

HAITI

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Leslie M. Alexander	1991-1993	Deputy Chief of Mission, Chargé, Port-au-Prince
Sarah Horsey-Barr	1992-1995	Deputy Chief of Mission, Organization of American States, Washington, DC
David R. Adams	1993-1995	Office of the Under Secretary of State, Washington, DC
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MERRITT N. COOTES
Junior Officer
Port-au-Prince (1932)

Vice Consul
Port-au-Prince (1937-1940)

Merritt N. Cootes was born in Virginia in 1909. Educated in France and Austria as well as at Princeton University. Mr. Cootes joined the Foreign Service in 1931 and served in the Haiti, Hong Kong, Italy, Portugal, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, Algeria, and Washington, DC. He retired in 1969. He was interviewed by Lillian Mullins in 1991-93.

COOTES: Something like that. In my case I was assigned to Haiti. In 1932 I went to Haiti, where I spent nine months before being brought back to the State Department to what was called the Diplomatic School.

Q: *So when you came back from Haiti, where, I assume, you had junior officer duties...*

COOTES: Actually, I was in the Consular Office in Port-au-Prince, because we had a Legation and Consulate. The Consul, my first boss in the Foreign Service, was Donald Heath. Donald Heath was later transferred over to the Legation, and a man named Jarvis was sent there as Consul. I served under him for a time. Then I came back to the State Department to what they called the Foreign Service School. There

Q: *What was Haiti like at that time? We're talking about 1937.*

COOTES: When I went back to Haiti, as I said, I was picked up by the Minister assigned to Port-au-Prince. What was the country like?

Q: *Yes. I saw it in 1980. We're talking about 1937. I just wondered whether, physically, there was any forest left in 1937.*

COOTES: Oh, yes. My first time in Haiti was in 1932. At that time U. S. Marines still occupied the country. The Marines had occupied Haiti in 1918 when the then President was dragged out of the French Legation, where he had taken refuge, and tossed over the wall. He was then promptly dismembered. At that time the U. S. decided that there had been too many revolutions, so we moved the Marines in there. That wasn't an unfriendly gesture. If we had moved the Army in, that would have been bad, but we just moved the Marines in. Apart from the humanitarian aspect, another reason for our action was that the Germans were angling to have a base for submarines in Haiti. We'd learned of that, so we moved in and occupied the country. When I went to Haiti the first time, the Marine occupation was still continuing. The President of Haiti was a bachelor. His hostess was his sister. He was a charming man. Col Lloyd Little was the commander of the 1st Brigade of Marines who occupied the country. Also, we had American instructors for the Haitian Guard, including the senior commanders.

Toward the end of my time there we negotiated an end to the occupation. Minister Norman Armour was assigned to preside over the liquidation of the occupation. Armour had been a Counselor of the Embassy in Paris. Of course, in Haiti most of the better educated people had done their studies in France. In their view Paris was something like Mecca. When the U.S. assigned the man who had been Counselor of the Embassy in Paris to Haiti, all doors were open to him. Norman Armour being Norman Armour, if the door was open a crack, he would finish up by opening it further and taking the place over. In effect, he did this, and I had the great pleasure of serving with him for a time in 1933.

At that time the Artebonitie Valley was the place where most of the bananas consumed in the U.S. came from. That was forest. Then up on a mountain called Morne Laselle [Mountain in Creole], which was the highest point there, several of us in the Legation had something rather better than a hut up there, at 5,000 feet above sea level. At the drop of a hat, we'd bustle up to 5,000 feet and get away from the steamy heat of Port-au-Prince. Already the vegetation was suffering because the Haitians are not very ardent farmers. They do what's necessary. Their goats were eating any shoots that came out of the ground, and that has resulted, as I understand, in the fact that the land in Haiti is now very much denuded of forest cover.

Q: It's totally bare.

COOTES: It's a very poor country. I've never been back to Haiti since I left there in 1940.

Q: I wonder if you would recognize it.

COOTES: I probably would not. I loved it when I was down there. I had some very good Haitian friends, since I spoke French.

Q: The Haitian population was speaking Creole, but they remembered their French?

COOTES: Well, no, they didn't remember it. The people who spoke Creole were the offshoots of the slaves. When the French came to Haiti, which was originally called Hispaniola (now the Dominican Republic and Haiti), the Carib Indians were the original inhabitants. They were put to work on the plantations and, of course, they weren't used to this kind of work, with the heat and

everything, and they died off. So that is why the French began the importation of Blacks from Africa. Haiti became almost entirely Black, with a certain admixture of White blood. So much so that Moraud de St. Marie, a French priest, wrote very extensively and in great detail about Haiti: the price of carrots in Gonaïve was this, the price of carrots in Cap-Haïtien was such and such. He was very detailed in that respect. He gave names to the various mixtures of White and Black blood. Half and half, of course, was Mulatto. One-quarter White was a Quadroon. One-eighth was an Octaroon. But a person who was 63 parts White and one part Black was a sang mele, of mixed blood.

Q: What was the name of this priest?

COOTES: Moraud de St. Marie. If you can ever get hold of a book of his, it will be perfectly fascinating reading.

I was still in Port-au-Prince, and Haiti, by that time, was a free and independent country, with its own armed forces, under the leadership of a Colonel, because our instructors had insisted that they not go back to the old days, when the Haitian Army consisted of all generals and three privates. So I was there in 1939 when we learned that war had broken out in Europe. I was due for home leave, but my Minister, Freddy Mayer, told me to stay away from Personnel because he wanted me to come back to Haiti. But I ran into Sam Reber in the Department. Sam said: "I'm glad to see you because I'm assigning you to Rome."

HENRY L.T. KOREN
Administrative Officer
Port-au-Prince (1948-1951)

Henry L. T. Koren was born in New Jersey in 1911. He entered the Foreign Service in 1948 and served in Haiti, Switzerland, the Philippines, the Congo (Brazzaville), and Vietnam. He was interviewed in 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Your first posting was to Port-au-Prince. What was the situation in Haiti when you were there? This is 1948.

KOREN: Well, it was still the vestige of occupation.

Q: Our occupation?

KOREN: Our occupation. We were very fortunate in that respect that the U.S. stood pretty high, and the marine occupation had been a benevolent occupation, as you know. They were still very highly regarded. As a matter of fact, most of what is now known as infrastructure was due to the marine occupation. They had built the roads and so forth and so on.

Many of the Haitian businesses had prospered under the marine occupation. For instance, car dealers did very well and others did well. It was really at that time only one product that was even slightly important in the world scene, and that was the sugar and sisal. There wasn't native Haitian sugar people, but mostly it was run by the United States, by Americans, and they obviously were prosperous.

Q: Were you doing economic reporting mostly?

KOREN: At the beginning I was assigned as the administrative officer, and it was sort of a first drawback as far as the Foreign Service was concerned, and I was concerned that the previous man who had been the so-called administrative officer had been drummed out of the Service because he was a homosexual and everybody knew it, so that didn't give me a very good taste. Our ambassador was Jacques Decoursey. I don't know whether you ever knew him, but he had been the chief inspector and he friends, of course, who were inspectors. Our first inspection which I think occurred in the first year I was there, and the inspector asked me where I'd like to be posted in the next year or two. And I said, "Anywhere but Latin America," and he turned out to be a Latin American inspector, so that was another step backwards. [Laughter] So my initiation was anything but pleasant.

SLATOR CRAY BLACKISTON, JR.
Economic Officer
Port-au-Prince (1950-1952)

Slator Clay Blackiston, Jr. was born in 1918 in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated with an A.B. degree from the University of Virginia. During World War II, he was an aviator in the U.S. Navy. Mr. Blackiston joined the Foreign Service in 1947 and served in Amsterdam, Stuttgart, Port-au-Prince, Jerusalem, Tunis, Jeddah, Cairo, Amman, and Calcutta. He was a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations in 1971. Mr. Blackiston retired from the Foreign Service in 1975. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: Then you went to Port-au-Prince where you served from 1950 to 1952. What was Haiti like in those days?

BLACKISTON: Haiti was a lot better than it is today. But I can tell you that Haiti was bad. The President was a guy named Magloire. The population then was only four million with ten thousand square miles. There had been a mahogany furniture industry there, initially making furniture; alternately as they cut down all the trees they were just turning out mahogany bowls. There was a Forêt des Pins, which was supposed to be a sort of preserved area which I guess they didn't cut so much. But Haiti was just a complete disaster. The erosion of the land; as they burned wood for charcoal it increased the erosion. There were a lot of Americans living there though and there were some quite nice houses. We lived up in Pétionville which is at an altitude of about 1200 feet so it wasn't the hot, muggy heat that you got downtown. Of course the Marine occupation of Haiti had lasted from 1915 to 1934 and actually some Haitians would tell you

privately that that was the only time that Haiti actually functioned properly. The roads were maintained, the telephone system worked. When I was there the telephone system was strung from tree to tree with nails bent over to hold it up. There was a sizable so-called Syrian population there; they were merchants. They were Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and so forth. It was certainly not as bad as it is today.

Q: What were you doing?

BLACKISTON: I was economic officer.

Q: What sort of economics were you looking at?

BLACKISTON: Haiti's main crop is a peasant coffee crop, no plantations. I had a very good friend in the coffee business; he was also an Alcoa Steamship agent. The peasants would grow the coffee and bring it down to Port-au-Prince be sold and they would add stones to increase the weight. This was a game that everybody knew; the stones were removed and the weight was docked. There was also a sisal crop there and, of course, sugar-cane--Haitian-American Sugar Company. There had been a period when they grew pineapples, but that sort of petered out. During the war they had grown a plant, an experimental crop, for use as rubber. So there was a fair amount of economic activity to report on. HASCO, the Haitian-American Sugar Company--has been nationalized now--was the big company in Haiti and we knew the president and its officers quite well. Also the electric company was run by Americans; quite a few Americans ran hotels there. There was a hotel called the Ibo Lele which is up above Pétionville, a beautiful view, run by a man named Andre Roosevelt; some obscure member of the Roosevelt family.

Q: As an economic officer how did you deal with the Haitian government? What was your impression and how did you work with it?

BLACKISTON: They were always accessible. You could go and talk to them but they would tell you they didn't have very good statistics. This all gets a little vague for me because of much passage of time so I can't remember. I remember we presented credentials to Magloire because a new Ambassador arrived. He had had an accident in Washington, hit by a car, so he only stayed there about four months as he had to leave for medical treatment.

Q: This was William Decourcy?

BLACKISTON: No, it was Perce Travers, a very kind man. Decourcy had been there; I talked to him before I went to Haiti because he had been an inspector, but he left before my arrival. John Burns was the chargé, he later became Director General of the Foreign Service. He was there most of the time.

Q: Were we concerned about communist movements or any political movements?

BLACKISTON: Yes we were. There was a communist movement, I can't think of the name of the man who was the head of it. Yes we were concerned about that and of course this was the height of the cold war. We probably exaggerated the threat but considering the poverty of the

people and the abysmal conditions many of them lived in there was that potential there. We had Guantanamo Bay not far away--our second son was born there because we had an Rh factor problem, my wife and I, and they couldn't handle it in Haiti, although there was a pavilion for Americans where they gave you better treatment than in the rest of the Haitian hospital. But anyway we arranged with the air attaché to fly my wife to Guantanamo. My wife stayed there with a Navy Commander and his wife until she had the baby and then came back. We had a naval mission in Haiti headed by a Coast Guard officer; we also had an Air Force mission. Should I speak about this?

Q: Yes, would you.

BLACKISTON: The head of the Air Force Mission was Bob Smith who later became, I believe, a lieutenant general. The head of the Haitian Air Force was named Eddie Roy who was a mulatto and a very personable guy, spoke excellent English. I knew him fairly well; but his big buddy was Bob Smith. They would fly off to the States to Air Force bases where Eddie was apparently perfectly accepted. Bob Smith once told me that they had been someplace in Alabama and I think they were in the men's room and some redneck type says "Smith, gee you're going around with Negroes." And Smith said, "Oh no, he's a Haitian." Roy quickly hands the guy a cigar, "Have a cigar." And they're buddy, buddy. Poor Eddie Roy was later killed by Papa Doc Duvalier's goons. Now I met Duvalier.

Q: He later became known as "Papa Doc."

BLACKISTON: Yes. He was a medical school graduate; a doctor, from the University of Michigan, I believe. And at that time, this was before we had programs like AID--you remember Truman's Point Four program--we had a medical mission, an agricultural mission and an educational mission. This "Papa Doc" worked for our medical mission and I was introduced to him. That was before he had gotten into politics. Should I tell you about some of the problems of the medical mission?

Q: Yes.

BLACKISTON: One of the big problems in Haiti is yaws. I don't know whether you have heard of yaws but yaws is akin to syphilis. The World Health Organization was trying to make a name for itself, at least that is the way we saw it or we heard it from our people in what you might call AID. WHO would make a sweep through the countryside inoculating everybody against yaws and there would be remarkable improvements. But our people said this was not a permanent cure, you have to return to inoculate them subsequently so our people followed that approach and there was a big conflict between WHO and the Americans on how you treat yaws. I don't know, I am not a doctor obviously, but it seemed to me that the American approach made more sense.

MILTON BARALL
Deputy Chief of Mission
Port-au-Prince (1954-1956)

Milton Barall was born in New York in 1911. He entered the Foreign Service in 1948 and served in Chile, Haiti, Spain, and Argentina. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: Well, in 1954 you were assigned to Haiti as the deputy chief of mission, and you served there until 1956.

BARALL: Right, I was a Class Four officer and a second secretary. I think they peeked at the promotion list, because they sent me down as a first secretary. About two months after I was there, the promotion list came out and then I was a Class Three officer.

Q: Class Three at that time was about the equivalent to colonel.

BARALL: That's right. There were no deputy chiefs of mission below Class Three, so this was a really very early promotion in jobs. Not necessarily in salary.

Q: How did you get the job?

BARALL: I didn't ask for it. I had been in Washington for four years, which was a long time, and it was time for me to go abroad again. They were considering me for a variety of jobs. I had developed a lot of what they recognized as political competence as a desk officer there, and as an officer in charge, and I knew the senior people. Inter-American Affairs was a bureau where we all knew each other, at that time. It's so big now that I don't think they can know each other. I didn't think I was in line to be a DCM anywhere, because I was still junior in rank. But I was fluent in French and, apparently, had demonstrated the ability to deal with a variety of problems. And maybe someone up there liked me.

Q: The ambassador there was Roy Tasco Davis, who was a non-career ambassador. What was his background, and how did he use you, and how did he deal with the relationship?

BARALL: In about 1920, he won Missouri for the Republicans. As a reward, he was made, at that time, Minister to Costa Rica and another country in Central America. And apparently he was very good at it, at that time. He was sort of a homespun philosopher, a Will Rogers type. He had been, for some years, a college president. Not a great college, but a college president. And he was an attractive man at that time--at a time when we had no major problems in Latin America. He got along well with people, and I understand that he spoke Spanish.

When the Republicans came back into power with Eisenhower, they wanted to reward this man, a good Republican. So, as a retread, in the 1950s, he's brought back and sent to the wrong country at the wrong time. He didn't know any French at all, and that was the official language of the country, though most of the people spoke only Creole. Ambassador Davis had good common sense, was gentlemanly, if not courtly, and was wise in public relations. But he was a fish out of water in Haiti.

Q: The language was Creole.

BARALL: Ten percent of the people speak French and the rest speak Creole, and most of them are illiterate. And I don't know how you're going to make people literate in any language if they don't have a written language and they're illiterate anyway. That's another point.

Ambassador Davis rarely told me what to do though I tried to keep him informed of what was happening on a daily basis. He was interested in knowing the important people because he was a politician. He knew the president. But he never questioned the motives or actions of the president.

Paul Magloire was president at that time. He had taken power through a military junta. But he was then the sole survivor of that junta. For Haiti, he was a pretty good president. The people would say: We're accustomed to presidents who steal, but they must leave something for the people. And he was smart enough to leave something for the people.

So Davis wanted to know the president and members of the cabinet and whatnot. But he did not try to talk about anything serious with them, like issues that might arise between the two governments. He was in favor of supporting and aiding the Haitian people, and that was one of his Will Rogers ways of being popular. He sought popularity, and he was popular, because the people knew him.

Q: Well, here you are, the deputy chief of mission. Here is a man not only with political clout but also an older man, a man whom you could respect in other things, at the wrong place, wrong time and all. How did you deal with this?

BARALL: Well, he wasn't difficult to deal with, because he didn't have an awful lot of interest in what was happening, in the kinds of things that we report. I wrote the whole Weeka, for example, with no input from the Ambassador and only occasional paragraphs from the economic section.

Q: A Weeka being a weekly report.

BARALL: A weekly report that was then a major reporting instrument, from every embassy, of what happened in the past week. We covered political, economic, and everything else. I occasionally asked our economic man whether he had any information, but otherwise I wrote the whole thing myself. And I would send it in through the ambassador. Almost invariably he just initialed it and sent it on. In other words, I gave him an opportunity to check or change or do anything he wished, but he didn't seem to be interested in controlling what I would consider normal embassy activities, which were left to me.

Q: What were American interests there, from your perspective, during the '54 to '56 period?

BARALL: Well, it's an impoverished country, and everybody wanted to help the poor people. How you help them I don't know. We had a very big AID program. We had about half a dozen people in the embassy, and we had an AID mission of 36. Curiously enough, one of the people who worked for that AID mission was Papa Doc Duvalier, who was a legitimate MD and a public health physician. We used him in that capacity as a public health technician.

By the time I arrived in Haiti he had gone into exile because he had political ambitions. But the chief of the AID program, and a lot of other people who knew him, believed he should be president, because all he wanted to do was help the poor black people who were undernourished and ill.

The political problem in Haiti is the constant struggle between the blacks and the mulattos for control. There is an aphorism (which probably comes from Africa because you can hear the same aphorism in Brazil) that says: "A rich black is a mulatto, and a poor mulatto is a black." Color was the important issue in Haiti. A Frenchman wrote a book about the 79 different shades of color found in Haiti.

I had a wonderful cook, who was not literate, but she spoke English very well because she'd been cook for American families for about 30 years. She would ask who was at the party last night, and I'd tell her, and she'd say, "Well, I never heard of him. Is he a black man or is he my color?" I thought she was black.

But the Haitians themselves were interested in graduating people, how they fit with respect to color.

The US was interested in improving the lot of poor Haitians though the government was not. We also looked after American interests in the major sugar refinery and in sisal plantations. The US also financed a large multi-purpose dam in the Artibonite.

Q: During the Henry Christophe period, or Toussaint-L'Ouverture, I think, the United States helped put down a revolt of mulattos against the blacks who were in control at that time. This was in the 1800 period.

BARALL: Well, it was after Toussaint-L'Ouverture. I think you're talking about the time of independence, when they started with two separate parts of Haiti. One was run by a mulatto general named Petion, , the other was run by Christophe, a black. And that was around 1804, when they became independent.

We did have some small business investments and we wanted them to keep going because they provided jobs. The big problem in Haiti was class, and we didn't know how to cope with that.

We had occupied the country for 19 years. A man named Herres was still there. He was a sergeant in the Marines. His job was supervising the bank, and he learned so much about it that he was paid by the Haitian government to keep on working in the bank. He tried to keep them honest, but they had a mechanism that made it impossible. They had, and they still have today, something called non-fiscal receipts. This was money received from taxes on common things like salt and matches, that went into a separate account controlled by the President. They never were fiscalized, were never put into the accounts, or the budget, or received by the state as revenues. It was available to the president. Some of it went into his personal account, and some into other things.

Q: How much control did we have?

BARALL: At that time we had no control. The occupation had ended with Roosevelt, in 1934, with his Good Neighbor Policy. We had some controls because we could raise or lower the amount of aid that we were giving them. And some of that aid was very important. The big dam financed by the US Export-Import Bank was supposed to create lots of agricultural land, hydroelectric power, irrigation, water in homes. We were putting a lot of money into loans and some grants. We were also an important factor in road repair and things like that. Because of the climate and the rainfall in Haiti, maintaining a road is almost impossible.

Q: How could we use this leverage? What were we trying to use it for?

BARALL: Well, we couldn't use it to interfere in internal affairs and tell them to stop stealing. I don't think anybody could have done that. We could have a little bit of influence with the president or with the secretary of commerce or others. But our problems were not major.

The only fairly large American investment was in the sugar business. The company had land, and they planted it with sugar cane. Then they processed the sugar cane and made sugar and exported it to the US. We rarely had any problems because the head of the sugar company had been there for 30 years, was respected and he knew all the politicians. And whatever he did, pay them off or whatever, he was a good enough public relations man that he almost never came to the embassy for help. He always wanted to know us, of course, in case he needed real help. But in the two years I was there, we were not called upon. He took care of things himself and was a major employer of labor--mostly with few skills.

We wanted Haiti to be a democracy. The last thing we did, before ending the occupation, was run perhaps the only honest election in that. And a good president was elected.

But after the US forces left, things just disappeared. We had a very good agricultural experimental station and a very good hospital. Shortly after we left, the hospital was looted, the equipment taken out. At the agricultural research station, whatever equipment they had was taken, food was taken, or whatever they were producing. Experiments were abandoned and they went virtually out of business. They tried later to reestablish the agricultural experimental station under the Haitian government, but it never became important.

I had a very funny experience in Haiti. I don't know, whether history would have been different if I hadn't been transferred to the National War College. I told Ambassador Roy Tasco Davis that he really ought to try to do something with Magloire, who was a popular president compared to most others. He was not all that brutal. He got his share of the loot, but he was relatively decent compared with others who have run Haiti.

I suggested to the Ambassador that we have a little visit with the president and see if we can't convince him to run an honest election on the grounds that if he did so, he would go down as a great man in the history book of Haiti. He could be the President who established Haiti as a democracy forever. (At that time the president served a 6-year term and could not succeed himself.)

Davis was against that. He didn't think it was proper for the US to influence the government. I nagged at him for awhile, and finally he said all right, he'd go. We made the appointment. We went to the palace. And since he didn't speak French, I did the speaking for him. Magloire spoke a little bit of English but not well. The President and all the cabinet, of course spoke French. So I made the pitch and translated for the Ambassador what I was saying, so that he followed the whole thing.

Magloire finally said, "I will do that."

I said, "What a wonderful promise. You will never be sorry, Mr. President."

Soon thereafter I was transferred to the National War College. I think I would have stayed on happily in Haiti for a few more years. But I wasn't going to give up the National War College, because I was at the upper limit of the age when you could be admitted. I think, 46 was the maximum age at that time, and I was 45. I wanted to go to the National War College.

After I was transferred, I think both the President and the Ambassador forgot that little meeting, or didn't pay any attention to it. Roy Tasco Davis didn't really want the President to step down. He thought he was running the place pretty well, even if he didn't seem to have great devotion to democracy.

But an election was held about a year after that. Magloire was unable to keep himself in power. And in that election, it was Duvalier who was elected president. When he showed his real hand, he was not very much interested in helping the poor blacks but in exploiting them, it was too late to do anything. He knew the techniques for maintaining control.

One other thing. We had a visit from Vice President Nixon. He went to the Dominican Republic and Haiti. I flew to the Dominican Republic as the advance man, and briefed him on the short flight from that country to Haiti. Then I translated for him on a national hookup, which was about four stations. Arrival statements and so forth. The Foreign Minister and the Vice President both had statements, so I translated both ways, simultaneously. I also did a whispering translation for the Vice President when he met the President. I was kneeling behind and telling him what was said.

After the call on the President, the director of Middle American Affairs, and the Assistant Secretary of State, drew me aside and asked; "What about Roy Tasco Davis. We've been hearing some stories about him. Should we replace him?" That's a hell of a thing to ask of a DCM.

My answer was, "Well, I don't know, he's got some problems, but he's pretty popular here. He doesn't cause any major trouble. I think I can handle him. Leave him here." They took that advice.

RAYMOND E. CHAMBERS
Binational Center – Deputy Director, USIA

Port-au-Prince (1955-1957)

After serving in the US Navy during World War II, Mr. Raymond E. Chambers became a Fulbright Scholar in France. Mr. Chamber's career later included posts in Haiti, France, Lebanon and Washington D.C. Mr. Chambers was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: You were in Haiti when?

CHAMBERS: From August, 1955 through the end of 1957.

Q: What was the situation there at that time as you saw it?

CHAMBERS: It was marvelous. A very interesting place. The president and all of his cronies were doing just like everybody else was, taking graft and dipping into the public treasury. But a very interesting thing was happening. These guys were building roads and extending electricity up into the hills where they had mistresses, because they had mistresses in just about every county or province to keep tabs on what was going on. So the graft was being fed back into the economy because of this. Life was extremely pleasant. I was very well received by the Haitians because it wasn't long after we got there that our landlord came to me and my wife and said to her, "Would you be willing to tutor the President's brother's children in English?" And she said, "Yeah." So three times a week she would go up to Arsen's house and tutor the kids. We got to know everybody in Haiti who was of any account. The reason was that about two weeks after we got on post, we were invited to our future landlord's home to a party. He sent a car for us. We pulled up to the gate and there was music and people and we were the only two non-Haitians there. The president was there and all of the cabinet. Everybody was there and our landlord was godfather to the president's kids and vice versa. We were welcomed and there wasn't a single party that took place afterwards to which we were not invited. The embassy was not getting the invitations and they were mad.

Q: What was the binational center doing?

CHAMBERS: The binational center was probably one of the best institutions that USIA ever invented. What they did was the Public Affairs Officer got a hold of three Haitian businessmen and three American businessmen in any community and got them to say, "We want to form a binational center." That meant USIA would provide directors and an English language instructor, director of courses, etc. to make this thing run. So we were to be grantees. There were about ninety of them, primarily in South America, although some were in Europe, but primarily in South America and the Far East. Whoever was on the staff there was telling the host country nationals the same thing that the Public Affairs Officer was telling them, but they believed us. We had access because of what we were doing...teaching English and other subjects...to all the important people in the country because they all came.

Q: Did the embassy use you or not?

CHAMBERS: Yes, but not. In other words they used me to get word out some times but they felt I would be interfering if they listened to me. I was unofficial...that was interesting too. Any official relationship we had to the embassy or USIS was taken away from us. We had a regular passport, weren't entitled to diplomatic plates or official plates, were not given access to the commissary, etc. until the host country government asked for it. This is the way it worked. We were paid by a check through the US Information Agency. We were strictly speaking civilians. The Haitian government, in my case, sends a letter over to the embassy requesting that we be given official plates and access to the commissary, etc.--all of the things that any Foreign Service Officer would have--which they granted. But we were not official. When I called on the Public Affairs Officer and reported to him, I didn't do it during the daytime unless I went to his house. In other words, there was no open official recognition of our contact. But I would report to him what we were saying and what was being said, etc. So in that sense USIS was using us. But I had contacts in the Haitian community, multiple political parties, which the embassy didn't want to hear.

Q: What were the main concerns of the US in Haiti during this period?

CHAMBERS: The main concern was building the Haitian economy. It was economic with Point Four and USAM, the forerunner to USAID. That was a big thing in Haiti at that time. As far as the political aspects of it were concerned I think it was just routine reporting. There wasn't anybody from CIA there at that time.

Q: Was the problem of immigration to the United States, over population a problem?

CHAMBERS: Consular work was slow. There was consular work but nothing like today. The problem of overpopulation was an enormous problem. There was tremendous erosion in Haiti and I feel USAM didn't take care of that properly. The Haitians had used up all their mahogany and they brought in while we were there tens of thousands of mahogany saplings and got them planted. But because they had no firewood or any other way of cooking, they uprooted all these saplings and made charcoal out of them. If they had (I wasn't very popular for saying this) just simply planted the saplings and brought in charcoal for the next ten years, they would have stopped the erosion and helped them develop their own industry. But nobody wanted to hear this. I am not complaining, but they just didn't want to hear it because I wasn't part of their team.

EDMUND MURPHY
Public Affairs Officer, USIA
Port-au-Prince (1961-1963)

Edmund Murphy spent three years in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1946. His career as a Foreign Service Officer with USIS has included positions in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Haiti, and Finland. Mr. Murphy was interviewed by Allen Hansen on January 30, 1990.

Q: Well, your next assignment was as Public Affairs Officer in Port-au-Prince Haiti from March 1961 until September 1963. That, again, must have been a dramatic change from rather sophisticated Buenos Aires to Port-au-Prince.

MURPHY: It was a very drastic change, but it turned out to be a really interesting assignment, not all pleasant because Papa Doc was the President for Life at that time and it was a very regressive administration as everybody knows. It also was a very, very frustrating experience for the American government because they tried to provide aid to one of the poorest countries in the world, but no matter how they did it, Duvalier always managed to use a fair portion of the aid for his own political purposes and it could be argued that the Americans were helping to keep him in power. Of course, there were those who charged that Americans had created him because he had been trained in the United States with American scholarships for medical training--he was a doctor. He was groomed and educated in the United States. No one suspected he was going to turn out to be such a catastrophe and while I was there toward the end there was a strong movement against him. The revolt was crushed, but during the revolt there was an attempt to kidnap his son, Baby Doc, who succeeded his father afterwards.

Q: But obviously, they were not successful.

MURPHY: No, they didn't get him. I'm not sure they ever knew exactly who did it, but in retaliation for that act several houses were burned down in the hope that by burning several they would get the one that they wanted to get.

Q: And as you noted about Argentina being similar 30 years ago to the situation today, the same can be said for Haiti, unfortunately.

MURPHY: It certainly can. The only difference is you had a man long entrenched when I was there. Now you have one who's trying to get entrenched but who hasn't been very successful. There has been a succession of aspirants, but it looks as if nobody can survive very long in Haiti. One of those, who lasted only a few months, was a very good friend of mine: Leslie Manigat. He was a presidential candidate in recent times, but had to flee before elections could be held.

Q: And I think the U.S. had some high hopes for him.

MURPHY: Oh, yes. Because he was an intellectual and a Democrat in his beliefs. I don't think he would have made any attempt to be a dictator. But he didn't last very long. He's in exile now. One my Haitian friends, who knows Manigat well, lives a few blocks away in Chevy Chase.

JACK MENDELSON
Consular/Political Officer
Port-au-Prince (1964-1966)

Dr. Jack Mendelson was born in California in 1934. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Dartmouth College and his Master's from the University of Chicago.

His foreign assignments include Port-au-Prince, Warsaw and Brussels. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed him on February 12, 1997.

Q: You were in Haiti from when to when now? This is...

MENDELSON: '64 to '66.

Q: What was the political situation in Haiti when you were there, when you arrived?

MENDELSON: The United States had just sailed some heavy warships into the Haitian harbor. I think in '63, before we got there, because there had been rioting in the country. Papa Doc had recently declared himself President "*a vie*", President for life.

Q: This was Duvalier?

MENDELSON: Papa Duvalier...the good old days...

Q: This is the father?

MENDELSON: This is Papa Doc, not Baby Doc. This was the real...you know...when men were men! Relations with Haiti were very bad at that time and Papa Doc was a very unpopular leader. To put it in very simple and probably incorrect terms, basically we were so seized with the Cuban issue that we refused to deal firmly with Papa Doc. He constantly said he was the only person who stood between a Communist takeover or between where we were then and a Communist takeover in Haiti. So we basically continued our relations although they were very, if you put them on the Human Rights scale, they were very bad.

Q: What was the issue why we considered things very bad?

MENDELSON: Well basically because he: (A) disrupted the democratic process, (B) was quite repressive to any political opponents. So it was a dictatorship with lots of imprisonment, disappearances, and executions about which I will speak in a moment. American tourists who had built the country up in the late '50s and early '60s just stopped going. The place was going downhill dreadfully. We had poured a lot of AID money into it. It was corrupt. It was a sinkhole for AID money. Apart from that it was an interesting place, a really interesting place.

It was a combination of it being a third world country, tropical, a totally different culture, and a first tour. All of which made it a great, great two years. We had a family problem we can talk about briefly. But my wife and I were passionately taken by local culture, voodoo, by local art -- Haitian art's a big deal -- by the people who were just as charming as could be, the ones we dealt with of course were the educated ones who spoke perfect French and very good English. Whites were not in danger. I don't know what it's like now. They were never in danger when we were there. And always there was this persistent, and I'm sure it's still there, this persistent ambivalence about the United States. Some people saying that the occupation was the best thing that had ever happened to Haiti and the other ones resentful that the Americans had sort of taken it over.

Q: We're talking...

MENDELSON: We occupied it in, I believe, 1919, and stayed until 1934 or something like that. That would have been 17 years, 15 or 16 years, but that was a moment that was looked at both positively and negatively by different people or by the same person. The occupation did do a lot, but it was degrading. It did a lot in the classic sense of what occupations do, the roads got built, things worked, there was a certain amount of, let's say, reduced venality in the bureaucracy. I won't say it was eliminated but on the other hand the tradition of the occupation was that the Marines dealt only with the mulattos and that the Black population was considered as it was in the United States sort of beneath caring. So there was a lot of ambivalence.

In any case when we were there Whites were really quite safe from the political violence and there was no domestic or street violence. It was safer than New York or Chicago and certainly Washington. But it was not a happy place. It was beggary poor. We lived exceedingly well and you always felt this incredible gulf between the way you as a member of what would be the elite in the country. You felt this gulf between [the way] you lived and the way everybody in the country lived. I was a \$7,200 a year FSO-7 first assignment and I had the nicest house I'd ever lived in because all of the foreigners had cleared out after Papa Doc took over. We were living in the house of the Mercedes Benz dealer and it had a swimming pool, three servants you paid \$13 a month and the house was \$160 a month. You know it was just incredible. We lived very well, but you also felt how enormous the gulf was.

I did what was at the time a junior officer trainee rotation. It started out with a year in the Consular Section, which was bloody hard work because you had an interminable number of applicants. I did half a year in the Administrative Section as a GSO, General Services Officer, which I thoroughly disliked. I disliked the whole idea of it and this is probably heretical to put down in the Foreign Service Oral History, but I disliked the whole idea of the kind of service that we were expected to provide as a GSO. I felt it was both degrading to provide it and degrading to ask for the kinds of things that people might ask for.

Is this too controversial to put down in an oral history?

Q: No, no, absolutely not.

MENDELSON: I thought people behaved and asked for things they would never...behaved in ways and asked for things that they would never ask for back in the United States. I did it but I thought it was wrong. I knew when I was not a GSO we were always very, very sparing of our demands on the Embassy because I always felt that was wrong.

My last tour was in the Political Section, which was clearly what I wanted to do.

Q: Who was the Ambassador and how did he run the place? This was your first post.

MENDELSON: It was my first post and perhaps I wasn't qualified to make a judgement.

The Ambassador was Lane Timmons, Benson E., I don't know what the E stands for, Benson E. Lane Timmons, so his initials were BELT...B-E-L-T. The guy was a little, petty tyrant. When my boss in the Consular Section went on leave, it was either R and R or home leave, the Ambassador came down and went through his in-box to see what hadn't been done, and went through his safe to see if there were things he had been sitting on. I had very good relations with him, but all the layering of the Embassy sheltered me. All of the senior people who had to work with him just found him impossible to deal with. He was very bright and very energetic, he was, what's the word, he was kind of dismissive of most of the people who worked for him as not being up to his standards. I think he was universally disliked.

The morale was very bad and I remember hearing stories that the Department was going to send out a DCM who was very mild mannered and very good with people who would try to cushion the impact of the Ambassador. The Ambassador just broke the DCM eventually. There is a lot I don't know of the story. I wouldn't have been made privy to it because I was a lowly Consular Officer. But there was a lot of backroom politics about how to deal with this guy who, you know, in a funny way kind of represented our Papa Doc.

Although, as I say, he and his wife were terribly nice to both me and my wife and in a sense I feel badly having to be critical of him but his reigning in the Embassy...he never got another Embassy, incidentally, after that. While he was a very bright guy he just didn't do well with people, he was too egotistical and too dismissive of others and it wasn't good.

Q: While you were in the Consular job you say you were terribly busy. What were the demands?

MENDELSON: They were just physical. You had people lined up every day. You worked all day.

Q: These were for visas?

MENDELSON: These were for visas. There were two kinds, immigrant or tourist or visitor. It was an impossible workload. It was so busy that they actually managed to send us down some part-time people to help out. It was just a terribly busy place.

I remember one very funny now, looking back, a very funny incident. When we arrived, my wife and I, we took a boat, which you could do, maybe you can still do it now but it's getting tougher, we took a boat from New York to Haiti. We were put up in a hotel while we went house hunting. The hotel was a totally empty, big tourist hotel, vice nice, probably still there. I remember the first week we were there I was in the swimming pool or around the swimming pool, and I leaned over the outer side of the area the pool was in. It had a little railing you could lean over and look into town. Actually it was a big retaining wall that went down 50, 100 feet, I don't know, a big wall. I remember seeing a crowd of people marching up the hill. I didn't have any idea what it was. I just kept watching. We had been there four days, five days; God knows what was going on. I see the crowd come up to his retaining wall that I'm standing at the top of looking over and I suddenly notice there are a couple of people in uniform and they are putting a couple of people up against the wall. All of the sudden I recognized that this was an execution taking place as my

feet. I thought oh, my God, if this is happening in the first week what is this two years going to be like!

I never saw anything like that again, but it was quite an introduction to my Haitian tour although it turned out, as I said, it turned out to be fascinating. From the point of view of what it was I had started out being interested in as a younger person, sort of ethnographically, sociologically, artistically and politically, and I'll get to that in a second. It filled our lives with really very interesting and new sounds and sights and smells and experiences.

Politically it was very interesting because you found out something about raw politics in an underdeveloped country representative of the Third World. So it was a great learning experience that I actually had. Clearly there were other experiences in the Foreign Service, but this was my Third World learning experience and I knew nothing about it and nothing like it. I thought it was very valuable and very, very interesting at the same time.

The other experiences, skipping ahead just for a second, I also got to find out about the Second World, because I served in a Communist country in the good old days, when Communism meant something. And I also served in Western Europe, so I got all of it. But the more interesting, in all honesty, the more interesting of my assignments were Haiti and then the Second World assignment in Warsaw because these were political cultures, not just social cultures, about which I knew absolutely nothing.

Q: Probably the best thing to do is to talk about the political life and your observation and what we were doing. It was also an interesting time because President Johnson was coming in and doing something about civil rights in the United States. I was wondering whether there was any spillover to that?

MENDELSON: No. The two things that there were spillover from...I can remember beginning to argue about Vietnam in 1964, about the wisdom of bombing or whatever it is we were doing I can't remember...

Q: We were just inserting our troops in '64.

MENDELSON: Okay. Okay. Maybe this was '65 then. When did we start bombing?

Q: Oh, it was probably during around that time.

MENDELSON: Maybe it was '65. Probably it was, because I got there in September of '64. I can remember '65 and '66 certainly, arguing not so much with the Haitians because Vietnam was not an issue with them, but arguing with others in the international community about the wisdom of the U.S. intervention. I can remember at the time, and I later changed when I was in Belgium, being a pretty strong advocate of "we have to do something about this," being pretty supportive of policy. I write that off to loyalty and naivete or ignorance at the time. But I can remember arguing about it and defending the U.S. bombings.

The second thing that happened, and I can't remember exactly when this was, '65 I guess, was the Dominican Republic intervention. That was another factor I guess that fed back into why we were prepared to stay on good terms with Duvalier at the other half of that island, because the Dominican part we were afraid was moving too far to the left. Of course Papa Doc was the bulwark against the whole island going the way Cuba was going. We were absolutely possessed by this Cuban-Dominican-Haitian set of islands off our shore at the time.

I can remember that the Dominican intervention was a big moment where we had to sort of pay attention and do reporting. Nothing happened.

Q: We put the 82nd Airborne in at that time and whether that was needed or not is still in dispute.

MENDELSON: We were pretty trigger happy on these issues at that time. And we were very, very concerned about left-leaning administrations anywhere so we tended to overreact.

Q: Did we identify any left-leaning opposition to Papa Doc or was anybody left-leaning?

MENDELSON: My recollection is that this was a sort of gossip-mill with a constitution, is what this country was basically. What you were reporting is what people were saying. There was so much gossip going on and that was what you were collecting and reporting. Nobody knew anything really. It was very difficult. You knew that people were disappearing and you knew that Papa Doc was executing people and leaving them at crossroads as sort of warnings to the population not to oppose him. There were landings. I remember a dozen people landing in the North and then being tracked down by Papa Doc.

There was all of this very small scale opposition that was going to be basically crushed by Papa Doc who had not only his army, but he also had these plainclothes mobsters called the Tun Tun Makoots. Plus he had the Volunteers of National Security who were sort of like the Boy Scouts. They marched. And I remember seeing a parade of this ragtag gang. They were all given the same shirts and kerchiefs and to keep the kerchiefs together they were using matchbook covers and carrying wooden guns. They didn't even have guns.

I may be disremembering that but it was sort of like reading *Nostramo*, you know, like reading Joseph Conrad. The level, I mean they could certainly kill you, but the level of sophistication was something out of the 1890s, a ragtag small country somewhere in the colonies. And this great feeling of loving to talk about the politics by the Haitians and also the fear of somehow getting caught up in it. Most of the people who were having anything to do with the Embassy were keeping their nose clean politically, were paying off the Tun Tun Makoots and were allowed to stay in business and not be harassed as long as they responded to the shakedown. I think you might find something similar to that in Russia now. You know if you are prepared to payoff the Mafia, you can stay in business. This was on a universal, countrywide scale.

There was still money in the mulatto classes and the international community was there but there was a great deal of distaste and dislike for the methods that Duvalier had employed in the country. I think we were reporting all of the gossip we could possibly collect, but I don't think we had any impact at all that I'm aware of on Duvalier's policies.

Q: Well there is no real political life, I mean it was all a Court, wasn't it, rather than saying the Chamber of Deputies did this or that...

MENDELSON: Yes. That's right. It was a rubber stamp. To the degree that it acted it was a rubber stamp. And you are a right, it was a Court, basically, everybody was in his pocket and all the Cabinet owed their job to him and it seemed that the point of becoming a Minister was to make your money and then hoped that you survived after you were kicked out. You look at the budget and 95 percent of the government budget was salaries. There was no program money. What could you get done? All you could do was keep the bureaucracy employed. Nothing would get done. Everything would either be siphoned off or go into salary. There were no programs to speak of.

We had a malaria eradication program being run by AID that was reasonably successful. I don't know whatever happened to it. Malaria was not in the city but if you went out into the country you probably had to be careful. Certain parts of it were still malaria infested. I remember going down there, as you probably should do, reading instruction and starting to take these malaria pills. I think after the third week I was told that everybody starts out but they don't keep it up. By the third week I stopped taking the malaria pills. But we also didn't have occasion to go very many places in the country; it was very difficult getting around. Cape Haitian up in the North you might go to, and we did a couple of times.

Q: Was the Embassy staff pretty well absorbed into what, I suppose what you call the mulatto community?

MENDELSON: Yes. The person who was the Consul, Bill Mall, who we liked very much and became quite friendly with, was very adventurous. He was the kind of Foreign Service type that I would have liked to be and I think I became. He was very interested in the local culture and he got to know some of the local Voodoo priests. He took us along to some ceremonies where they were not hotel ceremonies, but we would be out in the country. We would be the only white people and would be surrounded by hundreds, literally hundreds, of Black worshippers. You never had any sense of fear or concern at all. I want to repeat the fact. You were like an anthropologist, observing, and actually you were honored guests. I mean they were delighted to have you. He and his wife were interested in art, local art, and my wife, who is an artist, got very interested in local art. She is also a musician. She was the only white voice in the church choir. And we also met many of the artists and got beautiful paintings that we still have and carvings and all kinds of things. We had a terrific introduction into the society through the Consul.

