. He even missed his daughter's graduation from his alma mater, Harvard. U.S.-Ghanaian relations were at a very low point.

Q: What did you see as what you were going to do when you went out there in '83?

FRITTS: Well, there's a process of developing an ambassador's mission statement with goals and objectives, but I didn't want to develop a whole new policy approach before even stepping foot in the place. The situation was also volatile as Rawlings in his "second coming" had only been in power for several months. As you know, ambassadors try to write their own instructions, which they then seek to implement. I thus gave myself some breathing room, saying essentially that I wanted to assess the situation on the ground first and would report in 90 days or so with a prescription as to what policies we might pursue.

I was very fortunate that the assistant secretary for African affairs, Chet Crocker, whom I didn't

know, was more than amenable. I wrote up a formal memo of instructions within a conceptual policy framework. Of course, I had worked it out within the African Bureau and incorporated those aspects which made sense to me with other bureaus, departments and agencies.

When I saw Crocker shortly before departing, he gave a cursory scan of the document and then gave me orally the absolutely best instructions any American ambassador could ever desire. His words were, "I don't think much can be done in Ghana. But go out, see what might be done, and don't take any guff." And he used a word other than *guff*. In other words, I had *carte blanche* to do my thing. He also said that if I concluded the situation was hopeless, then draw down the embassy staff and maybe close the embassy. If I thought something could be done, come up with proposals. In the interim, do what I thought was necessary and maybe just tell the Department afterwards. One could not ask for more. Going back to our earlier conversation - for me, another ship was about to get underway and with some independence. Real responsibility.

Q: Well, now, I take it that at this time, Ghana did not rank very high in American policy. It had been, since the late '50s, as you say, that the "Black Star" was there, but by this time, did it have any real constituency in the United States? Were we concerned about it? Did we have any strategic concerns?

FRITTS: Naturally we had the usual concerns we had throughout Africa during the Cold War. Under the PNDC, one could anticipate that Ghanaian votes in the United Nations would be primarily with our adversaries. We knew that the climate for American investment was now even worse. There was no rule of law worth much. There were major human rights considerations, because there had been killings and purges and shutting down of a free press. Supreme Court judges had been murdered in suspicious circumstances. We were concerned over an expanding wedge of Russian, Chinese, Libyan and Cuban influences and that Ghana could become a platform to destabilize West Africa. Key members of Rawlings's entourage, including his chief of security, had fought with Samora Michel in Angola. The idea of radical revolution expanding in Africa and affecting our access to strategic resources and to military bases was all part of Cold War tensions. We also thought that Ghana had a special history and Ghanaians proven skills, which if freed and supported, could reverse its downward economic spiral and create a more open political system. Ghana was thus an integral part of U.S. interests in Africa.

Q: When you arrived in Accra, what was your impression of the embassy?

FRITTS: The embassy staff, frankly, was only a skeleton. Staff had been pulled out without replacements, who would not come in for some months. The carry-over DCM overlapped only 10 days and then departed early with prior Dept. approval. The few FSOs were, in general, inexperienced. It was one of those cyclical dips that affect many posts in the developing world. I felt singularly alone in trying to figure out who was who, what was going on, and what we should be doing. It seemed incredible that the world's superpower had such a dysfunctional disinterest, particularly at smaller posts in difficult places where, in fact, there are no back-ups. State was the problem. USIA, AID and DOD did better. Over time the State quality also improved as FSO bidders learned in corridor gossip that Ghana was not a pit. I helped recruit persons by saying we had career opportunities in an improving situation. My premise was that in

Ghana, you could have impact. At the end of the day and tour, you could say, “Yes, this is what I/we sought to achieve and this is what was accomplished (or not).” You wouldn’t get lost in a larger embassy where individual achievement was muddled, professional growth diffuse and psychic reward lacking.

Q: Watch officers on a destroyer again.

FRITTS: Maybe. In addition, the embassy location was in downtown Accra. Given the increasingly politically hostile environment, Ambassador Smith had made the correct decision to relocate to our more defensible and underutilized USAID building. We had thus begun to quietly renovate that building on the Ring Road outside of downtown. I accelerated the plan. Much of the work was by our own efforts with technical specialists rotating in and out. In essence, we built an embassy inside the AID building without the Ghanaian Government being alert to it. After several months, we delivered a note to the Foreign Ministry after it had closed on Friday, indicating we would reopen for business on Monday in the new location. Over the weekend, we moved the embassy lock, stock, and barrel from the chancery downtown to the renovated building. We had dropped off the note late assuming no Ghanaian official would read it until Monday and thus be unable to interfere or interrupt the movements of our vehicles carrying classified equipment and files. We probably made a hundred sorties using motor pool vehicles and our personal cars. There was no incident, but we had Marines in civilian clothes riding along in case the convoys were challenged. We were proud of the accomplishment. We felt there was some danger in it all.

Q: Why would there be opposition? Why did it have to be done surreptitiously?

FRITTS: I didn’t trust the Ghanaian Government at that time. They’d been in office less than six months. There were some very unsavory folk in the “Castle” – the seat of government – who were ideologues, impulsive and armed. Anti-American vitriol was official. I knew Rawlings had contempt for the Reagan Administration and my predecessor. The U.S., wrongly, was considered opposed to the PNDC. There was a wide-spread Ghanaian belief going back to the old Nkrumah period that somehow the CIA was the arbiter of U.S. policy in Ghana and that we were involved in seeking to overthrow the PNDC. My concerns were based on intelligence and other sources, that for us to give the Ghanaian Government advance notice could be twisted by their security group’s paranoia into temptations to interfere, such as by detaining our vehicles which were carrying cryptographic equipment, classified material and so on.

Q: Did we also feel that our embassy had been pretty well exposed to listening devices and that sort of thing?

FRITTS: Sure. The embassy had received a design prize at one time in the '50s, I guess, as one of the then-new embassies, which reflected an idealized host-country architectural style and used local products. Our offices fronted onto a second-floor square veranda that overlooked an open courtyard. The walls were made primarily of local mahogany and plywood. We were enveloped by much taller government buildings. The logical assumption was that we had no communications security whatsoever, even for spoken conversations. So, yes, that was also one of the reasons we decided to relocate.

There was also an overall security issue as the chancery grounds had been open and were now only fenced off with wire. Being in the heart of downtown, we were exposed to mass demonstrations, if ginned up by the government. We were also on the main track to and from the soccer stadium and thus an additional potential target for unruly crowds, which could be induced. Some Ghanaians were also intimidated to visit the chancery for fear of observation from the government offices. The list of concerns was long.

Q: What was your estimate, after your reading up and getting started, on Rawlings? Who was he? Where was he coming from? Could he be dealt with?

FRITTS: Rawlings was an enigmatic figure. Over the course of my time there, I got to know him fairly well - to the degree that an official American could and, in truth, far better than any Western ambassador there.

He was a populist mystic – almost messianic. He had, as did many African revolutionary leaders, overtones of a prophet. Very nationalistic and patriotic. Quite idealistic, but through an anti-Western lens. Also sincerely desirous, I thought, of improving the lives of ordinary Ghanaians, but the models he then found appealing were Cuba and Libya. And he was feted by Castro and Qadhafi with whom he developed kindred relationships.

His was an unusual personality. There was no normal flow of conversation – a lot of in's and out's and elliptical phrases. I sensed he often held back as not trusting what he might say. He was emotional, unpredictable and quick to judge on what I thought poor or limited information. In short, someone to be careful with. I thought how difficult it was for his ministers and staff. They weren't sure when they might inadvertently offend him. None of them ever said that to me, of course, but I observed their nervous behavior if, for example, asked a question from out of the blue.

He detested forms of Western protocol as being artificial and imposed. That was okay by me, but bent European ambassadors out of shape. For example, he generally would not receive credentials of new ambassadors and was choosy in whom he saw at departure. I presented my credentials to one of the members of his five or seven-person PNDC senior team, a Mrs. Annan, I think. A pleasant figurehead.

Q: So how did you get to know him?

FRITTS: A well-connected Ghanaian businessman sought me out to suggest that it might be useful if I were to meet with the "Chairman." I knew the businessman was reliable, as he had been mentioned to me by former ambassador Shirley Temple Black, a predecessor twice removed. He inferred there were those who felt a rapprochement with the U.S. was important. Naturally, I said "Sure." The result over some months was a series of meetings at the businessman's home in a close-by Ghanaian town and once at my residence. The sessions were always late at night and into the early morning. I sensed Rawlings was seeking to draw some measure of what I was while I did the same with him.

Sometimes I'd go to a location to meet him, spend four or five hours waiting around with a couple of ministers, and he wouldn't show. During the wait, several of his cabinet and security people would bounce in and out using hand-held radios to contact him as he and entourage prowled the night. He operated a lot at night and was concerned, probably correctly, about counter-coups and assassination. A nighttime curfew was in force and getting home could be risky for us as the police and military at the roadblocks were scared and often fortified their courage with drugs and beer. Because of that, on occasion he's escort us in his armed vehicle. Scared our guards, but also helped us in the Ghanaian street rumor mill. If he didn't show, I'd get word several days later of a rescheduled rendezvous.

From the very first, my wife, Audrey, was specifically invited to those sessions. I think it was because Rawlings didn't quite trust his own reactions and thought a woman's presence would have a calming influence. He had a sense of obligation towards women and could be quite charming at times – almost boyish. I felt her presence helped facilitate the discussions and also kept some of the potential thugs in check. After getting back to the residence, Audrey and I would use separate typewriters and write up inputs, which I would combine for my cable report. We would finish about dawn. Audrey's independent analyses of the meeting and participants were invaluable. Hers was absolutely the kind of contribution Foreign Service spouses make to the conduct of American foreign policy.

By the way, the first meeting did not begin well. He arrived with a full panoply of bodyguards, gun on his hip, telling of having been delayed while attending the execution by firing squad of one of his former military friends who had been convicted - so-to-speak - of fomenting a counter-coup. Rawlings had personally recorded his last words with a hand tape recorder. In fact, he did it twice as the first time he hadn't pushed the "On" button. His interest had been to get a possible deathbed confession of who had previously murdered several Supreme Court justices, but no success. He commented that the condemned man had made a last request that Rawlings look after the man's widow and children financially. Rawlings said he agreed. That's when I first noted his colleagues being nervous in his presence.

Q: Sounds like this personalized Rawlings government with a ruling clique would have had the country living in considerable fear.

FRITTS: Well, fear for some, but just uncertainty for most. Rawlings first coup had involved considerable bloodshed in Ghanaian terms, but not much compared to other African countries then and now. As I said, he had executed two of his presidential military predecessors on grounds of corruption and imprisoned the elected president, who had only been in office for several months. The three murdered Supreme Court justices, including a woman, had been found in a forest, their bodies partially burned. Several journalists were murdered or disappeared. Some scores, official or personal, were settled with an occasional body in the early morning streets. It was relatively mild in African terms. That all preceded my tenure.

When I arrived, the second Rawlings coup was over and he was well into establishing the PNDC structure with borrowings from Cuban and Libyan models, such as neighborhood Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR). Purges were continuing, particularly members of professional groups, such as lawyers, journalists and past politicians, who were arrested and

imprisoned without trial. Although denied by the PNDC, the anti-American, anti-imperialism media line was run out of the Castle. There were still some murders in ambiguous circumstances. His close associates had begun to talk about drafting some kind of Basic Law. The view in the street was that he'd only be in charge a short while. Either be killed or get bored.

Q: Sounds grim.

FRITTS: It was, but after a time I decided the previous government, although elected, had been corrupt and elitist. Some of Rawlings' populist instincts were compatible to degrees with American values. He believed, I think sincerely, that the mass of Ghanaians had not only been exploited by their leaders, but also by their own faults. He believed he was fated to restructure society more equitably. He believed in forms of simplistic participatory democracy. He wanted to improve the lot of the average Ghanaian and restore Ghana to its golden age of immediate post-independence international image. He was embarrassed by what Ghana had become. The economy was a shambles. There had been years of decreasing GDP. But there had been no mass bloodletting and no inter-tribal atrocities. Ghanaians have a societal sense of decorum and personal respect, which inhibited the worst.

After a few months, I decided it would be possible to work with Rawlings and some of the people around him, who saw the prospect for economic recovery through rational Western concepts. If successful, I thought in time economic progress and American/Western influence could support or induce favorable political adjustments, including human rights. With careful, judicious initiatives, we might be able to make something of the situation.

Q: You mentioned the economy. Ghana was pointed out at one time as being a fairly self-staining country - it had solid crops like peanuts and cocoa and other things of this nature - that it should be able to do fairly well. Were we involved in that or concerned about their economy?

FRITTS: The economy and its infrastructure – roads, ports, railroad and communications were a complete, utter shambles. All the worst kinds of problems endemic elsewhere in Africa. In 1957, Ghana had been the first African colony to become an independent country. It had been generally prosperous with a reasonably well-educated middle-class. The “Black Star” had been the leader of Africa and its first prime minister, Nkrumah, among other disastrous views, saw himself as a pending “President of a United States of Africa”. He even built an African presidential compound in Accra for the first meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In 1957, Ghana and South Korea had been virtual twins in economic and demographic data. Now in 1983, South Korea was an upward Asian “Tiger” and Ghana had only spiraled downward.

The cocoa producer smallholder had been squeezed almost out of existence. Bloated state corporations controlled the economy. Marginal employment and over staffing were six to ten times what was required. The budget was broken. There was hyperinflation. The economy functioned primarily by smuggling and small traders. The infrastructure had deteriorated. There was no foreign exchange for spare parts or to replace equipment. Railroads to carry bulk products had stopped functioning. Telephone wires had been stripped to use to tie bundles or

smelted down. Roads were awful. And to top it off, drought and mismanagement had caused a serious food shortage. Malnourishment was rampant up-country and starvation had begun. To most observers, it all looked hopeless, particularly with a radical Marxist PNDC in charge.

Q: And the positives?

FRITTS: As I noted, there were several in the PNDC who viewed the economy rationally. One was Kwesi Botchwey, minister of finance and economic development. He and a few others favored a disciplined approach using the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank IBRD). They recognized that to have any hope of inducing those institutions and any Western consortia, they had to have at least the acquiescence of the United States. That's what I came to believe caused my late night meetings with Rawlings. To see if they could get him to overcome his visceral distaste for dealing with the United States, which, in their shoes at that time, meant me.

Interestingly, I had served in Indonesia and seen first-hand how a small group of American-trained Indonesian economists, the "Berkeley Mafia", could be successful economically in a situation very similar to what existed in Ghana, even if Indonesia had been on a much larger scale. And there had been associated political improvements, including on human rights.

As for Rawlings, I felt many of his concerns were sincere and that over the course of time and experience, he could be brought to welcome progress if packaged appropriately – multilateral, basic human needs, export infrastructure, grass roots projects etc. I thought his humanistic instincts could be directed, not by me probably, but by pragmatics around him.

Thus, in Ghana, I saw a chance.

Q: Why was there this distaste for the United States? I wouldn't think that we'd had a particularly heavy hand there. Was it coming from the London School of Economics socialism? Or was it Marxism, or what?

FRITTS: There was a belief among much of the Ghanaian populace that the United States and the CIA had been instrumental in the overthrow of Nkrumah, who was the founding father of the nation. It had become part of the historic fabric, even for those who believed Nkrumah had betrayed his promise and become a disaster. Nkrumah's role was resurrected by the PNDC; his grave was buffed up, etc. Soviet Bloc, Cuban and Libyan anti-CIA diatribes and disinformation were common in the media. Philosophically, much of the PNDC brain trust adhered to socialist or communist theory, including the standard analyses of former Western colonialism and current "neo- colonialism." The U.S. was depicted as the capitalist-imperialist center of the world. The Reagan Administration was looked upon as a cowboy renegade racist group whose concern was to overthrow non-puppet governments in the developing world. All this mythology and cant was constantly promulgated by the government controlled press.

Q: Were there elements of the population - I'm talking about within the capital city, maybe, intelligentsia that you could deal with that had a more rational view?

FRITTS: Absolutely. For most Ghanaians, the anti-U.S. anti-Western cant just flew over their heads. They had “been there, done that” before. Now they just wanted a functioning economy, employment, education, money to travel, a stable currency and goods in the stores. And political peace. The CDRs, for example, never amounted to much. Ghanaians were masters at only pretending to participate.

The general public regarded the U.S. and Americans highly. The U.S. had done much for Ghana since independence, many Ghanaians had studied in the U.S., almost all knew that the first Peace Corps group was sent to Ghana, and many knew or had seen Americans first-hand. I often said to visitors that while we had a difficult political environment, we also had, in my view, the best human environment in Africa. And, frankly, there was no doubt in my mind that if the PNDC collapsed in some way, some of the PNDC officials who were most vociferously anti-American, would vie to be first in line for an American visa. I had to bite my tongue on that more than once.

I mentioned there were many Ghanaians, lawyers, professionals and politicians, who'd been involved in the parliamentary system. But I felt their leaders were discredited, fairly or unfairly.

Still, I wanted to encourage potentially independent institutions. The first goal was damage control, try to keep a few functioning and support a few new ones. For example, I did a lot of discreet work directly with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, which the PNDC had not abolished, but just ignored. Some times at the most basic, such as providing stationery and typewriter ribbons out of our own stocks. I worked with the lawyers' society in similar ways, looking toward a day when they might be able to function, although some of the persons in that organization were suspect in my own view concerning their personal integrity. We worked at trying to maintain women's and other professional organizations, to help keep them viable and quietly demonstrate some support. But we had to be careful, because if support were too much or too open, it would just reinforce the PNDC in-house paranoia that we were in the coup business.

As part of political image, I no longer wore coat and tie, except for the most formal functions even at my own embassy, as coats and ties were looked upon by the PNDC as Western bourgeois affectations, even though the Ghanaian Oxford-Cambridge elite had been among the best Western dressed Africans in the past. Their threadbare London suits were now seldom worn, but carefully retained. The PNDC and the government wore safari suits. Frankly, I also wore safari suits in part because the European ambassadors didn't. When serving in Africa, I always wanted to show that while many of us looked like Europeans, we weren't and, indeed, had once been revolutionaries ourselves. In that and other ways, I tried to indicate that I was not the representative of that great mythical ogre of the United States, but was willing to have an open mind and look for ways in which we could cooperate rather than ways to confront. But if the PNDC confronted us, we would confront them back - as Chet Crocker had directed.

That reminds me that sometime in my first year the PNDC renovated the home where W.E.B. Dubois had lived and worked for some years. There was an outdoor ceremony for the diplomatic corps where Rawlings gave a speech of praise, which also ripped the U.S. for slavery, bigotry and racial oppression. He then said he would call on an ambassador to talk about W.E.B.

Dubois' life. The diplomatic corps froze. Of course, he tagged me, so I stood in place and winged some minutes on W.E.B. Dubois and U.S. progress in civil rights. Going out later, a Rawling's associate whispered, "It was a test. You passed."

Q: What about the Brits? I mean, this had been their colony at one point, and had they pretty well given up with this, or were they playing a role?

FRITTS: The British High Commissioner wanted to be active, but London, like Washington, was fed up with Ghana. Both capitals, and especially the Brits as the former colonial power, felt we had devoted a lot of goodwill, effort and resources to Ghana over decades, which had been squandered. Now, once again, a Ghanaian government had adopted a hostile political stance citing neo-imperialism, consorting with our adversaries the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and Libya, and giving lip service to "wars of liberation." London shared the Washington view that it would pretty well be switched before reactivating any aid programs to Ghana or put new investment resources into a country, which had so ill used them and was semi-hostile politically. However, the U.K. High Commissioner, Kevin Burns, felt much as I did. Probably an occupational disease, if you're there, you feel you can do something. So did the Canadian and, to a degree, the Australian ambassadors, until the latter's foreign ministry closed the embassy. The other European embassies didn't give a hoot. Their goal was commercial contracts, of which there were precious few.

Q: How about on the economic side? What did you do?

FRITTS: After several months, I did a think-piece which said there was some hope and set out a series of check-points for improved relations ranging across the board of our interests – economic reform, human rights, trade and investment, exchanges etc. Among other initiatives in getting started, I recommended a new small scale aid program, that we should induce and support the reintroduction of the World Bank and the IMF into Ghana's affairs, and, importantly, begin significant emergency food shipments. Ghana was in the midst of drought and hunger was widespread. The U.S. got in with the firstest and the mostest. After some initial difficulties, the government let us distribute our food commodities – grain and cooking oils – through church and other private organizations rather than state-owned corporations. It worked well and I was gratified by the absence of government interference and the work of the private organizations. Our "wastage rate" i.e. theft was the lowest AID had experienced in Africa. Not too many months later, Nigeria expelled almost a million Ghanaians. Rather than whine and moan for international aid, the PNDC organized basic refugee processing centers and in an amazingly short period the million had been absorbed into extended families. As I recall, we hadn't much to do with it. I was impressed.

I commented that Botchwey was already working the World Bank, knew what needed to be done, and I was convinced he could convince Rawlings in pragmatic terms of positive potential outcomes. The foreign minister, Obed Asamoah, was a very decent experienced person totally familiar with the United States and our values and policies, many of which he didn't like. But I felt we could also work with him pragmatically. The U.S. should thus begin a measured series of steps to indicate our willingness to work with the PNDC, while being precise in stating our concerns and responding to harassments and excesses as they occurred.

I also had in mind a broader context. If a radical socialist populist regime such as the PNDC in Ghana were to embark upon a rational, Western-principled economic reform and development program - and show progress – it could have a demonstrable impact upon other African countries, which might be, encouraged to follow. Not a sure thing, but possible.

In retrospect, I take some pride in that assessment. If one looks at Ghana today, almost fifteen years later, it's pointed to as an example of economic resurgence and vitality. Imperfect, certainly, but a measured success. And a number of other African countries have similar programs, admittedly for a variety of reasons. Still, I really had to fight for the approach to Ghana, particularly with USAID and Treasury. But when the USG finally agreed to once more become involved economically in Ghana, it had a measurable impact upon the World Bank, IMF and country donors. When the World Bank president, or maybe vice president, visited Ghana some months later on an inspection trip, he asked to see me. I outlined the rationale that had led me to recommend a change in U.S. policy and discussed the potential progress and pitfalls as I saw them. Meanwhile, Kevin Burns got the HMG to get back in, arguing in part that if the U.S. were back, the Brits could not be conspicuous by their absence. Within a year, there was whole panoply of donor committees. Now, all of that was not my doing by a long shot. Botchwey, Asamoah and others were very presentable and very effective. But I did my bit and am willing to be judged on it.

Q: What was the role of the Ghanaian military?

FRITTS: There was a perception that because Rawlings was a flight lieutenant, that the PNDC was a military government. That wasn't true. Even though a number of Ghanaian generals had been presidents, the history of the Ghanaian military was not to become involved in politics. Its preferred response in case of political unrest was to return to barracks, lock up the guns, and lie low until the danger was over. The PNDC was a group of disgruntled noncoms and junior officers who rallied around Rawlings as a flight lieutenant. Thus, the Ghanaian military as an organization was not actively involved in the coups or the PNDC.

Instead, Rawlings had an aggressive internal security group in the Castle, headed by Kojo Tsikata, a Ghanaian and former senior guerilla leader in Angola. He was smart as a whip, ruthless, clever, experienced, well educated and effective. Some Ghanaians considered him the real brains of the PNDC and speculated how long Rawlings would last before Tsikata took over. Tsikata was, of course, tight with all our adversaries of the time – the USSR, Libya, Cuba et al. He was an experienced and highly competent revolutionary. A real nemesis.

The military was primarily army. I spent a good deal of time, as I mentioned, trying to support in varying discreet ways those institutions in Ghana which might help provide greater diversity, both in human rights and politically. I included the Ghanaian army as one of those institutions. We had had a long mutually valued relationship with the Ghanaian army since Ghana's independence. Historically it was apolitical and had no record of civil atrocities or anti-human rights actions. It was a garrison force with the exception of periodic seconding to the United Nations for service in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Its commanding general, Quainoo, and many of his officers had received training at advanced military schools in the United States. I thus felt that maintaining a good relationship was a visibly demonstrable means of indicating that the U.S. was willing to work with those Ghanaian entities that retained some claim to credibility. Frankly, and perhaps most importantly, I was also concerned, particularly in the wake of what had happened to our American hostages in Iran, that the integrity of our embassy and colleagues be maintained against any threats from rogue elements within the Ghanaian Government and any of its paralegal, paramilitary organizations. I hoped to develop a relationship with the army such that if the embassy were to come under siege or attack, that the army would be inclined to argue in our favor and maybe come to our assistance. For the same reason, I worked very hard at cultivating good relationships with the Ghanaian National Police, providing them with minor assistance in resources and commodities. One might object to that on purist human rights grounds, but, again, pragmatically, I wanted to develop relationships, which, if called upon for our defense, might do so with some will.

And the police did.

Q: How?

FRITTS: The PNDC could call out stalwarts to demonstrate upon whatever occasion it wished. To a degree it wasn't all that worrisome because Ghanaians, in general, liked the United States and liked Americans. The anti-American diatribes sort of rolled over their heads. Many of them had friends in the United States or they'd known Americans for a long time. Older Ghanaians particularly remembered Americans from during World War II. They had very favorable views concerning our openness and the values that Americans like to pride ourselves on.

But there were radical elements that could be motivated for political reasons to undertake actions, and at times we had information that certain groups did have those intentions. There was antipathy by ideologues to the Reagan Administration, the policy to roll back the "Evil Empire," etc. We believed that adversaries such as Libya and Cuba focused on us and could be emboldened to encourage actions against us. I knew the role the Libyan embassy had played in the assassinations in Khartoum.

Our renovated embassy in the former AID building on Ring Road was only about 200 yards from the Libyan Embassy with an open field between us. That posed security problems. As part of a worldwide effort, we were able to improve our security. For example, we built a perimeter wall, new gates and other devices. There were, of course, the usual naysayers and criticism in the local government press.

But lo and behold, it was all-worthwhile. You'll recall that the U.S. launched air strikes against Libya as a response to terrorist acts against Americans in Germany. Ghana became the only African country to mobilize a demonstration against us, composed of regime stalwarts, civil servants, etc. We understood from sources that some of its leaders had instructions to penetrate the embassy and take hostages. I had oral instructions from the Department citing the "White House" that I was to avoid a hostage situation by all means. I well understood that the Reagan Administration, which had come into office, at least in part, in response to the Iranian hostage situation, did not want one on its own watch.

Closer to home, of course, neither did I. We closed the embassy, implemented security procedures, put the Marine Security Guard into combat gear, and a core group and I hunkered down. The new wall was very effective. The Ghanaian mounted police were called out and kept most demonstrators at bay. Their horses were half-starved, but effective.

We knew some of the demonstrators were armed, some by political organizations associated with the government. A crisis moment came when a demonstrator shot a Ghanaian policeman, who was trying to move them back from the gates. The policeman and the demonstrator had about a two-minute confrontation and then the demonstrator shot and killed the policeman from about six feet. I saw it happen. The mounted Ghanaian police, observers to it all, were outraged, charged and pursued the mob. I felt our investments in time, effort and personal relations had paid off. We had broken windows and damage to a number of vehicles in our internal courtyard.

The British Embassy was further into town, so they had been hit first. Their embassy was in an office building on about the third floor. Both the British High Commissioner and I sent protest notes the following day, including damage done and compensation demanded. It turned out that the Brit was in the midst of a courtesy call from a new ambassador when a rock crashed through the window and landed at their feet. With great British aplomb, the High Commissioner's formal protest was a gem. His note to the Foreign Ministry began in the time-honored way – "The High Commissioner of the United Kingdom has the honor ..." to do so and so. It concluded, "Attached to this missive is one of the missiles." They had wrapped the note around the rock in an official red ribbon and delivered it to the Foreign Ministry. I thought it a wonderful touch.

Q: Well, how did the government respond?

FRITTS: The Foreign Ministry expressed indirect apologies, but, of course, went on at length to say nothing would have occurred except for our criminal act of aggression against a friendly state, which resulted in the loss of life and so forth. They falsely denied instigating it by a holiday for civil servants. We were fortunate that, Ghanaians being Ghanaians, many of those encouraged to participate didn't. I think we got some modest financial compensation for the embassy windows, but not the cars. I also arranged quietly for the embassy through an intermediary to pass a financial sum to the policeman's widow in customary appreciation of his sacrifice. I knew the Ghanaian police would come to know of it and remember.

Q: You said that Washington was initially "fed up" with Ghana. What was the response to such provocations?

FRITTS: I tried to keep myself in balance as well as Washington. For example, I initiated a quarterly "Report Card" on the bilateral relationship. I kept a list of happenings - the good and the bad, the large and the small. I reiterated to the Ghanaian Government time and time again that improvements in our relationship and my ability to move forward on issues of mutual interest, such as aid, were dependent upon deeds to implement words. At the end of a quarter I'd kind of look the list over, fiddle with a sort of qualitative-quantitative matrix plus trends, and assess where things stood. It wasn't scientific, but it was inclusive and enabled me to stand back

a bit. I think the reports also enabled the Department to swallow hard a few times.

I heard that these “Report Cards” on U.S.-Ghana relations became somewhat renowned, at least in the African Affairs bureau and were passed around. Some claimed to see them as precursors to some kind of output measure of diplomatic performance, even before computers.

Q: After you decided to restore an AID program, was there any impact?

FRITTS: Very much so. Once we made the decision to come back in, the World Bank and IMF also became engaged and other Western donors followed them. They followed our lead. The Ghanaians, of course, had hoped for such a sequence, which had provided me with leverage. Some of the ideologues also had to swallow hard. As other nations followed, we formed an aid donors group and began an economic stabilization program. One of the first in sub-Saharan Africa at that time.

There were continual problems and fits and starts, but rational economic reform decisions began to be made and the economy began to be reoriented. Bloated state corporations began to lay off excess workers. The producer price of cocoa was increased. Efforts began to rehabilitate the infrastructure in order initially to promote the development of export crops – the standard things that these programs help initiate. Progress helped strengthen the hand of the technocrats and began to undercut the anti-U.S. and anti-West stereotypes held by Rawlings and many of those around him.

However, one of the continuing issues I had with the government was that it had, in my view, reinterpreted non-alignment to mean that they were happy to follow a Western economic development program with our resources while kicking us in the political shins at opportunity, particularly in the media and at international meetings, to show their good social revolutionary credentials. So I felt we didn’t receive sufficient public political credit.

However, we did have some successes on relating even to our adversaries and Ghana’s friends where we carried the day. In general, if we had the facts and could act behind the scenes before something became public, we had a chance to forestall it. Once public, it was much tougher. However, though we paid a price publicly, over the course of time the government became less radical in policy even if radical rhetorically. In part it was increasing government maturity – up to a point. I think Asamoah succeeded in reducing gratuitous insults by Ghanaian reps against the USG at the UN and other international meetings. We also became aware of guidance to the police and cadres to tone it down. So a process of limited moderation was underway.

I recall that when the Soviets shot down a Korean Airlines airliner, that the Ghanaian press launched scurrilous accusations fed by the Soviets. I organized a protest by the Western part of the diplomatic corps and we had the satisfaction of a grudging government disavowal and the journalist got transferred. A small victory, but representative of change.

I sensed that Rawlings had come to consider me a credible person rather than a stereotype. He found me, I heard, something of a surprising equalitarian with more policy leeway than he expected from a government he quite despised, particularly how we treated his friends Castro

and Qadhafi, our constructive engagement policy in So. Africa, etc. Over time, his officialdom knew he respected me to a point and that helped immensely. There was even a phony newspaper poll which proclaimed me “ambassador of the year” and a photo of him and me in smiles taken weeks before. But the USG still took a lot of heat in the media and in speeches by PNDC Ministers, which kept me exercised. And much of our dialogue on international issues was pretty rigid. But we got things done, as is often the case in the developing world, by investing in personal relations. The Ghanaians are good at that and understand it. So are Americans.

Q: What did you feel that the Soviet Union was about in Ghana in those days?

FRITTS: The Soviet Union, of course tried to counter us and we them. For example, I recall when Ghana was reportedly going to provide landing rights for Soviet aircraft so they could monitor U.S. naval operations off the west coast of Africa. I bypassed the Foreign Office and went right to the Castle and the rights were not granted. A number of issues like that. The Soviets also competed on some aid projects, usually through the Eastern Europeans. But Eastern Bloc aid was either disguised commercialism or public spectacles like acrobats.

North Korea liked to send trainers for massed children choreographies at the soccer stadium. Ghanaian parents liked the uniforms, but didn’t like all the time taken away from school.

The Cubans were very active in Ghana. Rawlings admired Castro, valued the attention he received from him, and modeled his administration to some degree on Cuba, such as the CDRs. The Cubans had easy access throughout the PNDC and reinforced Rawlings and others inclinations that the U.S. was an imperialistic exploiter of the Third World. Cuba was very active at that time, particularly in southern Africa, and I was often perturbed. I was sure that a lot of the media gunk could be sourced to Cuba.

Several of the then-Bloc states had embassies, but they were ineffectual. The Iranians and, of course, the Libyans were there. We were wary of each other.

Q: So the Ghanaian Government responded in practical terms somewhat helpfully on some issues. But as you said, our adversaries were its friends. Did you feel sort of under the gun?

FRITTS: We felt exposed as exemplified in the demonstration over our military attack on Libya. Cuba, Libya, Iran, China and the USSR, all the usual suspects, had access to the Ghanaian security structure and the overt support of the government. So we were attuned to it. On the other hand, I was fairly confident, particularly after the anti-U.S. demonstration that had almost gotten out of hand, and occasional meetings – no longer clandestine - with Rawlings, that the government as a whole - and he personally - would not countenance major action against us, if he knew of it. The danger was that radical elements and thugs could be importuned by word or other events to take direct action consistent with PNDC political rhetoric. We couldn’t be lax.

Q: What about American exiles - maybe they weren’t exiles –but American expatriates who’d gone to Ghana during the halcyon days. Was there such a community?

FRITTS: Yes, it was a poignant group. A number of African Americans had come to Ghana in

the first flush of African independence to welcome a new world for Africa and for Africans led by Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah, now president of Ghana, but also expected to be the future president of a united States of Africa headquartered in Accra. They had also fled racial bias and discrimination in the U.S. But their dreams were unfulfilled. The unified Africa vision died and Ghana deteriorated politically and economically. Some had denounced their American citizenship. Many had married Ghanaians and their children were now adult. Their lives and futures as Ghanaian rather than American citizens had not worked out as they wished. They were still loyal to Ghana, but wistful that their hopes and dreams when young had been dashed.