The Economic and Political Counselors, as I remember them, the Economic one would have dealt almost uniquely with the mulattos because they were the owners. I didn't know him actually that well. The Political Counselors was the nicest guy, a Latin American specialist. Couldn't have been nicer. Again I suspect his clientele or his circle of friends was mixed because Duvalier's argument was that he was inserting the Blacks into the political process.

Q: Because Duvalier actually represented the Blacks.

MENDELSON: That's right, which was his argument. Because he was married to a Mulatto, very carefully chosen from the available Africans, his argument was that he was reversing the power order whereas the Mulatto few had been ruling the Black majority, this was going to be the Black majority ruling the Mulatto few and themselves. And to a large degree or to a certain degree that was the case but the economic and social power of the Mulattos at least when I was there, and I know it is right now, was never broken. But there are Black faces in the governmental structure, which was not a real government but a Court as you suggested, there were more Black faces in that than there had ever been before. And the Political Officer, of course, would have dealt more broadly with a broader set of society.

Let's see, I'm trying to think whether anyone else would be... I don't remember anything about the USIS operation.

Q: Before we end this segment, I thought we would do this and then cut this interview off at this point. Were there any events that happened there that particularly come to mind or was it all one of a piece?

MENDELSON: Well, actually, we had a personal tragedy there and so did the Consul that I should mention. I mention it because it actually shows the Government was really quite good. The event that stands out in my mind is the execution that I mentioned.

It happens we had a child who was born with severe handicap problems, birth defects. The Government was really quite good. They evacuated my wife and the baby and took care of... the baby died, unfortunately for us emotionally, fortunately for everybody else. The baby died about half a year after he was born in the United States. I must say I always get choked up on this.

I must say the Government really behaved very well. They took care of everything. We took the baby to Chicago, where my wife could live with her parents while the baby was being taken care of. In any event, we lost him. That was a tough moment.

And what happened to the Consul is his baby, he had several children, but his baby drowned in his swimming pool. It was really ironic that two people in the same section, within the same year, had these tragedies. In that case the Government obviously had nothing to do. But I do want to make the point, since this is an oral history about the Foreign Service, how there was a certain amount of bureaucracy but basically everything worked out very well. Everything was taken care of by the Government.

So my wife and I were separated for about a half a year and so that was a tough moment, but then we came back together and we had another child, we had had one, this was our second child. Things eventually turned out okay. But in terms of events, there was nothing more that I can think of.

What's interesting is that while we were reporting on palace politics in Port au Prince we had also a sort of roiling set of palace politics within the Embassy involving the Ambassador and the DCM. But I was a little bit removed from it and don't have any longer, if I ever had, a real grasp of how this was worked out. I remember being told that Washington was sending down... Barney

Taylor was the man who the DCM had turned to, a very nice guy, to help smooth things over. While he was an absolutely marvelous guy, the Ambassador just chewed him up and spit him out eventually, too. But there were so many bad reports, as I say, he never got another ambassadorial job. He left, finished his career, but he left and I think he ran, I'll look this up, but he became administrator of a hospital, I think, on Long Island. I think he is totally retired now of course. I feel a little chagrined about criticizing him because he was always quite nice to me, but I know it was not a good situation there.

CLAUDE G. ROSS
Ambassador
Haiti (1967-1969)

Ambassador Claude G. Ross was born in Illinois in 1917. He received a B.A. from the University of Southern California and entered the Foreign Service in 1940. Subsequently, he served in Mexico, Ecuador, Greece, New Caledonia, Lebanon, Egypt, Guinea, the Central African Republic, Haiti, and Tanzania. Ambassador Ross was interviewed by Ambassador Horace G. Torbert in 1989.

ROSS: One day, my code clerk came in waving a telegram. It was the drop copy of a cable that had gone out asking for agrément for me as ambassador to Haiti! That was the first I had known about it. Half an hour later, another cable came in from the Director General, apologizing for not having been able to let me know beforehand that things had reached this point, and asking if I have any objection to going.

Q: You couldn't very well say no.

ROSS: No. I was delighted at the prospect, because it was, in many ways, a more important assignment. It was closer to home. At the same time, it was an interesting Post, as I found when I got there, and had one of the best embassy residences in the entire Foreign Service.

Q: It's a lovely country.

ROSS: It's a poor country and in some ways it's in a shambles. It's been deforested, and in the rainy season, all the top soil gets washed down into the sea. There are really raging torrents running down through Port au Prince. I'd only been there a few months when a young Brazilian who was I think, vice consul in Los Angeles, came down to take charge between ambassadors. We had one of these torrential rains, when he was out in his car. He arrived at a bridge over one of the large ravines, and he saw he couldn't cross it, because there was a tremendous flow of water coming over it. But out on the bridge in a Volkswagen Beetle was a Haitian woman, and she panicked. Instead of staying in the car and maybe opening two windows and doors so the water would run through, she got out of the car. As she was being washed over the side, he rushed to help her, and the two of them were carried over, down the gullies, out through all kinds of drainage pipes. We found the bodies in the sea the next day. It was terrible. But that was the

kind of thing that could happen in the rainy season, when you had this great amount of water coming down.

There would be water in the street in front of the Embassy. My Embassy limousine was a big old black Checker with a high wheel base, and I could get through it, but nobody else could.

Q: You would also get in with a top hat on.

ROSS: I certainly could, and it had jump seats and lots of room, you know.

Q: But it wasn't very pretty.

ROSS: I had a chauffeur, a very dark Haitian, with the unlikely Haitian name of Waldemar Ulbnick. Haiti was a challenging assignment. I went out there with instructions to maintain correct but cool relations.

Q: This was Papa Doc?

ROSS: This was Papa Doc. Our relations were really sort of in neutral--low ebb, anyway. He had PNGed Gerry Drew in 1960 and I don't think Robert Newbegin was there very long. In 1963 he PNGed Ray Thurston.

Q: Was Lane Timmons there?

ROSS: Timmons was my immediate predecessor, and he was there for a couple of years. I gather I was sent there because they needed a change of ambassadors, because morale was very low.

Q: Lane could be quite difficult.

ROSS: Yes. I had never met him until I met him in Washington on my way to Haiti. He was very good at briefing me. He was an excellent officer, but I guess what we now call interpersonal relationships . . .

Q: He was a perfectionist and a workaholic.

ROSS: I didn't know all of this at the time. This I was told later. But morale was bad when I got there. We worked on it. I just escaped being PNG myself, although I had good relations. Papa Doc, for some reason, decided he liked me, and I always used to say, "God, I wonder what I'm doing wrong?" (Laughs) But this was on a purely personal level, because I avoided, as much as possible, official contact--that is to say, any one-on-one meetings, because I knew that any of those was going to be the occasion of his asking me for something that we weren't going to give him. So normally I would go only when I was instructed by my government, which wasn't all that often, for the same reasons, or when he called me in.

It was in these sessions that I learned early on how closely he kept watch on everything that was going on in the country. I mean literally. Nothing could happen that he didn't know about.

Somebody could be washed ashore or landed ashore anywhere, and within a matter of hours, Papa Doc would know about it, because this guy, or whoever it was, would run into some Haitian who had never seen him before, a stranger. The bush telegraph would start operating, and the first thing you know, it would get back to the president.

I'd go in, and he would always ask me about my wife. Her first name is Antigone, and old Papa Doc fancied himself as a great scholar and classicist, and he loved this name Antigone. "Eh, Antigone, comment va-t-elle?" Sometimes he'd reach in the drawer and pull out a series of photographs taken at some party we'd been at the night before, you know, dancing up a storm at the Dominican Embassy or whatever. So he really knew what was going on there. As I say, nothing happened that he didn't know about.

Of course, one of the consequences of this was that personal security was great. Our secretaries could have walked home at midnight without any fear of molestation. You had to go next door to Jamaica to be mugged or raped or whatever. Partly, I suppose, it was because the Haitians didn't have any colonial hangups. They were, after all, the second independent republic in the Western Hemisphere. They had been ruling themselves--not very well, it must be admitted--but they had been ruling themselves all this time. So they didn't have that kind of colonial hangup that existed particularly in the British colonies.

Q: Like Cuba, I guess.

ROSS: Yes. We had a minimal aid program there. We had suspended our aid program about the time that Thurston was there, because we found that funds were being diverted from aid projects and equipment was being used for things that they weren't sent down there for. So we stopped all of that, including work done on the Peligre dam, to electrify it. Thereafter we had a minimal program.

Our chief thing, which brought in about a million dollars a year to the country, was a program to eradicate malaria. We paid for people to go out in teams to spray everything in sight to eradicate the mosquito. There we kept our hands on the money pretty much, so that we were sure it was being used for the purpose intended, and that it did go into the economy. A million dollars was substantial input to a country where the fiscal revenue might not have been more than about \$30 million a year.

That's another point, of course. At least 40% of the revenues were siphoned off. They'd go to Papa Doc. He had something called the Régie du Tabac, the tobacco monopoly, really. It collected from all kinds of things, and the money that went into the Régie never got into the regular budget.

Q: That was his own personal money?

ROSS: He used it for all kinds of private things, you see, and this, of course, drove the IMF up the wall. They had a representative there part of the time when I was there, an Argentinian, a very nice chap and able, I think, who tried to get some order into things. The man who was, in effect, their Secretary of the Treasury, the chief financial man, had a way to keep himself

covered and in office and protected. He squirreled a lot of money away in I don't know how many bank accounts in the United States. He was the only one who knew where it was. So they had to keep him alive if they ever wanted to get this money. But that was the kind of financial situations that prevailed.

Q: Did the Duvaliers actually squirrel away as much personally?

ROSS: They were certainly thought to have squirreled away a lot, since they had access to all this money that wasn't being used for real budgetary purposes. So it was generally thought that they had bank accounts in the States and in Switzerland. Not to the extent or the degree, I think, that was later the case under Baby Doc, but then, of course, by the time he was in office, or after he was in office, aid programs began to increase in size, so there was more of it siphoned off in various ways.

Q: You said one thing that fascinated me, and that was that they didn't have a colonial mentality, and yet, for criepe's sake, we had Marines in there for 25 or 30 years.

ROSS: That's right, we did. But you see, they'd been gone since 1934, and one might have thought that an American administration there that long would have worked some permanent change, but, in fact, it didn't. We weren't in there long enough for a whole generation to have been raised and educated under American tutelage, if you will. All the old politicians came back in again when we left, and reverted to their old ways of doing things. We did keep somebody in there for a while, controlling finances, but then he left, too.

Q: But you didn't have an anti-American bias, particularly, because of that?

ROSS: Not really. The American ambassador was proconsul. It's not a role that we sought out, but that was it. To get back to what we were saying a little earlier, the Latin ambassadors all came around to me. I spent a lot of time talking to them, telling them what I thought of the situation and what was going on, or how we looked at this or that. Once in a while they'd have an input of some use, but a lot of them didn't. We had some Latin ambassadors there who didn't speak French. Fortunately that wasn't as much of a handicap as it might have been, because all of the top layer in the Foreign Office spoke Spanish probably as well as they spoke French. However, I was surprised to see that some Latin countries would send ambassadors who had no knowledge of French.

My last comment on Haiti is the visit of Nelson Rockefeller there in July of 1969, which went well. It was a one-day visit. It was difficult to keep him on schedule. A lot of advance preparation had been required, and I was in close contact with the Foreign Office and other agencies of the government there in preparation. It did go reasonably well, except that we had a hard time keeping him on schedule, because he was seemingly more interested in shopping for objects d'art. He had a great acquisitiveness, you know. He'd buy up all kinds of things.

Q: Was this an official visit?

ROSS: Yes. It was the last of the several swings that he made through Latin America, and Haiti was one of the last countries he visited. With Papa Doc still in power the White House wasn't all that enthusiastic about it. But Haiti couldn't very well be left out, so there was this one-day overnight visit.

Q: This was the beginning of the Nixon Administration?

ROSS: Yes. This was July of 1969. I took Rockefeller around to call on Papa Doc, which he couldn't very well avoid doing. But Rockefeller didn't want me in the meeting, so I absented myself after making the introductions. At the end of the meeting, Papa Doc led him out onto the balcony, presumably to look at the view, but anyway, somebody took a picture of the two of them. I can't remember now if they were shaking hands, but they were standing side by side. That hit the papers in the States, with some adverse comment, as I recall. But the Vice President couldn't come to the country without seeing Papa Doc. He did have a session with key members of the Cabinet, as well, to which he arrived late. He was with my wife, running around, buying up things. She kept trying to get him to move on. She knew what the schedule was, and she had one of his own people in the car, too, with them. Every time they'd stop, he'd come to her and say, "Can't you do something?" Rockefeller finally made it, but it got to be a little dicey before he turned up. We were all squirming. That was one of the last events before I left Haiti.

Several weeks later I got a call from John Burns, who had just left Tanzania and was now Director General, asking me if I would go to Tanzania.

JOHN R. BURKE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Port-au-Prince (1970-1972)

Ambassador John R. Burke received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1947 and a master's degree from Wisconsin University in 1955. He immediately joined the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Thailand, France, Vietnam, Haiti, Guyana, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: You went from Vietnam in '69 to the War College for a year, and then you went as a deputy chief of mission to Port-au-Prince, Haiti where you served for two years from '70 to '72. What was the situation in Haiti as you arrived there, and what were American interests there?

BURKE: Well, I should say that this is one of the few posts that I've actually tried to get in the Foreign Service and made an active effort to get the post. When I was finishing--well, I was in the War College. I did talk to people in ARA and said that I had an interest in going as DCM in Haiti. My interest stemmed from the fact that I've always been interested in Haitian history and the remarkable fact that it is, after all, the second republic in the Western Hemisphere and that the Haitians were able to drive out Napoleon's army in 1804 and been independent off and on ever since.

I had been intrigued by Duvalier and the role he was playing and the general reputation he had. I felt that he probably wasn't going to be around all that much longer, and it seemed to me that it might be an interesting time to be in Haiti, especially if he were to expire and be succeeded by another regime. Because as of that moment, nobody knew what would succeed or who would succeed the Duvalier government.

The situation prevailing when I arrived--you may recall that the relationship with the United States was very tense between Haiti and the United States starting roughly in '61-'62, and I'd say it bottomed out, if you will, in around '64-'65. Our ambassador was PNGed at one stage. We had cut off foreign assistance to this country, and our embassy was down to a very small size. The Haitians, the Haitian government, was almost destitute in terms of resources or income or whatever. But it was just getting slightly better toward the end of the 1960s. Duvalier had survived a couple of coup attempts, and there was some manufacturing outfits from the United States beginning to move in a very small scale.

But generally, I'd say, the relationship between the embassy and the government of Haiti when I arrived was reasonably good, although there was still tight control by the palace over contacts between Haitian officialdom and the U.S. Embassy. We were received at the various ministries, but the Haitian officials were inhibited from accepting social invitations and that sort of thing.

Q: Could they make decisions? I mean, did you find the officials there an effective group, or did it all have to be done by Duvalier?

BURKE: Oh, I think the palace had a control over the decision-making machinery. But you did have certain officials in the government who were reasonably effective. Several of the ministers, I'd say, were extremely well trained. Many had been trained in the United States or France. And they were highly intelligent individuals.

Q: Could you describe a bit about the embassy, how you viewed the staff there and also the operating style of the ambassador? Was it Clinton Knox who was a career officer?

BURKE: I'd never met Ambassador Knox before my arrival in Haiti, as a matter of fact. We had exchanged letters after my assignment, and I knew a fair amount about him. He had been in the OSS during the war.

Q: That's Office of Strategic Services.

BURKE: Yes, as an enlisted man. He was black, had gone to Williams College, gotten a Ph.D. in history from Harvard in 1939, and studied abroad in France, and worked under William Langer at Harvard--he was his major professor working for the doctorate--a very interesting individual, a very intelligent man. I, as I say, didn't know him before my arrival. We developed a relationship, which I think became a very warm relationship, and he treated me very well.

It took a while for me to gain his confidence, as was to be expected. I think any DCM going into an embassy has to earn the confidence of his chief of mission and has to adapt himself to the

operating style of the ambassador. But once I gained his confidence, he gave me pretty much a free hand of running the embassy as long as I was careful to keep him informed about everything that was going on. But he had a very easy hands-off style as long as he was kept informed.

He was able to develop--between the two of us, we decided that, after all Haiti was the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere--still is, for that matter--but a modest aid program certainly seemed the proper way to go in terms of trying to rehabilitate the relationship with Haiti. After all, we had occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934 and run the country for all intents and purposes--"we," the U.S. And this was of interest and somewhat of a surprise to me. There was a great residue of--I'd say affection may be too strong a word, but liking for Americans in Haiti. It was something, it seemed to me, that we could build on, and it might stand us in good stead after President Duvalier shuffled off his mortal call or whatever.

So we pushed for this very modest aid program. I think we asked for \$70,000 a year--the ambassador's fund, really. But it was a fund that we could use with a fair amount of local control over what it was given for. And these were self-help projects, many of them, and \$70,000 went a long way in a country like Haiti. So it was good seed money. And later on, of course, we were able to get AID to send an AID officer in and the government could begin to submit aid projects. And it developed, I think, in a very favorable way.

Duvalier did die not too long after I arrived. I think it was nine months after I arrived.

Q: He died, I think, on April 21, 1971.

BURKE: Yes. So I had been there just about nine, ten months. And in the meantime, of course, he obviously knew he was quite ill. He, after all, was an M.D. himself and probably could estimate his own condition as well as any of his doctors. So he, surprisingly enough to us, pushed through a referendum in February, I think, of 1971, which established his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier as his designated heir and successor to follow the father.

In the meantime, through a series of devices, Ambassador Knox had gotten to know Duvalier. Through a series of devices and initiatives, really, we were able to establish not a friendship, but a relationship between Duvalier Père and Ambassador Knox. We had, for example, the moon rock at that time, and it came through when we were able to get an appointment with the President to show him the moon rock, and he was intrigued with the idea.

Then we were able to convince Charlie Meyer, who is then the assistant secretary for Latin America, to include Haiti during the course of a swing that he was making through Latin America. It was the first time that anybody of that rank had visited Haiti in probably close to a decade. And in conjunction with the Meyer visit, Ambassador Knox had a sit-down dinner--I think for about 50 people--and we were able to get almost everybody of any consequence in the Haitian government to attend. Now, this did not include President Duvalier, but every one of his ministers was there including people who had never been seen socially by the embassy staff in any situation.

So these series of moves and initiatives, I think, did serve us well in April 1971 when Duvalier died. And, in fact, I got a call late that evening from Ambassador Knox, who said he had at 10:00 suddenly been summoned to the palace, and he had asked whether or not he couldn't bring me with him. And the foreign minister had agreed. So the two of us went down to the palace, and he was speculating--I drove my personal car, and the ambassador and I went in my personal car--speculating as to what was likely to come up during this session. He was a little apprehensive being summoned to the palace at this late hour. He was wondering if something had developed in terms of the relationship and he was going to be PNGed or what.

But in any event, I suggested to him that perhaps we were being invited down to say adieu to Duvalier Père. And, in fact, when we arrived at the palace, the foreign minister announced to us that the president had died, and that his son was being sworn in that very evening as the new president of Haiti. And we were the only non-Haitians in the palace the night Jean-Claude was sworn in as president.

Q: Well, did you get involved in anything, you and the ambassador, trying to ameliorate the rule of Duvalier's, say, regarding political prisoners or this type of thing?

BURKE: Well, in 1970, things domestically had calmed down to a large extent. When I arrived, there were probably about 16 or 17 people living in asylum in various embassies in Port-au-Prince, in Latin American embassies, because the standard practice in Latin America is for Latin American embassies to accept asylees until such time as they can be given safe passage out of the country. I think there's a feeling on the part of some that if they do it for somebody, maybe when their time comes, they'll be given similar hospitality.

But as far as the internal political situation was concerned, it had calmed down to a large extent, and there was a slight bloom of prosperity on the economy. The government was participating in activities of the United Nations and the OAS and welcoming various foreign groups down, and they were attempting to put their best foot forward. So the obvious oppressive atmosphere that had persisted or existed during the period '62, '63, '64 had shifted somewhat, and the Duvalier regime was really installed. And even though there had been an aborted coup attempt by some Coast Guard officers in early 1970 before my arrival, the reaction to that coup effort was not as violent and suppressive as previous efforts had produced. So the atmosphere seemed better.

Now, obviously in our conversations with Haitian officials, we stressed the importance that Haiti begin to play a more--what do I want to say--not responsible role, but take its place in the community of the Western Hemisphere, and that aid was necessary and the only way that you could assure that Haiti would likely get aid either from the international lending organizations or banks or governments was to have a climate of investment, and you weren't going to have such a climate of investment if people were getting shot and dragged off to prison and that sort of thing.

Now, how much influence we might have had, I think the tide was moving in that direction anyway. Then when Duvalier Père died, the father died, and Jean-Claude took over, he had a small coterie of ministers who were--after all, he was only 19 or just barely 20 at the time--coterie of ministers who were advising him. And these were the younger group of ministers who were, say, a generation down from the people in the earlier period when Duvalier first came to

power in '57--people like Andre Ramone, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs; Whitner Cambron, who was Minister of Interior; and Fitz Cénias, who was Minister of Information.

Now, some of them had better reputations than others, but all three appreciated the importance of Haiti and especially Jean-Claude projecting a more reasonable image than had been the case previously, and that's what they set out to try and do. And I think that they were modestly successful and that Jean-Claude in his first months and years, really, as president did project such an image, and foreign assistance began to flow into Haiti at rather remarkable rates.

Q: How about immigration from Haiti to the United States? Was this a concern or was it kept under pretty good control?

BURKE: Well, immigration was a considerable problem, because every Haitian, like every Jamaican, like every Trinidadian, like every Guyanese, probably in their heart of hearts would like to come to the United States. And, of course, because of Haiti's international reputation, which was not the best, when some Haitians would try illegally to pile into a boat and make their way to the Florida coast, they were oftentimes represented as political asylees. Quite honestly, I think that in most cases they weren't. They were economic refugees, if you will, given the fact that on one-third of the island of Hispaniola you have roughly six million people. So the arable land is extremely limited. It's mountainous. It's eroding because of deforestation. And the prospects for any Haitian are rather limited. And if you can get to the United States, maybe you can get a job doing something. So that they were economic refugees, but almost none were really political refugees.

Q: And you were so reporting in--

BURKE: Well, we had one case where one of these boats got as far as Guantanamo Bay. I think there were something like 60 or 70 on board. And we had a three-way negotiation between Guantanamo, Washington, and Port-au-Prince as to what we should do with them. And we went to the government, and we said, "Look, these people on the basis of the interrogation they've undergone in Guantanamo, it does appear that these people really were attempting to enter the U.S. illegally. Now, we would like to bring them back, and the Navy would like to get rid of them. But we want assurances that they will not be oppressed in any way for having attempted to leave the country illegally. I mean, we certainly don't want them thrown into prison. Can we get that sort of a guarantee from you"

They're flown back. Their boat was a wreck. As they were flown back from Guantanamo and to the airport, they came into the airport, we had the prior assurances of the government that they would not be maltreated or mistreated for having attempted to leave the country without visas, and we checked up on them for some months thereafter to make sure that this was, indeed, the case. And on the basis of that experience, we were even more convinced than ever that so many of these who did make it to Florida and, of course, did claim political asylum were probably economic refugees in almost every case.

HENRY E. MATTOX
Economic Officer
Port-au-Prince (1970-1973)

Dr. Henry E. Mattox began his Foreign Service career in 1966 as an Economic/Commercial officer in Nepal. His career also included positions in the Azores, Brazil, Haiti, the United Kingdom, Egypt, and France. Dr. Mattox was interviewed by Ambassador William N. Dale in 1993.

Q: After being in Kathmandu, you went on to Port-au-Prince, I believe. I was wondering when you were there, Jean-Claude Duvalier was the ruler, president at that time I gather. How did the United States government react to the way that his succession was handled? Or what did you hear about that?

MATTOX: I was there when the old man died, and Jean-Claude, Baby Doc, as he was called abroad but not in that country, of course, took over with the backing of his mother and of the military at the time. Otherwise he would not have been able to do anything. Papa Doc Duvalier, while I was there from '70 to '73, I guess it was--Papa Doc ruled in a benign fashion because all of his opposition had been killed off. So life was rather pleasant, and rather unruffled. There were no roundups, there were no public executions as had been the practice for quite some time. People would disappear but no American citizens were involved so we were not directly involved. When he died, rather unexpectedly--well, he was sick for a day or two, or a week or something like that, and he designated Jean-Claude as his successor. We all thought this could not actually be happening: The boy is 19 years old. The old man is out of his mind, or either this has been faked, or something or other. So Jean-Claude came to power. The old man died. I went through the enormous crowds there at the palace to view the remains lying in state. I wanted to do this, facetiously I should say, I wanted to do this to make sure he was dead. And he was, Jean-Claude took over with the embassy predicting seriously that he would not last more than six months. He turned out to be a lot more astute than we thought, even so young. And he was utterly ruthless too; well, at least he gave that appearance because at public events often he carried a great big automatic pistol in his hand, hanging down by the side of his trousers. He turned out to have a lot of his father's genes. He isolated his mother. He didn't ever exile her or anything, but he isolated her completely. He had some of the military people who might have been rivals exiled, sent off to Miami which was sort of the Devil's Island for Haitians in those days, unless they were exiles with a lot of money. And he lasted, as we all know, for a very long time.

Nothing changed for the majority of Haitians, and nothing could really be expected to change. Jean-Claude turned out to be just as astute as his father, and maybe even more so, in stripping the treasury, and building up his Swiss bank accounts.

I met him several times, but he never said a word. He appeared to be really quite dumb, but he wasn't.

Q: Perhaps his sign of intelligence was to keep still sometimes. Was it apparent then that Haiti would become the economic basket case it is now? Or were things rather better managed?

MATTOX: No, things were very bad then, though they may perhaps have gotten marginally worse since then. We had a very small aid program at that time because Papa Doc Duvalier was in disfavor. It was administered by me and the economic section until about--I'd been there about a year and a half--until AID sent out an AID officer, and we worked jointly. He became a very close friend with whom I still correspond. But it was only about total \$3 million a year, something like that, or less, I can't remember.

The place was a basket case then. One of the best programs designed to alleviate problems and suffering were those administered by the relief agencies, the voluntary relief agencies like Catholic Relief. These were funded directly by the AID program which thereby indirectly funded certain activities.

Q: This is beyond the \$3 million?

MATTOX: No, included. It permitted the U.S. government on a very limited scale to fund certain things such as rural health, not developmental projects. There were no road improvements going on at that time. The IBRD would not touch the place. We marveled, as I started to say earlier, at the way that 150 years previously Haiti had been one of the wealthiest countries in the world with its sugar production and its shipping. In fact it was a shipping stop off point. One of the busiest ports in the world around 1800, other than I guess London, was a place called Môle St. Nicolas up in the northwest corner of the country. By the time I was there, the country was importing sugar. It was on our sugar quota and we were pushing sugar on them, selling sugar. The country produced some of the finest coffee in the world, but not enough really for any significant export earning. It was a basket case. It's a worse basket case now perhaps.

ROBERT S. STEVEN
Special Assistant to the Under Secretary for Management, Department of State
Washington, DC (1971-1973)

Mr. Steven was born in Massachusetts and raised there and in Rhode Island. He graduated from Brown University and served in the US Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. Mr. Steven became a specialist Latin America, where he served in Mexico, Chile and Argentina. He also served in Burma, Vietnam and Japan and had several senior assignments at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Steven was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: What was your impression of the bureaus, particularly the geographic bureaus? Did they sort of go their own way?

STEVEN: I'm looking back an awful long way. My feeling is that it depended to a fair extent on what was happening in the bureaus. If there were a major crisis going on somewhere, then naturally it drew high-level attention. If things were quiet and nothing much was happening, as it usually was in Latin America at that time, nobody much paid attention and the bureau ran its

own affairs. It depended also on the Assistant Secretary. If he had influence or power and so on, he played a bigger role. It was sort of to me more a reflection of what was happening in those area and how much high-level attention was being brought to it. There were the usual questions of the budget, where you never have enough money, so where do you make the changes. Trying to close a post is very similar to what the military has found now trying to close a military base. You'd be surprised who comes out of the woodwork. You propose to close a post, and suddenly people you never imagined have gotten interested in keeping it open. Terrorism and incidents were something of a problem. We had two or three of them. An example that might be interesting historically: The ambassador in Haiti, Clinton Knox, a political ambassador, political appointee, was kidnapped in his own front driveway and taken into his own residence and held in his own residence under guard by a terrorist group. He got put on the telephone and called the embassy and was told to tell them that he was being held and that they had to negotiate. They wanted release of some political prisoners in Haiti. He called the embassy and spoke to the senior officer who was there in the embassy at the time, who was a consular officer, and unfortunately instead of really sort of telling him what was happening, he said, "There's an emergency. You've got to come out to the embassy right away." He went to the embassy and became a prisoner along with the ambassador. That was an interesting development, but then finally they figured out what was happening, and the deputy chief of mission, whose name I genuinely do not remember, was a USIA - no, no, there was no deputy chief of mission. He had left; the position was vacant. A new one was in training back here at the FSI, but he hadn't reported yet. The next senior officer who should have taken charge was the USIS counselor. He was told what was happening and said, "Well, I don't know. I don't have much to do with that sort of thing," and he left and went home, leaving the next man in the embassy, a very junior political officer. The junior political officer got on the telephone to the operations center and said, "Hey, I've got a problem down here." That's when Macomber heard about what was going on. So, Macomber being the direct type, said, "I've got to go down there and straighten this out," so they called the Air Force. The Air Force whipped up a Jetstar transport. Then he got the DCM out of training, the DCM designate out of training, here at the FSI to go down, and he got then the Assistant Secretary for the security side to come and told him to bring some weapons, so the guy showed up with a pistol. We roared on down to Port au Prince in the middle of the night and got there and got run over to the presidential palace where Baby Doc Duvalier was in charge, and we spent most of the day in his outer office with Macomber going in occasionally to see him. I never saw but was in the outer office with Tonton Macoute, literally dark glasses, white shirts, dark blue pants sitting on the window sills all around the room with carbines and Tommy guns staring at us. Every time you moved, their eyes followed you like this. So for most of the day they negotiated by telephone with these people.

They finally negotiated that these people would be allowed to be a plane that would be flown in, and I think the Mexicans finally agreed to fly a plane in and they would board the plane and at that point they would release the hostages. The papal envoy, the nuncio, was to be the guarantee, and he would go with these prisoners to the airport to make sure that they were on. They didn't release the political prisoners, but the idea was that the hostage takers themselves - I think there were three of them - would be allowed to leave. They flew out, and then we spent the evening. It was already late evening again, so we decided to stay overnight and then fly back the next day, and I am in the proud position of being able to say with a perfectly straight face all through my

career that I slept with the Assistant Secretary of State for Management. We shared a room. Yes, I slept with him. Eyebrows [raise] until I explain. An interesting experience.

Q: Did they do something to the USIS officer? That this was not a good performance.

STEVEN: I think discussions were had with him later, yes, about this. The more interesting part though was the poor consular officer who had suffered through this, because he was a pro. He had every right to loudly and vociferously protest what this idiot ambassador had done to endanger him, but he didn't seem to want to. He was a consular officer, and by sheer coincidence they were reopening the consulate at Salzburg. Salzburg opens and closes quite regularly over the years. We were reopening it, and the question was coming up as to who would be the principal officer, and there was quite a competition for it. It was quite a popular idea. Everyone wants to be principal officer in Salzburg. And I brought up the question and said, "Look, we have so-and-so here and he's just done a very gusty professional job of not embarrassing the Department. He could easily have but he played the role like a real pro. Don't you think he deserves some consideration for that?" Macomber immediately picked it up and said, "You're right, absolutely." We found out he had all the necessary qualifications, the rank, experience and every other thing. Really it turned out he was functional. So he was given Salzburg as a reward essentially for handling the situation in Haiti. That was typical of the things, anything that came up in the Department, but the saddest thing was the reform effort, as usual.

JON G. EDENSWORD
Visa Officer
Port-au-Prince (1972-1973)

Jon G. Edensword was born in the state of Washington, and graduated from school in Illinois in 1956. After a five year teaching career, he entered the foreign service in 1968. Edensword has had tours in Martinique, Liberia, Haiti, Jordan, France, and Mexico. He was interviewed by Raymond Ewing on October 30, 1995.

Q: So from Monrovia, Liberia, you went to Haiti, to Port-au-Prince. Did you do it by way of some training or did you go there directly?

EDENSWORD: No. I went directly - I mean after home leave. I did non-immigrant visas, immigrant visas, American citizen services. In those days, we dealt over a wooden counter, and I can still remember *ton-ton macoutes* with pistols on their belts and you were just talking to them across the counter. I asked at the time, "Isn't this strange" and nobody seemed to think it was strange. Now, of course, nobody would be allowed in an embassy with a loaded pistol. We were across from the Embassy on the Harry Truman Boulevard.

Q: What was the period that you were there, Jon?

EDENSWORD: I arrived there in 1972 and left in 1973. I was only there for one year. I think it was in early 1973 (I have forgotten the exact date), Clinton Knox was the Ambassador and he was kidnapped. It was the first real kidnaping of a Foreign Service officer that I was aware of. His residence was half way up the hill to Petionville, and it's on a small road that also goes to one of the most popular golf and tennis clubs. He had a big American car and a driver, but we weren't trained for those things in those days. Some little car just pulled over and the driver got out to see what was going on and found himself looking at a pistol. So they took the driver and Ambassador Knox to his residence and said that they wanted to contact the head of the Leopards. The Leopards is a special unit in the Haitian military. Interestingly enough, the main Embassy contact with this general was the Consul General, Ward Christianson, who was head of the Consular Section.

Q: *Who was your boss.*

EDENSWORD: He was my boss. For reasons not clear to me, the Ambassador called up Ward and asked him to come up to the Residence.

Q: *The Ambassador who was being held?*

EDENSWORD: Being held at pistol point. Ward went up there and was also taken. They were not held for a very long time - I think it was less than forty-eight hours. There was a whole series of demands: there was some money, they were to free some political prisoners, and they were to be given an airplane out of there. Ward told me later that they kept him tied up and every time that they wanted to make a point, they would drag him out on the porch and hold a pistol to his head and say that they were going to kill him if their demands were not met. So it was a very difficult time for Ward. They sent one of the early teams down... On that team... I'm trying to think of the guy's name. He had been the ambassador to Amman. I think he was head of M [Management]. Anyway, they brought this team down and they were negotiating. I ended up at one point... we had an open line to the department op-center at the palace, and I was on that line. We had two phones, and one phone was the line that I was listening to: I was just keeping it open and they were negotiating in the next room. The Americans were in one room, and the Haitians were in a room next to it. At one point, we got cut off to the Op [Operations] Center, and I couldn't get dial tone on that phone again. So, I picked up the other phone, and I re-established contact with the Op Center. The Haitians came running out of the room and said that I had to hang up and get it back on the other phone, which I did, but it made me believe that it was the only one that they could listen to. So I passed the information on. They asked for a million or two million dollars and they eventually - Jean Claude Duvalier was able to raise seventy-five thousand. Many of the people they claimed were political prisoners they couldn't find: they were either dead or gone. I think they let a few go. The plane was brought in and they flew to Mexico with the seventy-five thousand. The Mexicans took the money away from them, but let them fly on to Chile. Then Ward and the ambassador were released. In those days, we didn't really understand what those hostages were going through. They brought Clint Knox back to Washington. After some thought, they told Ward, "Why don't you consult with the Immigration Service in Miami and sit on the beach for a few days and get yourself together." Ward aged visibly from that experience. They probably should have had someone holding his hand. He came back, and they offered him practically anything he wanted. I think he took Salzburg. They

were re-opening Salzburg, and they made him Consul General then. This was also the period that we decided the best response to a hostage taking situation was not to negotiate, but be firm and if you make concessions and pay ransom then it almost invites more similar acts. The U.S. did not pay the ransom; it was the Haitian government - Jean Claude. I guess what he did was to go to the banks. Now, the stories were that when the Mexicans sent the money back, they sent it to Jean Claude, and it wasn't his money, but he kept it. That's the story that made the rounds. It was the bank's money.

Q: The people that instigated this, were they a part of a known group that was against the government?

EDENSWORD: This was the time that Allende was still in Chile, I think. I think they were members of the Communist Party, but I may be wrong there. They were not unknown.

Q: They were Haitian?

EDENSWORD: They were Haitian. Yes.

Q: It sounds like quite an exciting and difficult period.

EDENSWORD: One of the things that came out of this was that the number two in the section had to leave unexpectedly and I asked if I could move into that job - it was two grades higher than my personal grade. So Ambassador Knox called me in one day and said, "Look, you can't have the job unless you're on the promotion list and I'll try to find out if you're on it." When he was in Washington after this kidnaping, because it took place right after that, he apparently did try to find out. When he came back, he said, "No, you're not on the promotion list." So, somebody was assigned and a week later the promotion list came out and I was on it. A week later, he called me in and said, "I am confounded and I am very unhappy and I am going to call Washington, if you would like, and ask that they give you a more senior job." Knox had his contacts because about three days later, somebody from personnel called me and asked me if I wanted to go to Jordan and be chief of the section. So, it was interesting because he thought he had done on promotions, but it didn't prove to be good. But when he wanted to, he could move personnel. So, I got a very nice job in Jordan.

Q: Before we leave Haiti, you said that it was a rotational arrangement, you moved around visas, and what else did you do?

EDENSWORD: I did non-immigrant visas, immigrant visas (in those days, Western Hemisphere immigrant visas were special: the law was different for Western Hemisphere applicants than it was for the rest of the world,) and American citizen services.

Q: At that time, it was quite a large consular section, of course. It still is.

EDENSWORD: It wasn't as big as it was the second time I was there, but there were two or three junior officers, a deputy and a chief : so it was about five - five Americans and probably eight or ten foreign service nationals.

Q: Besides this hostage taking incident, what was the general political situation in Haiti at the time?

EDENSWORD: Well, it was the beginning of the Jean Claude Duvalier period. His father had died in 1971 and Baby Doc took over. One of the things that happened while I was there: he had been left with Whitner Cambron who was the Minister of the Interior, the single most powerful minister, who was a good friend of Baby Doc's mother. They used to refer to Baby Doc as "Basket Head" since he had a large round head. Everybody thought that he was a little dim and would probably be run by his mother and the previous ministers, particularly Cambron. Shortly after I got there, his mother, who had maintained an apartment in Paris, was in Paris and Cambron was on one of his many trips to Miami. Jean Claude reorganized his cabinet. He fired Cambron. His mother came flying back. He created his own government. People at that point realized that he was a little smarter than they had given him credit for and tougher.

Q: And that he was going to be his own person?

EDENSWORD: Yes, his own person.

Q: Did you ever have any contact yourself directly with Jean Claude Duvalier?

EDENSWORD: At that time, I may have met him once just in a large reception, but not really. He was still single at that time, too.

Q: How old was he?

EDENSWORD: He was still in his late teens...like eighteen or nineteen. He was pretty young when his father died.

Q: Did his father die about a year before?

EDENSWORD: His father died in 1971, that's when he took over. I arrived in December of 1972: it was about a year. I was at the beginning and ten years later I was at the end of Baby Doc's rule. Interestingly enough, there were three junior officers at the post at the time who were also there ten years later when Baby Doc left: the number two at the station and the second political officer, Jerry Desintiana. When I came back ten years later, the political officer was the DCM; the guy who had been the Deputy at the station, was the Station Chief; and I was the head of the Consular Section.

Q: We are all so touched by the long term planning of the personal area - it actually works in career development. (End of tape)

Jon, we were still talking about your first assignment to Haiti and I think you were first beginning to describe how the Embassy first became aware of the kidnaping of the Ambassador and his driver.

EDENSWORD: I not even sure how Jerry got the word originally. I think the Ambassador called the duty officer, who must have been Jerry. Jerry went into the Embassy and informed the DCM and they got other people there.

Q: From the Department, of course.

EDENSWORD: From the Department, yes. Jerry was sort of managing the initial hours of the thing. Everybody was kind of flying blind in those days: there weren't the standing instructions we have now. I think this was the first real kidnaping of an American diplomat. There may have been something before that.

Q: Do you recall whether it happened on a weekend or in the evening?

EDENSWORD: No, it was in the afternoon when he was going home from work.

KEITH L. WAUCHOPE
State Department Haiti Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1973-1974)

Ambassador Wauchope was born and raised in New York, graduated from Johns Hopkins University and, after a tour in the US Army in Vietnam, in 1966 joined the Foreign Service. His specialty being African affairs, Mr. Wauchope served in a number of African posts, including Ft. Lamy, Asmara, Bamako and Monrovia. In 1989 he was appointed Ambassador to Gabon, where he served from 1989-1992. In his several Washington assignments Ambassador Wauchope dealt with personnel, cultural, Latin American affairs and Sudan affairs. Ambassador Wauchope was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

WAUCHOPE: At the time I was on the Haiti desk, Baby Doc was running the president and was all of 23 years of age. He was a totally incompetent and not really in control of what was going on. His mother, Papa Doc's widow, retained a great deal of influence and ruled the country along with the Minister of Interior. They were the power behind the throne if you will, and they were completely unscrupulous, as you can imagine. We had a lot of economic dealings with Haiti because they did a lot of assembly work for the U.S. market. They do a lot of clothing piecework. Virtually all the baseballs used in the United States are sewn in Haiti. Tourism was an important source of revenue. There was constant political instability of a government that really didn't know what it was doing. While the Tonton Macoutes had largely been suppressed, they had not gone away. Yet they posed no real opposition to the Duvalier rule during this time, but there were issues and situations that would make for an interesting tour. Just one was the immigration issue. There was an unending wave of boatloads of Haitians pitching up on Florida beaches. If

they did not make it to Florida, when they spotted a Coast Guard cutter or any boat, they would stove in the bottom of their boat and then start screaming in distress. There would often be 50+ people on a 26-foot boat. Maritime law requires a vessel to rescue those people in peril of death, and land them on the first landfall and, of course, that would be Florida. They would be rounded up and take to the INS court for an exclusionary hearing. The court would formally exclude them despite their claims that they were political refugees fleeing persecution if they were sent back. In reality, they were economic refugees, but they had been coached to make the claim. There were Haitian organizations in Florida which would send an attorney to the INS court. They would ask for a 30-day continuance and in that 30, days they would all disappear into American society. We estimated in the early 70s that there were 250,000 illegal Haitians in greater New York area alone. They had their own radio stations, their own newspapers, and their own soccer leagues. Virtually all Haitians in the U.S. were illegals. They all claimed to be political exiles, but they were just peasants or small businessmen. Remarkably, there was a great debate as to why the U.S. was so hard on Haitian refugees as opposed to the Cuban refugees. The allegation was that Cubans are white, and Haitians are blacks. It is nowhere near that simple, needless to say. We identified Castro and his regime as a communist regime, and the law gave them the possibility to be considered refugees, whereas there was no such provision for the Haitians.

Q: Wasn't there also the domestic political pressure exception, I mean you just didn't mess with the Cubans?

WAUCHOPE: Absolutely, no question of that. In response to our critics we would make that case. I mean these people were fleeing a communist dictatorship whereas Baby Doc was considered a benign bumbler, as opposed to a repressive dictator.

Q: Didn't they have their Tonton Macoutes

WAUCHOPE: These thugs were somewhat subdued by this time, but they were still there. The stories in the files were just spectacular about things that Papa Doc had done in his heyday. He was not only a ruthless individual, but he personally he murdered people with great abandon. His son didn't have those tendencies. His son was a fat, not very bright individual who just liked to live the good life and he was glad to be able to do that. He sort of presided, but did not control things. There were also a lot of commercial disputes with Haiti. Haitians would fail to pay U.S. companies for goods or services, or they would expropriate American firms. The aggrieved Americans would come to the Department to try to make their complaint into a sovereign claim against the government of Haiti. We would dodge and weave and try to avoid accepting the claims because the American firms were often pretty sleazy. One example was Hemo Caribbean which bought for \$4 a pint, and sold it in the U.S. for \$12 to \$15 a pint.