Q: How was life- for you, your wife and embassy colleagues?

FRITTS: The infrastructure – roads, phones, water, and electricity was extremely run down. There were no functional Western hotels or restaurants. Stores and shops were dark and empty, with a few canned goods from Eastern Europe. We were dependent upon the local markets for seasonal foods and our small commissary for basic items plus quarterly shipments of stuff from Denmark. We had brought paper products and other consumables sufficient for two years. Audrey was a great planner. It worked.

I played tennis at a local club, which had fallen on hard times, and several embassy houses had basic tennis courts. There was a rocky golf course with sand “browns” rather than grass “greens.” We had a small embassy club with a pool and basic amenities. A major outlet for us and other diplomats was Sunday family beach parties more or less potluck. The embassy also had a lease on a beach cove, which we used when security permitted and sometimes when it didn’t. But the undertows were fierce and dangerous. I found a spot about ten miles outside of Accra where I could surf fish occasionally from a jetty, but I went as incognito as I could at dusk, because it was near a main highway and my face was well known.

We traveled upcountry whenever we could, visiting local officials, chiefs, including the Asantehene of the Ashanti who kept still impressive court and American missionaries plus AID and Self Help projects. We would stay with our hosts or in basic government guesthouses, as there were no local hotels we could really use. Travel was difficult. We carried our own gasoline in 50-gallon drums in the backseat, which always bounced, leaked and smelled from the rutted roads.

The defense attaché plane was very useful. It would arrive every three months or so and enable us to fly to certain parts of the country and show the flag with local officials. And we had incidents. Even though we’d inform the Foreign Ministry of the itinerary, communications were difficult. Usually, local Ghanaian officials would adapt with their usual cheer. But the ideologues could be trouble.

In one particular instance I was most incensed when we arrived to pay a call on a regional governor, who was paranoid about an American military airplane, pilots in uniform and a so-called American ambassador and USAID officials. Under several dissembling guises, we were effectively detained under guard at gunpoint. I had everyone put the best face on it for a while, but the governor became increasingly insulting and unbuttoned his pistol holster in speaking to me. After several hours, I was at the point of organizing a walkout past the armed guards, when

he received word from Accra that we were legitimate. But I canceled the meetings (it was then too late anyway) and we returned to Accra where I sent a protest the next day. He later became the secretary of agriculture. I never called on him officially.

There were a number of American missionaries in Ghana as Ghanaians are very religious. As I may have said before, while we had a difficult political climate, we also had what I thought was the best human climate in Africa. Average Ghanaians warmly welcomed us. The political stuff went over their heads. The country doesn't suffer from the degree of ethnic and tribal conflicts that many other African countries do. Nkrumah was successful in welding a sense of Ghanaian nationhood out of it all. Many educated Ghanaians, even some of those who would speak about the United States in most difficult terms publicly, on a personal level were very astute, accommodating and frequently witty.

Q: How about American academics? Was there much of an academic flowing back and forth, and was it of value and interest?

FRITTS: Practically none. At independence in 1957, American scholarship on Ghana was widespread. In reading up before going to post, I found a vast amount of scholarly work, but all outdated – political and sociological work from the early '50s into the mid- '60s and after that nothing. Ghana went off the academic scope as the economic and political climate deteriorated, the grant funds dried up and the scholars left.

Indeed, my successor, Steve Lyne, asked me at one point to recommend books he might read to prepare for Ghana. I replied that the only good stuff had been done during the Nkrumah period and was outdated. Instead, I suggested, not wholly tongue-in-cheek, to be sure to re-read two books, neither one on Ghana nor Africa - "The Prince" by Machiavelli and "The Annals of Rome" by Tacitus. The former was insightful as to how Rawlings often operated, even had to operate at times, and the latter on how the group in the Castle operated.

Q: What was your impression of the academic system, the university and the schools leading up to it?

FRITTS: At independence Ghana had possibly the best educational system in Africa. The University of Ghana at Legon, was recognized within the British Commonwealth as a prestige institution. Its degrees were accepted as equivalents with Oxford or Cambridge. By my tenure, that had not been true for over a decade. Legon and the other universities were frequently closed, classrooms and buildings had deteriorated, furniture, phones, desks and books had been stolen and sold, and electricity was problematic. Even paper and pencils were unavailable. The situation was similar even in the formerly prestigious private secondary schools.

Professors and teachers were unpaid or received barter. Some teachers would not teach in classrooms, preferring to tutor the same students outside of class for cash. Many professors, Ghanaian and foreign, had gone abroad, some to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. The professional classes in general, especially medical doctors, had deserted Ghana. Intellectual flight accelerated during the initial year or so of the PNDC. Hospitals barely functioned. The educational system was a mere shell. But Ghanaians value education highly, and many students

persevered.

FRITTS: Indeed.

Q: Hadn't there been in Ghana an American aluminum plant or something?

FRITTS: Yes, the major American investment in Ghana was the Volta Aluminum Company (VALCO) aluminum plant in the southern part of Ghana, a joint venture of Kaiser Aluminum and Reynolds Metals. The dam on the Volta River was the largest earthen dam in the world. It had been a major aid project by the U.S. and the World Bank. Nkrumah had lobbied for it personally with Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy.

The project was controversial at the outset and considered even more so as time went on. In this day and age it would not have been built because of the environmental impact and the relocation of massive numbers of people whose farms and houses were drowned by the reservoir.

The company was under great pressure from the ideological PNDC for allegedly previous sweetheart deals, which were raping Ghana of its resources, underpaying its taxes, falsifying import documents, using foreign rather than Ghanaian bauxite, etc. While certainly exaggerated, I suspect VALCO may have done what it had to do to survive corrupt Ghanaian governments. Eventually, after much stress, the PNDC and Reynolds successfully renegotiated the basic agreement to a balance they both could live with.

Actually, in my time, I found VALCO quite a straightforward operation with enlightened American and Ghanaian management. It was progressive in its personnel policies, while operating a major industrial plant in a part of the world whose infrastructure and workforce were difficult in terms of education, quality and consistency.

For example, it had by far the best literacy and vocational training program in the country. I've mentioned that a major drought existed. The lake level had fallen so far that the plant kept decreasing production and finally stopped entirely, generating only a fractional amount of electricity for national use – a single turbine. While most of the workers were laid off, the company used its duty-free privilege to import agricultural implements, fertilizers and seeds and other tools not then available in Ghana so its former employees could try to earn a living until such time as they could be rehired. That's not a usual American corporate practice anywhere that I know of.

Q: Wasn't VALCO concerned that it would be taken over or looted by undisciplined people?

FRITTS: It was always under PNDC pressure and media attacks for being part of a neo-colonialist conspiracy. There were also labor strikes stirred up by agitators or simply general worker concerns over layoffs and shutting down. There were occasional concerns over worker violence and/or provocations by PNDC zealots.

At the embassy, we had the usual kinds of early warning arrangements with VALCO with other American entities, such as up-country missionaries. But VALCO had some very accomplished

Ghanaians in top jobs and recognized its best protection was as a Ghanaian corporate citizen, rather than an American-owned firm. The government was also heavily dependent upon the foreign exchange earned from aluminum and electricity exports. So as time went by, the PNDC and its increasingly sophisticated negotiators became increasingly pragmatic, despite PNDC-controlled media rhetoric. I generally kept out of the discourse and only worked in the background when VALCO thought the embassy shoulder patch might be useful.

Q: *So when you left Ghana in 1986, did you feel things had really moved in the right direction?*

FRITTS: Absolutely. U.S.-Ghanaian relations had been turned around, Ghana was embarked upon an increasingly effective economic recovery program, and its ideological bark was worse than its bite. Then the bilateral relationship collapsed dramatically.

Q: *What happened?*

FRITTS: A first-class spy flap. And I can talk about it because I think I'm one of the very few American ambassadors ever authorized to discuss a CIA Station publicly. The crisis also had major media coverage internationally.

A support person in our CIA station, Sharon Scranage, was turned to spy against us. Her male cohort, Michael Sousouides, was a close relative of Rawlings. A foreign power aided and abetted the affair and Ghanaian internal security was in up to its ears. Scranage had left post on reassignment and received the usual polygraph test at CIA Headquarters. I understand the needle went off the chart. She then confessed her activity and cooperated in setting up a sting to entice and meet her Ghanaian lover and handler in the U.S. He was arrested at Motel 50, just down the street here on Arlington Boulevard. It was kept quiet and I knew nothing about it.

Several days later I was playing tennis with Ghanaians when the CIA Station Chief and several visitors came and sat courtside. I assumed it was not to admire my backhand. During a set break, I was informed they needed to speak with me urgently. Back at the residence, I was briefed on the arrests and that the USG would announce them shortly. I knew all hell would break loose. It wouldn't be a routine event such as with the Soviet Union.

Q: *What did you do?*

FRITTS: The first priority was to get our CIA people and compromised Ghanaians out of Ghana. Scranage had reportedly identified many of them as well as some innocents to her handlers. I couldn't take chances with lives and there was already a Ghanaian FSN in prison on spy charges.

I think we had about a week. We progressively evacuated all the Americans associated in any way as well as those not associated if Scranage said she had mentioned them. The exodus was an all-hands embassy effort. There's always chit-chat about State-CIA tensions and rivalries, but in this case everyone really pulled together. We had the CIA folk and their families gone quickly – maybe 72 hours.. They pulled their kids out of school and left their pets, household effects and full refrigerators behind. Over the following weeks, State, USAID and other Country Team

members, including Audrey, fed the pets, packed and shipped additional suitcases, took in and protected heirlooms, and helped pack up effects. Real Foreign Service cohesion. We staggered the CIA departures to avoid raising suspicions. I'd occasionally go and hang out at the airport on some pretext in case any incident developed, but none did.

We also arranged to inform many of the compromised Ghanaians, who also left the country precipitately. Some real human tragedies, of course.

Q: What else?

FRITTS: I had to prepare the embassy in advance of the Washington statement.

In that regard, given potential Ghanaian government volatility, I had informed only DCM John Brims and another officer of why we were doing what we were doing. For the others I outlined only in general terms why the Station draw down was swiftly proceeding. I held several embassy Town Meetings at which I essentially said, "Trust me." I believed strongly that if Tsikata and Ghanaian security tumbled to what we were up to, they would round up Ghanaians they suspected, have phony trials and execute them. There could also be incidents and attacks by thugs and PNDC stalwarts against the embassy, our American officers and staff, and even FSNs. Safety lay in getting our people out first and then seeking to manage reactions with the Ghanaian government. If I were to be openly candid within the embassy before the Washington announcement, the situation would not be kept secret.

By the way, when the eventual months long crisis was finally successfully over, the Department sent one its psychiatrists to post to interview everyone involved. At the onset and over the weeks and months, several officers and staff had suffered from the continuing tension and two had been transferred. I suppose today it's called post-traumatic syndrome. The psychiatrist faulted me for not initially bringing everyone into my confidence as it may have increased mental stress. She stated she was "sure" that if faced with a similar situation in the future, I would be open and inclusive from the beginning. I said, "Absolutely not." I was sorry for the stress, but my responsibility was to save lives and I would do it again if faced with what I thought was the same choice. She was shocked. So be it.

Q: How did you inform the Government?

FRITTS: The top task was to forestall any intemperate reaction from the within the Castle or zealot supporters by giving Rawlings a brief advance alert. That meant I had to see him on short notice, which was always difficult. Only an unconventional approach might do. So the next morning at dawn I camped outside the home of a government cabinet member along with the usual levee of Ghanaian relatives and others seeking jobs or favors. It's part of Ghanaian culture. I was moved to the head of the queue, invited in and sat down at his breakfast. I apologized for the intrusion and said I had to see Rawlings that very day. That I had an issue of major importance to the future of U.S.-Ghana relations.

When I saw Rawlings later that morning, I informed him of what had occurred, that an announcement of the arrests of Scranage and Sousouides would be made in Washington in a few

hours, that unless we managed the matter wisely, there could be serious repercussions, and that I expected, of course, the fullest government protection for our embassy and personnel. He didn't do much batting of his eyes and I don't know how much he may have known. I think he gave me the right answers, but his speech was often elliptic. I then returned to the embassy to finally open up with the Country Team and prepare to hunker down. That afternoon, I learned that the Ghanaian security was making arrests in town.

Q: What was the reaction after the announcement?

FRITTS: Given the time differential between Washington and Accra, the full story was emblazoned in the Ghanaian media with a heavy overlay of the U.S. and the CIA attempting to overthrow Rawlings and the PNDC. We had an urgent Country Team meeting, issued public statements, briefed the FSNs with the facts, sent them home, and shut down the embassy to await further developments.

Audrey and I were to attend a diplomatic corps activity the next day hosted by the Ghanaian Army. It was to observe a shooting competition at the main military base. I'd been busy most of the night and early morning, of course. And the army event had already started. Once the embassy was buttoned up, should we go?

We decided we weren't going to slink around. After all, it was the Ghanaians and their friends who had spied on the U.S., which had no interest or intention of overthrowing the PNDC. So later that morning we got into the car, drove into the military base, and then across a broad field up to the stands, with the flags flying on the fenders and every eye in the place upon us. Our stomachs were tight. But we got out and walked in with our heads high as if it were a normal day. The Ghanaian officers didn't know whether to shake hands with us or whether they'd be punished if they did. I put my hand out to General Quainoo and the usual Ghanaian politeness carried the day. But, of course, the adulation days of "best ambassador" and easy access were over.

Q: Well, let's go to what was done. What was this all about?

FRITTS: Scranage had been at the embassy several years in a support job. She appeared capable and was quite popular and good for morale. Evidently this Ghanaian, who became her lover, had captivated her. He had money and gave lavish Ghanaian parties with an in-crowd. She was seduced physically and morally by the glamour of being selected to go where no other Western foreigner went. They also worked on her gripes. She provided detailed inside information to him and thence to the Ghanaian Government and what I have to call a "foreign power." It was a very extensive and serious compromise, including far beyond just Ghana.

Q: When you say the foreign power, is this something we can -

FRITTS: Not really as I'm not sure if we ever stated it publicly.

Q: Well, why would this cause such problems in Ghana? I mean, this was, you know, our problem, not theirs. It strikes me as a self-induced tempest in a teapot on the side of the

Ghanaians. With the Soviets, for example, we both go through the exercises and move on.

FRITTS: You're correct about recurrent spy incidents with the Soviets, the then East Germans and others being flash-in-the-pan routine. But in the Third World, nationalism, paranoia and sensitivity are much more volatile. As I mentioned earlier, most Ghanaians believe that the CIA instigated the overthrow of Nkrumah. It's part of local lore and even those who had no love for Nkrumah believe and resent it. The PNDC, having a radical Marxist, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist mantra, always saw a presumed CIA hand in world events.

A number of its true believers and Rawlings as well, believed or were led to believe, that the CIA was working with Ghanaian exiles in Togo to overthrow the PNDC. I was regularly called in on the carpet or the Ghanaian media would carry reports on CIA connivance from Togo. It was all delusional. As I frequently said, my task with Washington was to get anyone in any agency to pay attention to the U.S.-Ghana relationships, not beat back budding coup attempts. I remember a cabinet secretary reading me the riot act one day. I asked him to cite one single shred of evidence to support his view. His reply was classic, "The absence of evidence is proof of the conspiracy!"

In some conversations, Rawlings would state that I couldn't know what the CIA was really doing. Once he even added, "Even me. Intelligence agencies have more in common with each other than they do with their own governments". In his world, that was certainly true at least some of the time. And maybe elsewhere as well. He could be quite insightful.

The PNDC itself had come to power in a coup and executed two former presidents. And given what many of them believed to be an Nkrumah precedent, they saw a mirror image. I'm also sure the Cubans, Libyans, Soviets and others were egging the issue on and reinforcing it.

All part and parcel of the challenges in the developing world.

Q: Well, the fact that we had a CIA station within the embassy couldn't have been a great shock to anyone.

FRITTS: Of course not. In fact, some persons on both sides had worked on liaison matters under the previous government. The government knew we had a station, but probably felt it could live with it and didn't want to jeopardize the evolving overall U.S. relationship, which it needed.

Q: When you say the Government of Ghana, Rawlings must have known that this was going on.

FRITTS: Sure. After all, we knew they were watching us. I was aware of surveillance at times.

Q: Well, did this happen as you left post?

FRITTS: No, during my last year. Both we and the Ghanaians began trials of our respective arrestees; the Ghanaians matching us step for step. Thus, the issue was in the news all the time - photos of Sousouides in shackles, etc. Vignettes of CIA skullduggery in Ghana. On and on. A

constant hemorrhage.

We eventually began prolonged negotiations for an exchange of "spies." We would hand back their man in the U.S. - Sousouides - for all our "persons of interest." There were also a number of side issues. The negotiations were tortured, extended, and broke off on several occasions. At one time there was a semi-official threat against me personally when the Ghanaian chief negotiator said he would not guarantee my continued safety. To their credit, AF Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker and DAS Jim Bishop called in the Ghanaian ambassador, who was a very good man, and laced in to him. I think one of Crocker's comments to the ambassador was "If a small country like Ghana wants to make an enemy of the U.S., let it." It got their attention and the chief negotiator was switched to the foreign minister, Obed Asamoah. With him the process remained difficult, but professional. By the way, AF DAS Jim Bishop was superb as the Washington focal point. He handled the Washington end on a real-time basis and I had no second-guessing from Langley or elsewhere on my game plans. Just support and constructive ideas.