In another instance, I was awakened about 3:00 in the morning by the OP Center which said that they had just received a flash message from the American ambassador in Port Au Prince that there was a fire at the presidential palace in Port Au Prince. The Haitian president had asked the Ambassador for American fire fighters and fire engines to fly to Haiti to put out the fire for him. So, I went into the OP Center and we started looking at the issue. Sure enough, a fire had started in the palace basement about midnight. This proved to be a classic third world scenario. As it turns out, the fire started in the magazine in the armory which located under the palace, and the

president, being paranoid, probably with good reason, had most of the ammunition stored in the presidential basement to keep it out of the hands of his. As the fire progressed, the ammunition started firing off. There was the gunfire all over the capital. The militia who were supposed to defend the president, at least in theory, heard this and grabbed their empty weapons and went racing to the presidential palace to see what was going on. Their expectation was that somebody has risen up against the president and there would be looting the palace, and they wanted to get in on it. So, when they arrived there and they found out that it was just a fire and not a coup, they immediately they turned around and claimed they had come to protect the president. The fire burned on through the night and our Ambassador is contacted by the Haitians to send firefighters and equipment. The Joint Chiefs Office said it could get fire fighting teams Port au Prince, but not in any useful time frame. We told the ambassador help could not arrive in time. The fire meanwhile is burning itself out. It pretty much burned the palace down, and, in the process, it destroyed all the ammunition in the armory. That morning at about 9:00, the president went on the radio to reassure his people, saying to his people, "Your beloved president and his family are well. There was a fire and it's now under control, and there's no longer any need for concern." He explained that the explosions they heard was the ammunition stored at the palace, and now all the ammunition was expended, and there is no further danger. He thought. My God, I've just told the whole world I have no ammunition to defend the regime. Haitian exiles were based throughout the region, the Dominican Republic and Cuba and parts of the United States. And here Baby Doc has just signaled them he has no munitions. He thinks about this for about an hour, and we get another flash message from the embassy with a preliminary list of the munitions that Haiti will need. They wanted four million rounds of small arms ammunition; they wanted mortar rounds, grenades and all many of other munitions. So, we take a look at this list, and I think to myself, wow, this gives us incredible leverage with this guy. I then got a call from the Joint Chief's office which had also gotten this flash message. They had started to staff this problem, and OJC figures DOD can get these munitions together and have them down there in 36 hours. I said, not so fast. First of all, this is Baby Doc. Second of all, if the Haitians want something from us, we should be getting something from them. So, I went to the office director about this idea. He had come to the Office of Caribbean Affairs from having been the DCM in Port Au Prince, and he knew the scene pretty well. I said this looks like an excellent opportunity. We had about nine or ten major issues with Haiti we wanted to resolve. I said, "Why don't we start going through our list of what we want before we give them these weapons?" He said, oh, no. He didn't think that was the right thing to do. I thought that this was the essence of diplomacy; you've got something that they want, so let's get something in return. No, no, he said, we can't do that. He said, "We have a security interest in seeing to it that the situation in Haiti remains stable." We had concerns about the Dominican Republic, which had been in turmoil in the mid-'60s, and where the Cubans were looking for an opportunity to move in, so we couldn't chance such instability. We therefore have an interest in sending these weapons. He simply would not consider a quid pro quo. Sure enough, DOD, in a fullness of time, starting within a week to provide some small arms ammunition, and Baby Doc was back on top. The exiles were so disorganized that they couldn't take advantage of this opportunity. It showed you the kind of the wit that this president had to even get himself in that situation.

This proved the first test that raised the Director's concern as to whether I was qualified to be Haiti desk officer. The second, and the defining one, was my dealing with a Haitian request to buy four Cadillac Gage armored cars. They were \$900,000 apiece, and the export control office

had sent us an application for our determination. I thought, Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere; the last thing in the world they need was to buy these million dollar armored cars. The Haitians said, "You needn't worry, because we're not buying the weaponry for them." These machines had six massive tires and they carried out six or eight machine guns, but we are not asking us to sell them the machine guns. The Belgians would take care of that. The Cadillac Gage people came in and explained that this was a fine deal. I had the presence of mind go back and to research a military survey done by the United States army about two years before. This report said explicitly the United States should not provide armored vehicles to Haiti. Haiti is about 90% mountainous and armored vehicles have no beneficial use in terms of counter insurgency, but would be used to suppress their own people, which is exactly what Baby Doc wanted. I presented my case to the office director showing him these passages from the military survey. At that point, he didn't have much choice but to agree. He grumbled, but we turned down the application for four armored cars. About four or five weeks later the Haitian military attaché, a brigadier general, came to the office and met with the deputy office director, George High. The General wanted to resubmit a new application, this time for six armored cars. I noticed he was wearing a gold armored car tie clip. Inevitably, he was in the league with the supplier; I could only speculate what the arrangement might have been. In any event, he wanted to go to a higher level to make this application and make his appeal. Now the general claimed that four of the armored cars were for the presidential guard, and two for a battalion called the Leopards. This was a special reaction force that was beloved by the Duvaliers. Haiti put forward this application, and this time it went to the office director, the former DCM. He decides that this request makes good sense. The Haitians would have four with the Presidential Guard and two with the Leopards, and they would offset each other thereby providing the right balance. He said he thought we ought to go approve. I said, this doesn't change what the military survey said. Armored cars are not what we ought to be selling to these people. He replied, you have to understand that the "mature relationship" with Latin America that Nixon had announced has permitted the sale of Phantom jets to Peru or Columbia. This was the new mature relationship, which essentially meant that if you could afford to buy a weapon, we'd sell it to you, all except the current first line of weapons. Therefore, under this mature relationship, we should sell these six armored cars to the Haitians. I thought this was outrageous. The next thing I know, the director decided to rearrange my portfolio of responsibilities. It was an issue as to my maturity to handle an account as complicated as Haiti. I was now given the Bahamas and Netherlands Antilles and the French West Indies. The Bahamas was interesting; the other two were of minor significance at this time. So much for my understanding of the mature relationship.

SCOTT BEHOTEGUY
Mission Director, USAID
Haiti (1973-1977)

Scott Behoteguy was born in Ohio in 1917. He received a BA from College of Wooster in 1939 and an MBA from UPenn in 1942. After serving in the Navy for four years he took a job at the Office of Foreign Liquidation Commission in France. After a couple of years at that post, he continued his stay in Paris while working as part of the US delegation to OECD during the Marshall Plan era. His

career in ICA, and later USAID, included tours to Cameroon, Tunisia and Haiti. He also worked in Washington at the Near East South Asia bureau and in Ankara as Economic Coordinator of the Central Treaty Organization. Mr. Behoteguy was interviewed by Stuart Van Dyke on August 11, 1997.

BEHOTEGUY: But, for a period of 10 years during the United Nations first Decade of Development, Haiti virtually sat on the sidelines. They were not involved because neither the United States nor the United Nations were playing their game. When Papa Doc died in the summer of 1972 and Baby Doc was inaugurated President, Clinton Knox, our then Ambassador in Port au Prince, who had served in Africa (actually in Dahomey as I recall), convinced himself first, and then the authorities in Washington, that it was time to take another look at Haiti. That's why Herman Kleine, I believe he was then the Assistant Administrator for Latin America, suggested that I go directly to Haiti from Tunisia to be Director of the reconstituted AID Mission in Port au Prince. Haiti is a French speaking country; that's why I was thought of. Maybe the other reason I was thought of was that Clint Knox said he wanted to have a very small non-expansionist American presence. He just wanted to feel his way and have a small program. I think I had already developed something of a reputation of not being too much of an expansionist, so in some respects, I was a logical person. I wouldn't blow the thing out of the water.

In any case I went to Haiti after my home leave, arriving there in early January 1973, as Director of a practically non-existent AID Mission. There had been an AID man there in the economic section of the Embassy. We were doing the usual small things. Also, even though we had been officially out of business there for quite awhile, the United States through UNICEF and CARE had been funding an anti-malaria program in Haiti, even during the interim. So, I inherited that and prepared to look and see what we were going to do in Haiti. I was very happy to discover that the Inter-American Development Bank was there. They had been on location for some time and they had several projects going. The World Bank, especially IDA, the International Development Association, was negotiating a road project. As a matter of fact, at the same time that the Inter American Development Bank agreed to fund the road from Port au Prince in the middle of the country down to the south. The World Bank through IDA was getting ready to fund the road from Port au Prince to Cape Haitian in the north.

Q: A lot of these projects had problems didn't they? Haiti was known as a problem country.

BEHOTEGUY: These were projects that were just on the drawing board and were not yet being implemented. I got word incidentally that the French were coming in to build another road in another part of the country. By this time as you may know, in the 1970s, USAID itself was not heavily involved in capital projects. They were turning over capital projects to the World Bank and other financial institutions. After arrival, I established essentially a technical assistance project to develop a road maintenance organization.. Haiti was about to have two highways built, one to the north and one to the south by two major international funding organizations and a third one by the French. So, although essentially our program was technical assistance, it did involve a large amount of equipment and our job was getting the country to develop a sensible road maintenance organization. Not an easy job. We were dealing with a country with a total budget that I'm quite sure didn't approach the state of Florida or even Sarasota County in its magnitude.

Q: *What was the per capita?*

BEHOTEGUY: The per capita annual income was hovering around \$200, but that might have been an exaggeration. There had been major U.S.-backed projects in the days before we withdrew our programs - the Artibonite valley - dam building and so forth - in which the United States was involved which hadn't gone very far and had been on the back burner for several years. The series of road building projects went off quite well when I was there. The discipline the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank applied with the Haitians in handling bids and following up projects was reasonably decent. Obviously, there were other projects.

A major project that I was responsible for getting organized was in the agricultural area, in coffee. Coffee was the major agricultural export of Haiti - was and I guess still is. Coffee was produced not by plantation agriculture, but by small farmers on hillsides all around the country, and they needed a lot of technical assistance. We worked with the Agriculture Ministry on seed plantings, and went around the country trying to upgrade the production level and therefore the income of individual Haitians, some of them larger landholders than others but nothing in the way of plantations. That was a useful and interesting project and there were others that we had during that period. I was there for four and a half years.

I retired in Haiti in the late spring of 1977. I am very fond of the country. I must say that it is very sobering when you see a country that needs everything, that is very poor, where you have some qualified people, a lot of them trained overseas. It is a French culture and a number of the Ministers had been trained in France. They were technically quite competent. The Minister of Public Works was handling all these projects, but I don't think he had a dozen professionals in the whole ministry. I quickly realized that all of the foreign aid donors had to talk to the same minister about the different projects they were proposing. The Minister would listen to a presentation, but there was nobody to whom he could turn to and say "you follow up," or "you keep an eye on this." The minister would then meet with another prospective donor presentation on what they were going to give him, but the follow-through just wasn't there. As a result, I became quite reluctant to recommend major projects and major funding until there was an infrastructure that could carry projects through. You are an old Latin American hand, Stuart. The way they did it was with the old "servicio," in which the United States would fund and pay for the personnel in many of these offices. Those things worked fairly well as long as we were paying for it. When we withdrew our funds, they did not have the financial or personnel infrastructure to continue, and a lot of good projects just went downhill. I could see that was probably what was going to happen in Haiti. I loved the Haitians; they were wonderful people. I did my best to try to keep things under control. By the time I left after four and a half years, I had been the recipient of much advice from the AID headquarters in Washington, which was always asking me "Why aren't you thinking bigger, why aren't you asking for more money, why aren't you doing more imaginative things?" They didn't like my answer very well. I said there is such a thing as absorptive capacity. If we want to do projects ourselves, the field was unlimited; we can do anything. If we wanted the Haitians to do it, we were faced with very little absorptive capacity. I sometimes think I am the only AID director who sent budget requests in to Washington which, instead of their being reduced here and there to show they were in control,

they were sent back with recommendations for increases. Always the analysis of our budget came back with a suggestion that they be increased. I understand why that happened.

By this time in the '70s we had a major structure in Washington, in the Latin American Bureau, which I never knew very well because, actually, Haiti was kind of the odd ball in the Latin American structure. But, we had a large backstopping structure there prepared to do all kinds of things, a fine engineering staff, and all the technical backstop you could want. They would go up to Congress with the program and ask for money for Latin American country, X, Y, or Z. The Congressmen would ask why are you worrying us about more aid for Venezuela, or Ecuador's, or whatever. Why aren't you doing more with Haiti? That is the basket case. By the 1990s, many of the Latin American countries were on the point of graduation from eligibility for concessional foreign aid. So, this would all come back to me. Why aren't you thinking bigger; why aren't you doing more about Haiti? So, I think the authorities in AID were happy when I said I think it is time I retire, and I didn't hear any suggestions except for coming back to Washington for one of those non-jobs, so I quietly retired and came to beautiful Sarasota. I was replaced I think first by Larry Harrison, a bright guy and a good economist. He did what I never was able to do; he thought big. He doubled and maybe tripled the program within a couple of years after I left. I'm afraid it all went down the drain. Not Larry's fault but I think partly due to the fact that Haiti's absorptive capacity never got to where it should be. I don't have an answer to what you should do with a country like that.

Well, I'm afraid I cannot resist a final PS to my interview covering my Haiti years, 1973 to 1977, proving once again that Cicero was so right when he wrote many years ago "Senectus est natura loquacior est:" Old men are by nature, talkative. I had read the Graham Greene novel, The Comedians, before leaving for Haiti and I found out later it was very apt. Were I good at writing comic operas, the week of my arrival would have been a good subject for one, although not very amusing to the people directly involved. I was scheduled to go to Haiti on Thursday of a week in early January, and on Tuesday, I attended a farewell dinner given by Bill Wheeler, who at that moment was head of the Caribbean Desk of AID. The guest of honor at the dinner was Wheeler's State Department counterpart the Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs, John Burke, who had returned recently from Haiti where he had been Deputy Chief of Mission. State was recruiting a new DCM, but the position was still vacant. On the afternoon of that Tuesday dinner, Ambassador Knox, returning to the residence after work, was captured by terrorists at the entrance to his residence and held captive in the residence all night at gun point. You can imagine our dinner party on Tuesday night was a little bit interrupted as the cables were flying back and forth between Washington and Port au Prince. The gist of the exchange was that the French Ambassador was negotiating Knox's release. Wednesday morning he was released after a ransom had been paid - not by the United States government, which as you know doesn't pay ransoms for Ambassadors, Mission Directors, or anybody else. It was paid for by the Palace. In other words, Baby Doc put up the money. The terrorists took the Ambassador to the airport. We had sent a plane, and he flew back to the United States. The terrorists took the ransom and departed for Mexico City. They were later captured; the money was returned to the palace. I guess this was considered a short-term loan.

In any case, Ambassador Knox never really recovered from the horrible experience of that night at gun point in his residence. I didn't meet him for at least a month after he returned to Haiti.

Shortly thereafter, he said his goodbyes and retired. The day after this event, Washington got itself organized and sent in a new DCM, Tom Corcoran, who was obviously mobile. When he arrived on Thursday; he was immediately Chargé d'Affaires. I delayed my departure for two days and arrived in Port au Prince on Saturday instead of Thursday, and was met at the airport by the new Chargé d'Affaires and the most senior political officer (an FSO-3) who had served as an interim chargé, Santiana. Anyway, it was a kind of a harrowing experience and an interesting one. I never did get all of the facts; we didn't talk about it very much, but I know it was very upsetting to the Ambassador. After Ambassador Knox came back, he stayed for several weeks and then quietly retired and went back to Washington, and was replaced by Heyward Isham, who was my Ambassador for most of the time I was there.

Incidentally, in going into Port au Prince on that Saturday night, I had gotten ahold of my former administrative assistant and secretary from the CENTO days, Olive Scancarella. She came in the next day. After I had left Turkey, she had served Mission Directors in Argentina and Ecuador, I recall, while I was off in Washington and Tunisia. We hit the ground running so to speak. It was a very small mission, and we kept it small for quite a while. I recruited a very competent agriculture officer, Leroy Rasmussen, who had served most recently in Laos. To my knowledge, I don't think Leroy ever served in Washington. He was an outstanding officer and one who would be very worthy of interviewing in this program. He was one of the technicians who could not only be a good technician but could put pen to paper in a very impressive fashion in the program style. So, he was with me most of the time I was there. Another one was John T. Craig who I had brought in as my program officer. He too had long experience in different places and hit the ground running. John was one of my co-students in the SAIS (1958) program that we spoke about earlier. Craig also would be an excellent candidate for interviewing under this program because of his long overseas experience concluding in, I believe, Guyana, when that unhappy Jonestown affair occurred. He later went back as a contract employee in Haiti, out in the boondocks. He has very relevant AID experience in a wide variety of places and has some good stories and good experiences to recount I'm sure. Craig incidentally is retired now and living in Washington, DC and should be easily accessible. Leroy Rasmussen is retired and living in Centennial, Wyoming, of all places. He also would have wide and relevant experiences about AID after having served as Agriculture Officer in the Entente states in Abidjan, and the regional states there, and then being a contract employee of Tufts University, way out in the boondocks of Niger for a couple of years. He would be worth talking to because he knows the AID program backwards and forwards, its pluses and minuses. So now I will sign off once and for all and get on with my interview with Stuart Van Dyke who has some interesting stories to tell us.

WAYNE WHITE
Consular Officer
Port-au-Prince (1976-1978)

Mr. White was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Penn State, Abington. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973 he served in Nigeria and Haiti before being assigned to the Sinai Field Mission. He subsequently devoted his career in the State Department to Middle Eastern Affairs, serving in senior

positions in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research dealing with Arab-Israel, North African and general Arab and Iranian Affairs. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Wayne, you are off to Haiti in 1976?

WHITE: Correct.

Q: And you were in Haiti for how long?

WHITE: Not quite a full tour because of things that you will hear. And it was not the happiest tour.

Q: To 1977 about?

WHITE: No, I arrived in late October of 1976 and left a little bit ahead of time around mid-August of '78.

Q: Okay just to give us a framework. Other than being a junior officer and at the beck and call of personnel, was there any rationale for Haiti?

WHITE: The main reason I accepted the assignment to Haiti was because I needed to get off language probation in French. I think much of what I am going to tell you about Haiti relates to why some people go sour on the Foreign Service. I was pulled out of language training prematurely before going to Niger, before getting my 3/3, because there was a contrived "emergency" at post (as you'll recall, the Admin Officer wanting to go on leave), forcing me to seek out yet another Francophone post if I wanted to get the language training to get off probation in French. I was told that I could not possibly achieve a 3/3 in French in Niger, even with tutoring. So I had to schedule Haiti as the next assignment, the most "challenging" Francophone assignment available at the time. I went into a consular job, Chief of the Non-Immigrant Visa Section a very large consular section, for the first half of the tour, and then Deputy Chief of the larger Immigrant Visa Section for the second half.

Anyway, between Niamey and Port-au-Prince, I went back to Washington with almost two months of French language training scheduled. Upon my return I tested 3+/3 in French. They didn't realize I would have over a hundred employees working under me who didn't speak English, so the learning curve was far beyond their expectations, which seem to be limited to tutoring regimes, not real life. So there we go, I picked Haiti for all the wrong reasons, once more frustrating a Middle East expert simply trying to get a posting in his area of expertise — and to take my wife there. That said, there are a number of FSO'S — many now retired — who are Middle East experts, a few of them to become ambassadors, who also served in Haiti. This small group sometimes compared an aspect of their experience in Haiti to what they encountered serving in Syria, . When I was Syrian analyst, along with them, I discovered at least one compelling analogy involving some rather unfortunate similarities between those two countries in the political arena.

Once again, off to Haiti. They used the two months I had in DC to put me in the fraud unit in the Visa Office, then in the old SA-1. This is very good training under a veteran FSO named Corodino Gotti, who was THE expert on visa fraud and had been our Consul General in Santo Domingo. I learned a lot under Cori, knowing I was going into a high fraud post. So I went down to Haiti pretty charged up to, you know, take on visa fraud and get the train firmly on the rails. Moreover, I was arriving there approximately a year after one of the officers in the NIV Section, named Carolyn King, I believe, had been caught in a visa fraud ring, and had been prosecuted in either Georgia or South Carolina, and had received a federal sentence. So things were a little bit dicey, and that only further reinforced my desire to lay down the law and get things fully back in order.

Q: Before we get into what you were doing, could you set the stage. First who was the ambassador, and second, what was the situation in Haiti, and then we will get to your work.

WHITE: This is a good question because I think, sweeping across recent decades of Haitian history, we may have been there in the best of times, but I must emphasize that all that is relative. Papa Doc was gone. His son, Baby Doc was there, and it was still a dictatorship, but in response to the international community, and the weariness of many Haitians themselves, the murders and much of the terror that characterized Papa Doc's Haiti, were largely a thing of the past. What people read in books like "The Comedians" (which, from what I saw and heard while in Haiti, is pretty accurate), was behind us several years. The worst you encountered was occasionally a human rights advocate or an opposition figure being beaten up or what have you, and even that seemed fairly infrequent. Many of the infamous Tonton Macoutes had been reduced to guys placed in doubtless ill-fitting (and relatively non-violent) jobs as well-heeled government bureaucrats, like the Chief of Protocol, with whom I had to deal on occasion. Other less senior foot-soldiers of the reign of terror, uniforms made of the same cloth with which we make blue-jeans, armed with pre-WWII German export bolt-action Mausers (which seemed poorly maintained), manned sleepy checkpoints on anything from crude benches to lawn chairs, just waving people through along some of the main roads outside the capital (which seemed pretty meaningless).

Q: I assume they had dark glasses on.

WHITE: A few. But, for the most part, the dark glasses were gone. It is funny you should ask that because of course people used to associate that with the Tonton Macoutes, and also those early to mid-1960's pseudo-stylish hats as well. Those guys were sort of the Tonton Macoutes secret police, and they had been essentially disbanded, folded into the regular police or the government bureaucracy. At checkpoints were the bottom rung of the once far more formidable Tonton Macoutes organization, pretty much the only visible presence left. During Carnival 1977 and 1978, the parade was preceded by about a dozen or so security types dressed in T-shirts and regular pants wielding Israeli Uzi sub-machine guns. Outside the context of Carnival, I never saw those men. So things were getting better in Haiti — well, as much as was possible in such an appallingly poor, corrupt and still sadly misgoverned country. So a number of Americans were going down there and setting up assembly industries, similar factories, etc. I associated with some of these people. The economy in this country was pitiful, and I say that even though I had just come from Niger. When I traveled to especially remote portions of the country (later I will

get into why I had to log a lot of business travel throughout the country), I saw poverty that eclipsed Niger during the Sahel Drought Emergency. It was really awful there, either in the dirt-poor rural areas or the squalid, teeming slums of the capital. But there was a burgeoning micro middle class that was beginning to prosper, and things were sort of picking up a bit. And, with the terror largely gone, Haitians also could speak to us fairly openly.

But, turning back to the dark side, Haiti was an ecological disaster. As I traveled throughout the country, a land once described by Columbus as heavily forested (we have reason to believe that Columbus's landing was in northern Hispaniola probably on the Haitian side—I've been to the most likely sector of beach up there) had largely been stripped for charcoal. You had to go to a tiny little corner of Haiti way up in the mountains near the Dominican border called Foret des Pines (Pine Forest) to find one tiny virgin forest at a pretty high elevation. In fact, there were whole swaths of Haiti that no longer had trees. Instead, there was mainly thorny scrub brush and cacti as ground cover, like some forlorn place in the American West, with much rock shelving exposed by erosion. When it rained, this ecological disaster area did exactly what happens under conditions of mass deforestation. There would be a brown ring around the island. I saw it many times. Two or three hundred yards of muddy water would line the coast, which, in turn, killed reefs, destroying the marine ecosystem around the island. Quite a sad situation all round.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WHITE: Heyward Isham was the ambassador, and I would come into conflict with him, but even more directly, his DCM, over policies related to visa issuance.

Q: All right, well go ahead with what you are up to.

WHITE: So anyway I came down there and took over the Non-Immigrant Visa Section. We were not a Consulate General, merely a very large embassy Consular Section. The Consular Section was separate from the embassy, and about two months after my arrival moved into a large new whitewashed building across town (as opposed to the former one, a much smaller, older and cluttered structure across the street from the embassy) that housed perhaps 1/4 of all those working for the embassy (including USIS). Walter Burke, a very distinguished diplomat, whom you might have known because he came out of Vietnam, was the head of the Consular Section when I arrived.

Q: Yeah, I knew Walter.

WHITE: Tall and with a waxed mustache, he cut a very impressive figure, and he was quite an intellect. Anyhow, this morally upright and strong-willed individual was in the midst of a knock 'em down, drag 'em out fight with the DCM and the ambassador over visa policy. The ambassador — and the especially the DCM — wanted very much to improve relations with the Duvalier regime, and we, on the other hand, wanted to enforce the visa regulations (in most cases, U.S. law). These goals, in the corrupt, fraud-ridden environment that was Haiti, and in view of the way the ambassador and DCM wanted to interact with the government, appeared mutually exclusive.

During my time as Head of the Non-Immigrant Visa Section, I took the first time refusal rate from 86 to 92%, just to give you an idea of how tough it was at the visa window for both officers and applicants. This involved quite a lot of tension and tremendous pressure on visa officers, even had there not been rather aggressive attempts at interference on the part of the ambassador and DCM. We would get, for example, diplomatic notes from the notoriously corrupt foreign minister, Edner Brutus, demanding visas for clearly unqualified applicants who were paying him for his services. By the way, going back to Edner Brutus, Haitians loved Roman names which I found fascinating as a Roman coin collector — really obscure ones too, like some of the little-known so-called Barrack Emperors of the 3rd Century, such as Aurellian and Probus. Hence, a name like Edner Brutus. We had been reliably informed that he was receiving about \$1500 for each individual he could get into the United States misusing diplomatic notes. We received diplomatic notes that would have lists of 30 or so people. Breaking protocol, as had my predecessor, we would ask such people to appear for interviews, and maybe only 15 would show up and 10 of them would be unemployed waiters and others who had no connection to the foreign ministry whatsoever.

I can provide you with a really interesting tale that would give you an idea of how bad things were at the time. The Haitian national soccer club, which was the equivalent of their national team, was invited to go to New York to play the Cosmos. First, we received a diplomatic note listing a suspiciously high number of team members — about 35. We saw a problem right off, so we asked them to appear for interviews. Suddenly, in came in a new diplomatic note with the names reduced to, I believe, 22. So we obviously had shaken off some of the fake soccer team members. We interviewed the 22, and determined that we could give visas to only nine.

Q: That leaves one man shy.

WHITE: Yes, and no reserves to allow others to rest on the bench, so there were bitter recriminations on the part of the foreign ministry. The embassy called us and squeezed hard, not caring much at all about qualifications, and finally pressuring the Visa Office in Washington to recommend bonding these people individually at \$2000 each. AND, it was made a collective bond. We didn't set those terms; the Visa Office did. This meant that if one guy jumped, the whole bond was forfeit. The Cosmos put up the bond. So the team, now pared down to around 16-18 because of our vigilance and the cost of the bond, went off to New York. I feared the worst, and at this point, even the Haitian government did, so nervous that someone would jump ship and embarrass them that they had two policemen go up with the team to patrol the hotel at night, forbidding team members to make phone calls. Well, during the game, at the end of the 1st period, five of the players fled into a waiting car outside the stadium and skipped town. The bond was forfeit; the rest of the game was a disaster. This was just the kind of thing we were trying to preclude and had warned the embassy about when the issue of the collective bond came up. If the visas hadn't been issued in the first place (especially with this collective bond), this embarrassing mess never would have happened, but they just wouldn't listen.

There was constant pressure from the ambassador and DCM. I arrived at the post, still only an FSO-7 3rd Secretary, but within the first two or three months there, I was called three times by Edner Brutus, who wanted me to issue visas previously refused. I would always offer to review the cases, which one has to do with a foreign minister. He would say: "No I don't want you to

review the cases, I want you to issue the visas.” I would say: “I can’t make any assurances along those lines.” Then he would start yelling at me, reminding me that he was a foreign minister, and I was only a 3rd Secretary. It would become a kabuki dance through three such calls on separate cases, which would degenerate on his end of the line into a rant that I had affronted Haiti, I had affronted his dignity etc. by not simply giving him what he demanded, concluding with a call to the ambassador or DCM charging that I had been deliberately rude to him. Finally, by the last call, my Philly “attitude” did poke through a bit, and I said, “Listen, you called me; I didn’t call you. A Third Secretary didn’t set out to insult you. You are the one who makes these calls to someone who is supposedly too lowly for you to speak with and who you know is not in a position to grant such requests.” Anyway, Walter Burke stood up for me (and the rest of the consular officers) and shielded us from much of the pressure from the embassy and the foreign minister — and the accusations. Walter was a very good man. Then Walter left post, and that would lead to another sad story. I don’t know whether I can use names here because this is rather sensitive.

Q: Use the names and we can look at it afterwards and see how it goes and take them out.

WHITE: On second thought, I’m going to leave them out. A new Consular Section chief was sent down to replace Walter. He met me shortly after he arrived, and had me over to his virtually empty residence for drinks. His wife and his family were not yet in Haiti, and the place was pretty bare. Over drinks, he put it something like this: “Wayne, I was sent down to end this rift between the embassy and the consular section. Now that Walter Burke is gone, you’re one maintaining the line on visas. Here is the deal. You will get the best EER’s you have ever gotten in your entire career, if you ease up a bit. Then I will get the best EER’s of my career because of how pleased the embassy will be over how well everything worked out. Everything that has happened up till now can be blamed on Walter Burke.” I remember staring out into the lush trees in the garden around the house and thinking: “Is this really happening?” I said, “I can’t do that sort of thing. I can’t believe you are even proposing such a thing to me.”

What I didn’t know at that moment was — and this was incredibly sad — that this individual apparently had some sort of history of some sort of emotional or mental issues. When I said, effectively, “Forget it,” I had no idea what unique stresses this man must have been subject to in view of his medical history. Within a fairly short period of time, he had what I suppose was a nervous breakdown. They doubtless have a more sophisticated clinical name for such a condition (or event) now, but one of my junior officers who saw him at his home before he was medically evacuated painted a pretty grim picture. The embassy and everyone else, particularly the Visa Office, should have known about that background. They should never have put this otherwise kind and caring man in that position and then assume, running against all my previous behavior, that I would sign on to such a deal. I’ve felt awful about what happened ever since. After he returned, Sonia and I socialized a lot with him and his wonderful wife for the rest of our tour, as if nothing had ever happened. I sometimes wondered if his wife knew what had transpired between he and I, and, if so, what version she might have heard. If I had known, even though I could not have accepted the proposal, I could have at least offered to work together on some tough cases that fell into gray areas, explained our position at greater length—even just spent more time with him. Who knows?

Q: Do you feel the deal was in this to get to the workings, where did the visa office stand, with Walter Burke or with...

WHITE: It's unclear because the individual concerned said something like he had a green light from the Visa Office. Was that true? I don't know. He could have been making that up or, possibly, exaggerated whatever he had been told.

Q: That is so odd.

WHITE: It sure was odd — and tragic. And, again, maybe he didn't have any authority at all to do that. He could have been doing this on his own, perhaps even in part because of a personal yearning to reduce stress levels (which would have been great all-round), but I only know what I heard. I even checked with my wife, and she recalls me returning from that evening meeting with much the same version you've just heard, and a bit shell-shocked.

Q: Or it may have been somewhere...

WHITE: Somewhere in between? Again, that is quite possible.

Q: You run across this the desk or the desk or something like this saying God we have a problem here.

WHITE: Right. But it really went to the heart of why we were in Haiti. We had a serious illegal immigration problem which of course has continued in decades following my tour. In fact, it is a HUGE issue right now in the context of the homeland security debate, Lou Dobbs' quest, night after night on CNN, etc. I remember one Saturday when the DCM, summoned me to his office for a rather stern chat (the trigger for the exchange might have been the last of Edner Brutus' calls). We spent several hours talking, and the sum of the conversation was: "I just want you to issue visas more liberally because I want things to improve between the embassy and the host government." My position was: "You mean you want me to essentially violate the law and State Department regulations and doubtless let in more Haitian illegals to be a burden on our country and take jobs from fellow Americans who desperately need them in order for you to be able to have good relations with a woefully corrupt, dysfunctional, and repressive Duvalierist dictatorship vastly weaker than, and heavily dependent upon, the United States? Instead, why don't we press this notoriously rotten — and weak — regime to back off in just about any area employing one strong demarche. When I related all this to Walter Burke, who was still with us at the time, he just shook his head in disgust. Walter told me to sit down in my office and write down everything I remembered about the meeting for the record, which I did at some length in a document I still have somewhere in my personal files, along with a lot of other papers from this ugly period.

About 10 months into my tour, I went over to the immigrant visa side. There is where another interesting saga unfolded and where I got to travel the country and really get to know Haiti from one end to the other. On the immigrant visa side, I quickly found out that there was a serious problem because the Haitian National Archives was issuing documents to quite a number of our applicants alleging relationships but 25, 30 or 40 even years after the fact, merely based on the

statement of someone walking into the archives. But these things were official documents, and we are supposed to treat them as such. Yet, they were not period originals from the era of an actual birth or what have you which would render such information authentic. Anyhow, after we mulled this over for a month or so, I and the head of the immigrant visa section agreed that this wouldn't work, and we switched, at my suggestion, to accepting only baptismal certificates from parishes derived from their ledgers which we could review.

So I went on the road with stacks of baptismal certificates visiting parishes, sometimes in terribly isolated and impoverished parts of the country. Sonia came along on two of these trips. I will never forget going through a village in the north which was so remote that my driver and I actually had to repair a small bridge in order to make it to where we were going. In one village, the kids came out to watch our SUV go by, and every single child had a horribly distended abdomen and had flaming orange hair (which I found out later was caused by serious protein deficiency). I had never seen that in Niger. Anyway, the system of using these baptismal certificates worked beautifully. We went out and found that about 75% of the certificates were fine, and without making it known, we would quietly give additional certificates from parishes that checked out a six month writ for acceptance without a field check. The other 25% were fraudulent. We left parishes many times hearing in the background the parish priest angrily firing his clerk for misusing the parish seal. Most of the parish priests were not Haitian. They were Canadian, American, Belgians and French. Apparently, many in the Haitian clergy didn't want to serve out in some of these impoverished places far from the capital.

Then a major problem arose. The Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, who was actually only a monsignor by rank and who apparently was the successor of, I believe, two or three prior archbishops of Port-au-Prince who had essentially been fired because they would not play ball with the Duvaliers, banned all parishes from cooperating with the American Embassy's Consular Section. So it appeared that we had hit a brick wall. The Visa Office, after several weeks, told us that we were just going to have to issue visas based on documents from the archives, which astounded most all of us in the Consular Section.

Just as it looked like all was lost, the head of the Consular Section (who had now returned from medical leave), was invited, along with me, to have lunch with the Papal Nuncio. It was delightful. Then the papal Nuncio said, "Now you probably are wondering why two Protestants have been invited for lunch with the Papal Nuncio. I will explain. You probably know as little about Roman Catholic tradition and law as most Roman Catholics. No bishop has the authority to exercise day to day administrative authority over parish priests. He only has the ability to exercise 'moral authority,' which is rather more vague." This may no longer be true, but this is what he laid out back in 1977 or 1978. He continued, "We have observed this unfortunate situation regarding visas, and here are letters (as he handed me a stack of envelopes about six inches thick) sealed by the Vatican to every single one of the parish priests in Haiti, including the Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, urging them at the request of the Vatican and the Papal Nuncio to open up their records to the American Consulate on humanitarian grounds." I went on the road with those letters. It was fabulous. Every single priest outside Port-au-Prince (accept one in a town near the capital named St. Marc) immediately opened their records to us, many with obvious delight. The Archbishop of Port au Prince held out for about another month until the pressure on him was so great (as people were getting visas from all the other parishes save one)

that he caved in too. I still have as a souvenir the one unopened letter and sealed letter to the Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, which he had refused to receive.

Q: What did you do, just put him on hold, his applications on hold?

WHITE: That's right. All Port-au-Prince (and San Marc) cases were put on hold.

Q: Wow, that was nasty.

WHITE: It worked like a charm because we knew that a parade of people coming in and getting their visas with legitimate records checks would spread the word, putting tremendous pressure on him. And, sure enough, we were getting reports that some people actually were demonstrating in front of the cathedral, demanding that he allow the same thing to happen that had happened in the other parishes. It was quite a victory. But Haiti was not an enjoyable tour. First, getting there by accident because of a language snafu related to what FSI thought one could attain in Africa regarding French language skills, then the incredibly nasty battle between the embassy and the consulate, and, finally, the battle with the archbishop.

By the way, I came up for tenure in Haiti. This also gets very interesting. Now as an FSO-6 (old ranking system), I came up for tenure, and at that time you achieved tenure by writing out your own mission statement, career goals, etc. Then the DCM would rate you as to whether he thought you should be tenured. Of course the DCM and I had squared off in separate corners, so I pretty much concluded that I had no hope of getting tenured as he would doubtless see a golden opportunity for payback, and most weren't getting tenured on the first shot in any case. He wrote a very clever statement. Following good old Foreign Service tradition, he said, effectively, "Wayne walks on water," going on and on about my terrific work, diligence, etc., but ending with a flat statement to the effect that I should not perform consular work in the future, which should have been the absolute killer, since I was in the Consular Cone at the time. To everyone's surprise, I was given tenure on the first review. When I made discreet inquiries in Washington after leaving Haiti, I heard that board members were aware of what was going on down there, and wanted to send a message to the DCM and the Country Team. Sometimes the Foreign Service acts in mysterious ways.

But, again, the tour was painful in so many ways. We were isolated: there were members of the mission in who would not invite my wife and me to events because they knew we were at odds with the DCM and ambassador. But I don't regret having served there. It gave me, as with Niger, the added perspective I think everyone needs if they try to specialize in an area such as the Middle East, to understand that many issues are not regional, but are ones that are widespread in the developing world. This provides a variety of case studies that thicken the depth of your ability to analyze. So anyway, about 6 months before my tour was up, we received an urgent cable that the Sinai field Mission needed volunteers. It was so desperate that qualified volunteers, once approved by the Sinai Support Mission in Washington, would depart their current post, overriding any ambassadorial considerations, so I beamed myself out of Haiti and into the Middle East.

Q: Well tell me, while you were there, how, I am not talking about the embassy but the consular officers. This must have been sort of rough but was there an esprit that brought them together? I mean what was the spirit of the consular officers dealing with this problem?

WHITE: That is a good question because, in this high-pressure situation, there were a few problems. Most of them, however, had an esprit that you describe, and continued to do their jobs with exceptional diligence. There was one very nice fellow who wanted to be more of a part of the embassy, as well as Haitian, communities — and received some encouragement along those lines from the DCM, if you know what I mean. I don't want to paint this too negatively because he simply fascinated with Haitian culture (as all of us were) and was a very interesting young man in his own right. But he started issuing visas more liberally, parted ways with the tougher standards of others. This is after I left the Non- Immigrant Visa Section, and he had replaced me there. All I could do is warn him that he was straying unwisely.

He quite rapidly ran into trouble in two respects. He started getting a stream of those notifications that would come back from the Immigration and Naturalization Service about how people had violated their visas that he had issued, which confirmed that he was issuing too many. On that, the rest of us had been right on target, receiving virtually none. The second thing, which was really very distressing, involved an illicit approach on the part of one of our USIA FSN's on behalf of her and her husband. USIA was on the second floor of the separate consulate building in which we worked. The FSN this officer to meet her husband outside, near the building (they had met socially before), and this FSN's husband approached the officer in question with a bribery scheme tied to visa issuance. The fact that he was being more liberal was interpreted incorrectly to mean that he was also dishonest. He, of course, blew the whole thing wide open. When the FSN wife was fired, we lost one of the best USIA FSN's — well, she had been up to that point. After that incident, this officer came much more in line with the rest of the consulate on visa issuance, appalled by the mess he had unintentionally set in motion.

Q: Did you have a problem. I mean sometimes, this is my field consular sections. Sometimes often the consular sections get two types. One rather idealistic officers and two some of the old hands who have been there, done that, seen this, and they can walk it too tight. You never get in trouble by issuing a visa. That is not really correct, but the other one would say screw them all, I am not going to give them. They are all crooks. I mean did you run into these personalities?

WHITE: Yes, I had one very special first tour officer with whom I was very friendly. We and our wives spent a lot of time together. He and his wife and, after not so long, their first baby, were wonderful. They were deeply religious, kind, well-intentioned all-round, and both had a great sense of humor. In trying to be rather careful like me toward visa issuance, however, at one point he went just a little too far, and I had to nudge him back a tad. I described one end of the issuance spectrum, so I should have balanced it with a glimpse into the other end. By far, however, our problems related to occasional officers who had difficulty holding the line. In fact, one new officer who arrived very shortly before I left found it difficult to refuse practically anyone without advice from others, like the young officer I mentioned above.

Q: What about visa applicants, we are talking about non immigrant, because immigrant applicants came in with far too many documents that is that.

WHITE: I worked both sides, and, yes, the immigrant side is far more complex, with a very large amount of paperwork, not to mention the extensive field investigatory work that we assigned ourselves in the context of the checking of baptismal records. So getting to the bottom of an immigrant case could take weeks.

Q: Your problem of rooting out that, but we are talking about the non immigrant. Somebody appears at the window. You know at one point there was a great to do about saying we were profiling people. This was in Brazil I think. Well of course we profile people. It had gotten in to the papers. What was sort of the profile of the people appearing?

WHITE: You mean the refusals?

Q: Yeah.

WHITE: Sad to say, most refusals were pretty obvious. In fact about mid-tour I was saying how unfortunate it was that in the course of our interviews, the profiling got so well developed, your own instincts and such, that you could sometimes spend 30 seconds looking over the materials and the person, and you knew there was a 95% chance of refusal, and for the rest of the interview you were only at the window for three minutes or so explaining why you weren't going to issue a visa. A decision could come very quickly. The profile was usually someone with poor French, dressed shabbily (or in a way that suggested that the better clothes were ill-fitting), somebody with documentation that looked clumsy, evasive responses to the first one or two questions, etc. And many thought they needed to have a bank account and a decent amount of money in it. The bank book with a typed in entry for a bank deposit for a date, say, only two days before the application for the visa, but little else, was common, and a dead give-away. Then there were others that had previous refusals. There was a little system in the Caribbean at the time among the various consular sections of putting a little initial between the last page and back cover of a person's passport hidden in the spine. They got onto it after awhile. But I would see the mark down there and would not even have to do a visa lookout request by teletype to find out, sure enough, that they had also been refused at another location. 99% of the business coming through was Haitian, not people from other countries unless they were in the foreign diplomatic corps there in Haiti. We didn't have the problems of a post like London to which people are coming in from all different places, such Iran, Eastern Europe, what have you.

Q: You mentioned the person who speaks inadequate French, but French isn't the language of the country is it? It is Creole.

WHITE: Well it was my introduction to probably the most extreme example of what is often described in Latin America as countries that essentially lack a sizeable middle class. That there was a very small, very well-heeled elite making up maybe one or two or three percent of the population, all too many with utter scorn for the rest. Then there was a vast mass of absolutely piteously poor individuals in the countryside eking out a living in tiny dirt-floored huts with access to no education or medical care. And then there was the vast urban poor, often living in small, pathetic ramshackle homes made of cast-off lumber with corrugated tin roofs. Then there was a middle class of, say, five percent. It was growing though at the time. You know, even in

our consular work we saw the arrogance of that upper class I mentioned earlier. Most of the middle class were mulatto, light colored indigenous Haitians who heavily intermarried with their French masters prior to the 1796-1804 rebellion and then only married amongst themselves since.

Q: This is the middle class.

WHITE: No, the upper class, in this instance. To the extent there was a middle class, it followed a similar profile, but with actual blacks, many given opportunities by the Duvalier's — the first true, non-Mulatto black ever to rule Haiti — in the minority. There was terrible internal prejudice in this society. The rest of the upper class, ironically in light of my Middle East focus, was filled in by a rather significant community of Lebanese expats who had long been in Haiti, some of them since the turn of the century, along with some Syrians and Palestinians (also long-time residents). I spent a lot of time mingling with the Lebanese community, getting regular reports—even from fleeing relatives, in some cases—of the ongoing civil war back in Lebanon.

I have to admit, referring to a small niche in between the poor and middle class, one of the most exciting things I saw in the consular window. It relates in some ways to something that we are seeing in South Asia—and in portions of Africa--in a lot of experimental projects over the past decade and a half, empowering women, through so-called micro-loans. In Haiti at that time, I am talking about gutsy, enterprising women, often single women, middle-aged, with a child or two, abandoned by men, who, although barely educated, were intelligent, smart and savvy. They were called “Commercantes” or merchants. They would travel the Caribbean buying relatively cheap goods, mainly clothing and shoes and other rather low end goods, moving around the Caribbean finding where the cheap stuff was, and then coming back to Haiti with many boxes of this stuff, and then going down to the market and making several hundred bucks, then turning around and going on another trip. I loved my expanding clutch of Commercantes. There were a number of women who wanted to break into this loop. By the time I left I would say we were catering to about 100-150 of these enterprising women. They were fantastic. They were proud. I had ones who would sometimes stand two hours in a visa line, not to get another visa. They had already gotten their first visa to Puerto Rico, which was the point at which they finally broke into the U.S. market and earned real prestige in their neighborhoods. So some, having gotten their first visa to Puerto Rico a couple of weeks before, would stand in the visa line for two hours just to show me that they had come back, could be trusted, and were damn proud of it.

Q: That is wonderful. I mean you know, we got involved in, we sent a constitution down one time I think around 1812. It was before we got involved in a war between the mulattos and the natives. That unfortunately had been going on I guess, well the whole conflict continues today.

WHITE: It does. We had a Creole translator, used as needed because many spoke French well enough to be interviewed in that language. Let me digress on the issue language for a moment. The upper class spoke French, but they also spoke Creole. But there are two kinds of Creole. There is so-called high Creole and low Creole. High Creole was basically modified French with African words blended in, just to describe it briefly. Low Creole was a very West African-oriented language with French flourishes. Everyone in the Consular Section memorized in low Creole the phrase “I cannot give you a visa,” which in Creole, rendered phonetically, is “Pa capab ba visa.” This was a bastardization of the French phrase, “Je ne suis pas capable de vous

donnez une visa.” But we had somebody we could call to the window who spoke low Creole when we needed a translator. Our translator came from one of the most prominent, upper class mulatto families. She probably had to know low Creole in order to communicate with family servants. I remember there was one sad lady who came for a visa interview. She couldn’t speak French or high Creole at all. So I called our translator over, and the applicant proceeded to describe her tiny farm. She was very poor and had virtually no reason to come back and could not be issued a visa. But I let her have her say at some length, feeling rather sorry for her. In the middle of the interview, our translator stopped translating abruptly, turned to me and said quietly, “Mr. White, you are not going to give this pig a visa, are you?” This was the kind of prejudice that existed in that country on the part of the small upper crust. And this young woman had been educated at a small college in Pennsylvania.

Q: One last thing. You have sort of answered it but something that I have heard people in Haiti that at the embassy the officers often got captured by the upper class and you know I am not sure it wasn’t that they had to deal with the people who ran the country, but that there wasn’t much contact except for the consular section with anyone else. Was there a concern on the part of consular officers that they would end up in the laps of the upper class being entertained by them?

WHITE: This is a very good question because it brings back a memory that is very important. All the time I was struggling with the DCM (and ambassador) over visas, they were constantly at odds with us, but seemingly quite comfortable working with the Duvalierist regime. In all this, I thought I was essentially fighting alone. In a way, I felt resentful. But, as it turned out, we were not alone. Yet, for reasons unknown, this wasn’t brought to my attention by the party concerned. There was a political officer who was engaged in a sort of parallel debate, or at least experiencing some related problems. Should I use a name here?

Q: Sure, why not.

WHITE: On second thought, as before, better that I don’t. This man impressed me as an extremely intelligent officer. Since I wasn’t invited to many events where we could talk and were in separate buildings during the day, I didn’t really know what he was up to. I assumed that he was probably falling in with the DCM and the ambassador in the same general line of thinking. I found out several years later that shortly after I left post, and after his own agonizing battle, apparently with the DCM, this FSO lodged a dissent channel message about what our policy in Haiti should be and that there were still sufficient human rights violations, corruption and other misbehavior on the part of the regime that we should not be cuddling up to the regime as he thought we were. So, in effect and on different fronts, we were fighting similar battles. But he never let on that he was having these doubts in the few brief encounters he had with me. In recent years, I reconnected with him. It just so happened that he had an office in the State Department near INR from the late 90’s on, and had a few pleasant conversations. But I would have loved to have known about his doubts at the time, so, for example, when I had that long chat with the DCM I could have said: “Well what about the Political Officer’s views on all this? He seems to have related concerns.”

LAWRENCE E. HARRISON
USAID Mission Director
Port-au-Prince (1977-1979)

Lawrence E. Harrison was born on March 11, 1932 in Brookline, Massachusetts. He received his BA from Dartmouth College in 1953 and his MPA from Harvard University in 1960. He served as an ensign in the U.S. Navy from 1953 to 1957. He joined USAID in 1962 and served in many countries throughout his career including Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Haiti, and Nicaragua. Mr. Harrison was interviewed by W. Haven North on December 12, 1996.

Q: Let's go to Haiti. You can come back to that.

HARRISON: Scott Behoteguy was the Mission Director. There was an expose by Jack Anderson, that here in the poorest country in the hemisphere, the Mission Director had a swimming pool. The swimming pool was the size of a big bathtub. I saw it. But it became an embarrassment and Scott had to go. I think he retired after that in Florida and occasionally visited Haiti. So, my first problem in Haiti was to find a residence that would be suitable--modest and yet capable of handling large numbers of people at a reception--and that didn't have a swimming pool. I looked for months. By this time, two of my daughters were in prep schools in the United States. One was with me. And my wife was there, of course, as well. We lived in a transient apartment for about five months. We entertained Clarence Long in the transient apartment at Christmas time. Why he chose Christmas to come down, I'll never know. Anyhow, the reason was that we couldn't find a house that didn't have a swimming pool: most of the substantial houses in Port au Prince have a swimming pool. So, finally, we bit the bullet. We found a house that had a small swimming pool that I was just about to board over, believe it or not, at some considerable expense to the U.S. taxpayer, when a reasonable and courageous auditor came in and said, "Come on, this is crazy. Go ahead and use the pool. It's inconspicuous." The house was relatively small. It served our purposes. So, my first several months were importantly dedicated to finding a way to avoid antagonizing Jack Anderson. Very silly.

Once again, I spent the early months also trying to figure out what we could do that would stand a chance of making some significant dent on this long-standing tradition of acute Haitian poverty, acute exploitation, high levels of ignorance and illiteracy (that today even may be as high as 3/4 of the population) and absence of institutions that could be used to move Haiti from what amounts to basically an uncivilized, inhumane society for most of its citizens towards some degree of modernization.

You'll recall that LA/DP was importantly responsible for our going back into Haiti after the Papa Doc years. When I got there, Baby Doc was in power. You didn't have to be a wizard to recognize that the government was being used in a number of ways to further his personal interests, including his personal financial interests. There were large gaps in the budget that were unaccounted for. It was clear that the military was taking a disproportionate share. It was clear that money was being diverted. There was no really coherent financial planning and budgeting process. This was the time when PL 480 Title III was legislated by the Congress. It offered the possibility of substantial new resources. So, I tried to orchestrate with the IMF and the World

Bank and with the Canadians a big new package, an incentive package, to bring some sort of order out of this fiscal chaos and to reduce the diversion of national resources away from development purposes. The IMF and the World Bank were solidly supporting it. The IDB wouldn't touch it. The Canadians, the guy who was the head of CIDA in Port au Prince, wanted to participate, but he did not have the authority to commit the Canadian government. So, I went to Ottawa and talked to them about it. I actually mention this in my book. It became clear to me after a few minutes of conversation that they viewed me as an imperialist leaning on this poor country and this poor government. They did not want to have anything to do with it. This is an anecdotal symbol of the Canadian tendency to moralize about the United States. It seems to me that in this instance the morality was far from clear.

Q: What were you trying to do with the Title III program?

HARRISON: On the one hand, it was an incentive. "We will come up with, if I remember correctly, \$125 million of additional assistance (it was not a threat to cut assistance) if you will open up the budget, open up the military budget, run through the budget resources that are captured by the *regie du tabac* (which took a lot of money from cigarettes and matches and other stuff and which was funneled off to the Duvaliers and the military)." Of course, they resisted. In the process of pushing the program, I almost got PNGed. The Title III program also addressed some policies with respect to facilitating private investment, and the Minister of Commerce, who had lived in the States, took considerable umbrage at it. I got word that he had gone to the president to ask that I be asked to leave. We had a strong relationship with the then Minister of Agriculture. I told him about it and he was able to stop it. But it was clear that the environment was not auspicious for the Title III program, not if it in any way had biting conditions.

WILLIAM B. JONES
Ambassador
Haiti (1977-1980)

Ambassador William B. Jones was born in California in 1928. He graduated from UCLA in 1949 and USC law school in 1952. He joined the State Department in 1962 serving in the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, UNESCO, and Haiti. Ambassador Jones was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Coming to your appointment as ambassador to Haiti, I would have thought this might prove a problem because you obviously had gotten the backs up particularly some of the members of Congress who were particularly allied to the Israeli lobby. This normally is the "Kiss of Death" if you want to get anything that requires their approval.

JONES: As I told you, I talked to them many times, and I made a conscious effort to improve the status of Israel in UNESCO, and I think that I was reasonably successful in doing so. So there was no opposition to me whatsoever. When I came up for my confirmation hearings, the only questions I was asked was about my position, what I would do when I got to Haiti. I was not asked anything about UNESCO. So that never became a problem.

Q: *You went there in 1977?*

JONES: I went there the first part of August of 1977.

Q: *What was our interest, at that point, in Haiti?*

JONES: We had a number of major problems with Haiti. As you know, the Duvalier family had been in control of Haiti since 1957. The father François Duvalier, and the people around him, had been an absolute dictator and a very brutal dictator until 1971 when he died, and his son Jean-Claude ascended to the presidency at the age of 19. I came in 1977. So then Jean Claude was in his mid- to late twenties.

Around him was still the Duvalier clique, who were running the country and running it very firmly. There were, maybe, a couple of hundred political prisoners in jail at that time. One of the cornerstones of the Carter Administration was human rights. One of the major issues that I had was to encourage the appreciation of human rights in Haiti, to get political prisoners released, to try and get Jean Claude to move towards a more democratic and liberal society, to have elections which were relatively free, to allow more dissent in the country, more opposition.

Those were the political goals, then there was always the underlying premise that we did not want Haiti to come under the influence of Marxism. Cuba beamed broadcasts to Haiti every day. There were lots of Haitians living in Cuba.

Thirdly, the most overriding problem in the country was economic development. It was the poorest country in the western hemisphere. We had, at that time, which was before the outbreak of hostilities in Central America, this was before Somoza was overthrown, the foreign aid program to Haiti was, I think, the second largest in the western hemisphere at that time. Of course, now it's totally overshadowed by the Central America. But at that time, it was the second largest aid program. Our aid program was focused on rural health delivery, programs helping the poorest of the poor, as the Carter Administration liked to say, building roads so that the peasants could bring their produce to market, and improving the soil. Much of Haiti's forest had been chopped down for charcoal and the hills were barren from erosion and top soil was washed into the ocean. We tried to replant the hillsides to improve agricultural production; to develop cooperatives and to help the farmers better market their products, particularly coffee; to encourage industrial development within the country; to negotiate new textile agreements with the United States which permitted the development of a textile industry in Haiti; and also to provide an R & R facility for Guantanamo. That was major. We had a flight to Guantanamo every week from Port-au-Prince. It was a major stop-off port for the Caribbean fleet because the Dominican Republic did not welcome American warships after the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. They were particularly paranoid about airplane carriers, so we had three or four visits a year of airplane carriers that would come into the Port of Prince for R & R for the sailors.

Q: *Let's go to human rights. After all, here is a régime which is founded on everything that the human rights policy opposes, no democracy, knock down your opponents, torture them, imprison*

them and all this. You lift this and you, in effect, depose the government. How did you preach this to people who certainly had no interest in following our preaching?

JONES: First of all, a lot of people didn't understand Haiti, and I suppose they still don't. It's a very complex country and a very complex society.

The Duvalier régime was based upon the support of the peasants. It was not an oligarchy in the Latin American sense. In most Latin American countries, such as Somoza, for instance, and Nicaragua or El Salvador, it was based upon the landed oligarchy who ran the country, the 2% of the people who own 98% of the land, as you had in El Salvador. That was not the case in Haiti.

Duvalier came into power with the support of the masses of the peasants, of the poor people. His régime was a poor-people's régime. The upper-class Haitians who were of mixed blood, mulattos, fair-skinned, were frozen completely out of the Duvalier régime. They did not participate politically in the régime at all. Many of them were killed by him, simply wiped out. There were cities in Haiti where there were no longer any of the old elite, the old fair-skinned elite, although they were still there and still controlled the economy around Port-au-Prince.

So there was support among the masses for Duvalier. He was not a régime that was uniformly condemned by all the people in Haiti. The exiles who had left Haiti and come to the United States or had gone to Venezuela or to France, were absolutely livid and irreconcilable as far as Duvalier was concerned. They were totally hostile to the régime and wanted only to overthrow Duvalier. But the masses of the poor people supported Duvalier.

I traveled with him a couple of times around the country. The outpouring of enthusiasm by the poor people, particularly women, who saw themselves as potential brides of Duvalier.

Q: This was before he married.

JONES: This was before he married. It was enormous, and this was not just generated by thugs, by Tontons Macoutes, of which there were plenty. There was support in Haiti for the Duvalier régime at that time. Now, this began to erode later on. But at that time, there was considerable support among the poor people.

The opposition to Duvalier was mainly the better educated people, the intellectuals, the elite, not the business elite, but the intellectual elite of Haiti, the newspaper people, the writers, the better educated people in Haiti, particularly in Port-au-Prince and in some of the other smaller cities like Gonaïves. Contrary to some opinions, I felt that, at that time which was 1977, there was substantial support of Duvalier among the masses in Haiti.

Now as far as political freedom went, it was nonexistent in Haiti. No Haitian president since they became independent has ever left office voluntarily. They have either died in office or they have been carried out. So there was no real tradition of democracy as we know it in Haiti. Haitian society did not function in that way. So the agitation for the American style of democracy came from a small group in Haiti and then from a large group of exiles outside of Haiti.

I felt, at that time, it was important for us to improve the human rights condition, to move Duvalier towards democracy, and if possible, to liberalize the society and to develop contacts with all elements of society because I always felt that the Duvalier régime was temporary. In the Haitian tradition, régimes did not last. In fact, I used to tell Duvalier that. I developed a pretty good working relation with Jean-Claude.

Q: From the outside he seemed to be a rather ineffectual president, but he remained in power a long time. What was your evaluation of him?

JONES: There were people around him who wanted to keep him in power. He was a very clever person. He was not at all dumb as some people thought. Jean-Claude was very clever in playing one group off against the other. He genuinely did, I think, want to develop his country but in a way that would support him. In other words, his primary motive, his *modus operandi* was to retain power. There was no question about that. This was his overwhelming goal. If that meant developing the country, improving the economic situation in the country, then so be it. He would certainly support it.

He differed from his father in that Jean-Claude was not as strong as his father, and he did not have a killer instinct. He did not like bloodshed. So he tried to run the country without too much violence, without overt suppression of the people unless it became necessary. He would resort to it but only as a last resort. He didn't have the stomach for brutality.

I developed, as I said, pretty good relations with Jean- Claude. After I'd been there for about two months, then I met with him and talked with him several times and told him how important it was, in terms of maintaining relations with the United States, to observe human rights particularly regarding political prisoners.

He did release 125 political prisoners in the fall of 1977 which was the largest group of political prisoners ever released by Duvalier. Now I don't know how many were left. I think there were only a very few left in the jails. But he released 125 political prisoners.

He also had sham elections. They were sham in that, if you opposed the Duvalier régime, you were not permitted to run. However, if you agreed to support the régime, he did permit candidates to oppose each other so that the elections were contested in the sense that as long you did not advocate the overthrow of Duvalier, then you could argue over any other issue, and you had an election. And they did have parliamentary elections twice, I believe, while I was in Haiti.

I was never able to get much relaxation of the media. He still controlled the press pretty stronger. He did allow some opposition voice on the radio. There were a couple of radio stations that were very muted in their opposition to Duvalier and they were able to get away with it. He tolerated them.

At one point, toward the last two years that I was in Haiti, Duvalier occasionally, I think two or three times, called me when I didn't expect it and asked me to come immediately, unannounced, in a private car to his villa on top of the mountain. He never gave me time to go to the embassy and get instructions. He would just send a car and driver for me and summon me to his villa.

Then we would sit down, for maybe two hours, just he and I alone in a room. He would offer me Cuban cigars and scotch whiskey. We would sit down and talk, and he would just listen to me. I would go down his Cabinet and tell him the ones who I thought were crooks and suggested that he get rid of them. And, as I said, I told him very candidly that, "You cannot last. This régime is not going to last." And I suggested to him that he adopt a parliamentary-type of democracy whereby he stay on as head of state, but he would have an elected prime minister, who he could gradually turn power over to. I told him I thought this was the only way he was going to stay in power. I said, "It's just not in the cards that you're going to be President for life. You're only 28, 29 years old. You're not going to make it." I said, "You've got your choice. You can either moderate your position and perhaps stay on, or you can continue allowing the more reactionary elements to dominate the society. I guarantee you will be carried out feet first."

He always listened to me and laughed, and we joked. We developed a pretty candid relationship. Of course, I would go to the embassy and report the conversation as it happened and report it to Washington. So I think that I developed a pretty close relationship with J.C., as we called him.

The way I divided my embassy, I was the main liaison with the senior levels of the Haitian Government, which meant the Duvalier régime. Only the ambassador can do that, and someone had to do it. You cannot have relations with a country, whether you agree with what they are doing or not, and ignore them or insult them. Then you are simply freezing yourself out of decision making and freezing yourself out of information which is vital. So I was the major contact with the high-level political controllers of the country, Duvalier and his ministers and the head of the army.

I was also designated as the main contact with the elite group in Haiti, the business elite, the people who control the economy. These were fair skinned mulattos who were frozen out of government entirely. They were very well educated, very sophisticated. They were not land owners. There were no big land owners in Haiti. The peasants owned the land in Haiti. But they owned the industry. They owned the computer chip factories, the baseball factories, the textile mills, the light industry sector that was developing in Haiti, patterned on Taiwan and Hong Kong.

So I developed close relations with the Mevs family--Pritz Mevs, who's grandfather had come to Haiti from Germany to avoid service in the Kaiser's army and had married an African woman. The Mevs family controlled the sugar mill and shoe factory in Haiti. They controlled the soap making, toothpaste manufacture. The Brandt family, Clifford Brandt, who was a Jamaican, was also of German-African origin. The Brandts owned all kinds of different factories. Brandt was the wealthiest Haitian with a reported worth of \$150 million. Mevs was probably worth \$70 million.

George Leger, who later became ambassador from Haiti to the United States--his grandfather had been president of Haiti--was the leading lawyer in Port-au-Prince. He was a great fisherman, as I am, and we would go deep sea fishing together frequently. When we would get out on the boat, of course, we could talk freely with no one listening.

With other members of that group, no one else in the embassy could have access to because they wouldn't be bothered with anyone else in the embassy below the level of ambassador. They simply wouldn't.

My DCM, of course, was the manager of the embassy, and he had contacts. But my political officers were instructed to develop contacts with potential opposition groups. We had direct liaison with Gerard Bourge, who founded the Haitian Civil Rights League, and Jean Dominique who was the young broadcaster who was openly anti-Duvalier.

The political section was tasked to develop contacts with potential opposition groups in the country and so on down the line in the embassy, with the military attaché dealing with the military, and the information people with the press, and the aid people out in the country, out in the field in the rural areas.

So I thought we had the country pretty well covered. I think we knew what was going on in Haiti, in those days, very well. I had a good staff there.

Q: What were the pressures on you? You had the Carter Administration, the State Department and Andrew Young. The U.N. was playing a very active role. It was an administration that was looking closely at so-called trouble spots on the human rights deal, and you were on one of the main ones. How did this impact you?

JONES: Human rights was the major problem that I had in Haiti. My role in convincing Duvalier to moderate his human rights policies was one of my major efforts.

As I said, we got political prisoners released. Sometimes it was successful. Sometimes it wasn't. The Human Rights League started largely through quiet encouragement from our embassy, from us, through my political officers. They got themselves organized and were going great guns. Then the Duvalier crowd decided that they were becoming too potent a factor in society, and they sent their counter-insurgency battalion called, "The Leopards" in plain clothes, into their meeting one night and destroyed the entire complex, beat up everybody there including my political officer who was there representing us. He got hit in the ear with a karate chop and fractured his ear drum and had to be evacuated. So they broke that up.

I guess we might have gone a little bit too far. I don't think we did, because we didn't control it. The Haitians thought that we had more control than we did, and they went one step too far. When they crossed over that line of openly opposing the régime, then they were suppressed and suppressed brutally.

The other major effort was our aid program. That was always very emotional because I would go out into the field and see these malnourished, undernourished children. I would go into the hospitals in the field and into a hut that would be a hospital and see these people who were ill and sick and have to involve myself at all levels of society which I tried to do.

It was very difficult to go into an area where you had such extreme poverty and see it. But we had to do it because we had to have contacts. We could not operate in that country effectively

unless we did. But, nevertheless, it was very difficult for someone coming from a highly developed society as we are to go into a Haitian village and go particularly into a hospital because the villagers didn't live all that bad. Some of them lived quite decent lives. But to go into a hospital where there was no medical care and see these babies and injured people, it was always very difficult.

Q: How did the Americans, yourself, your staff, particularly your aid people, feel about dealing with a country which has always been considered, certainly within the Latin American and South American context, as being the basket case, as they call it? It seems almost that nothing we could do would really help.

JONES: The problems are overwhelming in Haiti. You have a population, at that time, I'm not sure what it is now, it was about 6 ½ million which is slightly larger than that of the Dominion Republic. The population of Haiti was three or four times larger than all of the British Caribbean put together. The Dominion Republic was twice the size in land. Haiti was mountainous. There were no flat plains where you could grow large crops. So it was over populated. The population at a 2% growth rate was going to double in about 30 or 40 years. Illiteracy was about between 80% and 90%. There was not an adequate health care system, not an adequate educational system. There was not an adequate transportation system. The country simply was under-developed, and the Haitians were very ingenious in surviving and they maintained a great sense of dignity and, in fact, a sense of joie de vivre in Haiti. It was a very lively country. So it was not as depressing as one may think, and you developed a great deal of affection for the Haitian people. Living in Haiti was not bad because, if you liked water and I love the ocean and the sea, there was always the ocean and sea to go swimming or to go fishing, which made things a lot better.

Q: What sort of pressures did you get from, say, the Carter Administration?

JONES: The main pressure was on human rights, and that was from Pat Derian. I always made it a point, when I came up to see them, to talk with them and to tell them what I was doing, that they understood that Haiti was a very difficult society. It was not a country where you could go in and shake your finger at people and they would do what you say. That simply was not possible.

So, in general, they were supportive of my efforts and I had, I think, a good relation with Pat and with Mark Schneider, who was the deputy.

We had one problem, I recall. We wanted to get a motor boat, a gun boat, for the Haitian Navy, which would have been commanded by a graduate of Annapolis, a Haitian graduate, to use to interdict the narcotics traffic that was going up the straits and also to just generally patrol the waters in Haiti, and to provide rescue capability because in that Port-au-Prince channel there were a number of reefs. None of them were marked. The lighthouses had all burned out, and there was no air traffic control at the airport. You fly in by the seat of your pants. So I was just afraid all the time that we were going to have a tragedy, that a ship was going to hit a reef or an airplane was going to go down in the ocean, and there were no boats to go out and help anyone. So I wanted this boat to have rescue capabilities as well as to help interdict the narcotics traffic which was not a problem in Haiti but was all around Haiti.

Pat Derian and the Office opposed that because it had a .50-caliber machine gun on it. They opposed it because it could be used to suppress the people. I recall that I made a special trip to Washington and went to see the Deputy Secretary from California, Warren Christopher, and explained to him what it was that we were doing and why we were doing it and why we needed to have this boat. He overruled the Human Rights Office, and we got the boat. They sailed it down to Haiti, and we all went for a cruise on it when it came.

That was the only run in that I had with the Human Rights Office. The rest of the time they were very supportive of me.

Q: Mainly because the problems were so overwhelming. I was in Korea and there we had big problems with them. But that was a different situation. What about the problem of boat people from Haiti? This is one that has caused a great deal of heartbreak and concern in the United States and also in your time?

JONES: The boat people were leaving Haiti at a pretty constant stream when I was there. We were convinced at the embassy that with few exceptions, there were exceptions, but the majority of these people who left were leaving for economic reasons and not political reasons. They were generally from the peasant class, but who had gotten enough money together, like \$1,000, to buy passage on one of these sailboats that sailed from Northern Haiti to Florida. So they were very energetic people. They were the most energetic of that social class in the country.

It was our view at the embassy, and my political officer felt very strongly about this, that these people were economic and not political refugees. When they got to the United States, of course, they immediately became political refugees and everything was anti-Duvalier and how much they were going to be harassed if they came home.

We were very careful to monitor those that were sent home to see if they were, in fact, harassed. And with very few exceptions they were not. Duvalier simply didn't care about the boat people. He was glad to get rid of them because it reduced the population pressures. They were not politically active in the country. So he simply didn't care. When they came home, unless they had a personal grudge about a wife or a girlfriend that was settled when they came home, they were not harassed, they were not bothered.

But domestically, in the United States, their cause was taken up and Jesse Jackson got involved in that. I met with Jesse Jackson here in Washington at the Shoreham Hotel. He was here for a major speech. I briefed him on the refugee boat problem in Haiti and cautioned him not to be used by certain people who were using the boat people for their own particular domestic political hits.

Q: Who were these people? What groups?

JONES: Some of them were Haitian exiles who were using them as a vehicle to try and overthrow the régime, to develop sentiment against Duvalier, to portray them as political

refugees who would be tortured if they came home and to develop public opinion in the United States to overthrow Duvalier.

The exiles who were politically active always wanted the United States to cut off foreign aid to Haiti, to do everything we could to overthrow the régime. Now I never agreed with this as a policy. I didn't think it was the time. I didn't think the United States should be in the business of overthrowing régimes. I thought it would lead to a blood bath, and I did not want blood on my hands. So I simply refused to do it. But there were very powerful people, particularly in southern Florida and still are, but things have changed now, of course. But at that time, they were very vocal.

To find out what was really going on, I came to Florida sort of incognito. The federal authorities, of course, knew who I was. But I went out to the detention center where they detained these Haitians and just wore some regular clothes so they wouldn't know that I was the ambassador. I went into the detention center and talked to them and interviewed them to see how they were being treated, to see whether they were being treated badly from our point of view. I had lunch out there with them and spent almost a whole day out in the Everglades at this detention center.

These were very energetic people. They were intelligent. They knew what they were doing. They knew exactly what to do, how to stay in the country. They had lawyers. They had become good lawyers on their own. They said all the right things. They were very vocal in being anti-Duvalier.

Q: You were mentioning relations with Panama or was that later on?

JONES: That's later on. I went to Panama while I was in Haiti as part of the briefing on the Panama Canal Treaties because that was one of the things I was to do also, to get the Haitian Government at the OAS to support our treaty with Panama. I accompanied the Haitian foreign minister to Washington for the signing of the Treaties, and I met Torrijos and I flew to Panama and was briefed in Panama by General McAuliffe and flown all over the Canal and given the usual briefings so that I would know what I was talking about when I discussed the matter. We were all, I guess, most of the ambassadors were accorded that treatment at that time.

Q: One of the things in Haiti, there must of been a lot of pressure on your consular section. How did you deal with that?

JONES: There were two kinds of pressures. One, a very large number of Americans lived in Haiti, something between 5,000 and 15,000. We could never figure out exactly how many because so many were . . .

Q: Who were these?

JONES: Some of them were ex-patriots who liked Haiti and just lived there. Some of them were retirees from the military who lived in Haiti. The overwhelming majority were missionaries and Haiti was just wall to wall missionaries from every type of denomination that you could think of, Catholic and Protestant. I would say that two-thirds of them were probably missionaries. But a substantial number lived in Port-au-Prince permanently and had residence there.

Several wealthy Americans had families in Haiti. Kitner, who was the former president of ABC, had a house in Haiti. The Kennedy family frequently visited Haiti anonymously for various reasons. Senator Byrd from Virginia regularly came to Haiti. He had a favorite house. Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes." His sister-in-law ran a shop, a boutique in Haiti, and so Mike Wallace came to Haiti several times every year. So there were a lot of Americans living in Haiti that we had to liaison with.

The big problem, of course, was visas for the Haitians. The lines would start at midnight in front of the consular section. There were professional line-standers who made their living standing in line, as you probably know from your experience. There were sometimes violence if you denied someone. One of officers was attacked because she denied a visa. She was scratched in the eye.

There were attempts of bribes. Our officers would be offered money to get people visas. They had to be very careful not to get involved. Sometimes someone would befriend you deliberately thinking that this would influence you in giving them or some member of their family a visa. So this was a very sensitive aspect of our operations in Haiti.

We had an airplane crash and a number of Americans were killed. That required consular efforts.

A couple of times narcotics planes flying over Haiti from Colombia crashed, and we got involved with that which was most unpleasant because there were always rumblings of organized crime coming in attempting to pressure our embassy people for one reason or another.

There was one case where a certain prominent American's plane crashed with a load of marijuana and he was interned by the Haitians and put in jail. We began to get some threatening phone calls from some very strange places in the United States which we felt were involved with organized crime, that we should get this guy out and get him out quickly.

So the consular section in Haiti was a very sensitive operation, very busy. In fact, our first head of the section had a nervous breakdown and had to be relieved.

Q: I think this has happened with certain frequency there and in Jamaica and in a few other places.

JONES: Yes.

Q: Was there anything on this that you want to talk about?

JONES: In 1980 there was one threat on my life when I had to be evacuated. I was going to be kidnapped by a Cuban-sponsored guerilla group, and John-Claude was going to be assassinated at the same time with a land mine planted in his driveway. I was informed of this by the Haitian foreign minister. My guards had to be increased with all of that, and my family and I had to be evacuated for a period of time.

Q: How did we view the Cuban communist threat?

JONES: Under the Duvaliers, communism was totally suppressed and it was underground. It was there, but it was underground. We couldn't find out where it was. If Duvalier couldn't find it, we certainly couldn't find it. Cuba broadcast to Haiti every day in Creole. When Castro came to power, there were several hundred thousand Haitians in Cuba cutting sugar cane. So they stayed there. They never left. They tell me that a fair number of his officers in his army in Angola were of Haitian descent. Cuba was very interested in Haiti, but they never made any real impact, as far as I could see.

Q: After you left Haiti, this would be when?

JONES: This was in the summer of 1980. I was there almost three years exactly. Then I came back and was Diplomat in Residence at Hampton University for a year, which is a predominately Black college.

ANNE O. CARY
Economic/Commercial Officer
Port-au-Prince (1978-1980)

Anne O. Cary was born in Washington, DC in September of 1952. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and entered the Foreign Service in 1974. Her career included positions in Brussels, Port-au-Prince, Paris, Addis Abba, New Delhi, Casablanca, and Washington, DC. Ms. Cary was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 30, 1995.

Q: Then you left [Belgium] in 1978. Where did you go?

CARY: I went to Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Q: Boy, what a switch! Talk about going from one type of economy to another. You were in Haiti from when and when and what did you do?

CARY: I was economic/commercial officer from 1978-80. I got off the plane and I just had never seen anything at all like this. The poverty was just incredible. A ramshackled city with animals all over the place. I was pretty appalled at how poor people could be. US economic interests at that time focused on Haiti as an off-shore zone, industrial zone. All baseballs used in the major leagues are sown in Haiti. There were a number of electronic companies, Motorola, GE, GTE plants there, apparel companies, stuffed animals, etc. So, economically US investment was not very much in real terms, but light industry mostly fueled by US companies was the only sector of the economy that was growing.

Q: Was this a policy of just doing something economically for Haiti?

CARY: It was really more of a basket case problem. The boat people more or less started while we were there. Jean-Claude Duvalier, "baby doc," was the leader and he wasn't as stupid he looked, but he was not intelligent. He was 28 or so at the time, really incompetent and had no real interest in doing anything other than party. His mother was still alive and was plain evil, having people killed and being extremely greedy. He really wasn't that way, he just, I think, wanted to get out.

Q: First let's talk a little bit about the embassy. Who was our ambassador then?

CARY: The ambassador was William Jones, an African American who is still in the State Department, but at that point was a political appointee. He had been a lawyer in California. He spoke some French but didn't speak Creole at all and he was the only one who could have contact with the President, Duvalier. That made sense except for age and language ability. There were other people in the mission who were more natural interlocutors for Baby Doc but contacts with Duvalier were limited to the Ambassador.

Q: This was William Jones saying this?

CARY: Yes. It certainly is not unusual for the ambassador to say he is the one who is going to have contact with the head of state. We probably could have had better information...not that better information mattered that much...but there were other people in the mission who could have had more casual and insightful access to Duvalier.

Q: ...looking at it at the time and maybe later, this was a man first time there, a little unsure of himself who wanted to make sure that no fancy Foreign Service type was going to take credit or something like that?

CARY: Well, I wouldn't say take any credit, but it was clearly his mission and he was the one who...he did meet regularly with Duvalier sipping bourbon or scotch, but they would sit and talk in French. Duvalier, for example, was much more comfortable in Creole. The educated class were very comfortable in expressing themselves in French. But most Haitians didn't really speak French, or wouldn't admit they didn't speak French and so you would have conversations and come out very aware that the person had no idea what you had just said. Now, Duvalier's French was better than that, but in terms of letting down your hair and saying what you really think, if you wanted to do that you did it in Creole.

Q: When you were there you spoke French?

CARY: Yes.

Q: How well did you speak Creole?

CARY: Not very well.

Q: Is there a considerable difference?

CARY: It is a much simpler grammar. There is Spanish thrown into it. If you understand English and French, it is pretty easy to understand Creole. If you understand just French, it is not so easy, because the grammar is much more English...subject, verb. There are only three tenses...yesterday, today and tomorrow. So sophisticated thoughts are expressed in French. If you are going to talk about anything on economics, you do it in French. But, if you are talking about what is going on or voodoo...people really did believe in voodoo, in zombies. Educated people with Ph.D.s believed in zombies. The Creole mythology is just great and there is some beautiful literature that comes out of it. A lot of my friends spoke Creole, so they could translate for me or tell me what someone was saying if I didn't understand.

Q: What type of things were you doing?

CARY: We mostly worked with US business that was coming in, trying to make sure they got appointments, getting needed infrastructure. We also helped set up the Haitian American Chamber of Commerce. I spent a lot of time setting that up with links back to the International Chamber of Commerce here in Washington. There had been no formal association, people just sort of got together at clubs or hotels. There was a casino industry as well which was sort of interesting. They would bring people down on junkets and you would never see them unless they had a problem with health or something like that. Tourism was beginning to develop. Club Med and Holiday Inn had places.

Just about that time AIDS was being discovered.

Q: Acquired Immune Deficiency, a deathly illness which usually comes through sexual contact which, of course, tourism in a place like that was vulnerable.

CARY: Exactly. The original AIDS warnings was about contact with homosexuals and Haitians because Haitians were the first other high risk group that turned up.

Q: Was there a lot of promiscuity within the Haitian society?

CARY: Well, there was a fair amount. Because it was such a poor country, there was also tourism prostitution, both male and female, and it was a fairly well known place for homosexuals to vacation. Also in Haitian peasant society, monogamy is not necessarily the rule. It was not unusual, because the land is divided into such small parcels, you would have a system called "placage" where a man with six different parcels of land would place a different women to work each of the different parcels. The man would make the rounds while the women were actually doing the work. So, it was a pretty fluid system in terms of sexual contacts. And there was all the rum and the dancing.

Q: How about this divide between the sort of Africans and the mixed Creole people. This goes back to the Napoleonic times and even before. I did a book on the American consul and I think the constitution got involved in helping the Creoles against the Black revolt there after the country was freed. How did you find that?

CARY: It was very clear, the differences. Coffee was historically the main cash crop and it is an export crop. The coffee industry is virtually controlled by white and Creole families and they were important in terms of the plantations and the whole coffee industry. They were seen very clearly as the people who were the elite. It was very much a skin color thing. In Creole there is something like 14 different words to describe your skin tone, so you know exactly where somebody was. And that was where Duvalier had an awful lot of appeal, because he was very dark, Papa Doc. They keep saying that Papa Doc was elected in a free election and we supported him in the beginning. But part of his appeal was he was black as the majority of Haitians are, very dark. His wife was dark too, and Jean-Claude is dark. So, when Jean-Claude married Michelle Bennett who was from one of the elite families, her skin tone is lighter than mine, there was a lot of controversy about it, feeling again it was a way of saying white is better, light is better.

Q: Just the other day I read in the paper that Aristide, who is quite dark, married an American Haitian woman who is quite light and apparently there is lots of unhappiness. It is so easy to get absorbed into the upper class, because these are usually the people diplomats deal with anyway, but you are not sounding out the country very well if you get too isolated. Was this a problem?

CARY: People were aware of it and it certainly was a problem. It was a problem more for the support staff because being with the American embassy they were automatically put into the elite. The elite were very wealthy, they thought nothing of flying to Miami on a whim for a shopping trip. They lived in huge houses and gave elaborate parties and weekend gatherings. Everybody was more or less included in it. It put a number of people in a situation they had not been in before -- living beyond their means. I think people were aware of that. There was a lot of effort to make sure that we did get out and see the other parts of Haiti, not just plantations. I remember flying in a private plane up to the Plantation Dauphin which was a sizeable sisal plantation. I was fed lovely meals, and given the VIP tour.

As a counterpoint, by this time I had met my husband-to-be, who worked for CARE and I would travel with him to all the villages, seeing the missionaries and food distribution. People in the political section also made an effort to get out. There was a DATT, Defense Attaché, who had a plane and we could travel around that way. Most of the embassy tended to socialize with very well-to-do people, but the poverty was so pervasive that you couldn't not deal with it and not see it. There were a lot of international organizations that were working there and we were in contact with them as well.

I remember African Swine Fever, which is a virulent disease that has a very high mortality rate for pigs. Frequently, a pig was a Haitian peasant's form of savings. A pig was worth \$50-60 which could be a year's earnings. If somebody died, the family would sell the pig in order to be able to bury them. This cost a lot because of the belief in zombies. A body had to be well buried, with cement over the grave to make sure it couldn't be exhumed and turned into a zombie. So, when African Swine Fever was identified in Haiti there was a huge issue over what do you do with these infected animals. The econ counselor at that time, Bob Richmond, would go out into the bush and take samples of dead pigs in an attempt to confirm the fever and send them up to Atlanta for analysis. I must say that was one part of the job I didn't really want to do.

There was a very large AID mission there and Larry Harrison was the AID director. He subsequently wrote a book more or less about the cultural implications of poverty saying there are certain cultures where the elite don't work and are non-productive. Such cultures tend not to have succeeded because as soon as you get enough to live you stop working. There was a lot of controversy about it, but Haiti was one of the places that he was citing as part of this problem.

The other issue about Haiti was because it was in the Americas Republic Bureau, it really doesn't belong there. It is French speaking and makes much more sense to put it into the African Bureau because the issues and the approaches are much closer to what you will find in Africa than you find in Latin America. And, we were almost totally ignored by the Bureau, nobody had any interest in coming down.

Q: Did the Dominican Republic play any part?

CARY: The border was closed pretty regularly between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. One of the big issues was cane cutters, Haitian cane cutters. The Dominicans would come over and engage Haitians as cane cutters by the thousands, and ship them over to cut cane. It became a human rights issue as to whether or not these people were really doing it of their own choice or whether somebody else was getting paid off and the cutters were essentially slave labor.

The other really sad issue was the boat people. There was no economy; the US was going through a recession; the price of coffee fell. US off-shore plants in Haiti were closed as investments were being pulled back. It was a country of no hope. People would sell everything they could and buy passage on one of these incredibly rickety boats. The Tontons Macoutes, who were still running around at that point, would take the money and then turn the refugees in. The refugees were sent back and had no money, no land and no tools. Some people made it to the US, I hate to think how many didn't. Those boats were... I would take one to one of the little islands just off the mainland, you could still see the mainland, and you wondered whether you were going to make it back. It was just really sad. The agreement on interdiction was made by the US with Duvalier and was something I never agreed with. Stopping the refugees on the high seas and turning them back would be piracy in any other definitions.

Q: You left there in 1980. Whither Haiti as far as you are concerned?

CARY: Haiti is the one place I have been that I did not think had any hope. Nobody puts anything into that country unless you can get it out on a plane. There is just no investment. There was a minister of commerce that I got to know pretty well and he was well educated and had been teaching in the United States. I thought he would be different, but he was on the take just like everybody else. I talked to him about it and he said this was the one chance he had. He would be minister for maybe six months and he had to get everything he possibly could for his family in that six months. Until that mentality changes and people see that there is a long term future in Haiti, I just don't see it getting better.

Q: How pervasive was corruption?

CARY: It was pervasive but not bloodsucking. If you were a businessman and wanted to meet Duvalier, for \$5000 you could meet Duvalier and probably get whatever it is that you need him to sign. But, you could also meet him by chance and get the same result. So, it was affordable corruption for those well-healed. For a peasant, even 100 gourds (\$20) was too high a price for the right stamp. Towards the end of my tour drugs became a part of the picture and changed the corruption situation. Haiti is strategically located for small private planes to refuel on their way to Columbia. There was an increase in the number of Lear jets coming in with drugs, having gone down to Columbia. This appeared to tie in with Baby Doc's marriage with Michelle; the Bennett family has been implicated in drugs.

Q: Baby Doc's wife.

CARY: After that we started getting Lear jets coming through and we had a couple of crashes. One was just disgusting. It was coming from the United States. The plane crashed outside the airport and the family came down and could care less about their son who had been the pilot. The important thing was the jewels or money that he was taking down to Colombia to bring drugs back. It was disgusting to see how eager they were to have access to the plane, while not seeming to care about their son's remains. As the drug culture moved in the corruption got worse. We were leaving just about that time so it was only by stories later I learned how much things had changed.

Q: How, at that time did you treat people who were going to have to deal with a corrupt society? We are under pretty strict controls.

CARY: Well, some of them were really corrupt themselves. We had one instance, it was so sleazy. You really had to make judgment calls. These were Americans trying to convince the Haitians that they should open a toxic waste dump to accept US waste. The proposal was to pay a million dollars and later put a golf course over it. The proponents were from New Jersey and the ties to organized crime were pretty clear. Yet, this was an investment, and they were willing to put some money into the community as well. They kept saying they had golf courses in New Jersey that have toxic waste under them. The question was do we, the US government representatives encourage this type of investment or not encourage it. Do we actually go to the Haitians and say they would be out of their minds to do this, which is what we did eventually. Actually one of the people was killed in mysterious circumstances and the project didn't go any further. But, they were spreading money around like nothing. So, you have that part as well. People were looking to do things that you couldn't do in the United States because of the proximity. It is close enough by plane.