After about six months and many perils of Pauline, we reached agreement for the exchange and related matters. On a particular day, they took their arrestees to the border with Togo and the convicted Sousouides came across to Ghana. In order to positively identify the Ghanaians, the CIA had brought along several of the people we had gotten out previously. The Ghanaian press took telescopic photos of the exchange, including the exiles hugging the newly exchanged. It was not a good press day for the United States in Ghana. Naturally, I wasn't there, but was in touch with embassy officers who kept me informed in case any glitch occurred or the exchange was aborted.

I thought the crisis was finally over, but it wasn't.

Q: Why was that?

FRITTS: It had been agreed that the Ghanaians and we would announce the agreement and exchange at the same time, but the Justice Department violated the agreement and jumped the gun by several hours. The PNDC and Rawlings were furious when they heard the news on VOA and the BBC. Again, CIA and U.S. perfidy. We hunkered the embassy down again and took a break for Thanksgiving. I sent a cable saying that the Justice action had undone months of efforts and placed the embassy and my colleagues again in jeopardy. Actually, the night before the affront I had seen the Foreign Minister at a reception and we had agreed on "no more surprises" and to get on with our bilateral business.

Audrey and I hosted a large Ghanaian group for Thanksgiving dinner. As the specially imported turkeys were being served, I was summoned to call at the Foreign Ministry urgently. I delayed until dessert. Asamoah said the PNDC had decided the USG had not dealt in good faith and read the names of four embassy officers named persona non grata. They were to be out in forty-eight hours for interfering in Ghana's internal affairs. All blameless. I remonstrated conceptually and individually, but he said the PNDC decision was final. We responded, of course, by expelling the same number from their embassy in Washington and suspending – temporarily – our aid programs. Obviously, our new "surprise" had been answered.

A sidebar. After returning to the residence and finishing dessert with the guests, I called a Country Team meeting where we did the necessary. I remember sending the Defense Attaché to Gen. Quainoo to tell him informally that I would keep the Ghanaian Army out of this. I then began a reporting cable.

Alone in the embassy, the phone rang from Washington midway through the cable. In those days phoning Accra wasn't easy. It was a State Operations Center watch officer saying the BBC was carrying an item that American embassy officers were being expelled from Ghana. What was going on? I didn't want him to be the purveyor of interpretative comment, so I said I didn't know, but the ambassador was preparing a cable as we spoke. "Fine", he said.

Q: So now what? Was it finally over?

FRITTS: Yes and no. This was November and I was due to leave the following June. During my tenure the bilateral relationship had gone from a pit to a pinnacle and was now back in a pit. Neither my status nor credibility were the same. Some people thought we had been interested in overthrowing a Ghanaian government – again. It was also apparent that Rawlings no longer considered me esteemed. That complicated access to the government as it meant officials felt some risk in too close an association or not having it cleared by the Castle in advance. Also, international economic aid programs were expanding and the PNDC didn't need me or the U.S. as much.

We had really been of critical importance to the Ghanaian Government at a formative period. The U.S. decision to work with the PNDC, build a relationship and convince others to do so through an economic stabilization program had been essential. Recovery was underway. There were now established alternatives to a singular role with the U.S.

The government also reverted to petty harassments and vitriolic media attacks, which had marked earlier days, despite pro forma statements of putting the issues behind us. Meanwhile, I was determined to uphold the honor and dignity of the U.S. and that meant not trying to ingratiate myself personally. As long as we were pilloried, we would be correct and business like, but I was also back to Report Cards. It would set the stage for my successor to be a good guy.

I never saw Chairman Rawlings again personally, although I did receive a letter from him some months after I had left Ghana, apologizing for not meeting with me on departure. But it was an exercise by the Ghanaian ambassador in Washington.

I've often commented that the role of an ambassador is not to be well loved or liked, although that's preferable, but to pursue hopefully enlightened U.S. national interests. That's our professional responsibility, not always shared to my observation, by political appointees who covet abstract bilateral relations and local popularity.

Q: Just on that, who took your place in Ghana?

FRITTS: Steve Lyne, a career FSO. It was almost a year before he went out. The GOG wrongly interpreted the delay as a further expression of our displeasure. In reality, it was just one of those variants of the personnel process.

Q: Sometimes something of this nature, such as problems in a country, whether or not it's your fault, can be induced – sort of like being the captain of a destroyer –as happening on your watch and thus responsible. Did you think the system was saying, Well, I don't know about Fritts, there was trouble out in Ghana while he was there? I mean, you didn't feel that -

FRITTS: No, not at all. I received a personal commendation from the Acting Secretary of State and glowing evaluations by Chet Crocker and others plus a CIA award. I understand that to this day I hold some kind of record for negotiating the most one-sided exchange of “spies” – their one for our multiple – in the history of U.S. diplomacy. A few years later, I was the Department's selectee at the White House to be an assistant secretary, but a political appointee was chosen.

Q: Did you feel that the Central Intelligence Agency appreciated what you did?

FRITTS: Very much so. A lot of working level attention plus an award and lunch with the Acting CIA Director, Bob Gates, I think. It also created a corridor reputation, which served me well in some other tasks.

In retrospect, some CIA officers opined that they expected me as an FSO to be less cooperative and to care more about safeguarding State's image in the country. Sort of opt out with a low profile. I didn't see that as an option. Whatever status I had was to be used. In this case, negotiating an exchange and saving lives was not only humanitarian, but also a message that the USG, which includes the CIA, will not abandon those who, for whatever reasons, have placed their trust in it. Kind of a professional duty thing, I guess.

FRANK PAVICH
Rural development Officer, USAID
Accra (1986-1988)

Frank Pavich was born in 1933 in California. He graduated from the University of Southern California 1955 and then served in the US Marine Corps. Pavich served in the Peace Corps before joining USAID in 1966, with whom he served in Vietnam, Ethiopia, the Yemen Arab Republic, Somalia, Ghana, Pakistan, and Egypt. Mr. Pavich was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1998.

Q: This was in what year now?

PAVICH: It would have been 1986. At that point in Ghana our program had sort of hit bottom, politically and otherwise. The U.S. government and the Ghanaian government had a falling out over incidents in the embassy where some of the CIA people were compromised and some of the

Ghanians who were working for the “Agency” were compromised. Politically our situation was bad which meant our program was being cut back. It was the worse time for the Ghanaian economy. There was nothing on the Ghanaian market. It was very bad and that is when we got there.

There were only six of us in the mission. I was head of the Rural Development Office but also had food for peace, education and whatever we were doing with agriculture. We were doing some private enterprise activities. We were trying to privatize the Ghana seed company and one of my main jobs was to work with the people in the government who were running the company. That was a long process.

Q: Did it work?

PAVICH: Eventually it worked. I was there for two years and it didn’t work until the year after I left.

Q: What was the problem of getting it to work?

PAVICH: It was a problem because it was staffed by 3,000 people and they probably needed 150. That was one problem. They weren’t producing or marketing any seed. They were pretty much defunct. The only seeds they were selling were seeds they had received through the AID program. They had a brand new seed processing plant that was capable of producing seed but they didn’t have the wherewithal to make it produce. So, we had to go through a long process of finding all this out and developing a strategy for the government to divest its interest in the seed company and convince the government that nobody is going to want to buy 40 percent of it because as long as the government has part of it is not going to be any good. If they really want it to survive as a company they pretty much have to give it away at what the equipment is worth, which was about a million and a half dollars. We worked on that for quite a while.

Q: Did you have some interested outside investors?

PAVICH: We were trying to put together a package that would be attractive to outside investors. Eventually we did, but it wasn’t during my time.

We were trying to design a new project that would sort of continue the divestment of state-owned assets and do retraining for the redundant employees and get them back on the job market.

Q: How did you go about that?

PAVICH: We did a lot of feasibility studies. We brought in experts who could look at the economy and try to figure what the value of these organizations were.

Q: Do you remember which organizations you particularly worked with?

PAVICH: There was a list of about 20 different companies. The ones I got involved with were

for branches of Pepsi Cola and Star Kist Tuna. We had to look at them and see what they were doing. Those two were doing well, mainly because they were franchises. These companies were franchised. If they didn't do what they were supposed to do, then the franchise would be cut and they would be out of business. So, they were able to do well. But, most of the other companies that were operated by the government were not doing well at all for the same reasons the seed company wasn't doing well. They were overstaffed, mismanaged and not generating a profit. So, it was a long process of bringing people in and talking to the government and negotiating what needed to be done.

Q: Was the government positive about it?

PAVICH: Well, our relations with the government were at a low ebb.

Q: So, it wasn't very welcomed.

PAVICH: No, they weren't very anxious to talk with us. We really didn't have very much to offer because the program was getting smaller, not bigger.

We had residual programs in education and agriculture that we were running. And we managed to work up a program with the Peace Corps and the government and local voluntary agencies to do reforestation and conservation work and developing kitchen gardens and things.

Q: How did that work?

PAVICH: It worked pretty well. One of these programs turned out pretty well.

Q: These were local voluntary agencies or international ones?

PAVICH: Both. The Peace Corps organized a meeting in Kenya of Peace Corps and voluntary agencies. They invited six or eight African countries from East and West Africa, and Ghana was one. So, we went and brought some of the volunteer agriculture and Ghanaian government people there. We went through a team organizing exercise and once we got that developed we went into the problem solving process and developed a framework of a plan to do something about reforestation, conservation, kitchen gardens and something to do with watching out for forest fires.

We had virtually no program money but began to work with the group we had taken with us. Then the World Bank eventually contributed \$100,000 and got things started.

Q: Not AID?

PAVICH: No. The only thing that AID could provide was food through the Catholic Relief Agency. So, the program developed and we brought in somebody who had been at this conference to facilitate the next stage of our team development which was to broaden the base, bringing in more local people. We developed a program to do this and we did bring in more donors. We managed to get a million dollars.

Q: From AID?

PAVICH: No. Then I left, but the program continued. I got feedback years after that that it continued, had finally got some money from AID and was doing well.

Q: You must think positively about that process for getting things going.

PAVICH: Yes. This is a facilitation process that I am discovering has always been a part of what I have done. I realized a few years back that when I went to school at the University of Pittsburgh, I did my masters thesis on urban community development, which meant city, county, state, federal, local organization and people involved in development process. What I developed in my mind then while studying and writing about it was a development theory which I came to practice all through my career. I was so happy when Brian Atwood came forward with his 12 principles of participation, which were exactly what I was trying to do. For me it was very interesting and gratifying.

Q: Who ran this group or did they just run themselves?

PAVICH: They ran themselves with a self-selected committee.

Q: Who chaired it?

PAVICH: It revolved. There was a core with some of the volunteer agriculturalists and AID. The World Bank was in there occasionally and some of the UN agencies came in and out.

Q: The government was not involved?

PAVICH: Yes, they were always part of the core.

Q: But they didn't lead it or dominate it at all?

PAVICH: No, no.

Another thing we did there was to set on paper the beginnings of an environmental protection agency. Everybody in AID has acquired some back ground in environment. I have some background in government and organization with my public administration experience. We put together the framework of an environmental protection agency with the government because they asked for it.

Q: Did it come to be?

PAVICH: I don't know. This was my last year. It took about six months to write up the table of organization and describe the function of each part of the organization and then decide what help they needed from the outside to develop the parts.

Q: It wasn't clear where the million dollars came from. Guess I missed that point.

PAVICH: The million dollars came from a combination of the World Bank, UN agencies, AID and the World Food Program. I can't remember where else. But, we went from virtually nothing to a million.

Q: Did you have a common program or strategy? How did the program get characterized?

PAVICH: The framework, the strategy began in Kenya.

Q: What did you have to work with in Ghana?

PAVICH: The same thing.

Q: What defined the program?

PAVICH: What defined the program initially were the activities that were defined in Kenya. Subsequently, in Ghana, they gained substance and funding through various donor agencies.

Q: The agencies did their own thing?

PAVICH: Well, the Peace Corps was involved in the villages and the volunteers were involved on the ground in the villages with the Peace Corps and the government. There were two volunteer agencies...

Q: In the same village?

PAVICH: Yes.

Q: So they worked together in the villages?

PAVICH: Yes. It was the same approach that was taken from Kenya to Ghana and then into the villages. It was the same groups.

Q: What were the principal activities?

PAVICH: I don't remember exactly what the conservation things were but there were kitchen gardens and I am sure there was some reforestation, seedling programs and caring for them. Firemen from the United States came in to them with the fire program. Range fires are a major problem there.

Q: So you all worked on the same projects pretty much in the same locations?

PAVICH: We all worked on the organization and then as it left Accra, the capital of Ghana, it became teams of people doing things. At this point I am gone, but I am sure they weren't doing exactly the same thing at each place.

Q: But there were teams for each place?

PAVICH: Yes. The organizing principle was Peace Corps, AID, NGO involvement.

Q: Create a team for a particular area.

PAVICH: Exactly.

Q: Would there be any particular team leader in that process?

PAVICH: It just depended on the teams. The funny thing is I was just in Tanzania and I ran into one of the people who was in on that project. He is working with Catholic Relief and was a team leader.

Q: Any other dimension of your work in Ghana? How did you find working with the Ghanaian people?

PAVICH: It was a great country to work in because the people were very friendly and happy. In their poverty they were so happy. I don't see how they could do it. They had little more than their shirt on their back. We had lots of friends. My wife being Vietnamese could relate with the local people more easily I think. She is a very outgoing and gregarious person. So, we always had lots of friends.

Q: How did you relate to the government given the circumstances?

PAVICH: Again, there were a few people you could really talk to and a lot of people who were just there with no pencils or paper. There was no air conditioning so it was really hard to stay awake in the very hot, humid climate. The only air conditioning in the government offices was in the ministers' offices or their deputies. Everybody else sat there and roasted. It was difficult. Our relations when I got there were bad, although by the time I left things were beginning to improve a little bit.

Q: Did the program expand while you were there?

PAVICH: Yes. Subsequently the program did expand.

Q: But that was after you left?

PAVICH: Yes. I was AID rep for a while after the mission director left and AID didn't bring a mission director back, until another AID rep came in. Eventually, I think a year or so after I left, the mission was upgraded and the AID rep was made director.

Q: You are saying the program amounted to very little?

PAVICH: It was about \$12-\$15 million, but most of that was food aid, Title II.

Q: Where was the food going?

PAVICH: To the poor.

Q: Was it monetized or commodity aid?

PAVICH: Most of it was monetized. Food for work programs, feeding programs, education. We did bring in some other food which came in through the World Food Program.

Q: Well, what do you think about PL 480 Title II as an AID instrument?

PAVICH: I have seen it be very successful. Of course, you can see where it has been abused. I went out with the Peace Corps and monitored Title II and saw them just throw it away. It has to be monitored very closely. There has to be a distinct start and finish, and concrete outcome after it has been used. You just can't throw it out there because it makes more problems than it solves. But, it can be used effectively if it is done properly.

Q: What do you think are some of the more effective uses in the Ghana situation?

PAVICH: Giving the food to organizations like the Catholic Relief, where they monetized it and used the money to train people and take care of poor people working with the churches. The priests knew who the needy people were.

Q: Was it mainly school feeding or something else?

PAVICH: There was an element of school feeding, but most of it was social welfare activities and training. Training women to sew and get into small businesses, etc. There were just lots of things you could do that way. You have small amounts of money but you have to have people do it who you can rely on. There is no way that you can hire people to do that, they have to be volunteers and this is where the volunteer agencies can do a good job. And, the local people helped as they became volunteers.

Q: Anything else you want to touch on concerning your Ghana experience?

PAVICH: There is a lot more to be said but it doesn't fall into AID interests.

Q: Like what?

PAVICH: The social life, what the mission was going through, etc.

Q: You can certainly comment on that.

PAVICH: The mission had a small staff, small budget, small program. The government was not receptive which didn't help the morale.

Q: You found the mission had very low morale?

PAVICH: Among the Americans, I think it was high, but in terms of where things were going it was kind of depressing.

Q: What about the Ghanaian staff, what was their situation?

PAVICH: They were concerned. I'm sure losing their job was on their minds, and some of them did.

Q: Did they have difficulty getting food or did we help them out?

PAVICH: Everybody did. We did too. If we had to live on the market we would have been in bad shape. But, we brought things with us and we could drive to Lome for food.

Q: Were you helping to feed the Ghanaian staff too?

PAVICH: A little. There was always some way you could help. Not giving them money but having them over for dinner, going to the beach with them, having a barbeque, having an office party, etc. AID people get very close to the people they work with. I think we have more opportunities than other agencies not only with our mission staff but people who work in the ministries and in the villages. I think that pretty much finishes Ghana.

RAYMOND C. EWING
Ambassador
Ghana (1989-1992)

Ambassador Raymond C. Ewing was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1936. He entered the Foreign Service in 1957. In addition to being ambassador to Ghana, he held positions in Japan, Austria, South Africa, and Cyprus. The ambassador was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 29, 1993.

Q: Then in 1989 you went to Ghana as Ambassador. How did that come about, or was there an interim period there?