For other people, the Corrupt Practices Act was very clear and you were very clear to people what they could or not do as Americans and most people were relatively sophisticated. One of the things that an organized chamber of commerce can do is provide a meeting place where people can ask others questions like "How do you get things cleared through customs?" We had one US company making Christmas tree ornaments (a 0 tariff item) and sending them back to the US. US customs kept classifying them as pin cushions (about 7% tariff). That obviously was somebody looking for a payoff, on the US side. So, you would get the stories from the business community. They were pretty up-front that if you want your container out in 24 hours you had to

make some arrangement. The basis for most of the business investment in Haiti was a fast turn around. All the materials were shipped down from the United States, assembled in Haiti, and entered back with tax only on valued added which would be low because the wage was \$1.60 a day. And this was for skilled labor. The quality of the electronic stuff was the same as what they were doing in Taiwan and Japan. So, it was a big deal. But, if you couldn't get your container out and turned around quickly, you lost a lot. So people were constantly working accommodations with people.

INTS M. SILINS
Political Officer
Port-au-Prince (1978-1980)

Ambassador Silins was born in Latvia and raised in Latvia and Maryland. He was educated at Princeton and Harvard Universities. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969 and served abroad in Saigon, Duc Thanh (Vietnam), Bucharest, Stockholm, Port au Prince, Leningrad and Strasbourg. In 1990 he was appointed United States Representative to the Baltic States, resident in Riga, Latvia, and from 1992 to 1995, he served as United States Ambassador to Latvia. He also had several tours of duty at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. Ambassador Silins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: Oh yes. Well you were in Haiti in '78. What was your job there?

SILINS: In Haiti I was the chief of the political section, the political officer.

Q: And what was the situation in Haiti when you were there?

SILINS: As always, terrible. But not as terrible as it got later. Haiti was still very livable for those who could afford it. We were in the early Baby Doc period. We hadn't quite scoped him out yet, we didn't know whether he had promise or not. The initial readings, of course were, as you recall, negative on Baby Doc. He was called Basket Head because he looked dumb. But during my time there he married Michele Bennett, who seemed to be a very savvy woman from a good family. We thought, okay, maybe this is going to do the trick, maybe she is going to give him some smarts and point him in the right direction. Didn't turn out to be the case, but that wasn't apparent by the time I had left. At the time it was still a pretty tough place, of course very poor, poorest in the Western Hemisphere. We were trying to, now we are into the post-Carter period, we're into...

SILINS: By post-Carter I mean Carter has arrived, in the sense that we have a more active human rights policy. So one of my jobs was to go around and talk to freethinking people, opposition people, people that didn't think that the country should have a president with lifetime tenure. So that was an interesting part of the job, including one very dramatic example.

Q: What was that?

SILINS: Well, this was an attack by the *Tontons Macoutes*, Haiti's paramilitary thugs who acted as enforcers for the Duvalier regime, on a human rights meeting I had gone to. This was in '79, I guess. The meeting was held in a church auditorium by the Haitian Human Rights League. The group's president, Gerard Gourgue, was giving a talk and he had filled the hall, so you could see there was some real support for these ideas in Haiti despite the oppressive regime. I had arrived a bit late and so I was standing outside by a side door looking into the packed auditorium and listening to the speaker. Just minutes after I arrived the trouble started. A bunch of muscular thugs began to chant *DUVALIER! DUVALIER!* in deep guttural voices, both inside and outside the auditorium. Then all hell broke loose. Inside, the thugs started smashing the furniture, breaking the legs off the chairs and hitting members of the audience with them. People began streaming out, and as they ran out they were beaten by *tontons* who were waiting for them outside the door, not far from where I was standing. I stood there appalled, taking it all in as the hall emptied. Then a young woman ran up to me, Gourgue's daughter, and appealed to me for help because her father was being beaten up and her mother as well who was with them. I went back inside with her and saw them.

By that time the church was almost empty, most of the chairs had been broken up, but there were still three or four of the thugs left. They were leaning menacingly over Gourgue, who was down on one knee on the floor, his hands up trying to protect his head, which was bleeding, these guys were pounding on him, his wife was next to him. I don't know exactly what I thought I was doing but I walked up to Gourgue, pulled him up and began to lead him out of the hall, his wife and daughter following. And at first the *tontons* let me get away with it, as though I was wrapped in a bubble of diplomatic immunity. And so I got the Gourgues out of the church. But as I led them toward the exit gate, one of the *tontons* gave me a tremendous whack with the flat of his hand on my left ear. I was stunned, disoriented, almost fell. The blow ruptured my eardrum. I was separated from Gourgue but I learned later that he got to safety; he was taken by a priest into the basement and hidden there. And the *tontons* didn't attack me any more, so I made my way out to my car, drove home, and reported the incident to our ambassador. Quite a demonstration of the regime's attitude toward human rights at that point in Haiti.

Q: Who was our ambassador while you were there?

SILINS: William Jones.

Q: And how did he operate during this difficult situation?

SILINS: Well, he immediately contacted the government to protest. Jones tried to keep steady pressure on the government to ease up, but Haiti was a problem for which we had no solution. There was no schism within the embassy as to what to do because none of us knew what the hell to do about the root problem. Haiti is a very difficult place to help. One problem was we could find no solid foundation on which to build. To put it another way, it was obvious there was not much holding the country together, preserving a thin veneer of order. Chaos had swept Haiti in the past, and we didn't see any advantage to Haiti or to the United States of unwittingly precipitating it again through some maladroitness experiment. And so while we could have pressured Duvalier more to loosen up than we did, the fact is that we thought we had no real options as to

which way to drive him because the place simply wasn't built that way, it wasn't built to support any real programs. When I got there we had spent millions and millions of dollars on assistance programs but had little to show for it. We had reverted to training Haitians rather than doing turnkey projects. AID previously had built things and said okay, here you are, now you run it, and they'd always fail. And so we decided, no more of that. Now what we're going to do is train the Haitians how to help themselves, get them invested in the projects. So consequently we were doing mostly training programs. Whenever we had congressional visitors we had to take them to an Israeli agricultural project because it was the only concrete thing you could show to somebody. So it was a very, very difficult place in that respect. We just didn't know which end to grab it by. And we still don't.

Q: Well, as the political officer, was there the equivalent of a political party, a ruling one, or was it all running out, or was it equivalent to the White House?

SILINS: It was a family-run show, the Duvalier operation. Baby Doc had the title of President for Life and the clique of people that had supported his father, Papa Doc, was now supporting him. There was no political party structure. There was, however, an influential group with some impressive individuals, usually called *The Elite*. These were mostly prosperous rather light-skinned blacks. Haitians, by the way, are sensitive to gradations of color, much more than Americans are. They're appalled that here everybody's called black whether he has 1/2 or 1/64th proportion of African heritage. They make more subtle distinctions. And some Haitians looked down on American blacks because they didn't defeat slavery on their own, whereas Haitians take great pride in having defeated Napoleon. That was a bit of a problem for Ambassador Jones, as an African-American.

Anyway, many of the elite were successful in business. Now, Haiti has no natural resources to speak of. There was a bauxite mine but it was winding down because the ore wasn't of very high quality. That was about it in terms of natural resources. So the business focus was on tourism, assembly operations or low-level manufacturing. Haiti at that time made most of our baseballs and softballs, for example, and some textiles. Just enough to keep a group of people in pretty good comfort. There was very little trickle-down. Most Haitians were desperately poor. And the elite wasn't interested in government; they avoided it like poison because they knew it could be fatal to mess with politics. So there wasn't a middle class in the sense that we conceive of it, a middle class active in social affairs and community affairs and government affairs. There was no sense of civic action. There was a token parliament and that was about it.

Q: As the political officer what did you do?

SILINS: Traveled around the country, talked to people inside and outside the government. From the elite I picked up some metaphors about life and politics in Haiti. The crab theory of politics explains why it's so hard to rise to a better position in Haiti. Why do crabs find it difficult to escape from a basket? Because the other crabs keep him in there. Then there's the bullwhip theory of politics. It's easy to make people respect you, just keep a bullwhip on the wall behind your desk. They'll know what it's for. It's a country vivid and close to the ground for a political officer. It was educational for me because with the sole exception of Vietnam all of my assignments have been in Europe or close to it.

As political officer I had no mandate to involve myself in economic development issues, but I visited aid projects, ours and those of other countries, anyway. I also talked to the non-governmental and religious groups that were all trying in their own way to help Haiti become a better place. Some of them were doing wonderful work, but no one seemed to have found what many of us at the embassy were looking for, the secret for bringing lasting political, social and economic development to Haiti on a large scale.

SCOTT E. SMITH
Head of Project Development Office, USAID
Port-au-Prince (1979-1981)

Scott E. Smith was born in Indiana but graduated from high school in Brazil. He spent three years at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland and then transferred to the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC, earning a B.A. and an M.A. Mr. Smith joined USAID in 1974 and served in Bolivia, Haiti, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, and Washington, DC. He retired in May 1996 and was interviewed by W. Haven North on January 14, 1997.

SMITH: In January, 1979, we left Bolivia and went to Haiti. I had had some discussions that fall about a transfer from Bolivia as things had gotten a little unstable in Bolivia. I had also been the acting office director for a while and that was starting to get old without any real sense of whether that was going to be a permanent promotion or not. That combination of things prompted me, despite my affection for Bolivia, to think about moving some place else. So, I had had some discussions with the Bureau and the outcome of that was a transfer to Haiti as the head of the project development office in Port-au-Prince.

Q: Why Haiti?

SMITH: Well, I guess primarily because it was there. It was what was offered and the job was a good job. It was a move to an office director position. Also because Haiti was another poor country and that was what I was interested in focusing on. I didn't know much about Haiti before I went there. I had had a little French in college and thought that would help. That proved to be not too helpful. It seemed like an interesting place to go and certainly one where you could identify quite readily, as one could in Bolivia, with why you were there, from a development standpoint. So, we went.

My youngest son was born during that move. My wife and older son had gone to Texas to stay with her folks after we left Bolivia. My youngest son was born in March so they came and joined me in Haiti in April. So, I was there by my self the first three months. That actually wasn't too bad. I took some French classes the first month I was there and spent a lot of time just getting adjusted and acclimated to the new program and a very new culture and very different kind of country.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in Haiti?

SMITH: Well, Haiti was like no place I had ever been before. Even having traveled in Africa, it was not that. It was a difficult place to get to know. Unlike in Latin America where I had grown up and knew the language and my way around and to some extent could be mistaken for someone from that country by my appearance, in Haiti there was none of that. There was no question but that you were a foreigner. The culture was something that was different and it really took us about a year of being there before we really felt comfortable. Not because of crime or because we felt in a dangerous situation, but because just walking down the street you obviously stood out and people in the market or on the street would sort of yell out to you and that kind of thing. They did this not in a threatening way, although when I was first there and not familiar with the language and culture, I was never quite sure what was going on. So, it really did take us a long time to adjust.

Q: What was the government situation?

SMITH: One looked at the government situation from two perspectives, I suppose. From the perspective of the time, it wasn't good, it wasn't bad. It certainly was better than it had been. In 1979, Jean-Claude Duvalier had been president for three or four years, "Papa Doc" had died. There was a feeling of optimism of an opening, that things were getting better. I think that was true. A number of people, particularly younger professionals who had spent a lot of years in exile in the States or elsewhere in the Caribbean were coming back to Haiti and setting up businesses. Things generally were looking up. Certainly when one looks at Haiti in retrospect, the time that we were there from 1979-81, was probably close to the golden years of the last half century. We kind of hit it at the peak because things had begun to go down by the time we left.

On the other hand, a few years is not a long time to change a lot of the internal practices, beliefs and culture and the government. The government was viewed as being very ineffective, not caring particularly about the people of the country or its development, quite corrupt in many different ways. The AID program had started in Haiti about 1975 or 1976, so I was probably a second generation of AID people to work in Haiti and got there just as many of the folks who had opened up the program were beginning to leave.

Some of the early programs, reflecting the development models of the time, were with the government. But those were pretty uniformly not working very well.

Q: What kind of programs were those?

SMITH: Again a range of things. Agricultural development programs, health and population, road construction, some credit programs. The government programs were really not going anywhere. There were tremendous implementation delays. So, most of what we did in terms of new projects, or even redesigning some of the old projects, was to work with private voluntary organizations, PVOs. There was a big Food for Peace program there...child feeding programs and school feeding programs...with large involvement from CARE and Catholic Relief Services. So, the main strategic approach that we took during the time that I was there was to work much more with non-governmental groups and to put together programs that would in effect bypass the

government. And, of course, that became a much stronger theme in the Haiti program following that.

Q: Did that work?

SMITH: Well, it depends how you define “work”. It probably worked better in terms of getting specific individual projects going and achieving their own aims. Did it have much of a significant impact on Haiti and Haitian development in general? Probably not. It was hard to tell because of what happened in the country after that time. Beginning in 1980-81 Jean-Claude Duvalier and his government became much more corrupt and much more insulated and began the downhill slide which led to his leaving his “life presidency” in 1986, which led to another period of great turmoil there.

Q: What about the voluntary agencies?

SMITH: A lot of them were church groups that would have one project. But they were out there. They were the network that was providing whatever services were being provided. So, I think that the private agencies were pretty effective at reaching people. Again, maybe more on an anecdotal and not a systematic basis, but nonetheless I think they were successful.

Q: Were they just providing services or were they trying to build any kind of community capacities?

SMITH: The latter. I think there was a lot of attempt to try to build capacity, to develop community organizations. Not all of them, obviously, but I think by and large there were major attempts.

Q: Do you have any idea how that worked?

SMITH: Well, again, at a local level, I think it worked fairly well. Some of the larger programs were carried out by CARE, which not only had the food programs but had its own development programs that focused on handicraft and agricultural development. That was pretty effective I think, although in a limited kind of way, not with any really discernible national benefits probably. Again, as the political situation deteriorated throughout the ‘80s it limited any further impact.

Q: Were the local initiatives sustained or did they deteriorate as well?

SMITH: One of the programs that I am most pleased to have been involved in was in Haiti. There was and is a major problem in Haiti with deforestation, in fact, almost the whole country has been deforested for charcoal and other uses. A major effort of ours during the time I was there, and I think it still remains a major focus of the program, was on trying to do something related to tree planting. We wanted to try to do that by creating agriforestry activities where farmers could raise their own trees for fuel and other uses and also, to some extent, begin to reverse the deforestation trend, although that was probably a little more ambitious. So, we put

together an agriforestry program that really has become quite successful and I believe even now with the revival of the assistance program in the last couple of years is still going on.

Q: What were the features of that program?

SMITH: Well, again it involved exclusively private organizations and there were three different aspects to it.

Q: These were international organizations?

SMITH: Some were international and some were local, although most were international. One feature was working with CARE and the organizations they were working with in the northwestern Haiti to help introduce agriforestry into their development programs. The planting of fast growing trees, and that kind of thing.

A second component was to create a clearing house or a mechanism, a channel to fund small community level projects that international or local NGOs would want to carry out. A program office was created by the Pan American Development Foundation; it ultimately ran that program, which was basically a wholesale/retail operation where AID provided the funds to PADF and PADF then retailed those out to small community projects throughout the country.

A third component was a nursery component, working with an American who had come down to Haiti as a semi-missionary, semi-private businessman: "Operation Double Harvest". He had developed a technique for growing seedlings which was much quicker and much less cumbersome than the traditional big-black-bag-full-of-dirt approach. A sort of cone approach which got the root structure the right way and could be done using little forms that he had developed. So, we provided some funding for him to expand some of his nursery operations for growing the seedlings that were then used by the community organizations and CARE in other parts of the program. I think the project has been a tremendous success, at least in terms of numbers of trees planted, which is something given what the history in Haiti had been up to that point.

Q: What was the incentive to the people to plant the trees and then preserve them?

SMITH: The incentive was that they owned them, unlike the situation with a lot of the forests that existed there. They owned them, planted them on their own. They were fast growing trees, so theoretically they could begin to get some benefits from them fairly quickly. The seedlings themselves were either given away or a small amount was charged. Then there was some assistance provided in the care and nurturing of the seedlings. But, it was intended to be an effort that was driven by a farmer's desire to have the trees. It wasn't a government agency going out and planting trees on community land, but an activity that was started by a decision of the farmer that he or she wanted to plant something on their land. They owned the trees. It was not community wood lots. It was a commercial effort on the part of the farmers' themselves.

I think that is illustrative of the kinds of interesting things that we did and one of the programs that I was involved in.

Q: Was there anything in health and education?

SMITH: There wasn't much in education. Part of the problem with education was the language and we really didn't have much in the way of French and certainly not Creole expertise to offer for the education system. And, like other places, there was great sensitivity about curriculum and the history of Haitian education was more derived from the French system anyway than the ones we were familiar with.

Health, there again were major programs in mother and child health and family planning. Much of them through private organizations, too. Some of that was with the government agencies as well. There was a small program that was begun for small business, micro enterprise assistance. We did a lot of work on that when I was there. Helped to create the Haitian Development Foundation which was similar to the similarly named organizations in other Latin American countries. We also did a lot of research work on small businesses in Haiti as a foundation for future programs in this area..

Q: Did that work?

SMITH: There were some results, but again several years later there were a number of problems with the Haitian Development Foundation, corruption and leadership issues, which undermined some of those efforts. Unfortunately, I think we took more of a top down institutional development approach than supporting an organization that emerged from the communities or clients it was intended to serve. I think that gap in perception and culture was one that was difficult to overcome.

Q: What was the size of the overall Haitian program?

SMITH: I don't really recall but it was probably in the neighborhood of \$20 million a year.

Q: Including the food assistance?

SMITH: Yes. There was PL 480 Title II assistance but also some PL 480 Title I programs as well. So, to that extent there was an economic policy aspect to the program and a lot of reform efforts devoted to the national flour mill and its pricing policies and those kinds of things. So, it was a pretty multi-dimensional program from that standpoint.

Q: Why was the US interested in putting that much money into Haiti?

SMITH: I think there were a couple of motives. One, the initial one after Jean-Claude Duvalier became president and things seemed to be getting better, was the absolute poverty and the gap between Haiti and Florida which is only an hour and a half flight away. So there was a more altruistic desire to do something in the country. But a dimension of that situation, which and became much more prominent during my time there, was the phenomenon of the boat people. When boat loads of Haitians began to wash up on the Florida shores it became a major concern of the US government to address that and keep them there.

Q: What triggered that?

SMITH: Well, I think what triggered it was the economic disparities. The desperate situation.

Q: It had gotten worse?

SMITH: For a variety of reasons, which I think were largely economic in that time, the boat people situation became a major issue and a major concern.

Q: Were we doing anything at that time to try to prevent that?

SMITH: Nothing directly. Again, the theory was that effective development efforts would help to stem that, but of course that was a pretty tall order given the magnitude of the problem. That was like drugs and democratic elections in Bolivia and became the foreign policy issue having to do with the Haiti program. The lack of results, in terms of reducing the flow of boat people, became important for influential people in the Congress and therefore the administration. In 1980 that became a major issue and Clarence Long in the Congress took a hard line about cutting off assistance to Haiti unless something was done to stop the boat people from leaving. It became a major issue whether the AID program was doing anything in Haiti that was making an impact on this problem.

That kind of set up what, for me, was one of those major defining events for my career and in my life. At the end of 1980 there were presidential elections in the US and Carter lost and Reagan won. The contrasts in the way that those two administrations dealt with the issue of Haiti couldn't have been greater. I am not sure the way I just said that it is accurate, actually, because I think it boiled down more to individuals and their own particular perspectives on things than to some disembodied "administration". But, nonetheless, the approaches were quite different and provided me some real insights into the effectiveness of different management approaches to problems. When we were having these issues in the summer and fall of 1980, before the election, Jack Vaughn was designated as the assistant administrator for Latin America, although he was never actually confirmed in that position. However, after having been designated he was sitting in the office and anticipating being confirmed and moving into that job full time.

One of the big issues, politically, and one of the issues that he felt he needed to address in his confirmation hearings was the boat people and the Haiti development program. He made a trip to Haiti to discuss that with us. His approach to it was extremely constructive, extremely respectful, a model of a good management approach. I remember very distinctly meeting in the conference room with him and his basically saying, "I have a problem and you have a problem. You have a problem in Washington and my job is to try to help you solve your problem there. It is a problem for me what is going on here but my problem is going to be solved to the extent you are able to deal with your problem. So, my role is to help you solve that problem. So, let's talk about how I see the problem and how you see the problem and come up with something that we can do to address these concerns and try to solve the problem."

Well, unfortunately, Mr. Carter lost the election. And Jack Vaughn was never confirmed as the assistant administrator. The Haitian problem didn't go away. But a few months later, without consulting us at all, in his confirmation hearings, Peter McPherson, as administrator designate, allowed as how he was very concerned that the Haiti program wasn't getting the results that he would like from it and it would be one of his first orders of business to fix that program. The way he then decided to implement that was to send a delegation of four people to Haiti shortly thereafter to basically design an approach to solve that problem. This was done in consultation with us, but they were the ones who were empowered to come up with the recommendations. Needless to say, that was the first of what were to be several run-ins or disagreements I had with the Reagan administration and its conduct of AID business. I did not feel that that was an effective way of dealing with the problem or of empowering the staff or even respecting us. It took me a long time and many years, despite Peter McPherson's positive contributions to AID, to form a positive image of him because of the way that issue was handled.

Q: Were these appointees who came out or regular AID people?

SMITH: Both. One was John Bolton, who was to become the head of PPC and General Counsel. I think this was his first overseas trip or certainly his first trip to a developing country. The other was a guy by the name of Sam Martinez, who was also designated to be assistant administrator for Latin America, but actually never made it to the confirmation process. Then there were Ed Coy and Phyllis Dichter, who were the other two people. Ed was the acting AA for Latin America and Phyllis was the deputy director of the Caribbean desk at that time.

This episode left a mark on me in a number of different ways forever. It highlighted for me some lessons for later management roles and also some lessons about empowerment, trust, responsibility and interaction between the political appointees and people on the ground.

I think in the Haiti program in those days you had bright points. The agriforestry project that I mentioned was probably the brightest of them all. There were, in succeeding years, some other kinds of private sector development programs that I think had a positive impact for a while, but I think the program was defeated by the magnitude of the problem and the deteriorating situation over the early years of the '80s and then complete chaos in the latter part of the '80s. I don't know that there is a whole lot that would remain there from those programs, with the exception of some of the voluntary agency programs.

Q: Apart from the government and the wealthy elite, what impression did you have of the general population's view about development as such? Was it something that they understood or wanted?

SMITH: In certain pockets, but I think that there was an impressive lack of trust and community spirit among people in Haiti, probably born out of a long history of exploitation, particularly during the Duvalier years. Never knowing whether you could trust your neighbor, tremendous exploitation, marginalized existence. This really made working with people beyond family units, efforts to work together in community organizations or efforts that would benefit more than individuals, extremely difficult to do. There was a real sense of distrust, of individualism. On the other hand, despite the obvious hardships and the tremendous, almost indescribable poverty and conditions in which people lived, there was a certain energy there, a certain entrepreneurship and

creativity there without which people would not have survived. So, there was something to tap. But it was by far the most difficult situation and environment that I worked in.

There were a couple of threads in my Haiti experience that were also ones I mentioned for Bolivia. In Haiti, as in Bolivia, although perhaps not so widespread, I had the good fortune of working with a number of really good people. Among them Aaron Williams and Stacy Rhodes, who are both mission directors now in AID. Bill Rhoads was the assistant director and my direct supervisor. Linda Morse, now director in India, was a recent IDI in the health office. So, I had a good core of people, at least in my immediate circle, to work with. This really helped in coming up with some of the programs that we did and some of the approaches that we did to deal with the situation.

The other is that, again, because of a series of transfers and moves and other kinds of things over the two and a half years that I was in Haiti, I moved up through the ranks, mostly on an “acting” basis. At the time I went there the project development and the program offices were divisions under an assistant director who was Bill Rhoads. In the end, we in the project development division ended up doing a lot of the traditional program work, the strategies and those kinds of things as well. Less than a year after I arrived in Haiti, Larry Harrison, who had been the mission director, left and went to Nicaragua where he became the mission director after the Sandinistas took over there. Al Furman, who had been deputy director, became the mission director, and Bill Rhoads, in effect, became deputy, although officially he remained “assistant” director. When Bill left in early 1981, I became the acting assistant director, but because of travel and illness, for most of the last couple of months I was in Haiti I was the acting mission director. The first half of 1981 was tough. That was when all of the business with the McPherson group was going on and I probably took that more personally than I should have, but that was one of the reasons it still sticks in my throat as much as it does. We were trying to make things work as effectively as possible and I was just coming into a position of broader responsibility in the mission and yet there was little willingness to work with us, listen to us or even involve us.

I was actually a candidate to be the permanent deputy director there in 1981, but that did not work out. One of the things that happened when the Reagan administration came in was a freeze on all transfers, in expectation expectation of budget cuts. It looked as if I would be staying in Haiti for another two years, which would have been okay, even if I hadn’t become deputy director. Things went back and forth for several months, and literally, it wasn’t until the day my wife and sons were leaving Port-au-Prince for what they thought would be home-leave-return-to-post that the decision was made that we would be moving back to Washington that summer of 1981.

HENRY L. KIMELMAN
Ambassador
Haiti (1980-1981)

Ambassador Henry L. Kimelman was born in New York City. He joined the US Naval Reserves and soon after established a lasting business career in the Virgin

Islands before receiving an ambassadorship to Haiti. Ambassador Kimelman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Let's move to how you became Ambassador to Haiti.

KIMELMAN: I first became involved in government during the Kennedy administration as the Commissioner of Commerce from 1961-1964. I was in charge of the industrial development, tourism and rum promotion, and airports and harbors. During that period of time I became acquainted with many of the Kennedy senior officials. Traveled to Washington frequently. The Interior Department administers territorial affairs. The Secretary of Interior is the primary individual the Virgin Islands is responsible to. Stewart Udall was Kennedy's appointee as Secretary of the Interior, and served the entire eight years of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. I got to know him quite well and developed a personal relationship with him. After I resigned as Commissioner in 1964, we kept in contact. About two years later he called me one day and offered me a job in Washington. He was having problems with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and thought that I could be helpful and wanted me to take over the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I didn't think that was a job that I could be helpful with. But I told him if he could find something for me at an Assistant Secretary's level or preferably as his personal assistant, I would be interested in coming to Washington. In 1967, his long time personal assistant Orrin Beatty, who served as his Chief-of-Staff and had been with Stewart since he was elected to Congress in 1954, was appointed to the Four Corners Commission. Stewart had arranged the appointment for Orrin. A few months earlier the position of Under Secretary became available. Stewart forwarded his recommendation of me to the White House. However Senator Scoop Jackson, chairman of the Senate Interior Committee, had his candidate.

Q: A very powerful figure.

KIMELMAN: He was a very powerful figure. I knew Scoop, and I knew that he liked me. Judge Black in the state of Washington had been a political mentor of Scoop's and had a son whom he wanted to have that job. So Scoop used his influence and Dave Black became the Under Secretary of the Interior. A very nice man. I got along very well with him. Shortly thereafter when Orrin left, Stewart said, "I've got this job as my personal assistant. I'd like you to fill it Henry, I think you'll find it very interesting." So I went to Washington in 1967. Another key assistant by the name of Jim Officer, and I shared the Chief-of-Staff duties. Jim left a few months later. I then became Chief-of-Staff. Stewart was writing a book in 1968. Consequently I became the de facto secretary from June 1968 to January 20, 1969.

Q: What was your impression of the Department of Interior in those days?

KIMELMAN: I thought then and I still believe that Stewart Udall was one of the two best Secretaries of the Interior in our history. I don't know too much about the Harold Ickes period. It was before my time. He was Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior and considered a great Secretary. Stewart is an amazing man. He is intelligent, talented, creative, and as honest and devoted a public servant as I have ever encountered. He did a masterful job of running that department for eight years.

Q: He made quite a name. People were really aware of that, not in a controversial way, that came a little bit later.

KIMELMAN: He was a great environmentalist and a dedicated public servant as was his brother Morris Udall who took his seat when Stewart was appointed Secretary. And Moe served for 30 years. Both are very dear friends. I see Stewart from time to time. He's now living in Sante Fe, New Mexico. Moe is very ill and had to retire from the House. He has Parkinson's disease. He is a wonderful man. He was a presidential candidate in 1967.

Q: What was your impression of the professional staff of the Department of the Interior? One hears mixed stories about this.

KIMELMAN: Mine is extremely high. What troubles me, and I have this discussion frequently with friends of mine, peers of mine, successful businessmen who tend to denigrate the bureaucracy. I found that my time in Washington the career public servants, particularly the super graders, whom I would have constant contact with, were superb. Not only in the Department of the Interior but with the Department of Commerce and other departments. They were generally outstanding men and women who probably could have earned far greater sums in the private sector. In those days a super grader earned about \$34,000 a year. People serving in those jobs could have been earning \$75,000 a year, in my opinion, in the private sector. And they worked 60, 70, 80 hours a week, most of every week, seven days a week, perhaps only a few hours on Sunday. We were in our offices 7, 7:30 in the morning until 6, 7, 8:00 many evenings. I'm talking about not myself who did that, who was a political appointee and who didn't have to make any sacrifice salary-wise, because I had outside income from my own business. But those who make the sacrifice, who have families to raise and children to send to college; and yet worked for the government for sums much less than they could have received on the outside. I have the greatest respect for the bureaucracy. This is something I've been debating and discussing and arguing with friends of mine who have never served in government and who find it hard to believe. The American public just doesn't realize that.

Q: Well I think it's almost built-in. And I'd like to come back to this subject of when you became Ambassador. Could we talk about how you became an Ambassador?

KIMELMAN: Forgive me I hope I'm not rambling on.

Q: This is exactly, I want to catch this.

KIMELMAN: I guess you can edit out what you don't want.

Q: No, I won't edit out anything.

KIMELMAN: It's all part of my background. I went to Washington as I said in 1967. I met Senator Church in 1961 when I was Commissioner of Commerce.

Q: This is Senator Frank Church.

KIMELMAN: Frank Church, he became a close personal friend.

Q: You were saying that you had served in the government towards the end of the Johnson administration.

KIMELMAN: When I was the Commissioner of Commerce, I was also the Virgin Island's delegate to the Caribbean organization. It became defunct shortly thereafter. It was an attempt at a small United Nations for the Caribbean.

A Caribbean organization in Guyana and Cheddi Jagan was the head of government.

Q: Quite a fireband.

KIMELMAN: A fireband. Was married to a Jewish woman that he had met at the University of Chicago, both of whom were members of the Young Communist League in the mid-1930's. Arriving back from the Virgin Islands in October 1961 I had a message from the Governor that he wanted me to attend a luncheon he was hosting for Senator Church. I was seated next to Church with the Governor on the other side. Church was a member of the Senate Interior Committee, but also the Foreign Relations Committee. And foreign relations, foreign affairs was really his major interest. And Interior because he was from Idaho and had for political reasons to be on that committee. He was more interested in talking to me about Cheddi Jagan than he was in finding out what I was there for: to sell him the Virgin Islands and what he could do for us. We developed our relationship and when I came to Washington in '67, he hosted a dinner party for me to which Senator McGovern was invited. He was also a member of the Interior Committee. We became socially friendly as well as having a government relationship with both of them being members of the Senate Interior Committee. I appeared with Stewart before the Interior Committee on a number of occasions. By the time I resigned on January 20, 1969 the Kimelman and Church families were close friends. We had boys the same age. The Church and McGovern families vacationed at our home in the Virgin Islands. And George McGovern was visiting us in Saint Thomas on July 19, 1969 which was the day of the accident off Chappaquidick.

Q: This is where Senator Kennedy was involved in an automobile accident. A woman died. It pretty well ended his political career as far as presidential.

KIMELMAN: He was considered to be the far and away nominee for 1972 if he wanted it. I hosted a small dinner party at our home in the Virgin Islands for the Senator that evening. Scotty Fitzgerald, F. Scott Fitzgerald's daughter, was visiting. We invited her to dinner, she brought the news of the tragedy of Chappaquidick. And George and I spoke about his running for President that evening. I became his finance chairman. I was also Chairman of the Board of the McGovern for President in 1972.

We had a residence in Washington in 1969. In 1976 I did the same thing for Frank Church. I was his Finance Chairman and I was Deputy Political Chairman of his campaign for the presidency. You may recall he won five primaries and went down almost to the wire with Moe Udall. Carter

I had met. He knew me and asked me to be his Finance Chairman, but I had a prior commitment to Senator Church. I politely declined, but I developed somewhat of a relationship with him.

In 1979 my name was in the personnel computer at the White House. I was called by the White House to talk about a position in the administration. As it turned out, the young man who was Director of Personnel, I did not remember him, but he knew me. He had a minor role in the Church campaign, and had driven me a couple of times. He apparently liked me. It is interesting the play that happens in the bureaucracy. He told me that my name had come up for the position as an Under Secretary of the Army. Harold Brown was the Secretary of Defense and they were looking for somebody who had an administrative and financial background. The position was responsible for procurement. They believed that a number of billions of dollars could be saved annually. And that it would be an interesting position for me. I had been a Naval Lieutenant and I didn't think I'd feel comfortable being the Under Secretary of the Army. I had recalled reading in the Washington Post a few days before that the Secretary of the Navy had been promoted to Deputy Secretary of Defense and that the Secretary of the Navy position was open. I suggested that I might be interested in being the Secretary of the Navy. That was sort of more up my alley.

This young man who was White House Personnel Director had taken a liking to me. His name is Arnie Miller. He said, "Henry, if that's the job you want, fine. You've got it." I said, "What do you mean, I've got it?" He said, "I'll recommend it to the President. You go home. It's 95% certain." About a week later he called me very apologetic. Somehow the administration felt it needed someone with a Latin background for this position, politically. So a man by the name of Eduardo Hidalgo, who was then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, was given the position. I knew Ed Hidalgo. He had purchased my home on California Street about a year earlier. And Mr. Hidalgo was as much Mexican-American as I was. He came from an upper-class family whose roots were in Mexico 100 years earlier. I thought to myself, if my name had been Enrico Kimelmano instead of Henry Kimelman, I'd have been Secretary of the Navy. All I had to do was add an "o" to my name. He felt badly. He said, "What are you interested in, Henry?" I said, "All my life I had the ambition to be an Ambassador." He said, "You want to be an Ambassador?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, here's a list of six countries. Take a number from one to six. Almost that easy. Amongst these six countries, the ones that I was most interested in were Finland, Haiti and Costa Rica. Luxembourg was available. I immediately eliminated that country because I thought of Perle Mesta.

Q: Perle Mesta, "Call me Madam."

KIMELMAN: "Call me Madam," I had seen that show. And I thought, I'm from the West Indies. Haiti is a country I know and a country with tremendous problems. I believe I can make a significant contribution. So I told him that I was primarily interested in going to Haiti. About a short time after, perhaps a week or two, he called me and said that my name had been sent to the President. It had been approved by the Secretary of State, and it should come through any day. A few days later I received a call from someone in the White House. It was not Mr. Miller, telling me that my appointment had come through.

I was in Saint Thomas. I said, "I'm on my way to the States. I'd like to stop in Haiti for a few days to renew my friendship with some old acquaintances and let them know that I'll be coming,

etc. Does the State Department have any objections?" He said, "You're not going to Haiti." I said, "What do you mean I'm not going to Haiti?" He said, "You're going to Luxembourg." "How did that happen?" He replied, "I don't know." Well I knew Ben Reed who was Under Secretary of State for Administration. He was a close friend of a friend of mine. I called Ben, "What happened? Why Luxembourg? I don't want to go to Luxembourg. I don't want to be thought of as a Perle Mesta." He said, "We don't know what happened because the career people were very interested in having you go to Haiti." And apparently as he related the story to me, Cy Vance was at the White House. They made the State Department appointments on a Friday morning. He had come in with a list of my appointment and perhaps others. Carter was about to sign off, looked up at Cy and said, "Why are we sending Henry Kimelman to Haiti?" Cy Vance, who barely knew me, said, "I have no idea." The President said, "I don't know Henry well. But he has had a lot of international business experience. His company has represented a number of European companies." Carter did his homework. He knew about me. He continued, "I think Luxembourg, particularly with the rotation of the European Community Presidency, and the President of Luxembourg is going to be head of the European Community this year, that's an important post. I want somebody with some international business experience." So the President crossed out Haiti, and put down Luxembourg.

Mr. Kennedy, this is going to be particularly interesting. It should be part of the record. It shows the influence of the bureaucracy. The State Department's career people apparently were upset. They had been very dissatisfied over a number of years with the problems of Haiti. They had been very dissatisfied with the career appointees to Haiti. They had concluded that they wanted Kimelman, and although not black, he was from the Caribbean, had been the Commissioner of Commerce, had lived in the West Indies for 40 years, had been the Director of an airline, a bank, and knew the area. They were convinced that I, with my Caribbean background, was the man for Haiti at that time. Months passed and I kept calling the Department. "What's happening with my appointment? It started in late '79." "You're from the Virgin Islands. We're having problems with the FBI clearances. They're busy with others and you're far away on an island. They haven't the time to get there." I'm convinced that it was a delaying tactic by the career people who decided that they wanted me in Haiti and not Luxembourg. And after about six months, I called Ben Reed. He said, "Henry, why don't you call Hamilton Jordan. Do you know Hamilton?" I had met him, but did not know him well. Ben said, "Why don't you call Hamilton and tell him that you're having a problem with your appointment and that you really want to go to Haiti, and to see what he could do. I believe that your clearances would move at a much faster pace." He didn't say it in so many words but the inclination was abundantly clear. I called Hamilton Jordan, we chatted briefly. He put me on to Tim Kraft, who was his assistant whom I knew somewhat better. Tim said, "I'll see what I can do, Henry." About three or four days later I got called and was told that my appointment had been changed to Haiti from Luxembourg. Two weeks later all my clearances were completed. And that was how I got to Haiti.

Q: Did you have any problems with confirmation?

KIMELMAN: That's an interesting question. My confirmation took five minutes. And this is interesting for your Oral History Program. It shows you the play of politics in government. Frank Church was out of town campaigning. He was, early in 1980, up for reelection as was Senator McGovern. Frank was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, George was Chairman of

a Subcommittee. He chaired my confirmation hearings. Jesse Helms was holding up all career and non-career State Department appointments. I appeared, not knowing what problems I would encounter. I made a brief opening statement. George McGovern, who had by now become a close personal friend, knew quite a number of people in the audience. He went on extolling my virtues and said that Henry only has one major problem. Everybody looked up. He has a penchant for backing political losers in campaigns. He said, aside from that, I think he'll be a great Ambassador to Haiti. And everybody laughed. At that point Jesse Helms, just visualize this, probably one of the most liberal Senators and certainly the most conservative at the time, a man I had never met, began to extol my virtues, telling the audience that he thought I was a perfect choice for Haiti and that I was very experienced, background in government, etc. I had the perfect wife for the job, I forget his exact words, but this was coming from a man I had never met. There was not a voice of contrary opinion. Tom Foley happened to be in the audience because, I forget the man's name who was up for confirmation as Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs and had some problem. He has been Ambassador to Columbia and Tom came to oppose his confirmation.

Q: Diego Asencio.

KIMELMAN: That's his name. To testify against him. Apparently some woman from the state of Washington's son had been kidnapped and he had not given the mother the kind of comfort and security she had wanted when she was in Columbia. Tom saw that I was up for confirmation. He was on the House Interior Committee. I had known Tom for years. He arose to say that Henry's a fine fellow and would make a great Ambassador. I was confirmed unanimously. It took no more than ten minutes. As we walked down the Senate corridor afterwards, Jesse Helms congratulated both of us. We were walking along the corridor, behind the confirmations hearing room, Jesse Helms turned to my wife and said, "You're going to be a great Ambassador's wife, and your husband's going to be a great Ambassador." We thanked him. I have not seen Jesse Helms since. I looked at George, and he said, "Well, I guess I owe Jesse one."

Q: The situation in Haiti, in the first place did you go with either from the State Department or in your own mind, what you wanted to accomplish and what was the situation in Haiti at the time?

KIMELMAN: Haiti under Duvalier.

Q: This was Papa Doc Senior.

KIMELMAN: No, this was Baby Doc. Jean Claude who had been president for about nine years. Part of the problem in terms of our government's relationship with Haiti, was that Jean Claude became president, designated by his father on his death, at the age of 19. He had had nine meetings in nine years as President with three predecessor Ambassadors. An average of one a year. This is not to level criticism at my predecessors. Jean Claude was and is, in my opinion, one of the shyest and most introverted men I've ever met. Obese, quite obese, probably weighing in excess of over 250 pounds. And he was thought to be dull. All of this came through in the memoranda of conversations that the Ambassadors reported back to the State Department. All of which I read and digested carefully. Starting out with almost, to put it simply and not to be critical, this 19 year-old President seeming impolite. The Ambassador said in not so many words,

you be a good boy and "Uncle Daddy" will look after you. It was that type of relationship. Things came through in all the memcoms, he was considered rude, for example. He would never arise to greet the Ambassador when he came into his office. He would always sit behind his desk. Well, having read that, I decided that I wanted my first meeting with him not to be in the presidential palace under those auspices. By a stroke of good fortune, I had met his personal assistant a week after my arrival. It was at a dinner that my staff did not want me to attend. It was held for a group of Miami businessmen and the Haitian American Chamber of Commerce. I had not yet presented my credentials. I felt I should attend, Haiti problems were mostly economic. Here was a group of Haitian and American businessmen. But I would attend unofficially, and not to be on a dais and not to be called upon. I did attend, and they did seat me on the dais despite their agreement not to. Seated on my right was a young man who was a school chum of President Duvalier. He had been his private secretary all the nine years of his presidency. It was through him that I developed a relationship with Duvalier. He had an interest in art. I had asked Yankel Ginsburg, an Israeli artist whose home we're sitting in now, to help with the art at the Embassy program. There was no art on the walls. Yankel and my wife were waiting for me. He heard about that and the next day we went on a tour of galleries, it was Saturday morning. And I asked this young Ambassador-at-Large, private secretary, Claude Augusten Douton, to arrange my first meeting with the President after I presented my credentials at the Villa D'Acceuil which was the government guest house and was contiguous to the U.S. Embassy, in an informal setting and I wanted Duvalier's wife present and my wife. Douton arranged it. He was suppose to attend the meeting to act as interpreter if we needed one. I would not bring an interpreter. So it would be an informal first meeting. About two days before the meeting Ambassador Douton called and said that he had to go to France for some reason for the President. And he could not attend. Did I want to bring along an interpreter? I said no, he speaks English, I speak enough French, I think, perhaps to get by so we will understand each other. I think it'd be best if we just met, the four of us, and we did. None, none of his meetings had ever lasted beyond 35 or 40 minutes with my predecessors.

We arrived at the Villa d'Acceuil, Duvalier and his wife were waiting for us. We had a rum punch. He talked about the Virgin Islands. He wanted to know about my family, background, business, a lot of it. It was sort of a very warm and cozy informal chat which lasted about 45 minutes. Prior to this meeting I had called in the Country Team to solicit their advice as to what they thought I should take up and to how I should conduct this meeting with him. I give full credit to my DCM, my Deputy Chief of Mission, Alf Bergeson. A wonderful man. Al said, "Henry, why don't you try, saying to him at some point, Mr. President, what do you think our country can do for you? How can we help you?" He said, "I don't think young Duvalier has ever heard that from an American Ambassador." After 45 minutes engaged in the business end of our meeting, I leaned back and recalling Alf's suggestion, said that to the President. He was seemingly elated. His face lit up. And he went into telling me some of the problems he had with my predecessor, Ambassador Jones. Do you know him? Jones is a black man. I believe it's wrong to appoint a black Ambassador to a black republic. They feel that it's tokenism. For some reason, he disliked Jones who was a very capable man. He had been there for three years, but Duvalier's complaint was that he associated only with a few very rich families who were sending their money off the island--the Haitian elite, etc. And he and his wife kept interrupting, bubbling over with all the problems of what they felt Uncle Sam had done wrong, and what they felt we

could do, etc. It literally went on for 15 minutes without my being able to say a word. But it further eased the atmosphere.