EWING: In 1989, Ghana was not on the original list of ambassadorial vacancies in 1989. [Ambassador] Steve Lyne, [who was then in Ghana], had some health problems, and, fairly late in the process, decided that he would need to leave there in the summer of 1989. So Ghana was put on the list fairly late. I had the good fortune to be put on the list and was selected by the committee, chaired by the Deputy Secretary, which looked at State Department career nominations. I'd never served in Africa before, so there was understandably some resistance from the African Bureau, including from Hank Cohen, who had just come in as Assistant Secretary. His objection was not so much to me as a person but because of my lack of African experience. But eventually I was nominated by President Bush.

Q: Was there a "political" candidate for the post of ambassador coming out of the White House at this time?

EWING: No. It was clear that the position was going to go to a Foreign Service Officer. That was not an issue at all at that time. As far as the African Bureau was concerned, it was simply a matter of one of "their own," or somebody else. And that would be the only difference.

Q: You were in Ghana from 1989 to 1992. What were American interests in Ghana?

EWING: Certainly, American interests were limited. There was no geopolitical or strategic interest. We were interested in seeing Ghana develop politically toward a more democratic system. We were very supportive of this, in terms of our aid program and Ghana's economic recovery program. When I went there, the economic recovery program was already established and under way. It was getting good marks from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the donor community generally. We very much wanted to encourage that, not only for the benefit of Ghana and whatever U. S. business and economic interests might exist, but just as importantly for the model and the precedent that would be set for other countries in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world. We also recognized that Ghana, perhaps, had a slightly greater role which it wanted to play in Africa and in the world than might be warranted by its size -- 15 million people. In turn, this went back to its history. Ghana was the first independent country in Black Africa after World War II. It achieved its independence in 1957. Kwame Nkrumah was one of the leaders and founders of the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement. Ghana took seriously its role in the United Nations and other international agencies. It was quite active in international peace keeping activity in Lebanon and elsewhere. Therefore, it played a role in the world which was somewhat larger than, perhaps, would have been expected. We had a dialogue with the Ghanaians about South Africa and a number of international questions.

Q: What was the political situation in Ghana when you were there?

EWING: Jerry Rawlings had seized power on December 31, 1981. He came out of the Air Force, was a Flight Lieutenant, and kept that rank. The government had been formed under the Provisional National Defense Council, the PNDC. It had become somewhat more civilian oriented as time went by. He had always said that, when the time was ripe, Ghana would be returned to a democratic system when the people were ready for that. At the time I got there, there was no clear indication of when that time would come. Fortunately, it came when I was there. It was exciting to see the process of opening up and liberalizing the system. By the time I left, there were many newspapers being published which were very free and open in their criticism of the government. There was a Consultative Assembly which drafted a new constitution, which was approved and put into effect shortly after I left. Elections took place for both president and vice president and for a Parliament -- again, just after I left. Rawlings was elected President at that time. But, as I say, it was a time when political parties were legalized and became active. It was an exciting time to be there -- a very satisfying time, although Ghana did this for lots of reasons and not just interest expressed by the United States or by anybody else. However, it all happened in that period, basically in the 1991-1992 period.

Q: Did you have much contact with Rawlings?

EWING: Yes and no. I didn't have as much contact with him as some of my predecessors had, at a time when he was probably insecure and may perhaps have relished the thought of a long conversation with somebody who wasn't an enemy but an ambassador he could talk with. I met with him on several occasions by myself -- I think there were three occasions -- once, shortly after I presented my credentials and once at a time when Ghana was very concerned about the situation in Liberia and essentially made the decision to intervene there, along with other West African states. He invited me to come to his private living quarters at the Castle. We had a meeting which was really quite interesting and not really known of by others. And then there was another meeting before I left. Then, in addition to that, I went to see him with several visitors. Assistant Secretary Cohen came shortly after the Liberian intervention had begun. Deputy Assistant Secretary Leonard Robinson came a couple of times. I went with Congressmen and with various delegations to see him. I would see him socially or at various events. I felt that I had a good relationship with him. He was not a person who would call me up in the middle of the night and ask me to come down and talk. I was just as happy that I did not have that kind of relationship.

Q: Tell me about the Liberian situation. Did we play any role in it? What caused it and what was happening?

EWING: The Liberian civil war began in late 1989 when Charles Taylor invaded Liberia from Ivory Coast, a neighboring country. This caused many people to flee their homes and eventually led to the death of President Samuel Doe. The Ghanaian aspect was interesting. It started out because of their great concern about the threat to Ghanaians who were residents of Liberia. But Ghana also had a concern about the disarray, the chaos, and the number of people being killed. Liberia was a country which was not an immediate neighbor of Ghana but was a fellow, English-speaking country in the subregion. The Ghanaians became increasingly concerned about the situation there. They did not particularly like Charles Taylor. They had known him. He had been in Ghana and under detention. They were afraid of what would happen if he were to take charge [of Liberia]. They decided that things had gotten very bad there. I think that they would have liked to see the United States intervene, although they didn't quite come out and directly say that. However, they saw Liberia in many ways as an "American" country, an "American" problem. They thought that we ought to have done more to try to address and resolve the situation.

By the summer of 1990 they felt that things were at a point where something had to be done. They didn't see the United States or the United Nations doing it, so they took the lead, to some extent, together with other countries in the subregion, to do something about it. At one stage they were even talking about doing it themselves -- unilaterally. Then they realized quickly that Nigeria was also concerned and was prepared to do this with them, together with some other countries, too. So the West African Peace Keeping Force was established -- ECOMOG -- which also included Guinea and Sierra Leone. General Quainoo, a Ghanaian, was appointed as the first commander of ECOMOG. I remember that our role in the Embassy was in some ways a little bit out in front of the United States, because I think that Washington was not quite sure whether the

West African states could pull this off or could do anything effectively. [The U. S. wasn't] quite ready to endorse this initiative in its early stages. I remember that General Quainoo and Mohammed Chambas, who was kind of his political adviser and was Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs, came to our residence on a Sunday before they went into Monrovia. We had a very low key, informal kind of conversation which went on for several hours, with me and one of the political officers in the Embassy. In a sense they didn't have a clue about what they were getting into. They didn't know Monrovia. Part of what we did was to sit down with an oil company road map of Monrovia. We said, this is where Charles Taylor is, this is where the other elements are, this is where President Doe is and this is where the airport is. We weren't trying to tell them what they should do but we were at least giving them some basic information that wasn't immediately available to them from any other source.

So we had a relationship with the Ghanaians. In fact, when Rawlings called me in, he was anxious to have the United States be as supportive of ECOMOG as we possibly could be and do things that Ghana wouldn't have asked the United States to do under other circumstances. They wouldn't have wanted to admit it. I think that they were disappointed that we weren't immediately responsive, although Hank Cohen's visit a few weeks later led to increased U. S. cooperation and support, including some financial assistance, although in general I think that the Ghanaians never thought that we did as much or were as supportive as they would have liked. But we were able to help them in a low key way. And we developed a relationship which our ambassadors in both Monrovia and Freetown were able to develop further in arranging for cooperation and collaboration with ECOMOG.

Q: How did this intervention work out?

EWING: The intervention has to get a kind of mixed report card. On the one hand it eventually led to a kind of status quo cessation of hostilities. A considerable period went by when nobody was dying, or fewer people were dying and not much fighting was going on. On the other hand it didn't lead to a political solution or to the withdrawal of Charles Taylor or a pullout by the West African states, either. It led to a kind of stalemate. In a sense it was a success because it was better than having people die or having Charles Taylor take full charge of Monrovia. In that sense it was successful and timely.

Q: You were in Ghana during the demise of the Soviet Empire and so much of what flowed from that. Did that have any repercussions where you were? So much of our policy in Ghana, particularly in the earlier years, was focused on Soviet versus United States influence in Africa. Had this pretty well died by the time you got there or was this still a...

EWING: The Cold War was well on its way out. I think that one of the elements that influenced Jerry Rawlings in his decision to allow the country to move to return to a democratic system was looking at what had happened in Eastern Europe. Not so much only the Soviet Union but Romania, East Germany, and so on. I think that he saw that the movement toward a democratic system was pretty prevalent, not only in Eastern Europe. Other countries of Africa and other parts of the world were moving in that direction as well. He was a very proud person and was very determined that he was not going to do this because the United States or the World Bank told him to. He was going to do it because it was the right thing to do. So it turned out that he

was ahead of the curve to some extent and ahead of the pressure. I think that we realized, at least in the Embassy, that hard pressure and threats weren't going to work with him. Pointing out some of these trends could have and did have an impact, but I don't think that we deserved any particular amount of credit for moves in that direction.

The Soviet Embassy was there. They had given some assistance to Ghana in the past, but I think that they were essentially a non-factor already by the time I arrived there.

Q: Were you under any instructions or pressure to bring Ghana along? Did you have to serve as a buffer to carry out instructions but not push too hard?

EWING: I think that the feeling in the Department, particularly in the African Bureau, about Ghana at the time I went was probably somewhat more negative than I thought was warranted. Negative for several reasons. These included the human rights and political situation. The bureau saw the abuses and the lack of opportunities for self-expression, rather than the potential for positive change. The bureau also continued to be concerned that the Ghanaians in the United Nations and elsewhere were critical of "the West" in general and the United States in particular. I remember having a discussion with the bureau where I said, "This glass is half full and not half empty, and I'd like to look for opportunities to develop things further and see if there aren't ways in which we can not only develop our relationship with Ghana but move in the right direction." I didn't feel that I was inhibited from trying to do that. However, I also knew that any time that something would happen, people in Washington would say, "See, we told you so. You can't trust the Ghanaians." There was a history of very uneasy relationships which covered the better part of 25 years, going way back to Nkrumah. During a good part of the subsequent period Ghana had been under military rule -- for most of its history since independence, with some exceptions of brief duration. Rawlings was not particularly liked, respected, or admired.

There were a couple of things going. One of the things that happened just prior to my going there, early in 1989, occurred at the funeral in Tokyo of Emperor Hirohito. President Bush, who had been newly inaugurated, had gone to that, as had Jerry Rawlings, who didn't travel much abroad and didn't particularly like to go to conferences or ceremonial events. I think that he recognized how important Japan was. Japan was the largest [if not one of the largest] bilateral aid donor to Ghana. Japan had shown a lot of interest and respect for him. Both President Bush, when I went [to the White House] for a "photo opportunity" before going to Ghana, and Rawlings soon after I met him for the first time told me essentially the same story. Apparently, one of the events at Emperor Hirohito's funeral was held outside. It was rather a cold, gray Tokyo day in February. They pulled a curtain or drape or some such thing. The wind really whipped up. President Bush was cold and showed it by pulling his sleeves down. Somebody tapped him on the shoulder. He looked back, and [somebody] recognized [him and told him] that it was somebody from Africa, who offered him a scarf. President Bush said, "Oh, no, I'm all right." The person persisted -- and it was Jerry Rawlings. Finally, [President Bush] took the scarf and wrapped it around him. As he said to me later, "I really felt good. It saved my life," because it was a bitterly cold day. President Bush was very appreciative, and the next day he sent the scarf back to Rawlings with a little token or gift -- cufflinks or something like that. The Embassy officer who went to deliver the gift, to his surprise was ushered into Rawlings' suite at the hotel, and they had quite a nice, brief, but cordial conversation. Later, Rawlings wrote a

nice, long letter of thanks -- certainly, more than would be expected. He sent along a "Kente" cloth, and the White House responded with an equally warm letter of appreciation. President Bush said to me, "We all know about 'ping pong' diplomacy with the Chinese, and I've never heard of 'scarf' diplomacy but perhaps something can develop with Ghana." There is no question that Jerry Rawlings had a certain respect for George Bush which he really didn't have for Ronald Reagan.

I think that, partly as a result of this and for lots of other reasons the Ghanaians weren't going out of their way to take issue with or find fault with the United States. It seemed to me that here was an opportunity, at least in public, to look for ways to see things develop in a positive way. That was the general posture and attitude that I took. Certainly, there were problems with democratic expression and restrictions on what people could do and say. There were problems of more interest to the United States, such as the banning of the Mormon Church and Jehovah's Witnesses. There was the arrest and detention of a dual American-Ghanaian citizen for the better part of a year. All of these were problems that we worked hard on and which eventually were resolved. I think that, overall, our relationship did improve during the time that I was there.

Our assistance level went up considerably, and Ghana improved measurably, both in terms of its economy and its political system.

Q: How did you deal with the problems of missionaries? I'm thinking of the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, both of whom were relatively aggressive.

EWING: Jehovah's Witnesses did not have a lot of missionaries [in Ghana]. The Mormons did have a number of missionaries in the country who were expelled at the time the church was banned. This happened before I arrived there, partly because they were perceived as being somewhat aggressive. A couple of indigenous churches were also banned at the same time.

The Mormons also had problems because a film criticizing the Mormon Church was shown in Ghana. Jerry Rawlings saw it, [and an extended portion of it] was shown on Ghana Television. I think that was a [substantial part] of the reason which influenced him to think in a negative way about the Mormon Church. There were a number of [Mormon] missionaries [in Ghana]. They had a lot of vehicles and a fairly high profile. I had meetings with a Senator from Utah and a Congressman from Utah before I went out to Ghana. They made it clear that this was a matter of concern and urgency as far as the Mormon Church and they were concerned, not just because of Ghana, where the Mormon Church had been fairly successful, but also in other countries of Black Africa, as well.

I spent a lot of time on the issue. I realized fairly soon that it was probably going to be best to do it in as low key a way as possible by looking for a way to allow the Ghanaians to back down and come away from their position of their own volition, rather than by making speeches about the problem. That's essentially what we did. I had a number of meetings with Kojo Tsikata, who was probably Rawlings' right hand man and a member of the PNDC [Provisional National Defense Council], and involved with national security issues. I established a dialogue. I also talked with Ghanaian Mormons. One of the leaders of their church and the person who represented them as far as the American Embassy was concerned happened to be Rawlings' half

brother. They had the same mother but different fathers. [Rawlings' half brother] met fairly often with Tsikata himself but didn't meet with Jerry Rawlings. He had become a Mormon while he was living in England. Eventually, the Mormon Church sent various representatives, including a delegation which contained a couple of African-Americans who were members of the Mormon Church. An understanding was reached, whereby they were allowed to come back, reopen their church, and resume their functioning, with an understanding about the number of missionaries and their "profile" in the country. All of that was satisfactory to the Church, and so it was resolved. At one point in 1990 I was on a home leave and went through Salt Lake City. I met with a senior official of the Church to try to reassure them that I thought things were moving in the right direction and that with a little patience and quiet effort on their part they would be successful and productive, rather than by threatening the Ghanaians and exerting public pressure too blatantly in the Congress. I think that that was a very useful meeting. I was satisfied that the problem was resolved satisfactorily.

The Jehovah's Witnesses problem was a little different in that the American branch of the Church showed no interest as far as I was aware, either in terms of correspondence, visits, or otherwise. However, this seemed to me to be a matter concerning the freedom of religious expression, so I quietly worked on it. I got to know a few of the Ghanaian Jehovah's Witnesses. I think I played at least a small role in opening up a dialogue between the Ghanaian Government and the Church. Before I left, the ban was lifted, and they were able to function effectively. But it was less of an "American problem" than the one affecting the Mormon Church.

Q: You left Ghana when?

EWING: I left Ghana in August, 1992.

NICOLAS ROBERTSON
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Accra (1993-1997)

Mr. Robertson was born and raised in California. He was born in Wilmington, near the heart of the Los Angeles Harbor district. He attended University of California at Santa Cruz. Mr. Robertson first desired to be an academic, but then spent some time working as a chef on a ship. After returning home, he took the Foreign Service written and oral tests and passed. Mr. Robertson subsequently was stationed in South Africa, Barbados, Argentina, Nigeria, Ghana, Venezuela, and worked as the Deputy Director of the Office of African Affairs in at the State Department. Mr. Robertson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Alright, well let's- Okay, '93, you're off to Ghana, is that it?

ROBERTSON: Yes.

Q: And you were there to '97?

ROBERTSON: Yes.

Q: Okay. What was your job?

ROBERTSON: I was the head of USIS, public affairs officer.

Q: PAO, okay. What- Let's talk about Ghana in '93; what was it- I mean, what was it like just as a country and then sort of government-wise?

ROBERTSON: Oh. I had been there briefly in '82 when it was a desert, when for a variety of reasons the economy had just collapsed, partially due to Rawlings' government.

Q: This is Jerry Rawlings.

ROBERTSON: Jerry Rawlings took power in coups in 1979 and 1981 was still in power; he had been elected in '92. There were charges that the election was stolen. In fact, they had a lot of incumbent advantages but we never perceived any ballot box stuffing that was significant. Anyway, he had sort of opened the door, with the election of December 1992. There was a parliament, though the opposition had boycotted the parliamentary elections, which was stupid, I thought at the time and still think. Ambassador Brown was there, we had good relations-

Q: This is Ken Brown.

ROBERTSON: Ambassador Ken Brown, yes. Jerry Rawlings was reminiscing about Ghana and its path to democracy with a journalist recently. Ghana is an example of a U.S. success – a consistent push for economic and political openings had been pursued there from 1981 on, backed by solid commitments of economic assistance, and it worked. Jerry Rawlings told this journalist that, “it was the State Department that made us do it. We never would have become democratic had it not been for the State Department.” He was complaining but I thought it was the nicest thing anybody said about my institution.