Unfortunately, a day before my meeting an American of Cuban descent who was working for an American telephone company, had been arrested entering Cape Haitian. We had received reports that he had been beaten in jail. I was instructed by the Department to demarche the President on this issue. I recall being upset that this had to happen the day before my first meeting. And here I had to come with something I would have preferred not to have happened certainly before our first meeting. Our meeting had lasted an hour and a half, twice as long as he had met with any other Ambassador. We had come to a point where I thought I should wrap this up. And I saved the best or the worst, depending on how you want to look at it, for last. I said, "Mr. President I have this obligation to inform you about this incident that happened at Cape Haitian. And he looked at me after I explained and said, "Mr. Ambassador, do you think I ordered that? Do you think I knew about it?" Well, I'm sure he must have known about it. He said, "You know, I've just had a satellite installed on the palace, and I now bring in TV from the states. I was watching a program from Texas the other night." I don't know if he invented this or it actually happened. He said, "It showed a scene of three white jailers beating up a black man in a jail in Houston." "Do I think that the Governor of the state of Texas ordered that beating? Do I believe that the President of the United States knew about or ordered that beating?" He continued, "It happens in your country. If you tell me it happened, I accept your word that it happened. You know, I pay my jailers \$100.00 a month. That does not attract educated people to those positions." And then he hit me with what I thought was kind of a low blow. "You know besides which my people were trained by your marines when they occupied the country." Our occupation ended in 1934. Fifty-six years had passed. Touche, I thought.

When I wrote my memcon of that meeting, I was the first Ambassador who reported to the Department that we were not dealing with somebody with a low IQ, or who was semi-retarded. He may not be the smartest man in the world, but he sure isn't dumb. And the way he handled that incident; he finessed me beautifully and diplomatically. Our first meeting established a relationship for the period I was in Haiti. I met with him an average of once a month. We had a huge problem with refugees at the time. My meetings with him were always, except for one meeting, at the Villa d'Acceuil.

On one occasion, the Ambassador in Charge of the Refugee Program and a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, visited Haiti for a full-blown meeting on the refugee problem. The meeting was held at the President's official palace. I had never been in that office. It was an office approximately 25 feet long by 14 feet wide. We approached through the far end of the room. His desk was in front of a window and he sat behind a large formidable looking desk. He wore a safari suit. There were four chairs lined up side by side facing the President for the three of us and the interpreter. As we approached, I said, "Bonjour, Monsieur President." He shyly acknowledged our presence. I walked up to the ornate desk, leaned across and greeted him by shaking his hand, while he remained seated in his chair. I'd read my predecessor's memcons of other meetings. He had never, my predecessors said, gotten out of his chair to greet them. As I shook his hand, apparently and subconsciously, I did not let it go. And as I pulled away slowly, I pulled him up. He arose from his chair, looked stunned and then a big smile came on his face. He

then walked around from behind the desk, greeted us warmly and shook hands with the Assistant Secretary and the other Ambassador.

I remember telling this story after our meeting. I said it wasn't anything conscious. I believe what had happened previously was that this man was just so painfully shy and so introverted that it was against his nature. It was not an insult to my predecessor Ambassadors. And when I subconsciously pulled him out of his chair, he was fine.

Q: Tell me, what were our major issues with Haiti while you were there.

KIMELMAN: Our AID program was of course a major issue. Our desire to democratize Haiti. But it's interesting as a liberal democrat appointed by Carter, the policies that we moved towards establishing while I was there, and I was only there a short time, we came to the realization that Duvalier was the best for Haiti at that particular time. I also came to the realization, and my staff agreed with me, that if something were to happen to Duvalier or if he were to move to democratize too fast, there would have been a military takeover of the government, a coup. We would have had a more repressive government. I also learned, not only because I was there, and not for any special talent that I have, that a country that has a 90% to 95% illiteracy rate with a population of six million, cannot have democracy imposed. Our government's best interest was served by moving Haiti slowly toward democratization. And not taking the chance of moving too fast even if we could have moved faster. I'm not sure we should have. I believed it was not the right approach. And if a military took over, we'd have a much more repressive government in Haiti. I was able to sell that policy to the Department. I received a cable on January 22, 1981, two days after Reagan's inauguration. Haig had been designated Secretary of State but had not been confirmed. David Newsom, who was the number three man in the Department, was Acting Secretary of State.

Q: He was Under Secretary for Political Affairs.

KIMELMAN: Political Affairs, and acting Secretary. The cable was from Newsom adopting all the policy goals and objectives that we had sent up. We had been working on them for a couple of months. Keep up the good work, looking forward to working with you in the future, etc. Bergeson told me he had never seen a cable like that from the Secretary in his 37 years in the Foreign Service. Seven days later I received a cable from Haig telling me that my services were no longer needed. So here I was, a democratic appointee, recommending and adopting a policy for Haiti. That was probably what the Reagan administration would have done or maybe to the right of Reagan administration policy. About two months after I had left, sometime in March or April, the Department sent Vernon Walters to Haiti. Alf Bergeson was Chargé. Alf called me after the meeting. He said, "I want you to know Mr. Ambassador (we had developed a warm and friendly relationship) that General Walters has sent back a cable to the Department saying that he had completed his study and that all the policies and goals and objectives that had been established by the previous Ambassador should be kept in force." I felt pretty good about that as did Alf. And he had played a major role.

Now an interesting part of my termination was that the career people, and I say this not as Henry Kimelman but as Henry Kimelman who was a West Indian, who had lived in the West Indies for

30 years at that time, had been known in the West Indies, had prior government experience and business experience, was known to the Haitian business community. Was an appointment that was very happily accepted by Duvalier and the business community in Haiti. I suppose primarily because some of the businessmen who knew me, and who were close to Duvalier, told him I was a logical and a good appointee. As you know, normally the career people in the Department are not happy with non-career appointees. I don't know whether I should say this, I'm certain they're not too happy with non-career appointees who are Jewish.

Q: I'm not sure.

KIMELMAN: Let me finish. That would be a second strike. And particularly if they were non-career, Jewish and had been born in New York, then a third strike. The career people wanted me in Haiti and I had the total support of the Department. I think I would not have had it if I had been posted to Denmark, which I would have liked because I had a lot of business contacts in Denmark. Same thing if I had gone to Luxembourg. It would have been considered just another political hack who had been a Finance Chairman, had been paid off. But the career people wanted me in Haiti. They were happy with me there. And I am told that Bill Bowdler who was Assistant Secretary of State and John Bushnell who was his Deputy and worked on Haitian affairs, went to Haig and got Haig to go to the White House with a special appeal to keep me on. Now I understood that I was political, and I understood the administration wanting to make a change. But I believe the Reagan administration made changes that were not in our country's best interests. Carter had the least amount of non-career Ambassadors. There were 29, if memory serves me right, serving at the time of Reagan's election. I am told by the career people at the Department that 28 of the 29 received cables on the 28th of January, (the only exception was Mike Mansfield who stayed on in Japan), telling them to wind up their affairs.

Q: Well I think, particularly in ARA which is American Republics, the changeover was bloody. I mean they almost bloodied the corridors. And the other ones, Near Eastern Affairs it was sort of the normal thing. But you almost had the ideologues of the extreme right, Jesse Helms people to a certain extent, took over ARA when it was particularly well-known among the Foreign Service. This was really a nasty.

KIMELMAN: Well I'll tell you where I think the mistake was made, Mr. Kennedy. We had a threatened takeover, it didn't amount to anything, but our intelligence indicated a threatened takeover of the Embassy on January 15th, a week before the inauguration. The Iran hostages were still in custody. Haiti was one of five countries on the critical countries list at that time. I understand replacing an Ambassador, and particularly somebody who was as political as I, who was identified with democratic candidates. But I believe when a new administration assumes power it should be done in the best interest of our government. I believe I could have served and helped Haiti. And I think we would have a better position in Haiti today if I had stayed on. But I think an ambassador, particularly in a country like Haiti, should at least be asked to stay on until a successor is in place. A Third World country doesn't like having a Chargé. The Liberian Ambassador in Haiti was a two-man Embassy, the Ambassador and his chauffeur. The United States had 200 people in Haiti, between State Department staff and the 120 in our AID mission. The most important Embassy by far in Haiti. When you have a Chargé he is in the protocol ranking below all other Ambassadors in the host country. The Liberian Ambassador and his

driver outranked the American Chargé. Protocol and face is important to most Third World countries.

Q: It's important also to the operation.

KIMELMAN: It is important to the proper operation. What happened was that when I received my orders, I had two weeks, which took me to February 10 or 11. I did not receive orders by 12th, 13th, 14th. On February 15 I telephoned the Department. They were trying to delay it. I didn't know at the time, they had gotten Haig to go to the White House with a special appeal to keep me on, at least for some period of time. I didn't know Secretary Haig, but apparently he did it on the advice of Bowdler and John Bushnell. About the 15th or the 16th I was getting a bit nervous. My godson was being married in New York on February 22, and I was going to fly to New York for the Washington's birthday weekend to be at my godson's wedding, not knowing that plans were made to replace me. I thought there's no point flying to New York City and returning to Haiti only to leave permanently two days later. I finally called the Department on the 19th of February and said, "I can afford to pay my own transportation. If you don't send me travel orders, I'm leaving anyway on February 21. You told me I'm terminated in two weeks, it's now almost four weeks." I finally received orders.

I left on February 21 after my formal diplomatic farewells. On February 22 or 21 I was debriefed by the new Under Secretary of Political Affairs, Walter Stoessel, who had been Ambassador to Germany. While he was Ambassador to Germany, in the protocol ranking by terms of arrival, he sat next to the Haitian Ambassador, Francisque. While I was in Haiti he had been appointed by Duvalier to be Foreign Minister. We had little intelligence on Monsieur Francisque. I called Ambassador Walter Stoessel in Bonn whom I did not know. We had three or four telephone conversations. We got to know each other. Apparently he was interested in Haiti having known Francisque. And so when I came for my debriefing, he greeted me warmly, "I don't know what you're doing here, Mr. Ambassador. We need you back in Haiti. Would you return for four or five months, or until we can get another Ambassador in place?" I said, "Well, unfortunately, I can't. I've accepted a partnership in a Wall Street Investment Banking firm. I sold my company before leaving for Haiti." I was beginning on April 1st. He said, "Well, think it over, see what you can do." And they kept me on the payroll. Finally on March 29th, I came to Washington, visited the Department, and said, "Look, my resignation was effective February 21." I would have felt foolish returning, but if they had asked me before I left to remain temporarily for convenience of the government, would you at least stay on until we can get an Ambassador appointed and confirmed, I would have done so. I think it was a mistake.

Q: Well it is. Tell me, back at the time that you were there. Did you say you were essentially, after examining the scene and all felt that we could not try to move things too rapidly in Haiti? I might add for the record, we're talking about things right now where there's a blockade around Haiti. I mean it's a very nasty situation. So Haiti has not gone away. Haiti has been with us for a long time as one of the major foreign affairs problems of 1993. But, did you tangle with the Human Rights bureau, Pat Derian. Because they were pushing very hard for things which were of a major motif of the Carter administration.

KIMELMAN: You know that's interesting. I knew Pat, not well, but I was able to convince Pat, I think, because she never set any road blocks for me. I had, I guess an official meeting and one or two conversations with Pat - that we would try to move in the right direction. I honestly believe, and I'm not trying to make a saint out of young Duvalier, that he was far from being his father. As a matter of fact, I'm convinced that he was traumatized by the violence of his father. Because going back to that incident when I mentioned the beating up of one of our American citizens of Cuban descent, I noticed a sort of frightened expression on his face. A look on his face that said to me, maybe only my interpretation, I may be wrong, that this man abhors violence. And I reached the conclusion from that and a few other incidents that he had been traumatized by the violence of his father. I think Duvalier's principal problem, and that was responsible for his downfall, were the excesses of his wife. I believed I had convinced him, in a vague manner, that our government would not look to the past at his Swiss bank accounts accumulated by his father, perhaps some under his regime. This was the time for him to do something for the people of Haiti. And interestingly enough, our intelligence showed at the time that if there had been a free and open election, monitored by the international community, that Duvalier would have received between 80 and 85% of the vote. We were convinced of that. So I was trying to convince him to give up the title of the President-for-life and hold free elections. You know it was a short period of time, but we were moving slowly in what I and the administration felt was in the right direction. And it's sad because I think we could have avoided being faced with the problems we have today.

Q: Before we come to this after Haiti business. One last question I'd like to ask you about while you were in Haiti. The problem of Haitian refugees has been with us for a long time, what was the situation when you were there, what was our policy and how were things developing?

KIMELMAN: It's pretty hard to explain because our policy was in flux then as it is now.

Q: But we're talking about the time you were there.

KIMELMAN: Yes, I'm talking about it. It's the large question of whether Haitian boat people were political refugees or economic refugees. And nobody could get a handle on it. While feeling empathy for the boat people, I believe the vast majority were economic refugees under our definition of our laws. This, of course, was a big political problem because the members of the black caucus of the Congress were constantly on the back of the administration, saying that you're treating the Haitian people differently from the way you're treating the Cuban people. And for only one reason. Because they are black. This was a political problem. There were many Haitians seeking refugee status at that time. Many Haitians were leaving on boats, becoming refugees. It was a tragic situation because many were drowning at sea. The conditions under which they traveled were beyond comprehension. Sometimes 40, 50, 60 people and more on a 30-foot craft that was put together with spit and polish. And so we had, as I said in an earlier part of this interview, one meeting with our Ambassador for Refugees, the Deputy Assistant Secretary and myself, with Duvalier to see how we could jointly deal with this problem. The American viewpoint hoping that we could get the Haitians to help us to stop them from leaving Haiti and how to best do this. So that it doesn't become a problem from the U.S. viewpoint. And that was what we tried to do. Cut them off at the source. The Duvalier government indicated

support for our position, but in my opinion, did nothing to stop their people from leaving. That was the position in February 1981 when I left.

Q: Were you sending out officers to keep monitoring what happened to people when they returned, or did that come later?

KIMELMAN: I don't know whether you notice that I'm smiling. It has to do with our American bureaucracy. I remember arriving at my office one morning, about 6:30 before most of the people arrived and I found all the air conditioning units on in the Chancery. I asked to see our electric bill. It was approximately \$7,000 per month. Being a businessman who met a payroll each Friday, this bothered me. I established a policy of turning off the air conditioning at night. We cut the air conditioning bill almost in half and saved the government about \$40,000 a year. We were also receiving I don't know how many copies of the New York Times and Miami Herald. The DCM had one copy of each and I received one. I said, why can't we share one each day. There were three papers flown in daily, the Time, the Miami Herald and the Wall Street Journal. I said, let's get one for the two of us and cut in half our orders for the other departments. We probably saved a few thousand dollars a year on newspapers. I bring that up because in answer to your question, we had a report on some problems with some returning boat people in Cape Haitien. I called in my political officer and I said I wanted to send somebody to Cape Haitien to look into this matter. He said we had no money in our transportation budget to send an officer to Cape Haitien. What is it going to cost? We're talking about \$50.00, \$100.00? Yes, but the budget's used up for the year. I said, it doesn't matter, can't we take some money out of savings on newspapers? Or out of money I saved in the electric bill? Well no, you can't do that. Somehow he solved the problem, I forget how he did it. But I remember reading recently that it's been recommended that we give Ambassadors a blanket budget. I read this somewhere in the last month or two. Hopefully there's been some progress.

Q: It's one of those efforts to try to make it make sense.

KIMELMAN: Well you know, it just doesn't make sense. Here was an important problem, and we didn't have \$50.00 or \$100.00 to send an officer to Cape Haitien to check on this report about some returning refugees being mistreated.

Q: What were they finding?

KIMELMAN: As I recall, we never found any evidence of any serious maltreatment. Some minor things but nothing ever severe, never under threat of life, or serious harm.

Q: I wonder if you could tell me, because we talked about your experiences afterwards with Duvalier and Haiti.

KIMELMAN: Well, as I explained earlier and I'll try to be brief. We had felt and I felt that Duvalier was the best we had. Sometimes you make do with the best if you can't get better. And we'd have more repressive regimes if something happened to Duvalier. Well, as the years passed, I maintained some contact with the government. I revisited Haiti. I brought a group of business people. The President gave us a reception. In 1986 when things became unbearable in terms of Duvalier's leadership, there was a move to oust Duvalier from power, and it looked like it was

about to succeed. I received a call from Ambassador Douton, his private secretary. Ambassador Cineas, who at the time was the Ambassador in Washington. They wanted to meet with me. We met in Miami and as briefly as possible I explained to them that I didn't think I could help at this time because I was a Democrat and the Reagan administration was highly political. There were two things that I knew were anathema to the American people and to the American government. That was Duvalier's carrying the title of "President for Life" and the fact that there were no open and free elections in Haiti. And that if Duvalier would agree to doing something about both perhaps something could be done. Perhaps the administration would listen. In any event, they telephoned him. I spoke to Duvalier. He agreed to give up the title "President for Life" if the American government would help him to retain power and also agreed to free elections. He wanted to negotiate, but insisted that I be part of the U.S. negotiating team. I agreed. I placed a call from this safe house through the White House switchboard to Senator Pell. It was a Saturday afternoon. Pell was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I told Claiborne what had transpired. I informed him that I did not initiate these conversations. I suggested that he call Secretary Shultz. I thought a solution could be reached that could be in our government's interest. I certainly thought it should be explored, at the very least. I left for Palm Beach. On my arrival I received a call from Assistant Secretary Abrams. I explained all that had transpired. I told him I was not looking for glory or a job, and that my name could be kept out of it, but that I would be pleased to be of assistance. Duvalier insisted that I be part of the U.S. negotiating team. He would not meet with U.S. officials if I was not present. I suggested that I thought it was in our government's interest to explore the possibilities. And that I would be pleased to fly to Haiti with him or anyone he designated, the following day if necessary, to see what could be done. State mulled the possibility for a few days, and decided not to do anything. In my opinion, the decision was made on the basis of the fact that I was a Democrat appointee, much as I dislike saying that. I believe that if I had been an earlier Republican appointee say in the Nixon administration, they would have at least explored the possibility that had been opened. They did not. Duvalier left Haiti under American auspices in a jet that our government provided. I assisted in the planning. And Haiti has had three military regimes since, each one more repressive if possible than the Duvalier regime.

DAVID R. ADAMS
Mission Director, USAID
Haiti (1981-1984)

Mr. Adams was born in Washington, DC and raised in Virginia and abroad. He was educated at John Carroll, William and Mary and George Washington Universities. Mr. Adams joined USAID in 1973 in Washington, DC. He served in Washington and abroad, dealing primarily with matters concerning Latin American countries and Kosovo. His foreign assignments include Bangladesh, Guatemala and Haiti, where he served as USAID Mission Director. Mr. Adams was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

ADAMS: Well, enter Haiti for the first time in my life. My wife, remember I told you she studied in France. So I was looking for someplace that was close to the U.S. for my next post and

that had a culture that I thought she could relate to, because she had some trouble in Bangladesh. Even though English was well spoken, English was a second language. She had some difficulty with the culture, sort of a first warning sign that there could be trouble for the marriage, which later fell apart. But in any case she was not enamored with the foreign service life right from the get go. But she was a trooper. She tried. She was not alone by a long shot. She tried to stick with it. So I thought it would be, I took a TDY to Haiti. They brought me down, because I had some French, and they were looking for someone who had something of an agriculture background and was working in the finance area and had some French to do a TDY to work on an agriculture credit project. So I came down and I enjoyed it. The capital struck me as dirty and run-down, but it had its charm. I had been in Bangladesh; I had been in Laos. Haiti didn't really phase me. The housing was nice, functional. I checked out potential places to live because I had gotten vibes early on from the mission management that they were looking for a new project development officer in the mission. I actually found what turned out to be our future living arrangements. It was rather unusual. It was kind of a California type town house complex. In fact the fellow that owned it and designed it had studied at UCLA, architecture. So it was very nice and not too ostentatious, with good security as well, full tennis courts, blah, blah, blah. I told my wife of the time about it. She seemed interested. I enjoyed the work, and next thing you know I am posted to Haiti, Port au Prince in '81.

Q: You were there this time from '81 to when?

ADAMS: 1984.

Q: What was the situation in Haiti at the time?

ADAMS: It was Baby Doc. Francois Duvalier had been in power for several years. I have always said that if you weren't poor and Haitian, Haiti was not a bad place to live. Very good security. You could leave your door open and not have to worry about crime. In fact the post differential was quite low. I think the post differential was 10%. It was 15% when I got there and they dropped it. But there was quite a bit of official crime and corruption. Voodoo was pretty pervasive, practiced quite openly by government ministers as a way to consolidate their power and scare their underlings into doing what they wanted or they would get a curse put on them. So we at the time we were working both with the government and NGO's. I got my first taste of government corruption. As we suspected, the money we gave them for project implementation, money was being siphoned off. That actually caused USAID at that point to devolve more and more toward working with NGOs in Haiti. In think by the time I left we were doing very little with the government.

Q: This was during the time this '81 to '84 period. Well when you got there, or even before you went out, what were you saying about the Duvalier government?

ADAMS: Well the U.S. was most concerned it seemed with illegal migration even back then. My first ambassador was Ernie Preeg, who later came to work for AID in Washington. He had been DCM in Peru I think before he came to Haiti. He negotiated the first interdiction agreement with the Haitian government whereby U.S. coast guard cutters could come into Haitian territorial waters and pick up would be migrants and bring them back. So that was a priority. Democracy

was also something we had begun to talk about with the Haitians, but it wasn't something the U.S. was pushing overtly. It was much more economic development and humanitarian assistance. Feeding programs, agricultural production, health, education, those types of things. I was doing design work in Washington, i.e., writing. For example, the big program I justified was a potable water program that we worked with CARE and to a lesser extent the government. We didn't give the government any money except maybe bought them a car or two. It was all going through CARE because we didn't want it siphoned off.

Q: Well were there screams and yells from various Haitian ministers saying give us some money and all this?

ADAMS: There was some of that. They were still getting money through other channels from us and other U.S. government agencies. So there wasn't, and we were finishing up a road construction project with them which was actually going fairly well. It was secondary, tertiary roads. It wasn't expensive, we weren't paving the big highways. It was hand labor where we were hiring work gangs to dig, grade dirt roads and to basically dig culverts for water channeling away from the natural roadway, that sort of thing, so it was relatively basic stuff. So there was some whining over the trend of working less and less with the government. I was on the implementation side, I ended up sort of by default because of our agricultural officers not getting along with the contractors, ended up serving as the project officer for the Ag credit project that I had helped to design. I got a lot of joy in that. That was really the most interesting thing I did until I did the potable water project; a number of those systems exist to this day. So in terms of longevity the ag project eventually lapsed. We had a very good expat team working with the ag credit agency, but the bureaucracy was stifling. They were siphoning off money it turned out, or getting kickbacks from people who were getting the credit. So I think in fact after I left, the project was still going, the ag credit project, but then when they kicked out Baby Doc about a year or two after I left, the ag credit bureau folded or was shut down because it was seen as being not very effective and corrupt. I actually went back to Haiti and damn near got PNG'd. I went back once, only once after I left in '84. USAID sent me back to lead an evaluation team of a project that I had not been involved in to speak of. A tax reform and public administration program. We were interviewing the head of customs. Haitian customs was notoriously corrupt, and so basically in diplomatic terms, but still quite clearly, I accused him of siphoning money off, and that pissed him off big time. We had a former deputy assistant secretary of the Treasury who was the head of the project team who was mortified. He had to continue to work with the corrupt bureaucrats, poor guy. I guess he smoothed ruffled feathers later. I wrote a pretty scathing report basically saying that it seemed to us that the project was not having the intended effect, which didn't endear me to them further.

Q: This of course was when?

ADAMS: '85.

Q: '85. Being with AID in Haiti, and I have never been there. I only know the accounts I have read. But one gets this feeling that in the first place all the trees have been cut down to make charcoal or whatever. And that the population keeps growing and there is no hope. It is just, I

mean when you are going there did you feel like you were rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic or something of that nature.

ADAMS: Possibly when I went there in 2001 I felt that way. But in '81 perhaps I was too young, fresh faced, and naïve. I had just come from Bangladesh which was a real basket case. But in reflecting upon it where there is no doubt Haiti is still a mess in many ways; what has changed is that there is or there are participatory government institutions. That is a big change from the 80s. There is a broad cross section of civil society now. And there is if you will a vibrant political dialog that is ongoing. They are economically kept afloat in many ways by the remittances. That also is the big change from back then.

Q: Well what do the people in the States provide?

ADAMS: The States, Europe, Canada. You also have that flow of expertise back and forth. Haiti as the advantage of being close to the U.S. So unlike Bangladesh...actually things in Bangladesh have improved in many ways too, which is interesting....Because (re Haiti) of the flow of resources, because we finally now have this new trade act, and the assembly sector is beginning to return. Back when I was there they had something like 90,000 jobs in the assembly sector, “maquila” industries. Sewing baseballs, electronic assembly. They lost a lot of that in the turmoil of the late 80’s through the 90’s. But now with stability having returned to some extent under Pres. Preval, you have the return of investment. It is always marginal. Some were saying Haiti was going to sink into the sea, and that they all would be coming here. Well Haiti with a lot of help is proving viable. They will need a lot of help for a long time.

Q: Well one of the sort of stories one hears about that the Haitians who come to the United States are remarkable for being quite peaceful and are very hard working. I mean they really settle in and all, and yet when you look at Haiti itself, you don’t get that feeling. Was that the case when you were there?

ADAMS: Yes, and I find that rather remarkable. Although the one caveat there was Haitians always impressed me as being hard working at least laborers in Haiti. Now I think it was just such a remarkable sight to see a human being perspiring profusely dragging a cart behind him all stacked up with whatever, produce or tires to eke out a living every day. But you are right. I think they are still grateful for the opportunity in this country. That is one reason why they strive hard, as do a lot of immigrants, to make the most of their opportunity. I use these same arguments to (fast forward) when detailed to the deputy secretary of state’s office and I sort of inherited the Haiti portfolio for Deputy Secretary of State Wharton because of my background and because the person who had the job of handling all the hot issues for him didn’t have a background on Haiti. This was when Haiti was really getting a lot of attention regarding what to do with Aristide under the early years with Clinton. So one of the arguments I made with the immigration policy was that if you look at the performance of the Haitian immigrant community in the U.S. and the fact that crime was very low and employment was very high, and education, taking advantage of educational opportunities was important for them. The argument was that one of the papers I wrote—this was in one of the papers I gave you too—was that what a lot of us saw as the artificially low quota for Haitian immigrants which unfortunately was a hangover from the four H problem -- Haitians being identified as one of the source communities for HIV

AIDS -- that there was a strong case to increase the quota if only by a relatively modest amount. The Clinton administration for a variety of reason lifted those quotas significantly later. Now what you have is quite a large Haitian community in Florida, south Florida especially, and elsewhere that as I said, they are getting much more in remittances than they are getting "official" foreign aid.

Q: Can you talk about your impression of the ambassador? Maybe there were two or more when you were there, American ambassador with AID as you observed it?

ADAMS: Sure. Well the first ambassador was Ernie Preeg, who was bright, an economist. He was a very good negotiator. He had a bit of a complex because he was a short man. He didn't like tall people to stand next to him in photographs.

Q: And you qualified.

ADAMS: Not so much me but our agricultural adviser Tex Ford was about 6'5", and the Ambassador definitely didn't like Tex standing next to him. So he had a little bit of a hang up on that; he was also quite officious as some ambassadors and mission directors can be. When he came to AID later he loosened up. He was much less officious and was much more down to earth. I don't know what really happened. I really didn't get to know him too well. One of his "distinctions" besides his negotiating that agreement for picking up refugees in the territorial waters of Haiti was to build a tennis court, a nice tennis court that exists to this day, at the ambassador's residence, which I used quite a bit. He stuck up for his subordinates when the going got rough, though. Preeg was replaced by I think it was Clayton McManaway, who as I recall had more of a security background. I think he was, I don't know what cone he was in, but Preeg had been in Econ. Preeg was a renowned economist. McManaway had more of a military background. Pleasant, low-key fellow as I recall.

Q: Military, and he was involved in Vietnam quite a bit, and I think the NSC, but sort of an action oriented tough guy. I am not making this to be pejorative. I know Clay and have interviewed him. He came out of almost the Larry Eagleburger school of diplomacy.

ADAMS: He came near the end of my tour. I think that Preeg left a few months before I did. I really didn't get to know McManaway, but he impressed me as being more down to earth than Preeg was. He was more approachable as well.

Q: Well did you sense there a split between the State Department foreign service and the State Department AID people too.

ADAMS: You know you had some of that. At my level I didn't see too much of it. In fact I had a very good friend, a guy named Andy Parker who still may be in the foreign service. He may have retired. Last I heard he was DCM somewhere. But anyway so I had some very good friends who were State Department. At the more senior levels there was tension, although Preeg saved the career of my boss, Harlan Hobgood. Harlan was responsible for the establishment of several private sector promotion NGOs in Haiti. He put some of his own personal money into some of them because he was so committed to helping them to begin to establish, again in the Duvalier

era, sort of the nascent structure of commercial oriented civic organizations., In other words they weren't getting involved in politics. They were promoting investment in Haiti and Haitian entrepreneurship. This was under the Reagan administration. Peter McPherson was the administrator. So even though Harlan was more of an Ag Techie type, he took that mandate to heart and really established institutions that exist to this day in Haiti and have grown. But his problem was he was very loquacious and sometimes his mouth ran ahead of his brain. He made a derogatory comment about the views of the head of the agency, that a political appointee overheard and reported back to Washington. The head of the agency was so infuriated that he called Hobgood and told him he was being removed. We were all kind of shocked. Well Preeg came to Hobgood's defense. He called the administrator and said, "this man has been implementing your policy, the policies of the president faithfully. He has been doing a fantastic job. I just encourage you not to take this perceived personal slight in a way that you would potentially undercut or destroy what this man has accomplished on behalf of the administration." So the administrator backed off. So after that Preeg and Hobgood were pretty tight. They got along very well.

Q: Did the situation in Central America, I am talking about El Salvador and Nicaragua which is a major focus of the Reagan administration. Did that intrude on Haiti at all?

ADAMS: In terms of Haiti's position in the constellation of foreign policy priorities or issues in the Western Hemisphere, it was much more in the context of Caribbean Basin Initiative that also I think that was put into play by '80-'81. So that helped grow the assembly industry in Haiti at the time. There was more foreign investment. Haiti was at that time was very stable. Haitian women especially were seen as very dependable workers and very dexterous.

Q: With their hands.

ADAMS: Yes.

Q: The Cuban influence?

ADAMS: Not significant during that era. It would grow in prominence later.

Q: What about the Dominican Republic. It seems as though you have got this island and you have two quite separate nations.

ADAMS: Yes, very.

Q: Did that intrude?

ADAMS: You know I would say I wasn't as cognizant of cross border issues then as I was later in life when I returned as mission director. But there was very much a feeling of inferiority on the part of Haitians, and superiority on the part of the Dominicans. Haitians greatly resented the way they were treated in the DR, clearly as second class citizens, many of them kicked out of the country even if they had roots there for many years. They would have these sweeps every now and then and they would find these Haitians, even second generation, throw them out if they

were undocumented. So there was that tension. That was really palpable, the tension between the two countries politically and culturally. You had a number of Dominican workers, in Haiti, not that many but a number of them in certain industries. The sex industry as well as hairdressers and some other areas. But I didn't really pay too much to the politics at my stage of life back then.

Q: Were you sensing in the Haitians, were they picking up you might say the attitudes of the blacks, you might call them the African Americans in the United States, resentment about white dominance in the United States. I mean there is this tension. I mean were the Haitians, often people coming from a different culture where they are in the majority don't have quite that same feeling. Do you see what I am getting at? Did you get any of that?

ADAMS: The elite, the Haitian elite were cognizant of what was going on in the U.S. But they were such a small percentage of the population. The common man is more worried about making it day to day. But the elite both in government, education, business sector, where you didn't have resentment. In other words it was something of which they were aware if they had traveled in the U.S.; they were well aware, especially if they had some tales of mistreatment. But they held no resentment that I could discern against white Americans in Haiti or elsewhere. They were very open and friendly and interactive with us.

Q: Well was the word that was coming back was that the Haitians who had got to Florida and particularly New York doing pretty well. In other words there wasn't tales of oppression or that sort of thing?

ADAMS: Yes. It was of course the illegal migration was nothing like it mushroomed to later in the early 90's especially. But most of the migration was legal. But legal migration decreased after HIV became a public health issue, and the CDC made its infamous pronouncement in the early '80s.

Q: This is the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta.

ADAMS: Lumping Haitians in with homosexuals, hemophiliacs and heroin users, they became the other H.

Q: Oh my gosh. Was there any justification for that?

ADAMS: The only justification was that Haitians had a higher rate of infection than I think of any other island population or any other "ethnic" population in the Americas. I think those attending Haitian patients in Florida reported some higher level of infection, so that is what caused CDC to say watch out for Haitians too.

Q: Did you get the feeling, I am going back to this early to mid 80's period. Did you get the feeling that we were sitting on a time bomb of one, Baby Doc and his regime and how long it would last, and two, what would turn out to be boat people the mass immigration without being able to control it. Was this, how did you feel about this at the time?

ADAMS: Particularly because of the unusual agreement that was negotiated by Ernie Preeg with the government where, and I think it was basically we will scratch your back on exports and imports and making it easier for people to invest in Haiti and give you foreign aid if you will let us have this agreement. The very fact that the U.S. had pushed, successfully pushed to negotiate an agreement to not just pick up people but to give the population a clear signal that their attempts to migrate illegally by sea likely would not be successful. That was an indicator that there was a pent up demand for migration out of Haiti. In fact there had been polls taken, I am not sure about that era but later, polls take like something like 80% of Haitians saying that if they had their druthers, they would rather live somewhere else.

Q: Well what about Baby Doc and all of that. I mean I realize things were stable at the time but sort of at the embassy and in your own group were you saying OK this is fine but what about next week?

ADAMS: You know during my time there, that was never any concern. Of course I was not privy to most classified information. There was never any overt concern expressed that Baby Doc's regime was in jeopardy, immediate jeopardy. There was discussion that ok this is not sustainable in the long term, and in fact we were pushing democratic government elsewhere in the hemisphere so this was an anomaly of sorts and there was a recognition that eventually it was going to have to be dealt with, and that he would not be president for life necessarily. What happened was you had U.S. encouragement of local forces, encouragement of democracy even in a rudimentary state, and also from Haitian ex-pats. There was a very strong engagement of people traveling back and forth and of course you had media which was becoming much more prevalent, free media in Haiti, if only broadcast from the U.S. People were seeing and hearing more and more about democratic forms of government. I don't know all the factors that went into play but he was booted with U.S. encouragement about '86.

Q: Well I was wondering what about Madame Duvalier and her family. I recall having talked about them being particularly voracious in their appetite for property and this kind of thing?

ADAMS: Property, yeah. The Bennetts. Yes both she and her father and other members of her family that were there. The acquisition of wealth was the primary motivator for her existence. Her marriage to Baby Doc went sour once they got kicked out of the country, and she married another rich European.

Q: And last before we end this up, how did you find sort of social life there, you and your wife.

ADAMS: We mingled quite a bit with families from different backgrounds, Haitian, American, European. We had a group of friends with small children like ours. We'd hang out together, go to the beach together, have dinner parties. One of the participants in that group and fathers every other Saturday or something we would have just a play group and let the ladies have some time off from the kids. One of the participants in that group was Guy Mallory, who was at that time a lawyer, a young Haitian lawyer who was on retainer with the U.S. embassy and USAID to give advice on local laws and legal issues. He later was assassinated because he was minister of justice when Aristide was in exile. In fact I dedicated that paper to him, the one that you have now, you will notice that his name is on there. It was particularly sad because he had served as

minister of justice and because of threats against his life was on the verge of quitting and emigrating to the States after doing it for a couple of years and then again during the exile period in the early 90's after Aristide was booted the first time. Then right after the USS Kohl or , rather, Harlan Country was turned back

Q: The Kohl is the one that was blown up.

ADAMS: Harlan County was turned around by a bunch of thugs chanting on the dock, then they murdered Guy. They thought OK now we have a free hand. The U.S. is not going to do anything. So they shot him.

Q: Did Aristide hit your radar at all while you were there the first time?

ADAMS: Not the first time. I started hearing about him and reading about him when he was a priest. He was gaining some popular following for his charitable work with St. John Bosco, and I started hearing things about him. But as time went on he gained more and more of a following and notoriety, but it was particularly while he was in exile in the U.S. that I learned more about him. I met him.

Q: While you were there the first time, did you have a feeling that we were reaching down to not just the elite or whatever you want to call it aristocracy of Haiti but also to the lower reaches at least as the Haitians sort of differentiated themselves. Were we making a real effort to make sure that we weren't just hitting one sort of Haitian collapse.

ADAMS: Yes and no. By the way one thing, one of the only positive things Francois Duvalier did, Papa Doc, he insured that black African-descendant population got a piece of the pie, at least in terms of the corruption and getting jobs in government and so forth.

Q: Just sort of looking at it, he came from a black African as opposed to the Creole.

ADAMS: Yeah, his wife was of mixed racial heritage.

Q: They had wars back in their history.

ADAMS: Yeah, throughout their history they have had fights. So the elite was a mixed bag, but it was still the elite, and acted accordingly. Typically what you had would be in terms of our daily interaction, the US Embassy empathized with the intelligentsia, the elite, but on the other hand USAID made an effort to design and implement programs that reached down. It was pretty basic stuff. We did nothing really complex in Haiti. It involved for example secondary, tertiary road instruction that involved hiring local labor. That was the main component. The same with their maintenance operation. We helped to fund the road maintenance operation. That involved the local community. Potable water, a very basic need, and the program that we implemented with CARE was in the remote areas in the south and southwest.

Q: Showing on the map the huge bay on the southernmost branch.

ADAMS: Yeah, the southern peninsula. So even the agricultural credit project theoretically was helping small farmers. It did to some extent. It was inefficient and wasn't sustainable. The potable water project has been sustainable. So it is a mixed bag. Some were, some weren't. As I mentioned some of these specific institutions we helped to establish, they were aimed actually more at the elite, the more educated to help promote foreign investment and all that. So there were some efforts at that. Education, we focused mainly on primary education in rural areas. So when we didn't get too much into secondary or university except for scholarships, some scholarships to the U.S. to study. There was some of that, but it was mainly textbooks and teacher training. Bilingual Creole French. To help keep kids in school, hold their attention. Health. That has been a huge thing for USAID over the years. That is mother and child health, HIV Aids now, we are jumping ahead, but we put a lot of money in for HIV Aids prevention, treatment and care. That is the one continuum for the U.S. investment in Haiti over the past 20 years it has been to invest in health systems at the fairly rudimentary level. Now we are getting back to helping to fund government systems. We found that using the NGO structure was much more efficient. And while health indicators are still bad in Haiti, they have improved quite a bit over the years.

Q: OK, I will ask you one final question. What about the Reagan administration came in and birth control was not very high on the Reagan list. As a matter of fact there was the Mexican conference and all this. I would think Haiti would if any country Haiti along with Bangladesh would be pretty high to try to stop the growth of population. Did this affect you at all?

ADAMS: USAID has pretty consistently over the years offered a wide variety of family planning programs. In fact I will never forget, jumping ahead, the administrator of USAID, Andrew Natsios, a stalwart Republican once said that they were now exporting, we were now supplying more condoms than ever before in the history of the U.S. government. So family planning in its purest sense shall we say and condoms now for HIV Aids control, has been pretty consistently supplied by USAID. In Haiti back in the early 80's. I am a little hazy on it because I don't recall being directly involved, but there was a family planning program. The thing about Haiti the birth rate has come down. I think it is about 2.1. Back when I was there in the early 80's it was about three something, 3.1 % contraceptive prevalence? No I am sorry, that is the population growth rate. So it has declined for various reasons even though Haitian men like men in any other part of the world aren't overly enamored in using condoms. But women have tried the pill and the injection, the other forms. Being a Catholic, I am, just to fast forward in my recent tours, I was mission director, because I found that an organization in the south was having tremendous success with natural family planning. The acceptance rates were much higher. I went ahead and had that replicated elsewhere because it was more effective, meaning Haitian women were much more interested in using that type of method where they could gauge when they were fertile, and were more successful than getting men to use condoms. Plus they didn't necessarily want chemicals in their bodies.

CLAYTON E. McMANAWAY, JR.

**Ambassador
Haiti (1983-1986)**

Clayton E. McManaway, Jr. was born in North Carolina. He graduated from the University of South Carolina and served in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in Phnom Penh and Saigon, and as Ambassador to Haiti. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Let's talk about your time going to Haiti as ambassador. How did that come about and how long were you there?

McMANAWAY: I arrived there in mid-December, 1983 and left on the August 1, 1986. I had learned that the State Department's recommended candidate had been turned down by the White House. [The rejection] was not in favor of a political appointee, but something else had caused that. The normal tour of the Secretariat is about two years, that is about all you can take, and that would be in around January 1983. So I went down to see Tom Enders, who was Assistant Secretary for ARA at the time, and asked him what his reaction would be if I threw my hat in the ring for it. Tom's answer was typically Tom Enders, honest and to the point. He said that he had to support his candidate from the Bureau but he would not object. So I was nominated from the Secretariat. When the committee met, which at that time was the Deputy Secretary's committee which hadn't been operating very long consisting of the Director General; Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who was Larry Eagleburger at the time; Executive Secretary, who was Jerry Bremer; Assistant Secretary concerned and others. I was selected. I was recommended to the Secretary and my name was sent over to the White House.

And then began the long wait. [The nomination] went over in March and I didn't get the appointment until November. Senator Percy, who didn't know me from Adam but was running for reelection and was chairman at the time of the Foreign Relations Committee was mad at the White House. At the same time the Republican Party of the State of Illinois had recommended a retired doctor to be ambassador to Haiti who felt that because he was a doctor he could go down and deal with Baby Doc, who was not a doctor. Percy seized this as a way to get more support out of the White House for his campaign and he held up my nomination. He had me up there once to explain to me what the situation was. That it was nothing personal, it was politics. Of course, the White House didn't feel that he had done such a grand job as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee either, so he finally gave way. But it was very disruptive personally. My wife was working and didn't know whether to put in her resignation. She was working with the CIA. And, of course, we had to put our daughter in school and then take her out. It was a very disruptive thing from a personal point of view, but that happens to a lot of us and no one in the Congress particularly cares. It doesn't bother them in the least.

Q: Senator Percy was defeated wasn't he?

McMANAWAY: Yes, he was defeated.

Q: Before you went in December, 1983, how did you bring yourself up to speed on Haiti?

McMANAWAY: I left the Secretariat almost as soon as my nomination went in and began working both on French, refreshing my French, and getting familiar with the Haitian issues. This

was an eye opener because a small country like Haiti barely comes up on the screen in the Secretariat. When you go down to the bureau you find out about all these problems that people are working on that you had no idea about. It was a very active relationship. But I had plenty of time to get on top of the issues.

Q: You hit there at a key time, but as you were going and when you arrived, what was the situation in Haiti from the perspective of the United States?