Q: Was Rawlings, he was the-?

ROBERTSON: President.

Q: President when you got there. What were you getting, I mean obviously you'd been around the African circuit for some time but what was, when you got out there what was the impression of Rawlings?

ROBERTSON: Well, Rawlings had certainly violated human rights in his early years in power, but with my Argentine, South African and Nigerian experience the scale seemed small; statistically speaking, he didn't seem that bad a guy. He had tried to cast his country in a Cuban mold and brought the economy to a grinding halt. He was, for one reason or another, open to small suggestions and we just kept forcing him, step by step, do this, have an election, have a fair election, have a parliament. Well then, even if it's a rather weak and disorganized parliament, the

President does have to sort of answer them. You have a press which is increasingly free, increasingly vocal. You had civil society organizations, the women's lawyer organization, I can't remember the acronym for it, Women's World banking; you had lots of organizations that with a little bit of support from us began playing independent roles and building a society that politically and economically was increasingly diverse and open. It wasn't a straight upward line; Rawlings packed the Supreme Court, so to speak, and the government didn't always observe legal niceties. In general, though, you saw a country that politically and economically was increasingly open. Rawlings visited the U.S. in '94, I think, maybe '95. People who didn't like Rawlings, which incidentally included much of the business, press and academic class who were natural embassy contacts, thought we were lackeys of Rawlings. Ambassador Brown gave a news conference when he came back from the Rawlings visit to Clinton, and the atmosphere was pretty hostile. There was a lot of criticism for being too pro-Rawlings. In 1996 there was another election, Rawlings won again, the opposition to Rawlings cried foul, said it was a stolen election. We begged to differ, we were on the ground, we had a lot monitors. Rawlings had great advantages of being the incumbent, but they just didn't have to stuff ballot boxes. There was only one seat in Parliament that they actually stole, as far as I could tell. But we defended the integrity of the election. You have to... Well, Rawlings did not lead political and economic change in Ghana, but he let it happen, and so you can credit Rawlings to account for this stuff.

Q: Well, alright, now you're the public affairs officer; let's talk about various elements of the press. What was the press like there? Not the press but the whole media thing?

ROBERTSON: The big change in Ghana and much of Africa, are two real revolutions since 1991: the first is cell phones, the second FM radio. Remember that in any African coup attempt, they went for the broadcasting house. You weren't trying to take the stock exchange or the banks, you wanted the broadcasting house. And so, believe it or not, once they sort of accepted that that there should be FM radio, independent radio, you can't have a coup anymore. It's really interesting.

Q: Well, let me just, on the technique and somebody in later years, what's the difference between an AM and an FM radio coup-wise?

ROBERTSON: FM is small and it's cheap. You can set up an FM radio broadcasting for a few thousand dollars.

Q: Yes. So these got broadcasts spread around.

ROBERTSON: Yes.

Q: Do they represent individuals or did they represent companies?

ROBERTSON: The very first were individuals, then companies, and later FM stations became an investment in themselves. We're going from a time in the '80s when the norm in Africa was state controlled TV and radio broadcasting. We had the head of FCC (Federal Communications Commission) out in Ghana soon after I got there in 1993 to talk about frequency allocation on the FM band. And of course the Ghanaians grew up with the military tradition that said that we

can't have FM radio for security reasons; we need all of that spectrum for our security needs. And I'd laugh and tell them I lived just a mile from the Pentagon down the road and don't have any trouble getting FM radio or cell phones or anything; I doubt that your frequency needs are more than ours.

Q: Yes.

ROBERTSON: But we eventually chipped away at that and the first FM station in Ghana was a pirate station.

Q: Well were we deliberately looking at FM and saying ah ha, this is going to basically democratize the thing or was this just something that was happening and we were observing it?

ROBERTSON: We actively pushed the process. We brought this FCC guy over specifically to talk about frequency allocation, which eventually became very important for telephones too. But you were dealing with a norm where the state controls everything – all radio and TV broadcasting, monopolies in telephone, monopolies in electrical power, and for a variety of reasons we were chipping away at all of this. You can't really talk about democratization if you don't have some kind of free media. TV and AM radio can be expensive to get into, which limits the number of groups or people who can potentially enter the business, and makes them are very susceptible to government pressure through contracts. We saw this in Argentina when much of the "advertising" for TV, radio and newspapers was in fact contracts to publish government announcements, government bulletins, the stuff that is in the Federal Register here. FM gave everybody a voice, every group a voice, and so backing it was a sort of natural corollary of economic and political reform efforts. It became really important, and that's why I know there was no fraud in the December 2000 elections in Ghana, because no FM stations reported it. It really changed the nature of politics. All of a sudden you had election monitoring by the whole country. People would use their cell phones to call FM stations and say that there was a shortage of ballots over here, people are lining up over here because the polling station opened late. You had a degree of transparency that was extraordinary, very exciting.

Q: And cell phones; I mean, this is really quite a new-

ROBERTSON: They were just coming in.

Q: I mean, for all of Africa and hell, all over the world cell phones were really changing things; they're changing things right here in Arlington.

ROBERTSON: I had subsequent experience in Ghana with it. They were coming in, they were chipping away at the state monopoly on communications all over. The new technologies made it possible. Argentina had a notoriously bad telephone system and we went from a time when we could barely call across Buenos Aires, and rarely to Washington, to a time after they allowed cell phones when we'd get regular phone calls in Ghana from my wife's home town in the Argentine pampas. From one year to another it just shifted. And Ghana began allowing them. And all these Ghanaian government types, as Ambassador Brown said, they didn't think this through, they just sort of said okay, okay, we've got to have some telephones. Well, we can give a little frequency,

dah, dah, dah. They didn't expect FM radios to tie their hands in stuffing ballot boxes, if that is what they wanted to do. None of these governments did but that was the effect. It was fun; it was exciting.

Q: Well then, what about the media then? How about the press itself; was that a different type of-?

ROBERTSON: The press – the Ghanaian private press – was small. The two main newspapers were government papers, one violently pro-Rawlings and the other only officially, moderately pro-Rawlings. The Ghanaian private sector was small, so there was not a lot of advertising possible. This is a small country and a poor country and a rather well behaved country and so when the press began taking on Rawlings after the 1992 election, with the weak parliament, the independent press really became by definition the opposition force. And I was very closely involved in radio stuff, in radio liberalization, the FM, and eventually ended up crossing swords with the government. The Rawlings – neither Mrs. nor Mr. – were not by nature good sports about being attacked and ridiculed in the Ghanaian press. It was not their nature to allow this to happen. Because of international pressure they had to open up the country somewhat, but the issue festered. Things blew up around an issue in which, in fact, the anti-Rawlings press was wrong. There was a Ghanaian diplomat related to a very high level Rawlings security advisor who was caught buying and selling drugs in Switzerland. The opposition press said this is evidence of drug dealing at high levels. It wasn't; it was evidence of the Ghanaians not selecting their diplomats with any regard to their drinking and drug histories. But the press was saying look at this, this is drug dealing on the part of the ruling party, the embassy. It wasn't; there was one guy who had a serious drug problem. I tried to tell them, you don't – if you're a national level drug dealer – walk around knocking on people's houses selling grams of cocaine. Come on you guys, grow up. But this festered and the government by '97 decided to bring these guys up on criminal libel charges, which would have been like 10 to 20 years in jail for this. We thought that was excessive. And I told friends and contacts in the government that if they do this their money was going to dry up overnight. They were very much a client state of Europe and the U.S. and the international organizations. They could not do this anymore. Actually, at a Ghanaian court or something if they asked us to comment on it I would have been happy to say that the Rawlings were right; I mean, they have nothing to do with this drug dealing. But the way it played out, I actually got thrown out of Ghana; I was declared PNG (persona non grata) by a client state of the United States. Rumor had it that it happened because Hillary Clinton was making a visit to Africa and Ghana was on the short list of countries but not the final list. Somebody convinced Mrs. Rawlings that the Embassy had had something to do with this decision and that I was a key player in that. This was Ambassador Ed Brynn by that time.

Q: So you were kicked out.

ROBERTSON: Yes, I was PNGed.

Q: Well let's go back before we come to that; what about academic institutions and our role with them?

ROBERTSON: University years abroad and summer programs for U.S. and European students

have become sort a cottage industry in Ghana. Don't forget, it's a safe country; it's a pleasant country and an increasingly comfortable country. And they are nice to strangers. And so the academic institutions had trained a lot of professionals; Washington is filled with Ghanaian professionals. We talked earlier about the ineffectiveness of some international aid. Ghana exports about two-thirds of its doctors, the doctors that it trains, so the World Bank was talking about loaning Ghana money to build another medical school. It would make more sense if you keep the money in the country and pay the doctors in the first place so they did not leave.

Q: Well, was there, while you were there, I mean, just do a compare and contrast of Nigeria; how did that play out for you?

ROBERTSON: Ghana's an infinitely nicer place. They are nicer to foreigners. A friend of mine, a northern Ghanaian who was a minister snapped at me once when I said the Ghanaians were nice. He said we are not nice; we are polite to visitors, which is quite a different thing. During my time in Ghana I would have a lot Nigerian FSNs (Foreign Service nationals) come over on holiday or just to visit. On one of these visits, when we were driving down the road to Cape Coast, there was a car parked by the side of the road. I said, look, that's been there 12 hours and it's still got tires. This is a much more sensible country. The Nigerian laughed and said that I confused sensible with slow thinking. He said they will dismantle the car, but it will take them longer. And there was something to that. It's a sane society; you know, you don't do things that would embarrass people in public, but that's not necessarily the same as integrity. I had never lived before in such a fiercely egalitarian society; they really hated success, and that was interesting.

Q: Was this a little bit like the Japanese say, it's the nail that sticks up that gets hammered down?

ROBERTSON: Yes, yes. I always joked that Nigerians always lie about how big they are. Somebody selling cigarettes and kola nuts out on the street will hand you a business card, listing himself as the director of an export-import company, and tell you that he's working with a cousin, bringing a shipload of Thai rice; come see him next week and he'll have some deals for you. Whereas in Ghana, you can never find a businessman who's ever had a successful year! They always lie about how bad they're doing.

Q: Yes.

ROBERTSON: I had always considered "egalitarian" to be a positive attribute in a society, but when you live there for a while all the negative attributes are displayed.

A true story: A bunch of Ghanaian taxi drivers in Atlanta had a group where they bought a bunch of lottery tickets every Thursday or Friday when they went on sale. Once they won the lottery, but then there was a fight about who was actually a member of the group. Some guys weren't on duty the night the tickets were bought for one reason or another, but otherwise were regular members of the group. They never sat down to figure out any structure for the group because, after all, it was a lottery and their chances of winning were low. So some of these taxi drivers who were not scheduled to get any money took the others to court. Nobody could get any money

unless they were included - "I would have been there except I was sick that day," that kind of nonsense. The ethos was to not allow anybody to have the money if they could not get full shares, and it was not amenable to negotiation. Rather than collect the \$25 million and share it out, they would rather argue about it for five years. It was strange.

Q: What about the universities?

ROBERTSON: The universities had been anti-government centers but they were becoming less politicized. Rawlings' opponent in 1992 was a distinguished Ghanaian historian, Prof. Adu Boahen.

Ghana was able to keep its universities small. Ghanaians aren't as forceful as Nigerians. There was a lot of pressure on Nigerian governments to expand the university system to create more opportunities. Nigerian governments could not fight off the kind of pressure brought to bear by the Nigerian public – even military governments, not to mention elected governments hoping to be re-elected. So the Nigerian university system expanded, and it more or less killed the universities, but governments could not resist the pressure. The Ghanaians over the years did not expand their university system significantly - they had limited universities, educated relatively few people. A lot of Ghanaians went to school elsewhere and a lot went to Nigeria at different times. But Ghana ended up with universities that functioned like universities and more or less had academic years, and were not so subject to strife. They were good institutions. Oddly enough, one of the things that you have to really look at in terms of the cost to society and all that was that Ghana maintained good public schools and good public universities but the cost of keeping those functioning was to keep them small. Small universities and small public schools became much more preserves of the elite than private schools were. Here you have a left wing government with a commitment to equality; it keeps the public schools good and the top Ghanaian public secondary schools, which are boarding schools, are outstanding but if you don't have really good connections and pay a lot your children don't get in. So private schools were actually sort of the option for the hoi polloi.

Q: The second, yes.

Well did the universities during this time, had they been infected with Marxism or-

ROBERTSON: Oh sure, sure, they were big centers of Marxist- opposition to earlier Ghanaian government. But they always became an opposition. Nkrumah set up his own party schools, indoctrination schools, because the universities weren't Marxist enough for him. It's in the nature of the university to be sort of anti-government. Ghanaian universities were anti-government when it was Nkrumah with his sort of quasi Marxist orientation, anti-government when it was Rawlings with his initially Cuban-Marxist orientation. They opposed the conservative military governments of the late 60s and 1970s. They weren't ideologically as rigid as universities might be in parts of South America, in parts of Europe, even maybe in parts of the U.S. They were opposition centers but they were well behaved and orderly and fulfilled a social role.

Q: Going back to Rawlings, what got him off the Cuban kick?

ROBERTSON: It was a disaster.

Q: Yes, he was an air force lieutenant, wasn't he?

ROBERTSON: Yes, flight lieutenant. This is funny but his father was a Scot, his mother was from a group in Eastern Ghana called the Ewe, who are found from Ghana east to the Nigerian border. Togo was split between England and Germany, and the German part was given to France after WWI. After WWII, before independence, in a referendum, the people of British Togo voted to join their Francophone cousins in Togo, so some Ewe remained Ghanaian, some became Togolese, and a few were in the Benin Republic. When Rawlings was elected, when they went back to constitutional rule, his opponents went to court to argue that he was unqualified to be the president of Ghana, not because his father was a Scotsman, but because his mother was Togolese. In 1992 Ghana had sort of the equivalent of our own "birthers,"

Anyway, Rawlings was impetuous, he was immature, with a taste for violence, a proclivity for violence. A bit of a bully as a student, a bit of a bully as an officer. He was certainly charismatic, he certainly could sell himself well to foreign audiences. He's a very good looking man. He had crazy ideas. He knew that the Cubans had the cane cutting campaigns through the late '60s, so just like Castro he said, "We have to get so many hundred tons of cocoa." But cocoa is different from sugar, it's a small farmer thing, most of the labor is done by families. There were never cocoa plantations in Ghana, ever, because there is no economy of scale, much less the kind of labor requirements that a sugar harvest has. So these poor cocoa farmers were saddled with groups of 50, 100 students that they had to take care of, and they didn't want them anywhere around.

And so the cocoa farmers, in addition to their other grudges, they were being paid at the official rate instead of the black market rate, also had to support vast numbers of useless students.

Q: Yes. What about, I mean, one thinks of Ghana as having peanuts, ground nuts or cocoa; what sort of economy did they have?

ROBERTSON: Well, in addition to other bad ideas they had when they started off in the 1980s, they were trying to pay farmers for cocoa at the official rate, which was one cedi (the national currency) for one dollar, at the time you'd get 30, 40 *cedis* for the dollar on the black market. And so suddenly Togo became one of the world's largest cocoa producers; everybody took it over the border.

Q: It was the same stuff, it just went over the border.

ROBERTSON: Yes, it was exported as Togolese cocoa. Then they rationalized that, and went back to the state purchasing boards which still kept a large percentage of the profit. They did serious damage to the cocoa economy over the years, and it began reviving in the '90s.

They had had electrical power generated by the Volta Dam, Alcoa Plant. The dam was built and justified by the Alcoa investment in an aluminum plant. They had a revival of mining industry

gold. But it was a very small industrial sector. The aluminum plant was the big hirer and that had only about 3,000 workers. After all these years of coddling by the international community, the NGO sector was far bigger than the industrial sector in Ghana. And they were trying to boost the farm economy, which still provides most of the employment. They came up with elaborate schemes for farm incentives, but all you had to do was pay them for their produce and provide credit and stuff. The Rawlings Government began reviving the agricultural economy and the mining economy. But from the colonial times it had been a very state centered economy, and as a smaller economy and a more quiet economy the state really did exercise control, and may have done some long-term damage to Ghanaian society. Nigeria never really had a dictator, until maybe Sani Abacha, because it's tough to dictate to people in a large country heavily populated by Nigerians. Ghana has tolerated more than its share of dictators.

Q: How about some of the neighbors of Ghana? Were they a problem?

ROBERTSON: It's hard to believe now that in 1995 Cote d'Ivoire was still a regional center for everything, for finance, airlines, everything. Ghana has since picked up most of that. In the 1980s Togo still attracted a lot of European tourism, but fell apart while we were there. The government refused a political opening, refused an ethnic opening, and kicked off a sort of slow-burning civil war. Talking about misconceived international projects, the UN High Commission for Refugees had big refugee camps for Togolese in Ghana, but of course everybody just went to work in Togo and then went back to their camp at night. There was very little incentive for the refugees to go anywhere else. Ghana was very active in Liberia; at one point, some of you may recall, a ship over laden with Liberian refugees landed in Ghana and we persuaded the Ghanaians not to send it back to sea, to let us take off the refugees near Takoradi and put them in a camp. I was made head of that delegation and every time I went to Takoradi they said "oh, let's go visit your people, Nick, and maybe they'll steal your car instead of mine this week." But we burned the Ghanaians on that episode. We promised them that if they allowed the Liberians in there would be international money to take care of them and we wouldn't just leave them on the outskirts of the city. We said this wouldn't happen.

Q: Well then, did- how about culturally with Ghana?

ROBERTSON: You know, you had this massive investment by AID in the former slave castles that Obama visited earlier this year and encouraging sort of cultural tourism, which worked to an extent, although, they don't get tourism like Jamaica. But they get a few hundred thousand people a year coming for cultural tourism and for their Pan-African cultural festival, Panafest, every two years. Panafest has been hard for Ghana to maintain. Ghana had the most exceptional of the Pan African cultural productions, Soul to Soul, in 1973. There was no government money, it was all private money, all private investment, and they got Ike and Tina Turner and a whole bunch of soul music stars out to Ghana and filmed it. A friend of mine who lives in Alexandria, a percussionist with Hugh Masekela, still gets residuals (royalty checks) from Soul to Soul in 1973, but then they had all these fantasies of making it a government operation; it never quite jelled.

But some of their thinking was a little old fashioned; they were talking about sort of new world information order stuff about how the international news agencies, more powerful then,

international news, dominated African cultural reporting. I pointed out to them that they had not covered the death of a friend of mine, a great Nigerian artist, but I read about it in Newsweek.

It's a small country with small cultural markets and you can only do so much with that. They produced some good playwrights, a couple of novelists, some excellent painters, sculptors and ceramicists. It was a great country for music. I loved it with high life, then they developed new forms of reggae and hip hop; I stuck to the high life.

Q: These are dances or-

ROBERTSON: Yes.

Q: Song dances.

ROBERTSON: Sort of big band African music for the 1950s and '60s.

Q: Well, was the Internet coming into that area?

ROBERTSON: In Ghana I got to see the big revolutions in communications. First I mentioned FM radio and cell phones. The other two were the emergence of international broadcasting with CNN, and finally the internet.

When the first Gulf War opened up in August of 1990, we set up an Embassy situation room to monitor the situation. After a few weeks of that, we closed the situation room and the duty officers and other embassy staff were just told to watch developments on CNN.

Which we still got from AFRTS (Armed Forces Radio and Television Service) at the time.

In Ghana, many Ghanaian academics and journalists got their first taste of the Internet in our USIS library. At the time we had some sort of low speed interconnectivity; we got it off the satellite. We used to get a shortened version of The New York Times sent by satellite. It seems pretty small potatoes now, but then we were still awaiting the International Herald Tribune to come a day or two late from Europe, and we'd get the Sunday New York Times a week late through the pouch.

It was just the early days but we would have people over to show them what could be done. We had a few terminals that we'd allow certain selected friends to use and introduced it. This reminds me that I caused a small scandal by allowing senior Fulbright people to use the email, but I wouldn't allow the junior Fulbright researchers to use it.

Q: Did you get a good number of African Americans coming to look for their roots? I would think this would be a prime spot, English speaking and all that.

ROBERTSON: Oh, it was. And we had the president of Lincoln University out there.

Q: And that's where, of course, Nkrumah had gone.

ROBERTSON: Yes. Yes, it was quite an event. This sort of “bridges over the Atlantic” had been really a theme of Ghana even before Nkrumah, with Dr. Aggrey, the founder of Chamita College in Ghana, another U.S.-educated African who advocated strengthening those ties. His son, Rudolph Aggrey, was U.S. Ambassador to Romania and after retirement became a highly respected scholar on Eastern Europe. This relationship between Africa and its diaspora had a long history in Ghana, and cultural tourism is an important sector of the Ghanaian economy. Of course, the most important element for some of the Africans and African-Americans never did jell; you didn’t have as many people moving back to Ghana as they had perhaps hoped. There remained up until the ‘90s more Americans living in Nigeria, a much rougher place, but Americans married to Nigerians could make a living there. Ghana’s comfortable, but there’s no money there. This talk of the relationship between Africa and the African diaspora that has been a theme of a number of Ghanaian governments makes Ghana loom large in U.S. views of Africa, but thus far it doesn’t involve that many Ghanaians. So I think it looms large in American views of Africa but that doesn’t involve that many Ghanaians, and it certainly doesn’t employ many Ghanaians.

Q: Yes. So in some ways I take it, I mean, it was a nice, I won’t say a comfortable spot, but it just didn’t have the storm and drang of Nigeria, for you.

ROBERTSON: Look, I loved it, it was the nicest four years our family we spent in the foreign service. My wife works over at SAIT (a nearby office in FSI), and you can ask her about it. A wonderful place to live, lovely people to work with but a small society and a society very dependent upon the generosity of strangers. And it’s done very well; it’s a real success. I hope it continues.

Incidentally, I wrote a play in Ghana, under a pseudonym, teasing the Ghanaians because of their loss of self-confidence, their unwillingness to take risks. In the 1880s a Ghanaian named Tetteh Quarshie discovered how to plant and cultivate cocoa. Nigerians and Ghanaians had been working in cocoa on Fernando Po, the former Spanish colony just off the coast of Nigeria. Europeans, missionaries as well as business people, had been trying to cultivate cocoa for about 20 years but were unable to do it. Tetteh Quarshie took the seeds back to Ghana from Fernando Po, and figured out how to cultivate it. He launched a real revolution in West Africa, with hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers in Ghana and Nigeria developing a cocoa industry, and putting their money into schools, and hospitals and churches and roads, paying for the first generation of Africans to study in the UK and the U.S. And so you had this explosion, this wonderful success story, an industry that African peasants developed on their own with no foreign involvement until the ships came to pick it up off the docks. And I wrote a play teasing the Ghanaians that the country that revolutionized itself like this, that had entered the 20th century riding this tremendous success, just didn’t seem to be the society around me. They were much more cautious, and that is part of the long term damage that years of misrule left.

Q: Okay, let’s come to the ill fated trip; how did that develop?

ROBERTSON: It was a real surprise to me. All of a sudden Ambassador Ed Brynn called all the agency heads in and said “Nick, you’ve got to be on a plane out of here in 72 hours.

Q: Well you were getting pretty close to your time, weren't you?

ROBERTSON: Yes, I would have left in July in any case and this all happened in May. I don't know why they did it. It made no sense to anybody. I was leaving anyway; why do this? What was in it for them? And nobody ever really could tell us.

Q: How did you relate to the government?

ROBERTSON: I was fighting all the independent journalists, so-called independent journalists who all hated Rawlings, about the election that had taken place in December of 96. I said Rawlings did not steal the election. I was there, I was a monitor; there was no election stolen here, you guys. So a lot of journalists considered me a shill for Rawlings, and I thought I'd get an award from Rawlings when I left, which would have been slightly embarrassing. I had no idea I'd be expelled.

They charged me with inciting the press by saying something about the criminal libel laws in public. There was a World Press Freedom Day celebration at the headquarters of the Ghana Association of Journalists and I was invited as a guest speaker. I think that Mr. John Mahama, who is currently the Vice President, was there that day. The speech really hit out hard at the irresponsibility and lack of professionalism of Ghanaian journalists. I knew these guys; they were over my house all the time. There was a regular Sunday brunch with a group of senior journalists. After almost four years, though, I was getting exasperated at their collective failure to behave like serious journalists. I prefaced my speech by noting my view of criminal libel, there was no secret, I had told all of them plus every government official I knew that I think it's a disgusting law. Having said that, why don't we inaugurate a press responsibility day? How about a press responsibility day? Why don't you guys start paying attention to business? And I was quite surprised to find that that had been used as the reason to throw me out.

Q: Did you- Did the embassy have any input in the give and take about Mrs. Clinton's trip or not? I would have thought Ghana, you know, particularly you had Shirley Temple there and Ghana, for a small country, has a fairly high profile.

ROBERTSON: Ghana had a very high profile, but there was a particular problem with a possible visit by our first lady, Hilary Clinton. The problem was her counterpart, the First Lady of Ghana. A lot of the nasty stuff that was being done by the Rawlings government was done by her and her cronies in their "NGO," the December 31 Women's Movement. Whatever her gifts, whatever her leadership qualities, they were involved in a lot of funny stuff.

Q: This is Mrs.-

ROBERTSON: Mrs. Rawlings, yes.

Q: What was her background?

ROBERTSON: Educated middle class Ghanaian, very smart, very attractive. Rather like a

certain lady in Argentina once upon a time, perhaps much smarter than her husband, certainly much more energetic in pursuit of her interests. Insofar as you would look at illegitimate use of incumbency advantages in an election, it was her and her NGO. Funny business involving privatization and contracts was also done in her office. We did not think it's appropriate for the First Lady to salute that. And President Clinton himself was coming the next year. It wasn't that big a deal.

Q: This is sort of a minor lashing out and you were the lashee?

ROBERTSON: A little bit like that. Actually, Ambassador Brynn said, how come I was getting credit? Because everybody in the embassy agreed that a visit by Mrs. Clinton would be a bad signal to send.

Q: Yes. Okay, well I think this is probably a good place to stop.

ROBERTSON: Yes.

EDWARD BRYNN
Ambassador
Ghana (1995-1998)

Ambassador Edward Brynn was born in Pennsylvania in 1942. He graduated from Georgetown University and received an M.S. and a PhD from Stanford University. He also attended Trinity College in Ireland and served as a captain overseas in the U.S. Air Force from 1968-1972. His postings abroad have included Sri Lanka, Mali and Cameroon, with ambassadorships to Burkina Faso and Ghana. Ambassador Brynn was interviewed in 2000 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Looking at the map you see it borders on both French and English. You've got Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, Niger and Nigeria. What were the influences?

BRYNN: First of all, the overarching influence has been Cote d'Ivoire, because, although until World War I Upper Volta, as it was called - Burkina Faso was Upper Volta - had been an independent French fiefdom, it was fused with Cote d'Ivoire, Ivory Coast, in 1920, I believe, and remained so, remained a province or a stepchild of Cote d'Ivoire until after World War II. At that point the Mossi were able to convince the French that they needed their own identity back, and so in 1947 that Upper Volta regained its autonomy. But there was no doubt about it that Cote d'Ivoire remained a very, very powerful influence. Not only were some of the leading families in Burkina Faso very closely connected with families in Cote d'Ivoire parish but trade was absolutely governed by the trading houses in Abidjan. Every year Burkinabé men, partly because they had a reputation for being strong and good workers, filled the seasonal plantation jobs on the southern Cote d'Ivoire plantations: cocoa, bananas, pineapples, the lot. So Burkina Faso remained a surrogate in an economic relationship to Cote d'Ivoire. The other relationship

was, of course, to Ghana directly to the south. This was a very testy relationship. From the time that J. J. Rawlings came to power in 1979 and then for good in 1981, tension levels between successive regimes in Ouagadougou and Rawlings were always very high. It was a very difficult border area. There were many small skirmishes along the frontier. There was a contest over riparian rights because the three branches of the Volta River came out of Burkina Faso and coalesced in Ghana. There was very little evidence of Anglophone commercial ties between Burkina Faso and Ghana. It was for the average Burkinabé as if there was no country at all to the south; so this was different from their relationship to Cote d'Ivoire.

Q: And you were in Ghana from '95 to...?

BRYNN: Until the summer of '98. I left Accra shortly before the bombing of the embassies in Dar Es Salaam and Nairobi.

Q: Before you left the State Department, did you feel that there was a new mood within the Clinton administration? Was it going to react more strongly, do you think, if something happened of this nature again?

BRYNN: I sensed a new mood, and I think that if we had had a resurgence of Hutu-Tutsi genocidal tendencies, and it was quite possible it was going to happen in Burundi, we were psychologically prepared to intervene in a more timely fashion and with military muscle.

Q: Let's turn to Ghana. Ghana has always had sort of a special place in our foreign policy really from Nkrumah, and he was the fair-haired boy, to use that expression, at the beginning of the opening to Africa. He and Nyerere were sort of the two people, particularly because they're Anglophone - the French had their own group of French speaker leaders... How were relations with Ghana, and what was the importance we saw in this '95-'98 period?

BRYNN: I think there were probably three points to consider. There was, of course, this Nkrumah ambiance which governed our bilateral relationship. He went to school in the United States. He established a relationship even with Eisenhower. And then, of course, he collapsed into gross dictatorship...

Q: And also teamed up with Nasser and Sukarno...

BRYNN: That's right with every suspect character on the block. The whole U.S.-Ghanaian relationship from the '60s was colored by the fact that Nkrumah had taken a wonderful state, an almost model colony in the British crown, and had destroyed it. This element of pain is still part of the relationship between the United States and Ghana. The second element is a feeling among African Americans that Ghana is the best place to rediscover their African roots. It is Anglophone. It has a relatively developed physical infrastructure, so you can get around the country. It's got the slave castles on the coast, which are a poignant reminder of the slave trade. It's got a population that, despite the economic vicissitudes of the country, has sent a lot of its people to study in the United States. Many Ghanaians have remained here. So there is among

the African Americans a sense of affection for and understanding of Ghana, a sense more highly developed than it is with any other African country. That contrasted with the conviction in Washington that Ghana had gone to hell in a handbasket because of what had happened with Nkrumah. The third point is J. J. Rawlings. What an adventure. A young pilot takes control of the country, turns it back to the civilians, finds that corruption levels remain high, takes it back again and executes seven of the leading Ghanaians (including three former heads of state). He embarked on aggressive rationalization. Suddenly about 1982 he finds that the country has declined to such low levels that he makes an absolutely dramatic turn opts for privatization. He opened a dialogue with financial institutions, investors, and the West.

J.J. never understood the ideological implications of all this, which is probably just as well. He just decided Option A didn't work, so Option B was what we were going to go for. This put us into a remarkably stormy but productive relationship with Ghana. One level he remained deeply suspicious of the United States. We had CIA problems. In the early '90s Rawlings persuaded himself that we wanted him out. On the other hand, he responded handsomely to our pressure that he submitted himself to elections in 1992 and in 1996. In the year 2000, when we fell in love with him in a certain way, warts and all he honored the 1992 constitutional prohibition against a third term.

He certainly is the most fascinating character that I ever encountered during in my years in Africa, and I think a high point for me in my professional career in the Foreign Service was working very hard to help Ghana stage what could credibly pass for free and fair elections in 1996. I am full of praise for the very costly electoral management and monitoring program that we put into place. And I think the election provided an element of dignity for Rawlings during the next four years of his term. The 1996 election process also empowered Ghanaians to see that their country might look forward to a future a little bit different from much of the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa. It's been especially an element of pride for African Americans. African Americans need, as we all need, some concrete evidence that this circumstanced continent can escape a troubled past. We've seen the end of apartheid in South Africa on one hand, and we have, in Ghana - in a less dramatic role area but still very important - another major achievement.

Q: Let's talk about going there. What was your embassy like, and how did you find relations at that point when you were there?

BRYNN: Relations were good. Ken Brown, who was my predecessor, had established an extraordinarily wide-ranging and sensitive and deeply planted relationship with the ruling caste in Ghana. I suppose it's always easier to see what the negatives are from your predecessor, but there were really rather few. He may have been inclined to be more pro-Ghanaian, a little bit more myopic on the side of the Rawlings regime than I was, but he left a very fine relationship with the government.

Q: From where you came from, you had been looking at Ghana. Ghana was one of the African countries, and so you can't help but carry the Washington view with you. So let's talk about, first, Rawlings. Was Ghana Rawlings, or was there more to Ghana by this time?

BRYNN: There was more to Ghana by this time, but there's no doubt that the energy force of

Rawlings was still so great, especially when I got there in '95, that ministers were afraid to be too proactive on their own without getting into trouble with Rawlings. Rawlings came to Washington on a state visit while I was in the confirmation process here, and he cut an extraordinary figure. He was late for his meeting at the White House, which ruffled feathers. I was not directly involved but I heard all these stories and thought, my God, are we going to survive it. At the end of the day, however I think he made of positive impressions around town. I don't think I had the same informal relationship with J.J. that Ken Brown enjoyed. I think there was a chemistry between the two of them that made that part of their relationship. On the other hand, I think that my relationship across the board with various elements in Ghanaian society may have moved our interests forward, partly because, of course, everything was working through the election of 1996 and working up to Clinton's visit in 1998. Ghanaians were determined to mobilize the country's resources to make the Clinton visit a success, and as a result of that vector I got to know an enormous number of Ghanaians across the board, all the way from literary figures to musicians to the local government people and parliamentarians. I was helped by having an extraordinarily good staff. Ghanaians deserve enormous credit for bringing off a very fine visit for Clinton.

Q: How did you feel that the economy was doing at this point?