McMANAWAY: The situation was that Haiti was sort of stumbling along and had been doing so for some years. It was still the poorest country in the hemisphere and was not improving a great deal. There was only one sector of the economy that was improving and that was what we call the assembling center which was essentially American companies setting up plants to partially assemble things to be brought back to the U.S. for final production. Everybody knows the story of the baseballs, I guess. All of our baseballs, including the pro baseballs, are made in Haiti.

The problem that we faced immediately was that there was a group on the Hill, not just the Black Caucus, although some of the Black Caucus, Fauntroy in particular was active. There was also a group of staffers over on the House Foreign Relations side who were interested in Haiti and had become active. They had decided that it was time to do something about the human rights situation in Haiti and the lack of any political progress in the sense of movement towards properly elected democratic system. They wrote into the AID legislation...in fact, just as I was leaving to go down there...they wrote in language that was the toughest language I think that existed anywhere at that time. In fact, in talking to the staffers later, I think they were a little aghast at what they had done and realized they had gone a little too far, but it was already there. It called for political parties and certification by the Department of State that there was progress in these directions and human rights in order to continue the AID program. This was put into law just as I was going to Haiti and became the centerpiece the whole time I was there.

Q: Before you went out did you talk to both the staff members and their principals and say, "What do you mean by this?" There must have been implications there that there was a good possibility that aid would be cut off. Was that acceptable?

McMANAWAY: It wasn't acceptable to the administration. The administration fought it. Something else had gotten the attention of the administration that year on the aid bill. I forget what it was, but it was bigger than Haiti and nobody notice this until it was too late. They couldn't do anything about it. It slipped through the normal give and take on the aid bill with the staffers and the Congress itself. It caught the administration by surprise. Haiti wasn't the only country that had these certifications. The general position that the administration was taking at that time was that all of these certification requirements were unconstitutional in the sense they tied the hands of the President too much. So the position that the administration was taking was that they were going to fight all of these, Haiti being among them. I didn't think that the administration was going to be successful, so I felt it was incumbent upon me to warn the government of Haiti, Duvalier and his principal ministers, that this legislation was now in effect. In the spring I was going to have to submit a recommended report that would go to the Congress. Even though the administration was not please, the report would have to be taken seriously. My initial courtesy calls turned substantive right away.

Q: Did you find the attitude there was, "Well, the administration is challenging it so let's not worry about it?"

McMANAWAY: Oh, it varied from minister to minister. Some were outraged by it, some were frightened by it, some were defensive, some were offended by the intrusion into their internal affairs. So you had a variety of reactions. It started my tour in Haiti off on a very interesting foot. Here I was basically coming in telling them they were being challenged to make political improvements or the AID program was going to be cut off. The AID program was the biggest thing in town, not a huge program but big enough to make a difference. It made a difference because other donors tended to follow our lead. Not only other countries like France, Germany, Japan, who had small programs, but it also influenced attitudes of the World Bank and IMF. They were having troubles with the IMF. So it was a serious issue in Port-au-Prince.

Q: How well were [the Haitians] informed? They were close to the United States. Did they have a good lobbyist? How well informed were they of the real workings of Washington?

McMANAWAY: That is an interesting question because there is in Haiti, or there was, a group of people who are very well educated, worldly wise, well traveled, well read and who talk as though they understand Washington and the United States, when in fact they don't. They don't really understand it. At that time the foreign minister was a very articulate and erudite gentleman by the name of Estemay, whose father had been president in the forties and we had long debates. He had probably the best grasp of how Washington worked. But even he didn't really fully understand it the way we understand it. The fellow who came to be the minister of economy was very adept at manipulating the IMF and World Bank. I used to tell him that I thought he had magic numbers. I used to kid him a lot because the numbers he used with IMF always seemed to turn out just right. He was quite adept at that. He was French educated, I believe. Estemay had lived here as a young man in exile, as well as in Brussels but he still didn't understand. And, of course, Duvalier had left the island once when he was 18 years old about a year before his father died and left him president for life. He went to France for a two-week vacation. That was the only time he had been off the island. He did not finish college and was not a learned man. He was not dumb, but he didn't understand Washington at all.

Q: Could you describe the political and economic situation when you arrived?

McMANAWAY: There are two Haitis. There is Port-au-Prince and the rest of the country. The rest of the country is in pretty dire straits economically as it has been for years. Politically it was like being dropped into some other century. I never quite figured out which century, but not the twentieth. It was court politics, palace politics which young Jean-Claude Duvalier had become quite skillful at. After his marriage, he had stopped traveling in the country the way his father had done and the way he had done prior to that. One of the ways his father had maintained his political base and his power was through what they call a Gromet out in the countryside. In every area there were these people who dominated things and made appointments, etc. It was through connections with those these people and other methods that Francois Duvalier used, and he used everything from voodoo to you name it, to manipulate the people. He was a mad genius at this. Jean-Claude Duvalier gradually stopped doing that, staying in touch with the people in the countryside. So you had a situation where he was concentrating mainly on politics in Port-au-

Prince and would deal only occasionally with problems other areas. Most of his attention was on palace politics and the manipulation of the political powers that existed in Port-au-Prince by Duvalier. He did that through appointment of his ministers and letting one particular minister accrue more and more power until he got too much and then he would cut him off and get rid of him. But no one was ever out of favor, socially or politically, because you might need them later on. You might have to bring him back five years from now. There were only so many who were capable of doing the job. You may no longer be able to get your hand in the till directly, if you were no longer a minister, but you are never out of favor socially or politically.

The mulatto class was primarily in commerce. The blacks Haitians were primarily in the military. The government became more of a mixture under Jean-Claude Duvalier than it was under his father. Francois Duvalier had run on the platform of returning power to the blacks. It was supposedly a revolutionary government and Jean-Claude maintained that the revolution was still going on. That, incidentally has a lot to do with our intervention back in 1915. I have just recently written an editorial that is going to appear in the Washington Times Monthly in July against this idea of invading Haiti. One of the things that I point out is that we went in there in 1915 and stayed for 19 years. We sent in southern Marines who were much more comfortable dealing with mulattos. Up until that time the traditional division of power was that the mulattos were good at commerce and the blacks ran the government and military and they fed off of each other. Well, our Marines were much more comfortable dealing with the mulattos so we upended the power structure and put in mulattos in charge of the puppet government. Eventually that gave rise to Francois Duvalier. So our legacy was the Duvalier regime.

Q: That is interesting because back in about 1785 we supported the blacks against the mulattos.

McMANAWAY: Jean-Claude had more of a mixture and this was a matter of some grumbling around. It was felt that he needed a better balance. Even in the controlled press at that time you could occasionally see articles about the need for more balance in the cabinet. Gradually he ended up with really only one powerful black, La Fontaine, who was minister of defense and interior at the same time.

Q: Clay, can you tell me a bit about Jean-Claude Duvalier's wife? I have the impression that she played a role in how he operated.

McMANAWAY: Very much so. The marriage was really the beginning of the end. I think history will show, the beginning of the end.

Q: Can you explain about the marriage and what had happened?

McMANAWAY: The marriage was... Let's see. He had been married about five years when I went there. I think that's right. She had lived in the United States. She was the daughter of a middle class coffee grower, merchant who turned out to be an extraordinarily greedy man once he got in the position where he could get his hands into the till and influence things, and he got into everything. He became a real irritant to just about everybody in Haiti. She was very powerful. She attended cabinet meetings. She spoke up at cabinet meetings. Jean-Claude was a somewhat passive guy. He was not a very aggressive man although I think he did maintain the

final say. She had his ear and everyone knew that. There was a lot of jockeying on the part of ministers and others to win her favor. There were groups that she favored and groups she didn't favor, and that kind of thing went on quite a bit. She was quite a party girl, too. There were a lot of sort of lurid stories and rumors about their sex life and the partying that went on at the Palace which I never paid much attention to. It didn't affect me. The only time it affected me was the residence. He had a residence... A number of residences, but he had one residence which abutted our ambassador's residence. They would have New Year's eve parties. They would have commercial speakers out there that would keep you awake all night long. The power structure of this class, social structure was... Again the mulattos in commerce, some very wealthy people. I think about one percent of the population had almost all the wealth in the country. I call them the skimmers. They took and they didn't invest in Haiti. They never made any real contribution to Haiti's economic development and I made it a policy not to have much to do with them. I felt that it was not a good signal to give because they were aligned with Duvalier. It was his policies. He was in the position to give them the monopolies they had which enabled them to accumulate the wealth that they had. So they were beholden to him for that and he could change any time he wanted to. It was also his way of taking his cut and accumulating his wealth at the expense of the Haitian people. So I felt that it was not... It would have been unseemly for the American ambassador to be seen socializing with these people

Q: I take it this would have been somewhat of a change because we just normally fell into the company of the resident elite?

MCMANAWAY: Well, I don't want to be critical of anyone in here about my predecessor, but I had been warned that this had become a problem and there had been a lot of that. So I made the decision not to do that. So we turned down a lot of opportunities to go to glamorous parties and ride on glamorous yachts and things like that. I just refused and the word got around very quickly that I was turning these invitations down and they stopped.

Q: How did you find the staff you had and what sort of contact... I mean, how did they operate within that society. I'm talking about the embassy staff.

MCMANAWAY: It took me about a year to get my country team in shape. The shape I wanted it in. My attaché position was vacant for quite a while. I had to fire my first Agency station chief, and I was able to do that... Is this the kind of thing you want?

Q: Sure. Certainly.

MCMANAWAY: Because I found out quite by accident that the Agency was trying to send somebody down even before I was confirmed. I was still in the process of being confirmed and then I found out quite by accident that they were sending [somebody] to go down there as station chief. So I put a stop to it. I called out to... Keep in mind now I had had some dealings with the intelligence community during my career. I was with Bill Colby, I was on the intelligence community staff. So I knew people at the Agency personally including the deputy at that time. I had known him before. So I got it stopped. I said: "Nobody's going down there without my interviewing him."

Q: Did you have a feeling that the person named represented a policy or is it just a generic thing that you wanted to know who was coming?

MCMANAWAY: I wanted to know. You see, it was a small political section. I had asked, to give you a sense of what I was thinking about, in view of my state of mind or what I thought might happen. I'm not claiming here any prophesy capabilities or anything like that, but I had asked the historian's office to do a study for me on where there had been change from a totalitarian government to something less than a totalitarian government without violence. They weren't able to find anything. I was looking at legislation and looking at the situation in Haiti and wondering what I might be facing down there. I was trying to get some precedents, get some ideas from history. I knew I was going to need a good station chief because it was a one man station. He had a girl Friday but he was going to be just the one guy so I wanted him to be good. I knew that the Agency had a tendency on places like Haiti to make it a retirement assignment. So I had the guy stopped and I interviewed the guy and I didn't think he was up to the job. This presented a problem because he was partly a native American Indian and part black. So we had a problem, and his girl Friday was black down there. I think to this day she probably believes that I fired him because he was a minority. But I went to John - not John McEnroy... I went to John and I said: "John, I interviewed this fellow and I have my doubts. I'd like to have your personal opinion, your personal blessing on this fellow that he is somebody who can indeed do the job. Would you look at his file?" He did and he called me and said that he thought he could do the job. I said: "Well, I defer to your judgement, but I'm not persuaded completely and I'll give him six months." At the end of six months you know, he had not performed well. I had formed this little inner group and we met quite often to review what we were getting into. It was a real team, it was a team effort the whole time I was there. And he simply... In fact, he wasn't respected by the team. It was evident. He tried his best to brown-nose me and he would say things that would turn your stomach, about what people were saying about me I knew were not true. So after six months... I had made a deal with the bureau that I would come back up here every six months because I felt there was a tendency... You know you could get isolated down there because you didn't see traffic from other places and I felt there was a congressional element there that needed tending, that needed to be talked to and that I could do it better than anybody else here. So I struck a deal with the bureau that I'd come back every six months and work the Hill, and work with the executive branch. I came back after six months and went to the Agency and said I wanted him replaced. Having dealt with intelligence people, people in the intelligence community in the past, I sort of knew what words to use and what buttons to push. I said that I had formed this inner circle and that quite frankly he was the laughing stock. Bam, that did it. They couldn't take that. They sent down, to their credit, an excellent young man who performed superbly and thank God I had him. Once the end was in sight for Duvalier, he was invaluable, absolutely invaluable. He did a terrific job. You know, they stopped letting the ambassador choose below the DCM, and I'd chosen my own DCM. He is a man who had been a DCM in a number of places in Africa which I felt was appropriate. I had a very high regard for my first political chief and an equally high regard for my second. Leno Gutierrez was my first. He was Cuban born, raised in the States. Leno has kicked himself, he could have stayed. I said: "You can stay. You can extend." And he went on and he's kicked himself ever since because he missed the big event. He's kicked himself ever since. Leno did a superb job. We had a very, very good staff. We had a major turnover at the embassy when I went down which was really mismanagement, I felt, on the part of the Department personnel to have that big a change, a complete change over.

The consul general was extraordinarily good. I ended up having a very good public affairs officer, Jeff Lite; he was superb. I handled the press through him. During all of this I didn't give any interviews, I stayed away completely from the press and kept Jeff closely informed and did everything through him, through all of this. One time I was, toward the end of it all, I was approached at the airport by a fellow from Time magazine who said: "I just wanted to tell you, by the way, [I admire the way] you handled the press. Very smart." I've had other people from the press make similar comments. I kept information flying, but they weren't getting in to see me. One time we had like three or four hundred reporters. If I'd given an interview to one, my God I'd have...

Q: I would have thought that there had been two factors going in here. One, the military attaché is extremely important because you're talking about the military being a crucial factor in the thing and there has been a long sense of closeness between their military and ours. Maybe I'm wrong on this. And the other thing, there has been a tendency of our military to use a post like that again for retirement purposes. Did you find either of these factors...?

MCMANAWAY: My military attaché was good. He was not as strong as I would have liked. It turned out that my station chief in the end had the contact that paid off and resulted in a covert meeting with General Namphy's number two. General Namphy was still in the Palace that night dealing with Duvalier and dealing with setting up a government to take over when he left and I had a clandestine meeting with his number two where I put down our demands. The interesting thing was that they didn't understand this business of recognition, so I played that to our advantage, and they came wanting to know what would be required to receive recognition from the U.S. government. So I laid out what would be required and they did everything we asked. But that was arranged by the station chief, not the military attaché, even though it was a brigadier general that came to the residence.

Q: Did you find, say your political officer, was he able to get out and around in society?

MCMANAWAY: Oh, yes. This is a phrase that I want to keep in mind, because I did coin it. Port-au-Prince was a place of no secrets and no truth. Oh, I should mention, I had a very strong economic officer who was very good at contacts. He had an extensive network in the business world and both my political counselors did the same. Even [John Evansworth] was very active socially. When anything looked like it was about to happen or we got a whiff of something coming along, we pulled this team together and I just said: "Hit the streets, go. Be back here at five o'clock and let's compare notes." I'd be calling on people, you know. We had extensive contacts throughout Port-au-Prince. Later on in other parts of the country. When the country started going up in flames, to be dramatic about it--in fact there were demonstrations in every city except Port-au-Prince--we put people out and we got people up in Gonaïves, and we got people in Cap-Haïtien who were reporting in. We had some very good intelligence as to what was going on.

Q: When you arrived there, were things in a state of flux at that time, or did some things start to fall apart as far as Duvalier later on...?

MCMANAWAY: Well, in March of '83, the Pope had visited which I think is a marker, is one of several turning points. Because when he left he said: "Change must come to Haiti" in his remarks and the church became much more active. Here's another irony of Haitian history. Francois Duvalier had deliberately set out to get himself excommunicated by the church, which he did. He then renegotiated the concordat, he renegotiated this treaty with Rome, with the Vatican, in which he got the authority to name Haitian bishops and he got rid of all the French, foreign bishops. It was those bishops that turned on his son. His son was faced with a Haitian Catholic church, led by an Italian nuncio, and he and I worked very closely together. But the church became much more active, speaking out about the disparities in the society between the rich and the poor. Gradually about the Palace we had this combination of things taking place, these forces converging on Duvalier. The marriage was resented deeply by the military and by the blacks because she was as white as you are and Duvalier himself is really... would classify as a mulatto, Jean-Claude. His father was black. There was resentment over the marriage. There was growing resentment throughout Port-au-Prince and wherever there were businessmen in Gonaïves or Cape Haitien of her father and his [greed]. It was gross, his corruption, his greed was one of the worst I've ever seen anywhere.

Q: His corruption was gross?

MCMANAWAY: Yes. It had to become an ego trip because no one needs that much money. He was bragging all the time about it, [manipulating] foreign currency and... It was outrageous. You had the church speaking out against corruption and making the public increasingly aware of the discrepancies about their way of life and the rich people. And you had the U.S. government bringing pressure to open up the political process and for human rights improvements. These things were all going on at the same time, all this mix began to really become [critical].

Q: How did you see it when you went out there? You had rather explicit congressional instructions. You understood the climate in the United States when you went out there. What did you see at the end of the road as far as where we were pushing for Haiti to go within your time?

MCMANAWAY: I decided to try to use, since I really did not have much choice. It was there, it was the law. I didn't have much faith in the administration even though Motley [Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs] was trying along with others. In fact there had been a task force set up I think to try to overturn these conditions on AID that Congress was increasingly imposing in those years. I didn't have much faith that they were going to be successful, so I said: "Let's use it, let's make use of it to see if we can bring some improvements here." Where that was going to lead I didn't know for sure. I was secretly hopeful without ever saying it to anybody that it would lead to the departure of Duvalier. I didn't have any idea that it would actually happen. The reason for that I thought it would be a good thing is that Haiti has got too many people basically. It's just a fundamental economic problem which is not going to be solved by Haitians. Now I guess they're saying seven million, when I was there six million and on the east end of the island. You got the worst in the island. Two thirds of that island is on an incline of twenty degrees or greater. The trees have been cut down, the land is washing away. It's going to take an international effort to do anything positive about Haiti's economic condition. As long as the name Duvalier was associated with Haiti I didn't think you could get that. I thought if you could get that name away out of here, then you could. And we did start it. As a matter of fact I did start

it working behind the scenes, working with the World Bank, working with other donors, trying to get something headed in that direction. But I didn't know what would happen and certainly when it did happen it wasn't just our doing. What happened in the end, it got to the point where if we had a choice. If Duvalier stayed, it would mean the deaths of thousands of people, which would have driven us away from it. The position that we at the embassy took vis-a-vis Washington was: "Let's not wait. Let's not wait until we're forced to pull back. Let's pull back now. He's gone; he's finished." Mind you this was right toward the very end.

Q: Actually Duvalier left in February of '86. So we're talking about the end of '85?

MCMANAWAY: Yes, December, January. We started taking some deliberate steps which upped the ante and increased the pressure on Duvalier at a time when all the other things were beginning to come to a head. They made some really stupid mistakes which gives you an idea of their state of mind. They being the Duvaliers. They had in May of '85... Well, my first Fourth of July, I invited...

Q: July of '84?

MCMANAWAY: Of '84, I invited some of the dissidents and the government tried to get me to disinvite them and I refused, so the government boycotted my Fourth of July, and I made a speech which made me a hero on the Hill, you know, an absolute hero. They thought they were doing me in and they were making me a hero back in the Congress. So my tenure there was pretty rocky, it was full of tension a lot of the time. There are a number of different stories that I'm going to tell you. I don't know if we're going to get to them today because I had an experience there which I think is somewhat unique. I don't know if it's unique or not, but unusual certainly. But the mistakes they made in May of '85... They had this huge big party. They invited people in from Paris and all over, a big thing. They gave door prizes and one of the door prizes was a twenty thousand dollar necklace. This was on TV.

Q: This sounds a little bit like the Shah's two thousand birthday party or something in Iran just before he went down the tubes.

MCMANAWAY: Yes. The Foreign Minister's wife won the twenty thousand dollar necklace. This was all on TV and was shown all over Haiti. We couldn't believe it. We couldn't believe they could be that stupid. Later that year, in the fall of that year, they had run into foreign exchange problems again. They couldn't pay their bills and there were gas lines. There was no gas, so you had long gas lines. In the middle of that episode, she flies off to what was billed as a one or two million dollar shopping spree in Paris. Now this was in the context of bishops and priests talking every Sunday talking about this, and gradually it was coming home to people that the general disposition of the Haitians was that they were in the plight they were in because it was God's will. It was fate.

Q: They're a patient people.

MCMANAWAY: Yes. It wasn't the Duvaliers. But gradually they began to associate their situation with Duvalier. It was his fault. And then in December or so there was a shooting. Some

students were killed in Gonaïves and it started downhill so fast, it took everybody's breath away. The Duvalier mystique was gone. They were no longer afraid of him and at the same time they were beginning to blame him.

Q: I don't know what the timing is, save the going downhill for later. But before that before it all blew up, what about relations? What about our aid?

MCMANAWAY: Our aid was increasing. We were able to get increases in our aid program. I got in a new AID director who had served as Deputy AID Director in Ethiopia. He saw immediately that we needed to make strategic changes in the design of the AID program which took a lot of time. I spent a lot of time on it. In other spheres things were going quite well. They did do some things. I'd have to go back and review notes and things to give you specifics and I can do that if you want me to.

Q: I would.

MCMANAWAY: They did make some moves, both on the human rights front and on the political front.

Q: You were able then to basically in all honesty make certifications that [improvements were made]?

MCMANAWAY: Yes, we were able to make certain certifications in my first year there. First year that we had to do it, we had the certification. We were criticized for it, but we felt justified in making it because there had been some movement. We also renegotiated what had been in effect when I got there and which is now such great controversy was this interdiction agreement which is an international agreement with the Haitians.

Q: You're talking about the boat people leaving and...?

MCMANAWAY: Yes. Bilateral. Which gave us and our Coast Guards the right to patrol those waters and return them. It was an agreement, with the national government. We had at that time a requirement from the Justice Department which was a part of that, a program of follow-up interviews with at least twenty-five percent of those returned and within six months after their return to make sure they were not being harassed by the government. We never found any sign of that even under the Duvaliers, any sign of harassment of these people. We negotiated a title three, PL-480 agreement which we had got them into the Caribbean basin mission which was a first for Haiti. Haiti had never been a part of the U.S. sponsored regional AID program. So there was tension and I continued to hammer away on this but we were making progress. What was about to happen though was that he was about to undertake, you know, screw the top off the bottle and couldn't get it back on. After the boycott of my Fourth of July and after... That was a fact, my office director, Rich Brown... I was just teasing him about this the other day. At one point when the Administration was still battling to get these restrictions placed on the AID program by Congress lifted, Motley sent Rich Brown down to rein me in. I was going too far too fast for this business. So I suppose I slowed down a little bit.

Q: The rationale being that if you started meeting all these requirements it would undercut the Administration's position in a broader sense?

MCMANAWAY: Yes, but it was also causing tension with the government of Haiti and I guess Tony [Motley] felt that let's don't go in that direction because we're going to get it changed. Well, I didn't believe it, was going to happen and it didn't. But I was then approached by the most powerful member of the Cabinet who was the Minister of Defense and of the Interior and said: "We ought to meet with you and the entire Cabinet, and we'll put all the cards on the table and have an honest exchange." I said: "That's something unusual." It finally turned out that we had two dinners. One hosted by the Foreign Minister and I hosted the second at the residence. The first was at his home. Basically what they wanted to know was whether I was sent there to get rid of Duvalier, was that my agenda. This was in the fall of '84, somewhere in that area. Since I hadn't been sent there [for that], that was not our policy. What I managed to do... I had my political counselor with me at both meetings and it was quite a performance by this fellow, Lafontant. He always reminded me of one of the major figures in Haitian history, during the fight with [Revolutionary France (Toussaint L'Ouverture)]. He always brought this fellow to mind, he was the first fellow who said: "We'll burn down Haiti before we [surrender.]" And he said it to me. He came through during this meeting. Number one, keeping Duvalier in power was essential to these people because it was the basis of their power. This was fundamental and it wasn't going to change. But I was able to let them know that was not U.S. policy without letting up on the pressure which took some doing, but went through the two meetings. First dinner I just sort of listened, so there was still a lot of tension when we started the second one. But when I sort of, in a very carefully worded way, let them know that I wasn't there for that purpose, it was almost physical, you could see the relief. Having come from Vietnam, you know there were rumors about my being CIA and all that sort of thing and in the way I was acting and making some pretty tough demarches they really had got it in their heads that maybe I was there, maybe I had been sent there for that purpose. So we got past that and we made progress with the IMF, we made progress in a number of areas. I think one of the things that I did had a strong effect on future events was I went to them all, including Duvalier himself. I went to his key guys and said: "Look, your constitution says that Duvalier is president for life but it doesn't ban political parties. Why don't you consider having a law that governs political activity and political parties. That started [it]. They went for it. The ball started rolling and they brought in people from France to help them write the political law and it was a long story about that evolved over the next year. They did come out with a law that governed political parties and people started forming political parties. The next thing you knew, the press became much more liberal, it just started... And by December of '85 we withheld certification and informed the government we were withholding certification. In saying we weren't going to certify it we delayed it and by the time... I was in Washington at the time arguing for this policy and by the time I got down there in January the whole country was in an uproar.

Q: Whom were you arguing with who wanted to give certification? Were there forces within the State Department, Congress or anywhere else that basically didn't want to rock the boat?

MCMANAWAY: There was concern about what the impact would be. It was not that there was a big argument about it. We simply sat around and discussed as a policy issue. How do we deal with this? Do we want to send the signal now. Do we try to certify? That was another problem.

Could we certify? With demonstration all over the place, some students having been killed, it would have been very difficult to certify anyway. But we decided that it would be a good political strategy vis-a-vis the government to send that signal that we were delaying it. By somebody saying so, we were sending a signal that we did not approve the way that the government was handling the situation. Because at the time he was still sending out the military against these demonstrators. Later on that ran its course and the military really basically stopped. They refused to shoot Haitians.

Q: Were you talking to the church, the Roman Catholic church?

MCMANAWAY: Yes, through the Nuncio.

Q: How did they see things playing out? What were they after?

MCMANAWAY: Same way. They saw it exactly the same way. There had to be this change and it was leading to his departure. Or it was going to lead to his departure or a great bloodshed.

Q: Were any of you thinking how do we get this guy out? What would our role be?

MCMANAWAY: Oh, yes. We were very worried about... There is an incidence in Haitian history that was on my mind very much just before we intervened in 1915. It was the public dismemberment of the president, the crowd tore him apart literally. Sam was his name. I particularly didn't want that to happen on my watch.

Q: What did you do?

MCMANAWAY: To the extent that we decided that we would not take him out in the daytime. That we would take him out at night when people were asleep. I was worried about getting him to the airport.

Q: Before we talk about the actual getting him out there, were you sitting around a few months before telling your people: "You know, we may end up getting this guy out. Did you have a plan?"

MCMANAWAY: We had discussed and it sort of jelled very rapidly. When it started going, it went very, very rapidly. Within a matter of two or three months it was over. He lost his mystique and the demonstrations started, he'd reacted to it. He was increasing... The military was backing away from him and he was turning more and more to the Tontons Macouttes.

Q: The Tontons Macouttes. Could you explain what they were?

MCMANAWAY: Well, that was the para-military organization that was set up initially by the father, Francois Duvalier as a counter-force to the military. It was not a military organization in the sense of having battalions, etc. But they were all over the country.

Q: With the disguise of dark glasses and ?

MCMANAWAY: That's in "The Comedians," the movie. No, Jean-Claude changed that. He made them into the Volunteers for National Security and gave them a uniform. They had blue uniforms. They were thugs. Not all of them were thugs. Some of them were your cousins out in the countryside. Some people joined to survive. And that's one of the things that's so wrong right now and people don't realize it. Those people are back in control. We can knock off the military with a reinforced company but that's not the point. What do you do after that? You can back in there and you assume responsibility for Haiti's future and why on earth should we do that?

Q: Let's cut it off now, don't you think? I'm just looking at the time. Let's talk about when we pick this up the next time, about essentially what we keep referring to. How things played out as far as the overthrow of Duvalier. What we were doing, what you were doing? How we saw it, how Washington reacted? Also something I didn't ask before but that may be covered, the role of the Black Caucus within Congress, how did this play?...Not necessarily at that time but all throughout your time, was this an important factor or not? Did you have to be concerned about that equivalent to the ethnic community, the black power group? Okay?

MCMANAWAY: Okay.

Q: Today is December 13, 1994. Clay, you heard what I said on the last interview, I think we're in Haiti. We've more or less talked up to the fall. Why don't you cover about the Black Caucus first and then let's move to how the situation played out with the overthrow of Duvalier?

MCMANAWAY: The Black Caucus played a role but in fact the individual who played the most important role was Fauntroy.

Q: What is his first name?

MCMANAWAY: Walter E. Fauntroy who is the [democratic] delegate from the District of Columbia, a non-voting member. He became very interested. And some of the staffers of the appropriations committee on the House side were very keen on Haiti. As a matter of fact I met with them repeatedly on my [trips back to Washington].

[Note: portion of tape inaudible]

[Congress] had written conditions into the AID legislation, including formation of political parties, and I think everybody felt that they had gone too far. But there it was, it was in there and as it turned out we later made very good use of that in pressuring for change in Haiti. Fauntroy visited quite often and took a very keen interest in Haiti.

Q: He would go see Duvalier?

MCMANAWAY: He would go see Duvalier, but not very often. He would see others. He would see a lot of the dissenters, he would see some of the opposition, he would see some of the people

who would do things on the human rights side. He would see a lot of the clergy. Fauntroy is a reverend himself, a preacher. He came out of the civil rights movement and he would make speeches there, press conferences there and here. He was quite active, traveled throughout Haiti.

Q: Did you find him useful in sort of getting across the concern of the American political establishment or not?

MCMANAWAY: Well, he certainly complemented what the Administration would say. He was not well-liked by Haitians certainly not the Duvalierists, nor the Duvalier government, but Haitians in general do not like African-Americans I guess you would call them now. They don't like them coming down telling them how to do things because they don't see Afro-Americans as being particularly successful. After all, the Haitians in their eyes overthrew their slave masters. It's been downhill ever since, but in their eyes, they don't like black Americans to come down there and tell them what to do. The converse of that is that I think Haiti is an embarrassment to black politicians, American politicians, the Black Caucus. And it was the Black Caucus which was very instrumental in driving President Clinton into this current policy of intervention. He allowed them to make it into a domestic political issue rather an international or foreign policy issue. Even at the end though they sort of split, the Caucus did, as I understand it. They weren't unanimous about the intervention even though they had put so much pressure on it and given Aristide so much support that it became inevitable.

Q: We're talking now in say December 1994 where earlier in the year the United States put on tremendous pressure and actually sent troops into Haiti which are there now as we speak to restore the government of Aristide. The situation is still in flux. How did the situation play out with Duvalier. Why don't we start with how the situation was falling apart?

MCMANAWAY: We'll have to go back a bit to understand the forces that were at work. It wasn't falling apart when I went down there although the seeds had been sown already by the Pope's visit in March of 1983. I went down there in December of '83. The Pope on his departure in his speech, his statement when he left, said change must come to Haiti. From that the catholic church became much more active. The international press was much more active in raising the consciousness of the Haitian people about the corruption in government, about the disparity between their lives and the life of Duvalier. At the same time we were putting quite a lot of pressure on Duvalier to change.

My relationship with the Duvalier government stayed correct but tense the whole time I was there to the point where I guess it was my first or second July Fourth reception I invited some of the opposition, some of the people who were pushing for human rights, some of the people who had spoken out and they asked me to disinvite one or two and I refused. And then the government boycotted my Fourth of July reception. I went ahead with it and made my speech to no response and they made me a hero on the Hill. They didn't realize what... Then they made some very huge mistakes.

Q: Let me ask something about the role of the CIA. Was there a problem?

MCMANAWAY: No. No problem at all. We had a very good station chief. He was part of my inner group. There were four, five of us that met, worked this problem. I used all the resources I had there. He was very useful as a contact. We were approached by the Tontons Macouttes leadership. We were approached by an old-line Duvalierist who had been out of power for a long time. We were approached by everybody. They all knew it was crumbling and they were stepping forth to see what they could do with it. They wanted to work with us. I was sending messages and finally was asked directly... Let me back up a minute, it gets more complicated because somewhere along in this time period, the Prime Minister of Jamaica had in his cabinet a fellow who knew the Duvaliers personally. So he sent him over to Port au Prince and I was seeing someone over at the airport and he arrived by pure chance and he came running over to me and he said: "You're the American ambassador." I said: "Yes." And he said: "I've got to see you, I've got to see you. What's going to happen? When can I see you?" So we met clandestinely and we talked on the phone. He was there for a few days and he was helpful. I used him to send messages to Duvalier. I used every avenue that was going to Duvalier. Everybody who was seeing Duvalier and it was sort of the same thing. "You've got to go."

Q: Was the message by this time (We're talking, I guess, about late '85) "Get out!" or "You've got to make major reforms!"?

MCMANAWAY: Well, we still favored major reforms. I didn't have the green light from Washington to take it any further at that point. We did have, again fortuitously, a chief of missions conference in Miami in January. I didn't know it but the [Assistant Secretary (Elliot Abrams)] had a meeting on a [previous] Saturday of all wise men on Haiti who were in Washington, and they had come out of the meeting which said: "Don't underestimate Duvalier's staying power." I'd had a session with my team and we wrote up a memorandum of recommendations and I carried it with me. It had the endorsement of the entire country team which was a hundred and eighty degrees out from [the wise man's advice]. And to his credit, he came around very quickly to the point of view that it was inevitable that the choice for Duvalier was, "Kill a lot of people in order to stay, or leave." If we didn't back away, you know, distance ourselves from it, we were going to be associated with that slaughter. We needed to convince him to leave because if he started slaughtering a lot of people, we'd have to move away from him anyway. To his credit he came around very quickly overnight and I got my marching orders and I was able to be much more forceful when I went back.

Q: Who came around?

MCMANAWAY: Elliot.

Q: Elliot Abrams

MCMANAWAY: The Assistant Secretary of State.

Q: Yes. Who had come down and basically he had been receiving and saying: "Well, Duvalier is going to stay in there for a long time"

MCMANAWAY: Yes. "Don't underestimate his staying power." But we met with his various lieutenants and discussed it at some length and decided we would take a more aggressive stance. We would move to distance ourselves from Duvalier even further. So I was going to go back with a much stronger hand and at that point started passing the message that I began forcing the conversation on to options. What were his options? This gentleman, Solomon, was a brave man.

Q: The Foreign Minister?

MCMANAWAY: Yes. His wife was dying of cancer at the time. He was walking through the dark corridors and he didn't know if he was going to get out of there alive. They had crazy ideas. They wanted go to the UN with this and he had to stop that; they couldn't do that. So a lot of his advice was most unwelcome. He came by one day and asked me, this was early one morning and he said: "The president wants to know what you think?"

Q: Were you at this point saying: "You know, if you want to go we'll help you get out? How was this put?"

MCMANAWAY: Very subtly but clearly enough. One of our nightmares was that Port-au-Prince would go up in flames. We were also worried about all the Americans living there, about five or six thousand Americans all over Haiti. We had hooked into a ham radio network where we could keep people informed throughout the country on what was going on. They could stay in touch. We had a round the clock task force going. Of course the schools were closed. A lot of people had left.

Q: Just giving the nuts and bolts, you really saw this as an inflammable situation in the Caribbean where things at least were near our resources. Were U.S. military forces alerted for an evacuation?

MCMANAWAY: Oh, yes. In fact we had some people from the military there. A couple of guys had been in earlier and had done their usual surveys for evacuation. They came in... The Department had sent in a satellite (TACSET) secure radio. I had one of those on my desk. In fact the Executive Secretary got upset with Elliot and me because we were doing so much of our business on TACSET. There were very few cables being sent back and forth. We were on that radio constantly, back and forth. For once, we had called it right because definitely he was going to go. I was in lunch and got [the] word.

Q: When was this?

MCMANAWAY: February 6th, 1986. I was in lunch down in a little snack bar we had at the Embassy and I got word that the Foreign Minister was on the phone and went up... I remember leaving my ham sandwich lying on my desk. He said: "Would you please come to the Palace right away?" My DCM insisted on going with me for my protection, but they wouldn't let him in the room when I went in to see Duvalier. As I arrived at the Palace immediately in front of me was the French ambassador. He preceded my car, in his car. He went in and saw Duvalier, then I went in. He made a little speech. The Foreign Minister was there. He made a little speech about what was good for the country and he was going to make this sacrifice to save lives and he

wanted to leave as soon as possible. He wanted to leave that night. Could I get him a plane? Without any authorization I said yes.

Q: But you said without authorization, we were saying we'd help him get out...

MCMANAWAY: We didn't have anything arranged. We didn't have any policies, statements, any directions from Washington that said: "We will do it." I had asked for a number of things. We had put on standby some jets out of Florida to come do a fly-over if we needed - Haitians are terrified of airplanes for some reason - to fly over Port-au-Prince, not to invade or anything like that. It never even occurred to us. Our concern was getting him out alive without a real horrible massacre of him and his family. If people found out he was headed to the airport, why, [who knew what could happen]? Trying to do it in the daytime would have been foolhardy. So Washington responded. The military responded. We had a C-141. It arrived I think about two o'clock in the morning. I told them they could take two suitcases each, that was all. They wanted to take everything. I said I needed a list of what they were taking with them.

I congratulated [Duvalier] on his decision, etc. I'm leaving out a number of things. I wasn't prepared to give this much detail because we had one mishap where we thought at one point during all this activity going on, he declared a state of emergency. I was working very closely with the Nuncio at this time.

Q: The Papal Nuncio.

MCMANAWAY: The Papal Nuncio. All during this period. We had a meeting that night, on one particular night. The town was just rolling with rumors. People were calling, coming to the residence. Something's happening, something's going on. He's been captured by the military, he's in jail, this, that... It was just wild. My DCM decided he was going to go down to the Embassy and he was there alone when this broadcast came on, very early in the morning on the radio. It was a radio broadcast which said that he had left. The operations center in the State Department got wind of something going on down there and called about that time. My DCM said: "No, we've just heard on the radio that he's left." Well that was immediately send off to the White House and somehow got to...

Q: Who was the spokesman for the White House.

MCMANAWAY: They were on Air Force One and he made this announcement which of course was false. Then Duvalier... I think it actually helped in the long run. Then Shultz went on Good Morning America and we scripted him to say the right things. He knew what to say of course. By then he'd been following it. He wasn't directly engaged but he was following it. He was kept closely informed and he was asked the question whether we supported Duvalier and he said: "We support popularly elected governments." Well I was besieged with questions immediately coming from the Palace. "What does that mean?" "It means what it says." But I used that to very good effect. The Jamaican was there at the time.

Q: What was the timing of this about because we're talking about February 6, 1986?

MCMANAWAY: You know what I'd like to do. I wrote a piece for Shultz's book.

Q: *Turmoil and Triumph?*

MCMANAWAY: Yes. I'd like to go back and reread that piece and then we can do it maybe I don't know if we're going to do anymore of these.

Q: *Sure.*

MCMANAWAY: We can just hold the conversation on this at this point and I can refresh my memory and get the chronology right.

Q: *Okay. While we're here why don't we... We'll insert this later on. But Duvalier left. Let's let it go at this point now here.*

MCMANAWAY: Well, it was interesting. The C-141 landed. I thought it was going to wake up the entire city. It was huge.

Q: *A big four-engine jet. It's one of our biggest transit planes.*

MCMANAWAY: It reversed the engines when it landed. I thought it was going to wake up everybody. At one point we got word that one of the networks had the story and was going to go with it, so we got the phones cut off. We were working with the military at this point.

Q: *The Haitian military?*

MCMANAWAY: They got the phones cut off so that people in the States couldn't call and tell people in Haiti what was going on. We had a two-hour window. The plane could only stay on the ground for two hours. We used that entire two hours to get [Duvalier's] entourage out there. I think the plane left at three forty-five, or something like that, that morning. We had set up liaison with him and with the military, General Namphy, but we lost track of him. Nobody was answering the phone at the Palace. All I could think of, having been in Vietnam, was [when Diem] had been killed. I was thinking: "Oh, my God, they've taken him off somewhere and shot him. Got to find him." So I woke up the Foreign Minister about three times in that early morning hour through to three o'clock and do you know what they were doing? They were partying at the Palace, going-away party. Plus he was handing out part of his weapons to the Tontons Macouttes right up to the last minute. But they finally arrived out there. Washington decided that we should have somebody on the plane, so we put a young lady Foreign Service officer on the plane. The French were not happy about them going there, but by then they couldn't do anything about it and they took off.

Q: *So then, what happened, from your perspective?*

MCMANAWAY: I met, before he left, at the residence clandestinely with a Brigadier General, an envoy from Namphy. This was set up by my station chief. We went upstairs at the residence, at night, I forget what time it was. He wanted to know what it would take for us to recognize the

new regime, not realizing that we don't do that anymore. So I laid it out, what they needed to do. There had to be elections, and do this, and this, and this, for a move toward democracy, establishment, honoring international treaties and all these things. General Namphy came on the television the next morning and announced all these things, they were all there. Everything I gave him was in the speech. They had formed this council to govern until there could be elections. And I began working with Namphy directly.

Q: How sincere did you find him?

MCMANAWAY: Very sincere. Secretary Shultz also came down before I left and had a long meeting with Namphy. Namphy was, I think, very sincere from the outset. I don't know what happened. I never have quite figured out what happened. Namphy was a stubborn man. I had a four-hour meeting with him. He spoke French with me. He had a slight speech impediment. I had a splitting headache, but I'd meet with him almost everyday. I could turn him. It would take time, but if he was heading off in the wrong direction I could turn him around. Then I left.

Q: You left when?

MCMANAWAY: I left August 1st, 1986.

Q: Just to give some idea how something operates, you knew what we wanted but your proposals to Namphy, were these coming from you or was there a game plan or you were just told the goals over there and you figured out how to get there?

MCMANAWAY: Yes, that's pretty much it. A lot of it... You mean after Duvalier left?

Q: After Duvalier left.

MCMANAWAY: Well, I worked with Namphy in setting up a cabinet. I talked him into putting several people there. He was going to make the military attaché here in Washington as ambassador. I said: "You can't do that. You can't send a military officer off as ambassador, from the military. He represented almost a military regime. You don't want a civilian on your council but you can't do that. He would get exasperated. He said: "Where am I going to find anybody after twenty-eight years who is not a Duvalierist?" And I gave him the list, talked to him on the week-end. I called him and we went over the list.

Q: Where did you get the list?

MCMANAWAY: We made it up from the collective wisdom in the Embassy. And he'd start reading down the list and he'd say: "No, no, he's not family, no, can't... Then finally I'd hit one and he said: "Ah, good idea, he's family, okay!" And that person became ambassador.

Q: When you say family...?

MCMANAWAY: He meant you know, part of the... People he could trust. That was one of his big problems, was finding people he could trust. But you want to save the rest of this heap to the next time?

Q: *You mean the addition about the timing?*

MCMANAWAY: Or anything else.

Q: *Or we can keep on. How's your time, do you have more time?*

MCMANAWAY: I have a little bit more time.

Q: *Why don't we keep on. In the first place during this post-Duvalier period, how did you treat things like the army, the Tontons Macouttes and all that?*

MCMANAWAY: Well, the Tontons Macouttes were being disarmed. One of the things we were worried about was that the way the Duvaliers had run things, they had three battalions. The chief of staff, Namphy, was really not in command of the military. He was off to one side, an administrative officer. The commanders all reported to the president directly. They didn't socialize with each other, they weren't allowed to. We didn't know whether they would work together or not. Whether they could work together. While the Tontons Macouttes was not a military organization, it was very big. It was even bigger than we thought. When they got into the Minister of the Interior and found the files, the numbers were staggering, including messengers. Over three hundred thousand men.