BRYNN: There's no doubt about it that Ghana's economic progress, which had established a certain momentum in the early 1990s after the first big wave of reforms were put in place, began to flag just before my arrival. The biggest challenge was the inability of the Ghanaian government, the Ghanaian political system, to move more briskly on privatization. Many families were deeply invested in the grossly underperforming parastatals. They were willing to see some smaller parastatals sacrificed as part of the enticement to get larger loans from international financial institutions, but at the end of the day really couldn't see their own deeply cherished cash cows brought to the table. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Ghana failed to attract large scale U.S. investment. Part of it dealt with the land tenure system, American investors could not always be confident that they could control of land or other resources without being harassed for annual presents. Corruption, although not nearly as high as you found in Cameroon and perhaps not higher than you found in Cote d'Ivoire, was high enough to discourage American investment. Middle-level entrepreneurs in the United States, especially African Americans, who came with money in their pocket were often were the first to be alienated. They found that their African brother would put his arms around them figuratively and in effect remove their wallets in the process. We ended up with many disillusioned Americans, especially African Americans, mid-level investor types, who came to Ghana with a dream and with some money in their pockets. Big-ticket investors, such as Kaiser Aluminum, which had been in Ghana since the late '50s, or investors planning to come in to help tap offshore natural gas and some oil reserves, or some big-ticket American investors who focused the agricultural center, were less vulnerable to harassment and the corruption, and they've done a bit better. (One prominent player on the scene for a while was none other than Enron, but Enron cut such an unattractive swath across the Ghanaian landscape that J. J. Rawlings asked them to leave.) But even the large-scale investors encountered substantial inertia in Ghana's swollen and lethargic bureaucracy.

Q: Right now they're going through a major scandal, the collapse of this firm Enron.

BRYNN: I think, that Ghana's economy, with all its warts and all its problems, is now sufficiently broad based and is sufficiently privatized to sustain a moderate growth rate of three and a half or four percent, barring some real collapse in the political leadership. The heady days of eight percent growth rate to nine percent growth rates we saw for several years in the late '80s and early '90s put Ghana back in comparatively decent shape by African standards. Those growth rates are unlikely to return in the near future. But there is an enhanced level of political maturity. Ken Brown deserves a lot of credit for that, and I think that in my watch we were able to help that along, too. I think if the political institutions continue to take root and to mature, down the road Ghana's prospects look pretty bright. Its big, big Trojan horse is a problem over which Ghana has little control. If you have an implosion in Nigeria, you may see just lots of Nigerians crossing Togo and Benin flooding into Ghana. Rawlings never tired of saying how much he feared this "million man march" from Nigeria to Ghana.

Q: What were the main sources of economic support in Ghana?

BRYNN: Gold production, in the first instance while gold prices were quite high, when I first arrived and it looked like this was going to be a very big-ticket item. Gold prices have been more depressed recently, although I think they're firming a bit. The most spectacular good news story was the recovery of cocoa. Ghana had been the world's leading producer of cocoa on the eve of independence, and then through nationalization of cocoa and paying below-market prices to cocoa cultivators, the cocoa production sank by, I think, 80 percent by about 1985. But cocoa has come back, and in the long term, even though prices there are not top class, there is promise of greater growth. Ghana has also done a fairly good job in the recultivation of natural rubber, which is coming back into its own after a binge with synthetics. Ghana stands to benefit from increased sugar and palm oil extraction.

Q: Ground nuts, are they still...?

BRYNN: Ground nuts are okay - it's a feature in the north - but the world overproduction of ground nuts is legion. If you produce ground nuts, you'd better think mostly of eating them at home.

Q: Was AID busy there?

BRYNN: I think we had a good AID program. I've been rather negative in some aspects about our AID program in Cameroon, positive on our very flexible one in Burkina Faso. I thought in Ghana we had a highly structured, formal AID process but on balance our program functioned fairly well. I think we had identified the right targets. We were strong in vocational training and secondary-level education. We were very strong in health care and health-related issues, and we had some, I think, quite good programs in increasing the productivity of small-scale agriculture. We also had 54 NGO/PVOs in the country, an extraordinary presence. I emphasized was the need to get these people to know each other, and hosted monthly or late afternoon work and socializing sessions at the residence. So often we saw that several different NGO/PVOs were doing exactly the same thing and had no idea who else was involved. And we had a really top-of-the-line Peace Corps operations; the oldest worldwide. We celebrated a big anniversary while

we were there, forty years.

Q: What were they doing?

BRYNN: The PCVs were very heavily in education. In Ghana's an educational system weak but well established, so it was relatively easy to put volunteers into schools and have them raise the quality of the education without having to worry about building a schoolhouse to get the whole thing started.

Q: What about the Ghanaian military at this point? What sort of a role were they playing?

BRYNN: I got the impression, and I think it was vindicated, that by 1995 the military had no appetite to get reinvolved in politics. They had been there, done that, and it had not been a happy experience. I thought that the Ghanaian military had decided to return to the barracks. The leadership was professional. Most U.S. military bigwigs who came down from European Command in Stuttgart liked what they saw in the Ghanaian military. And also, a very high percentage of the officers and men had had some exposure to international experience in UN Operations. I think Ghana had the highest percentage of its military involved in UN peace-keeping missions of any country in Sub-Saharan Africa and maybe one of the highest in the world.

Q: Were we encouraging or seeing a development of an African military group that would go around and squelch problems?

BRYNN: Oh, yes, we did, and I was very active in this area. We were able to get a defense attaché reinstalled which had been closed some time ago. We had an active ACRI agenda- that's the African Crisis Reduction Initiative. Ghanaians played a central role. They and the Senegalese were sort of the war horses. Both militaries were relatively well trained and well led. I pushed very, very strongly to have this new pan-African self-help military program headquartered in Ghana. I came away with a positive impression of the Ghanaian military. J. J. Rawlings was aware that I had been an Air Force officer, and therefore he assumed I was a pilot. Of course, J.J. still flies, and many times he would say, "We're going up, going to fly together," and I kept saying, "I'm not pilot qualified." "Oh, we'll go anyway." I kept thinking of all the people I might want to put on that plane to have it go down with me. Fortunately it never came to pass.

Q: How did you deal with J. J. Rawlings?

BRYNN: I saw him frequently and realized that you had to be willing to go over every issue every time. He liked to call me to see him about six o'clock in the morning, and I sometimes would see him in, to put it mildly, very informal circumstances. He might have been up most of the night, had a bit to drink, or was jazzed up on coffee and Coca Cola and was energized. He often called about five o'clock in the morning and said, "Could I see you right away on this." By the time I got there, the crisis of the moment might be, was usually settled, but there were always many things to talk about. He was fixated in conversations with me on three things. The first was deep-seated feeling that the French were going to try to overthrow him. He thought there

was a Gallic conspiracy on all of his borders, that the French were animating Eyadema in Togo, to oppose him, or that Blaise, up in Ouagadougou, was being programmed by the French and of course the Ivorians. So quite often there had to be a conversation about the French and I had to give assurances that the French did not plan to topple Rawlings. Secondly his real distress that American big business wasn't pumping a lot of money into Ghana. We talked frequently about corruption. Of course, he prided himself on not being corrupt. He was genuinely not corrupt and I am satisfied will not die a rich man. His wife was much more mischievous than he. He would get really roiled about corruption and even as we were sitting there he would call people and say tell them to stamp out corruption. The third thing was his absolute desire to have Washington see that he was an important player. He wanted to visit Washington frequently, and we were fairly accommodating on this score. He wanted to start his trip in Africa by coming to Ghana. This happened. Those were always three big themes that dominated my conversations with him. But we also had lots of conversations which were prompted more by our, asking Ghana to take a lead in the Liberian conflict and in getting Ghana to talk to General Abacha in Nigeria, and to play a moderating role whenever there were African summits.

Q: What about this Nigerian connection? In a way these were the two centers of Anglophone, and Nigeria was going through a nasty time with Abacha, wasn't it?

BRYNN: It certainly was until the "poison mushroom" intervened. I still think Abacha was poisoned. Abacha came over to Ghana twice while I was there. I met him once. It was clear to me, in looking at the body language between J.J. and Abacha that J.J. was in deadly fear that Abacha was up to no good and was going to do harm to Ghana. Rawlings would always talk about the million-man march, and he didn't mean the million-man march in Washington; he meant a million Nigerians coming across Benin and Togo either because of chaos at home or aggressive designs abroad. He genuinely feared the mischief that Abacha could do. We knew that no non-Nigerian really had much influence with Abacha. Although we asked J.J. to help Abacha see wisdom, I'm not sure that much came of that. He did, in fact, though, have a much better relationship with the Nigerian military involved in Liberia experience, and I think J.J. was pleased to think that we valued Rawling's role.

Q: What was Ghana doing in Liberia?

BRYNN: The Nigerian-led African force was sent into Liberia as a peace-keeping mission to prepare for the free and fair elections we were hoping for. After Taylor had overthrown - what was the name?

Q: There was Doe.

BRYNN: Samuel Doe, yes, that's right. The Nigerians were there in a peace-keeping mode, but in fact fighting was intense on occasion. The Nigerian-led operation had attained some level of credibility, but in fact we believed that the Ghanaian troops were by far the best disciplined and the most effective foreign troops in Liberia. We supplied the Ghanaian contingent with military equipment, up to helicopters. We put our money on the Ghanaian horse. Meanwhile Rawlings constantly reminded me that Liberia was "our" colony, and that twelve marines could establish a preserve in Monrovia that would restore peace. I suspected that Rawlings was not far off the

mark.

Q: What about the role of the British? One thinks of Ghana and their military as being a very British-type outfit. The British turned out a pretty good army at one point.

BRYNN: Yes, we played a very limited role in terms of the Ghanaian military in Ghana itself. We were much more focused on Ghana's role either in the UN peace-keeping operations or in Liberia. The British played, I thought, a very constructive role in the training for Ghanaians. They ran an academy just outside Accra - and I spoke at it many times - where they brought officers from other African Commonwealth countries. I think the British relationship to the Ghanaian military was not only constructive but probably reinforced rather fond memories of the old empire.

Q: How about African Americans there, people coming back to look for roots or investment? Did you find yourself dealing with this particular element of American society?

BRYNN: Yes, quite a bit, partly because a number of them who came back got involved good philanthropic or social work and partly because we had a number of African Americans who were victimized. Many African American groups were drawn to Ghana by the country's rich cultural traditions, and by their search for roots. I hosted many of them at receptions and lunches at the residence, and put on my professional hat to provided guidance for visits to the castles and forts along the coast. A great many African American educators came over to Ghana. The De Bois Accra house and library needed a great deal of work, and I tried to stimulate interest among African-Americans. I found this was an enriching part of my life in Ghana.

Q: As an embassy in a place like this, particularly with African Americans coming there, were we able to get African American officers? I think this would be very important to show that...

BRYNN: We did. We had an African American AID director. We had an African American, for part of my tour, Peace Corps director. On the embassy staff, African Americans were well represented, as well as in the Consular section. Most of the American NGOs/PVOs in Ghana, I think, probably had African Americans at the helm. My DCM was an African American woman.

Q: Were things changing or were you noticing the phenomenon that I mentioned before about the starvation of the Foreign Service under the auspices of Jesse Helms and the lack of willingness of the Clinton administration to fight this? Or was it beginning to turn around?

BRYNN: I don't think it began to turn around in a meaningful way while I was in Ghana from '95 to '98. Ghana was an easier place to attract Foreign Service Officers, probably because living conditions compared favorably with other parts of Africa, there were many interesting things to do, and it was Anglophone. We had a very fine school. On the other hand, we had a real crisis in the consular area. Our consular operation was growing substantially - at a rate of 10% year by year. We were, more vulnerable than some other embassies to counterfeit and other scams associated with certain Nigerians. In one month - I picked out a month in early 1996 - and we ran a check on all documents that came across the consular counter to try to test for veracity, an interesting exercise. We found that well over two-thirds of the documents presented at the

windows, of all different types, were counterfeit or fraudulent. This is the underfunding the foreign affairs agencies come in. The antiquated nature of our equipment, our extraordinarily compressed and tight physical facilities, and our lack of staffing challenged our consular operation's effectiveness. Out of embassy funds, we undertook considerable expansion of physical facilities. I got rapped on the knuckle because they said this expenditure was not authorized. But at least the rapping came after the work was finished. You just couldn't have people working in an office where there was no place to sit. You've got to have a place where they can do their analytical work at a table. I just have to wonder, looking at American embassies in these third world countries, how many people got visas and came to the States because of the fatigue factor.

Q: You mentioned the election of '96. Could we talk about what we were doing there?

BRYNN: The election of '96: We established, and spent about a million dollars in so doing, a comprehensive nationwide election monitoring system right down to providing plastic ballot boxes for the votes. We hired poll watchers. We rented vehicles so we had mobile teams to go to places where we forecast. We established a radio network. I had really fantastic officers at my elbow. Geeta Pasi and Jim Donegan were stellar performers. We received tremendous help through AID, which provided an election dimension; Ghanaians knew what they were voting for and could use a ballot. We had excellent cooperation from the government, partly, I think, because the private polls indicated that Rawlings was going to win the election. It was very much in his favor to have an honest election. These were long-term results; standards were raised in the election of 1996. This held Rawlings to a level of accountability in the election of 2000 where his handpicked guy lost, in effect a peaceful regime change. I just had a very positive sense - and Ken Brown had started this before me - that we had made a large but very worthwhile investment.

Q: The Clinton visit, could you talk about that?

BRYNN: Well, like all of these visits, there are so many bruises all over the place. The team that came out at the beginning of 1998 to look at Ghana as a place for a visit - I'll say this even with my own Democratic Party leanings - this was the biggest bunch of amateurs that I ever saw coming down the pike. Many of them were young. Very few of them were paid. I really think if you're going to have a White House staff, for God's sake, focus on a smaller but better trained staff. Some of them were arrogant. They looked at Accra and concluded that it was a dirty and unphotogenic city and therefore not a very good place for the President to visit. Well, I said that we had to have Ghana on that list. I touched base with the African American community back home. "You're going to have to pick this one up. We need to make this work." I contacted a couple of the Senators, including Pat Leahy. And I assure the White House that we would guarantee that we will get an enormous audience to come out and hear Clinton give his inaugural speech in Africa. We had to have him come.

At the end of the day, things moved in absolutely the right direction. First of all, a professional staff came out, took a second look, and persuaded themselves that the President should come to Ghana. They asked the right questions. We got our priorities straight. It was an exotic experience watching the advance team get the Black Star Stadium ready for the Clinton visit.

But his entourage was so large that we did not have enough hotel rooms in town to accommodate them all unless we were willing to use a hotel which is half owned by the Libyans. In the first staff visit a White House staffer had said, "We can use it," and I had said, "No, we can't." We finished the lodgings problem by having the President arrive from Washington at six o'clock in the morning on Air Force One, and leave at six o'clock in the evening. We had him for one 12-hour, fun-filled, jam-packed day, and the whole schedule went extraordinarily well. The Ghanaians really got their infrastructure right. We had 180,000 people in the stadium on an extremely hot day. The President's speech and J.J.'s speech, which we were afraid would go on and on and on, went very well. We got Mrs. Rawlings to cut him off. The visual effects were fantastic. By keeping the entire visit in Accra we avoided some daunting scheduling nightmares. The crowds were enormous and ubiquitous, and they were extremely well behaved. I suppose that probably President Clinton said this to many others but before boarding the plane he said to Jane and me that this had been the most satisfying day he had ever had overseas. I think the visit was a spectacular success. It even reached the point of being an oversuccess when the crowd surged at him when he was down "doing the ropes" and it looked like they were going to overwhelm him. Well, they didn't, there was enough protection, but it gave the impression that he was absolutely loved, which was true. Of course, he himself was extraordinarily focused. It's hard to believe, in the context of what was going on with the scandal inside the White House...

Q: Monica Lewinski.

BRYNN: ...with Monica Lewinski, that he could be. But every Ghanaian he met and every Ghanaian to whom he talked told me afterwards that for that one brief moment it was clear to them that they were the only important person in Clinton's life.

Q: He has that... How about Mrs. Clinton?

BRYNN: Jane was with her and had a separate schedule for part of the day, and that went very well. She had many of the same qualities. I was extraordinarily impressed with both of them. It was an unusually hot day in a hot part of the year. President Clinton changed his suit four times, and the suits were just destroyed. The visit went very, very well.

Q: Rawlings, I assume, was delighted.

BRYNN: He was. He was transported with delight, and it led to a somewhat bittersweet aftermath. Mrs. Rawlings never liked me and for very understandable reasons. Before my tenure she had been a major beneficiary of American self-help funds, which went into an organization that she had which was ostensibly designed for women's empowerment, but in fact it was very clear by the time I arrived in Ghana that the money was going into her political hatchet campaign. I paid a call on her and told her that I was cutting off the funding. That put her at loggerheads with me. It never affected the relationship between me and J.J. Of course, the relationship between Mrs. Rawlings and her husband was never that close. They didn't live together. She did think that I was a very good dancer. Whenever there was a dancing partner, she always asked me to dance with her. But at the end of the day, of course, after the visit by President Clinton, Rawlings said, "We will be giving you a big award," which I didn't welcome. I'm of that group of diplomats who don't think we should be taking awards from foreign

governments, and over the years I had avoided being a beneficiary. I got a call from the chief of protocol a couple days later and he asked whether he could have a chat with me. I said, "Sure, I'll be over." He said, "No, I don't want to do it here. I want to do it at your residence." So he came to the residence, and he said, "The President has made a commitment to you for an award, and I'm afraid we're in terrible trouble because Mrs. Rawlings is absolutely opposed to this." I replied, "Consider it a non-event. I frankly am honored that the president thought this was a good thing to do, but I don't think this is a good practice and I will feel no pain to be excluded from the awards list." So, despite the afterglow of Clinton's visit, I left Ghana unbemedaled.

End of Reader