Q: *Good God!*

MCMANAWAY: But they were spread out. There was no organization. It was not organized like the military, except in Port-au-Prince you had the real hard core, about two thousand. The whole military counting everybody was only about seventy-five hundred. And that's fire trucks, police, etc. So we were concerned about whether the military could hold together... Well they did. They almost had a pitched battle in Port-au-Prince, and the Tontons Macouttes backed down. Then they sort of started disappearing. Of course the people started attacking them as well, killing them where they could. Out in the countryside they just sort of melted away. One thing about the countryside, the Tontons Macouttes were probably your uncle or your cousin.

Q: *Was this... I'm using the wrong term but more a social organization, you know. If you were a member of the Tontons Macouttes, were you getting a salary? How was it...?*

MCMANAWAY: No, it was basically... They lived off the land, so to speak. They were powerful, they had the power to do a lot of things.

Q: *Was it a mafia-type thing?*

MCMANAWAY: They were open, not undercover. They were called the national volunteers or something like that. They had uniforms. But you could go into some of the most remote places in

Haiti and suddenly, boom, there would be a Tontons Macouttes wanting your name and who you are and what you're doing there. Not secretly, but openly. But they were his balance of power from the military.

Q: In this post-flight period, did our military get closer to the Haitian military and started beefing it up?

MCMANAWAY: We tried. We tried like hell. Because one of the things we felt that Namphy needed to be able to do... He kept asking, kept asking, kept asking... He said: "You know I've got to do something with the army. Can't you help me get some barracks. I want a medical program for the army. But you know, I couldn't get it through Congress. That was an area I think where we let him down. We couldn't get the money for the military in appreciable amounts to give him a strong hand with the military. Our military came down to do surveys of their requirements, their needs, etc. We tried, but the Congress just would not go along.

Q: Why? Was there a feeling that the military per se...? Was this a post-Vietnam reaction, or...?

MCMANAWAY: They didn't trust. They didn't trust them. We tried to point out to them they had no training in riot control, crowd control or any of that. They didn't have any instruments like rubber bullets, they had very little tear gas, you know, for crowd control stuff. We were afraid they would misuse it. Congress was afraid they would misuse it so we had a lot of trouble getting anything through. We got some.

Q: Did you have a feeling that when Duvalier left, interest within the political apparatus back in Washington fell off. I mean, this was taken care off and now to move on to other countries?

MCMANAWAY: No, no. Not in the administration and not among the people who'd been following Haiti up on the Hill. No, it didn't. Everybody was holding their breath. I was working very hard with Namphy to... We had some back-and-forth about how long it would take to have an election. I thought five years would be a good time period. Certainly no sooner than three years. Washington was pushing very hard for eighteen months. The Administration felt that Congress wouldn't stand for any longer, and Namphy surprised me by coming out with eighteen, I think it was eighteen...

Q: Clay, the two names, I think, General Cedras and Aristide, did any of these come across your radar at this time?

MCMANAWAY: Aristide did. As I was leaving he was emerging as a very vocal liberation theology priest and one the Vatican was worried about and was trying to move him out of Haiti.

Q: Could you explain what "liberation theology" was?

MCMANAWAY: Well, it is: overthrowing a government is justified on the grounds of religion. The church was very worried about him and wanted to move him out of Haiti. They weren't able to do so. He was emerging then with some very varying speeches, or sermons I guess, I've

forgotten the right term. Their Sunday morning homilies. They were firebrand stuff. He also... We didn't know then that he was a little wacky as well. He was just emerging when I left.

Q: When you left Haiti... You know, as you leave what did you think. You'd been so immersed in things what did you think when you left? Whither Haiti?

MCMANAWAY: Well, the Secretary had me in.

Q: Mr. Shultz?

MCMANAWAY: Mr. Shultz. For a chat when I got back and he said: "What are the chances?" And I said: "Fifty-fifty." I may have said less than fifty-fifty. He was a little startled, he thought... "Well, you're saying it's not going to work?" And I said: "No, no. It could but there's a long way to go." They'd never had it. They don't know what's democracy. To most Haitians democracy is license, to do what you want to do. It would include getting revenge. They have memories that go back... Things that had been done to them. It's a sad place. They can be very gracious people and they deserve better leadership than they've had since they beat the French, they and yellow fever. They defeated the French. They haven't had it. I don't know what happened to Namphy. Namphy was a drinker. I guess two months after he'd taken over he had to go take a rest. His doctor ordered him to take some rest. They were working very hard. They're not used to working those kinds of hours. They'd never had to work like that in their lives. Here they were faced with running a government. He had to take some time off, and he took a rest period. After I left I heard that he went back to the bottle. I don't know whether it's true or not.

Q: Just for somebody who wants to get a little feel, in the short term, in the next couple of years. Basically were the election held in eighteen months?

MCMANAWAY: They did hold the elections and they were aborted. During the voting, as the voting started, there were attacks on the voting places. People were killed and the election was aborted by the military. Namphy, from what I could tell, sort of let it happen. He didn't... There were some bad guys around him. Again I'd have to refresh my memory on some of these names and I think they basically took over running things. I got the impression, I wasn't there. I wasn't really able to follow it that closely. I wasn't reading the cable traffic and certainly not to notice. But I think a lot of people saw it coming. Our embassy didn't.

Q: Who replaced you as ambassador?

MCMANAWAY: Brunson McKinley.

Q: What was his background?

MCMANAWAY: Brunson had served, I believe, mainly in Europe and had had one tour in China.

Q: I want to get a little bit how our system works. Here is a place which has just gone through a critical phase and is obviously still up there. We don't know where it's going or what's happening.

Did you have much of a chance to brief him? Was there much bringing him up to speed before he arrived?

MCMANAWAY: I made myself completely available to him and did as much as I could. He was well briefed. He had been selected before the overthrow of Duvalier. He had been the seventh floor's candidate. He replaced me as Deputy Executive Secretary. We had a very short overlap there. It was the first time I'd met him. Then he was the seventh floor nominee. I think Abrams felt he had no choice but to leave him. He had been selected before the fall of Duvalier. You know the Department, how long this process takes. He was not selected with the situation in mind.

Q: Probably a good place to stop would be about here. Do you have some more time?

MCMANAWAY: Not today I'm afraid.

Q: Could you explain just how you got your next assignment then?

MCMANAWAY: I don't know if we want to get into that or not.

Q: Well what we'll do, is the next time, you'll fill in a bit the details of the day Duvalier left. And also then we'll pick up starting about your problems with Elliot Abrams and all, about getting involved with the Nicaraguan situation and a job there which proved abortive for you. Then we'll move on to your time as (a counter terrorist?) Okay?

MCMANAWAY: Okay.

Q: Today is March 9, 1995. As we said last time, we got Duvalier off the ground and what happened after he left, the day after. Then we'll move on to other things.

MCMANAWAY: Did we get him off the ground? I don't recall.

Q: Maybe we didn't get him off the ground, but we were having trouble, he was partying or something like that.

MCMANAWAY: Oh yes, he was in the Palace, we couldn't find him. I woke up the Foreign Minister two or three times during the night.

Q: We can always cut this out if we've already... Don't worry about that.

MCMANAWAY: We had a liaison by then with the military. We had a colonel who was with him and supposedly performing liaison with us. When we couldn't find him I was reminded of the situation in Saigon when Diem was killed. We had to send out a major to collect him from where he was hiding in the Chinese part of town, Cholon. The major lost his head on the way

back and killed him and Ngu his brother-in-law in the van on the way back. It was not intended at all and I had visions of [the same thing].

Q: You'd be known as Mr. Assassin or something. "Don't send this guy to my country!"

MCMANAWAY: The guy we sent was someone we weren't all that sure of and...

Q: This was a Haitian colonel?

MCMANAWAY: Yes. We had about a two-hour window when the military aircraft could stay and then it had to leave and we were getting very close to the end of that window when they finally showed up. The mother came out first, showed up at the airport. I had sent a team out there. We had unusual luck in the team that I had. I had as part of the military detachment there was a sergeant who was a C-141 cargo master.

Q: C-141 being the type of aircraft we had.

MCMANAWAY: And my DCM was a former Marine, Steve Doggins. And I had a Coast Guard fellow who was a pilot, and we put him in the tower at the airport to talk to the plane's pilot coming in and going out. And there was a fourth, I'm trying to think who the fourth was. We also at Washington's request put a young female officer on the plane to go with them. I wasn't terribly enthusiastic about that, but Washington thought we should do this and we did. But finally they showed up with about fifteen minutes to spare I think, maybe a little bit more. Then they loaded up. We had limited them to two bags each. The plane took off at close to four o'clock in the morning, at three forty-five I think. It sounded like... You could hear it for miles, huge racket. Since it was taking off in the dead of night I thought surely it would wake up every Haitian in the country, but nothing happened. Then General Namphy went on TV. I had met with his envoy to me that night and he wanted to know what it would take for the U.S. to recognize the government. I laid down our standards of requirements and he spelled them all out in his speech. They were all covered in his speech: elections, he would return to civilian elected rule and meet international obligations, and all those things. They were all spelled out in his speech to the people on TV the next morning. Namphy had a call-in of the whole diplomatic corps later that day around noon and gave the usual assurances that you get in such situations. Then he met, wanted to meet separately with me, and we talked about meeting later and how we were going to proceed. From then on I met with him almost daily. It was quite a sensation driving down to the Palace that day. The crowds were in the streets waving the American flags and palm fronds as a sign of peace. That was one of the few times I flew my flags.

Q: I was going to ask you whether... On the ambassadorial car most of the time one doesn't want to fly the flag.

MCMANAWAY: A few times I did and drew the cheers everywhere all the way to the Palace. It was quite a sensation. It was a very happy day for our government. Then we went forward working with Namphy to form his cabinet. We had quite an influence on that. I may have mentioned previously some of the things that we did. We pretty well suggested his minister of the economy, his minister of finance. I dissuaded him from sending a colonel to Washington as

military attaché. I said he couldn't do that, he couldn't have a military... Not an attaché, it was an ambassador. I said he couldn't do that. He said: "Well I can't find any people who aren't supporters of Duvalier, Duvalierists." So I came up with a list and he picked one out. As a matter of fact, it was a grandson or a great-grandson of a former president, Pierre Sam, and he sent him as ambassador. We proceeded on a number of fronts with regard to policies, programs, and headed toward elections over the following months.

Q: But your replacement was already on track at that point?

MCMANAWAY: Yes, he had already been nominated, decided upon anyway, at least within the State Department, he'd been decided upon which I learned when I returned on consultation shortly after.

Q: Well, how close were you, sitting down there "Why don't you pick this guy as a minister of economics and don't do the ambassador." Was this coming out of you, or were you...?

MCMANAWAY: That was coming out of me.

Q: That's what I thought. How did Washington, particularly the State Department...? Did they give you your head or was there a problem, running down there to see what was happening?

MCMANAWAY: No, they pretty much gave me my head. The one area where we had some debate was how long before they could have elections. I thought they should have more time. I was thinking if we could possibly do it, three to five years. They were pressing for elections much sooner, eighteen months which is what Namphy finally did. That was the one area of disagreement. Other than that they pretty much gave me my head. I would not call interference at all.

Q: Going back to you, this thing came to a satisfactory conclusion, at least as you, at this particular point in time, were concerned. Your successor had been put on track. It was time for you to leave. What happened?

MCMANAWAY: It wasn't until... You see, Duvalier left in early February.

Q: February '86.

MCMANAWAY: February '86. I didn't leave until August, 1st of August.

Q: So you really had quite a bit of time for what we would call nation building?

MCMANAWAY: Yes.

Q: You feel a little bit better about this than you did in Vietnam?

MCMANAWAY: Oh yes. We were encouraged by Namphy. Secretary Shultz found him to be a person that he had some confidence in. It didn't turn out that way, and I've never, never really

quite understood what happened except that he didn't have a lot of stamina. He was a drinker and apparently he did go back to drinking. I think he was manipulated by some of the people around him, but I've never been able to determine exactly, what happened to Namphy, why he failed. He did. We didn't think he would. We thought he was capable. The one area of concern I had about Namphy was his extreme dislike and distrust of Haitian politicians. He would not talk to them. He wouldn't do a lot of things initially. It took a lot of long, long meetings I had with him. I'd have four-hour meetings with him. I got him to turn around on a number of things, but that's one I never did succeed, to deal with politicians. So I was worried about that.

Q: When you say you had these meetings, I mean you're the American ambassador and here is the president of a country. Was this your role? I mean turned into an advisor's role?

MCMANAWAY: Very much so. I met with him very frequently and we talked about lots of things, about how he was governing and things that needed to be done. He asked for things, he asked for one thing we failed as a government to respond to I think probably because of concerns about congressional attitudes. He needed support for the military and he wasn't looking for lethal weapons or things like that. He was looking for things like barracks, places for them to live. He needed the army support. I could never persuade Washington to come up with the funds and [equipment] that could make a difference. I don't know whether that had anything to do with the eventual failure of Namphy or not. I can't say. It's conceivable that he lost support of the army. He knew and he was pretty desperate about it, that he needed to produce something for the army who in fact had stepped in and taken over and had pulled back from following Duvalier's orders at the end, of killing Haitians. We weren't able to deliver on that, not in any meaningful way. But yes, I was pretty close, not close in the sense that we were dealing with each other very frequently. These very long meetings which I always left with a splitting headache. He had a speech impediment and it was all in French. It took a lot of perseverance and a lot of time. But I had gained his trust and he would listen, do things that he didn't really want to, but he did it.

JON G. EDENSWORD
Consular Affairs Officer
Port-au-Prince (1983-1986)

Jon G. Edensword was born in the state of Washington, and graduated from school in Illinois in 1956. After a five year teaching career, he entered the foreign service in 1968. Edensword has had tours in Martinique, Liberia, Haiti, Jordan, France, and Mexico. He was interviewed by Raymond Ewing on October 30, 1995.

Q: When you finished that year at the National Defense University, it looks like you were assigned back to Haiti again. You had been there before. What did you do that time? It looks like you were there about three years. What was your job there?

EDENSWORD: Well, I had gotten remarried back in December of 1981, six months before I went to the War College and my wife was a USIS employee, a librarian. So, when I got out of

the War College in the cycle of bidding, we began looking for a tandem assignment overseas because I had been in the States at that time for four years. We were ready to go overseas in any case. We could not find a place where both of us could get jobs. Lou Goelz, who was at that time the Deputy Assistant of Consular Affairs for Visa Services, called me up one day and said, "Would you go to Haiti?" I told him: I said, "I would go but I didn't know if there's a job for my wife." We started looking around: it turns out that the cultural affairs position there was open. My wife was not a FSO, but a specialist, but she bid on the job. At the same time this "Kiddiegate" thing was going on, where, I think, a nephew of Weinberger and a nephew or a niece of Al Haig's had gotten jobs in the government or the Foreign Service. This had hit the papers at that time. Well, when my wife bid on the CAO job in Haiti, she was called back in a couple of days by her career counselor in USIA and told that the number two man at USIA had a candidate and she was a political appointee and that the job wasn't open. So we sort of began looking around: we were in the Department and had gone to the Credit Union. We walked out of the Credit Union and were looking at that bulletin board for a car or something and here is this man - the number two man in USIA and my wife speaks to him and explains our problem. He said, "Well, gee, that's really too bad." The next day in the paper, it came out that a non-career person, who the paper described as a "deli-queen" because I think she was a member of his church and worked as a cashier in a New York deli (he was from New York.) He had gotten her assigned as CAO to Haiti. Well, this hit the papers and Wick, who was the head of USIA, was out in the Far East and called this man and said, "What in the Hell is going on - I want this thing resolved." It was at this point that we ran into him outside of the Credit Union. He said that it would be resolved and she should come see him the following day.

Q: That your wife should come?

EDENSWORD: Yes. She went up to see him and found out that overnight Wick had fired him.

Q: So he wasn't there anymore?

EDENSWORD: He wasn't there anymore. He was later picked up by Schultz and given a job up on the sixth or seventh floor in the Department for a year or two, I think, before he sort of faded into the sunset. Anyway, the upshot of all this is that the "deli-queen" didn't get the job and my wife did.

Q: And you didn't have to go through all this competition for the consular section job?

EDENSWORD: No, they couldn't get anybody to bid on the job and I was very happy to go back to Haiti. We had a marvelous three years there: we really enjoyed it. We had a first-rate ambassador - we got along with him fine anyway - Clay McManaway. USIA and the Consular Section were in the same building about a mile and a half - two miles from the Embassy, so it was very convenient for us. We had a house that we really liked: an old fashioned house that we picked out that nobody wanted and we just loved. We had a very nice tour there and it was an exciting time. In February 1986, Baby Doc fled Haiti for France, so we were there during the fall of the Duvaliers.

Q: Let's talk first a little about the Consular Section. You had been the Consular Section there before: how different was that from your previous assignment which was in the early seventies?

EDENSWORD: Well, it was about twice as big and it was in a different building. We had in the meantime picked up the entire monitoring of the Haitian returnees. We got there in 1983. A couple of years earlier, the U.S. government signed an agreement with Haiti that allowed the U.S. Coast Guard to board any Haitian vessel and search it for illegal aliens or boat people and to return them to Haiti under the assurances that they would not be persecuted. They were met at the dock by Red Cross and given some cash and, I think, a bus ticket or something back to their home. At least two of my junior officers had been given the Creole course before they went to Haiti and all of them had to take Creole when they were there. One of my junior officers' extra responsibility was to visit these people to ensure that they were not being persecuted. Sort of a dress rehearsal, but this experience came in very handy. Now in Cuba, we're essentially doing the same thing with Cubans.

Q: So it's to monitor, in effect, their civil rights...human rights to make sure that they aren't being persecuted, and aren't being intimidated?

EDENSWORD: Essentially the Haitian government didn't have anything against them. Sometimes they would be picked on (we found out) by the local *chef de section* which is the lowest level of government authority. But generally speaking, they were left alone.

Q: Did they tend to be concentrated in certain villages - communities?

EDENSWORD: Sometimes, but they came from all over. For the most part they were young men, but you often found women and children, too...but mostly they were men.

Q: Otherwise, the Consular Section issued visas, looked out for American citizens. There must have been a lot of American citizens in Haiti in those days or at least people who had American passports?

EDENSWORD: Yes. One of the problems we had is that the Haitians would go to the States and sometimes there were children born in the States. Anyway, they would often send their children back to Haiti to be raised by grandparents or aunts and uncles. Somebody would come in with a birth certificate from New York and a one year-old kid and saying, "Issue this person a passport." We had been doing that and when I got there it seem to me a flagrant way of getting kids up to the States. We found out later that that in fact was happening, so we began to try to put into place some procedures to ensure that there was some evidence that a kid had traveled. The big problem was identification: there was certainly a kid who was born in the States - it just wasn't sure to us that it was this particular kid.

Q: That particular kid who was born in the United States might still be there. They had the birth certificate.

EDENSWORD: So that was a problem. There was a lot of fraud in Haiti...a lot of fraud. The pressures to get out are tremendous and Haiti itself I found to be a very attractive place: a lot of

art, a lot of optimism in the face of incredible obstacles to just making a living. I think somebody from AID once told me that the average Haitian spent something like four hours a day just looking for water...drinking water, water to bath in or whatever. So life is not easy.

Q: You had a number of junior officers (first tour officers) assigned to Haiti: did you have a rotation scheme within the consular section so they would have an opportunity to do different things or do they pretty much do the same thing for two years?

EDENSWORD: No, we tried to rotate them out of the NIV Unit. I think they spent somewhere between nine and twelve months in the NIV unit and then (it wasn't as big a unit as we had in Mexico so there wasn't as many options, but) we could give them these trips to monitor returnees and we could move them to the Passport/Citizenship Section and the Immigrant Visa Section. We would send them over to work with the political officer from time to time and they would do political reporting wherever they were and they would go out do these trips. One of the fun things that happened is the...when Baby Doc left (it was February 7th as I recall) they flew a C-141 in from someplace in Florida, I think. The crew said, "Okay, we've got to have Creole speaker on board." Of course, most of the Haitians getting on board spoke pretty good English, in fact, Michelle Duvalier, Baby Doc's wife, had lived in the States for a number of years and at one time had a green card. So I sent one of my junior officers and she had a great time. They flew them into France. When they got on the plane, there was about twenty-seven people: there was the family and a lot of hangers-on and some military officers. I think the crew picked something like twenty-five weapons off of these people before they boarded the plane. Barbara, the junior officer, who went there with them, told me that when they arrived the French searched them again and found half dozen weapons that had been missed in the first search. She had a nice week in Paris and everybody had given her a list of cheeses and wines to bring back, so she had that.

Q: Were you otherwise involved in the end of the Duvalier Administration or Regime in Haiti? This was in early 1986, correct?

EDENSWORD: It was February of 1986 when he left. In fact, after we got back to the U.S., there was about a dozen of us who used to get together on February 6th to sort of have breakfast or dinner together. Just before Baby Doc left, there were many riots and demonstrations and there was a period of two or three days when the ambassador, the military attaché, the DCM, me, and one or two others were in the embassy. We had closed the Consular Section and USIA. The Ambassador was trying to set up a follow-on government and was working with Namphy, the head of the military. The DCM and the Military Attaché were the ones trying to move Jean Claude and his family from the palace out to the airport. I was pretty much in charge of setting up the evacuation of Americans. They had two officers from a Delta Force kind of unit and out of sight (but just over the horizon) was a small helicopter carrier with helicopters and it must have been a company or two these Delta Force types. They were going to secure the Ambassador's residence and a small industrial park between the Embassy and the airport. They were going to secure that or part of that as centers where Americans and others could go while they waited for a convoy to the airport if we had to arrange an evacuation. So, I was doing that. The military had brought in a "tact-sat"(a tactical satellite communication system) in, so we had good communication with Washington. I remember I was really smelly by that time and my wife

brought me some fresh clothes. There was a small bathroom in the Ambassador's suite and a couple of people had taken showers, but I hadn't bothered (I don't know why.) I sent Vince Battle and somebody else over to the Consular Section to start destroying records. About three days before Jean Claude left, I got nervous about the North and decided to send one of my junior officers, a driver, and a vehicle up to Cap-Haitian. Sure enough, as soon as the crunch came, Gonaives (which is about half-way between) was one of the hot spots and they cut the road there and you couldn't get back and forth for about three or four days. We had a lot of people who wanted out: there were a lot of missionaries in the North. This junior officer was able...he was really operating on a high level - he was dealing with the governor and the head of the military there. I was dealing with the new government to try to get planes in to get these missionaries out. (They wanted out!) It was one of those very fortunate things that worked out very, very well: we had a person in place and it looked like we knew what was going on and anticipated well and it really worked out nicely. With that junior officer there, we were able to smoothly move out two or three plane loads of very nervous missionaries from the North.

Q: The Americans were nervous because they weren't sure what was going to happen after Duvalier left or because...who was cutting the road and causing trouble?

EDENSWORD: Groups of Protestants and anti-Duvalierists and sometimes they were not particularly well organized. There had been a couple of shootings at cars that stopped. They would often set up a barricade of burning tires and request money. It was little more than extortion.

Q: Were these people (to the extent that they had a clear motive) who were blaming the United States for pushing Duvalier out or were they...?

EDENSWORD: No. This was just a breakdown of law and order.

Q: Anarchy.

EDENSWORD: Partial, yes. It never turned out very bad, but the *ton-tons* were running and hiding. I remember the day before Duvalier left, things were very tense in the capital. One of the things the Ambassador and the Station Chief were working on was the problem that in the basement of the palace were three hundred *ton-tons* armed with automatic weapons and the fear was that they would resist and try to prevent Jean Claude from leaving. And might even get in a shoot-out with the military with whom the Ambassador was working to put together a transition government. The story that I heard because I was a good friend of the Station Chief's (he and I and the Ambassador and our families we used to play tennis together every Sunday - the three couples) - I never sat him down and said, "Is this in fact true?" But the story I heard was that he did a deal with this Madam Max Adolph, who was the head of the *ton-tons* (a really wicked woman - evil), that they would smuggle her out - and I am told that they smuggled her out in the disguise of a nun - to Jamaica if she would get the *ton-tons* to stand down - give up their weapons. That eventually came to pass. I know she did get out, but I don't know the details. The Ambassador was working with Namphy to put together the government and I was trying to set up the evacuation. I remember the morning before Duvalier left, I told the Ambassador that I was going to walk down two blocks to the German Embassy. They had an office in an office building

a couple of blocks away. I had to go around a body that had been killed by the *ton-tons* the night before. Out in the street in front of the Embassy were remains of blockades set up by demonstrators. I walked to the German Embassy... I hadn't even called, I just walked down to tell them that I was including them in my plans and to get an idea of how many people might be involved. When I arrived, the German ambassador said, "Come on in here, I'm on the phone to Bonn and they're very nervous: would you get on the phone and tell them that you'll take our people out." I said, "I don't speak any German" and he said, "That doesn't make any difference, they speak fine English." So I said, "Yes, we'll take all the Germans and their families - there is room in our planes" and I was crossing my fingers.

Q: So you could deliver on that one?

EDENSWORD: So I could deliver on that one.

Q: Was there a general evacuation?

EDENSWORD: No. The problem was that we didn't know if Jean Claude was going to leave or not. If he didn't leave, we were afraid there was going to be a real shoot-out. The plane flew in at midnight of February 6th - 7th (midnight) and was on the ground for, I think, four or five hours. Steve Dawkins, the DCM, and the Military Attaché had gone to the palace to try to get them to move to the airport and it took them four hours. Apparently, they were drinking champagne and having a party.

Q: Dramatic and traumatic experience for them.

EDENSWORD: Yes. It was an exciting time to be there. It was interesting: the Haitians, of course, once he left went through a kind of euphoria.

Q: Things calmed down though?

EDENSWORD: Things calmed down and things were fine. There was a government run by Namphy. Namphy was not an Idi Amin character, but he was like the sergeant that had made it to the top. He had a serious stammer - he did not like to give speeches - he was not a glad hander. He refused to live in the palace: he had a little house about five, ten miles out of town that he maintained and that's where he lived. He trusted Clay McManaway - it's my feeling. I always felt that (not to take away from the man who replaced Clay, but that) Clay had a very good relationship with Namphy. I always felt that if Clay had stayed another year, he could have gotten Namphy to see the importance of ensuring the 1987 elections went through. You know, they shot up a bunch of polling places and the whole thing collapsed. I always thought that Clay could have ensured that election...simply because of his good influence with Namphy. I mean, he got Namphy to go down to a southern city and give a major speech. He just practically had to take him down there kicking and screaming.

Q: Ambassador McManaway left Haiti about the same time you did in the summer of 1986? So, about four or five months after the departure of Duvalier?

EDENSWORD: The whole team left: the DCM and I left: there was a whole turnover of staff.

Q: *Brunson McKinley was there?*

EDENSWORD: Brunson McKinley, yes.

Q: *He was the Ambassador. I guess I should ask you if you have any recollections of Father Aristide in that period?*

EDENSWORD: No.

Q: *You don't remember him at all?*

EDENSWORD: No. I think Rachel went to a couple of Creole masses and one of them was his.

Q: *Rachel is your wife?*

EDENSWORD: My wife. She had a lot of really good contacts in the cultural and artistic community there as CAO and one of her contacts had taken her to one of Aristide's masses.

Q: *So he was known at least in the Creole community?*

EDENSWORD: But he was still a priest then.

Q: *Not a political figure?*

EDENSWORD: He was known for his liberation theology views, but he was still in the Church and had not run for office or gotten involved in that way in politics.

Q: *Later on, the military...the elections in 1987 didn't really take place as you said. And it became a major problem for the United States and for the people of Haiti. But yet, we were, in a sense, the creator...we encouraged the military to take responsibility and to take charge. Did we see that, at least in the time that you were there, as a very much transitional arrangement that wouldn't be very long lasting or how did we kind of look to the future?*

EDENSWORD: Yes.

Q: *It must have been a relief to get rid of Duvalier and...?*

EDENSWORD: The main step was to get rid of Duvalier and set up some sort kind of transition government, so the country didn't fall into a real chaotic state. The elections of 1987 were to be the end of that transitional government and they never took place. That led to the eventual... Well, then Aristide was elected, when...in 1990? And then the military took over about a year later, didn't they?

Q: *Yes, but they had been there, of course, before, but they took over from him.*

EDENSWORD: One of the things that I...I'm not involved actively now or even marginally with Haiti. We still have some very close friends there and will probably go back there. A good friend of ours is going down as PAO next year and so, for sure, we'll be down there. In fact, she was the junior officer who worked for my wife when we were there.

Q: I remember meeting her at your birthday party.

EDENSWORD: Right - exactly.

Q: But I forget her name.

EDENSWORD: Meg Gilroy. It's interesting to speculate on what is going to happen. According to the constitution, Aristide cannot run again this time. That doesn't preclude him for running the next time as I understand it. It is interesting to speculate on the role of Aristide historically and it seems to me and I look back at one of the cases that we read when I was at Harvard. A guy had come into a company and in order to destroy the old culture, he had literally destroyed a lot of the institutions. It took him about one year, but then he had to leave because he had to be the real SOB. He had to bring somebody else in who could then put the company back together again. First, you had to destroy the old culture in order to start over. I wonder if in some ways Aristide is not doing that because he seems to have destroyed the military. He has essentially gotten rid of it. And if we can in fact create a police force that is not beholden to the military and does have some sense of responsibility and service; it would certainly be an incredible step forward: getting rid of the one threat and creating some kind of order. The big challenge, of course, is going to be getting Haiti back on its feet economically.

Q: In the period you were there, you mentioned the poverty and the difficulty for the average Haitian just simply to exist - to get water and so on. I know that there was a fair amount of American investment at a particular period: making baseballs and assembling things and so on. Had that started in the period when you were there?

EDENSWORD: It was starting in the early seventies. I think it kind of started with Baby Doc...I don't think it was going under Papa Doc. At one time, I think most of the baseballs except those used in major league games...

Q: I think even some of them.

EDENSWORD: Oh, really. Anyway, most baseballs as a whole are made in Haiti. Also a lot of other sporting goods: Rawlings and Wilson had big factories down there. One of the buildings that State Department Security was looking at for an Embassy was a structure that had been built to process these coupons, you know, that you get in the newspaper. You get twenty cents off a box of corn flakes and you give that to the cashier at the grocery store. Those coupons are...were bundled up and sent to Haiti for sorting. There was a large building - that all fell apart, I guess, in 1986. I don't know if that's ever come back, but I know at one time that building was for sale and the US government was thinking about using it. So, they had a lot of that kind of industry there.

They had a small industrial park near the airport: they had a variety of assembly operations in it. Most of those left, closed down and I don't know if they are coming back or not.

Q: They were certainly good sources of employment for those who were able to work in them. The wages were low certainly by United States standards.

EDENSWORD: They were pretty low, yes. They were pretty low.

Q: And involved very much unskilled labor?

EDENSWORD: Although I think that was changing a little bit. Somebody told me that if you could get the Haitians trained they were as good a worker as you could find anywhere, but often they had to work with people who had no formal education or very little.

Q: Haiti is a country where American non-governmental organizations - private, voluntary organizations have been very active. You mentioned the missionaries. Did you have a lot of contact with them when you were there or any sort of sense of their role...importance?

EDENSWORD: One year, my youngest daughter came down and spent the summer with us and got a summer job with AID. Her job was to go around and report on how the money was being used, for a lot of these NGOs that got money from AID. Because you're right AID is very big in Haiti - it is one of our largest missions or it used to be. I don't know, but it's probably building up again. So, I took the occasion and I'd go with her and we would go together. I'd just go out and look for Americans or whatever and she'd go and do her report. They are everywhere: CARE has been in Haiti for a long time and have a big operation. It's called HACHO - Haitian American...something and they are all over Haiti. I'm sure they're back. Many of the churches: Catholic and many large Protestant churches (Lutherans and others - Episcopal) have operations there.

Q: How about Peace Corps?

EDENSWORD: That's right. Peace Corps started up and they pulled them all out, I guess, shortly after Aristide was forced out. But it wouldn't surprise me if they go back in, if they haven't already.

Q: They were there when you were there - Peace Corps?

EDENSWORD: They were just getting started, yes. They hadn't been there before.

MICHAEL NORTON
Reporter, Associated Press and BBC
Haiti (1986-2004)

Born and raised in Minnesota, Mr. Norton was educated at Hamline University and the Universities of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Chicago. After several years in Europe and Martinique, he moved to Haiti, where he spent a large portion of his career as a radio news reporter for the Associated Press and the BBC. Mr. Norton was a keen observer and reporter of Haiti's political, social and economic difficulties over the years and of the personalities involved. Mr. Norton was interviewed by Daniel Whitman in 2007.

NORTON: I went to work in Haiti. I scrounged a while looking for a job - very, very difficult to find a job. And then I got into, I did some teaching. I had taught English as a foreign language for a number of years and then I went into radio and I became a journalist. I had my own program - first at night, a program of commentary. I commented on the events - the extraordinary political revolution in Haiti. And then I began a Sunday night interview program with the luminaries of Haiti - artists, politicians, intellectuals - in French and Creole.

I did that until the state of siege in 1988 of General Prosper Avril. And, since my good friend, Antoine Izmerly was banished--he was later killed during Aristide's exile by military thugs--since he was my sponsor, I stopped. I stopped regretfully since radio was my true love. And then I dedicated myself entirely to reporting for The Associated Press from 1988 until 2004. And simultaneously I was a sort of pundit/performer for the BBC on the subject of Haiti. I had a lovely experience with the BBC. I was free to give my opinions and arguments. I also, during the coup d'état, did free commentaries and analysis in Creole for a community radio in Montreal for the Haitian community... Things like that: believing at all times that if people could get to know the truth, right action would follow.

Q: Describe to us what was going on in Haiti and what took you there and what happened to you.

NORTON: It was in August. I think it was August 16, 1986. It was the day that Balaguer came to power again. I've often thought of how interesting it would be to write a book on Balaguer, Trujillo, and François Duvalier. One lesson I think you can learn from Balaguer is that cynicism in politics cannot be successful in a value vacuum, in a power vacuum. Duvalier lost power. That's the son of François Duvalier, Jean-Claude Duvalier -- in February, exactly on the 7th of February, 1986. Every attempt since then or almost every with two exceptions have been attempts to reestablish the dictatorship. And, on each occasion, doomed to failure, whether the dictatorship did or did not have popular support, was headed by a dictator with or without populace rapport.

The two exceptions that come to mind are when Supreme Court Justice Ertha Pascal Trouillot, who was a provisional president, handed over power to Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 and in 2006, when the current president, René Préval, began his second term. His first term is a bit ambiguous - the term that took him from 1996 to 2001, since he was really bench-warming for Aristide. So it's really difficult to say whether he wanted to establish a dictatorship or not. I think he wanted to get out of it alive, which is a strange position for somebody who wants to be a dictator. He didn't want to be one. He wanted out in one piece.

Q: Later we'll ask the question: If that's what he wanted, and he always said so, then why did he run for president?

NORTON: We can get to that later, but quickly to answer your question, because Aristide wasn't there. So the regime of François Duvalier was inherited by his son, Baby Doc, they called him, Jean-Claude Duvalier. I don't know why they called him Baby Doc. So idiotic. Just nicknames.

Q: Because of his pudgy face, I think.

NORTON: He was, but he didn't end pudgy. He was a good-looking guy, finally. Completely in the hands of his wife who was a grasping upstart from the, what they call petite bourgeoisie, which means not petit bourgeois but a bourgeois who is not very wealthy and who wound up air conditioning the national palace, that enormous building, that enormous birthday cake within view and smell of the slums of Port-au-Prince, the capital. Air-conditioning it so she could wear her furs. She wasted a lot of money. The slight prosperity that had begun in the 1970's after Baby Doc took power – after Jean-Claude Duvalier, excuse me, took power – frittered away when the assembly industry started collapsing.

And since 1980 until today, if I'm not mistaken, Haiti has been in a depression. A 27- year long depression. Sometimes they gain a point or two in GNP, but what does that mean. They're so far from where they were 25 or 30 years ago that it will take a long time, if ever, to regain that GNP. The regime, I think, couldn't continue. Popular discontent. Human rights movements all over the world and the United States collaborated – was a willing collaborator with the Haitian army to oust Jean-Claude Duvalier. The democratic movement, as I already said, was by and large outside and I think unfamiliar with the terrain and especially unequipped with the language – to deal with the situation. How to develop a country like Haiti. Most statistics for Haiti are unreliable. It is difficult to tell you how many people are unemployed. They say, according to the latest census, that there are eight million people. Maybe more now. We don't know how many are unemployed. Most of the people are unemployed or underemployed.

Q: The latest census was quite a long time ago, was it not?

NORTON: No, under Aristide, the last term. Most of the population is underemployed or unemployed. Underemployed means, you know, living hand to mouth. That means scuffling – going from house to house to get a bowl of rice or something, corn meal, corn mush. Most of the population is still supposedly in the countryside but it's very difficult to distinguish the countryside from the cities because it just goes back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Most of the population is illiterate. The countryside has deteriorated. Most of the country, 95%, is a desert. The chances for recovery of this sick nation are very, very, slim. But it has gotten worse, what I have just described, this current Haiti. In 1986, it was well under way to deterioration. But the despair had turned into anger and into hope. And, to the surprise of everybody, the people didn't just accept their newly won “freedom from oppression.” They took things into their own hands.

The U.S. and the Haitian military had opened a Pandora's box. Once out, the people did not want to climb back in. The powers that be underestimated their demand for a better life.

The ports that had been closed for security reasons under Duvalier were opened. A flow of used goods came to the country creating this extraordinary population of middlemen, stimulating the growth of the informal economy. Few people have gone into studying the relationship between the desire for democracy and this extraordinary free enterprise atmosphere where anybody could become a small businessman. All you needed was a little capital and you could buy your cans of Carnation and your soap, your pots and pans and your Crest and your Marlboros and you could sell them on the street corner and turn a dollar. How much do Haitians live on a day? People talk about one dollar a day. That's nonsense. There's no way of knowing, no way of converting how Haitians or what Haitians live on a day. That's nonsense. People survive and there is no monetary equivalent of survival.

You don't have any money for a week, but every day maybe you'll scrounge and get a bowl of rice at your friends'. Most people wake up hungry in Haiti. Most people are born, and this is very important, with 99% of their potentiality nipped in the bud. That is called oppression. That is not repression. Repression is political. Oppression is the situation. It's the sky falling in, falling down on your head. The sky has fallen on the head of Haitians. It is one of the most oppressive societies you can imagine. I will not go over all of the figures - the illiteracy, the death rate, the infant death rate, the maternal death rate, the AIDS. All of that, you know, goes up and down. It's a disaster. All of the wells in Haiti's main town, Port-au-Prince – metropolitan Port-au-Prince – all of them, there are about twenty of them, are polluted. People who can drink water that comes out of the earth, and there's less and less of it. And since there is no zoning, what there is of it is polluted.

Q: The supposed income figures...did the importance not change when subsistence agriculture disappeared for many people?

NORTON: I think that's another question. I don't think we have time to go into an economic history of Haiti. What is important, I think, is the relevance of statistics in a country like Haiti. The donor nations - please don't let me say international community, let's say donor nations and if I say international community please chastise me – the donor nations have to get a handle on this slippery creature. The Human Development Index tells us what? In which countries is the humanity of human beings the most and least developed? Americans are more fully human than Haitians? Speak of ethnocentrism! The UN experts cannot factor hospitality and solidarity and courage into the scores. How do you get a handle on a society? You get a handle on it by means of figures. That's all. How are we going to judge if there's any improvement? Well, that the average income has increased, say, by fifty cents or whatever is absolutely ridiculous. In Haiti, things don't function that way. I guess that would be the major theme of what I have to say about Haiti. Things don't function our way.

Q: Words matter, and your definitions up until now of republican and other things are key. What is it that is pejorative about the term, "international community?"

NORTON: A community for me is something that is close-knit, that's organic. Something more than based on interest. Shared values. History. What it's supposed to mean is an international bloc – a bloc of nations that's acting in a similar way toward Haiti. Community, for me, is very

special. A community is living – it's a living tissue of relations. The donor nations act as a bloc of interests.

Q: When the so-called Friends of Haiti used to meet on a regular basis - I think it was, I'll get it wrong, Canada, EU, France, Spain, US, perhaps Mexico – how were they not behaving as a community?

NORTON: Well, their representatives may have had coffee at their meetings. It was not a coffeeklatsch. They did not represent a community. I know what a comity of nations is. I don't know what a community of nations is. I don't know what that possibly could mean. Not in today's world.

Q: So, are you saying that the various nations that have embassies in Haiti and that are donors are acting out of self-interest and failing to coordinate with...

NORTON: No, I'm not saying anything like that. I'm saying only, and we can talk about the behavior of the donor nations or international bloc. Just the word, "community," doesn't seem to me appropriate for nations. It just doesn't seem appropriate. A bloc. Friends of Haiti. When I say self-interest, I'm not talking narrowly. It's obvious that with certain exceptions, there's not much economic interest in Haiti for anybody. Okay. Donor nations, friends of Haiti, etc. The international financial institutions need to get a handle on Haiti. And from the very beginning, you're dealing with a stubborn obstacle. You don't have reliable statistics.

People say that the last census was correct. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I don't know how they did it. When people take opinion polls of Haitians, I don't know how they do it because Haitians are not used to answering questions. They're used to evading. I don't know. It has no scientific validity for me is what I'm saying. But it is a necessity for the international donors to have some way to get a handle on this country. And it has not, until this day, been able to get a handle. Willy-nilly. Either through innocence, through ignorance, or through indifference. It has not been able to. It has never read the situation correctly.

Let us begin with 1986. I arrive with Haiti in turmoil. There was enormous hope: the creation of associations forbidden under Duvalier – hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of associations – labor unions, neighborhood political action committees, economic groupings, you name it, farmers, youth groups, an incredible number of them – floating on the dream of economic betterment because of all of these products that are flooding into Haiti – second hand clothes, food goods of all sorts. The hope was contagious and, at unequal rates of disillusionment, doomed, either to dissipate or to be transformed into the raw material of charlatans. Uncontrolled imports of goods destroyed Haitian manufactures. Imported rice is less expensive than locally grown rice. Finally, the middleman bubble burst.

Q: Duvalier had repressed political activity. What made it possible for these groups to become visible?

NORTON: The hope that the country would change, that misery would change into prosperity.

Q: Were they taking great risks in being public?

NORTON: Not after the fall of Duvalier, although very soon on the army did begin acting repressively. In March. There were shootings in the streets. There were repressive acts. It's obvious that the army didn't want what General Namphy, who was leader at the time, called *bamboche*. La *bamboche démocratique* – the democratic spree, wild party...

Q: N-A-M-P-H-Y.

NORTON: The wild democratic party – funfest, drunkfest - to get out of hand. Well it did get out of hand. There were enough people in Haiti – thinkers, intellectuals, politicians – who saw that the way towards a new power would be through elections in spite of the army. And so, a Constitution was written. I can't remember the exact figures, but a Constituent Assembly was elected in October 1986, by an enormous number of people in comparison to what was expected. And then when the...

Q: This was for the referendum on the Constitution.

NORTON: Yah. And then came the referendum day the 29th of March 1987 in which you had, I don't know how many people came out, certainly the majority of the Haitian electorate. And, manifesting the same order, the same respect, for one another. The same rejection of disorder and anarchy. The same quasi-religious attitude toward casting their ballots. Yes, it passed. Now, this was the new Haitian republic.

The Constitution is very badly written, as I already mentioned. Everybody can block everybody else. And it's so complicated that, for it to be fully effective, it would take forever. I don't think it's fully effective yet, because certain institutions have not yet been able to take root, local assemblies and departmental assemblies and interdepartmental assemblies. And they come up again and again and again, and there are so many elections it's maddening.

Q: True...the Permanent Electoral Council became the Provisional Electoral Council...

NORTON: Right, and there was no Provisional Electoral Council provided by the Constitution for two elections. The Provisional Electoral Council was for the first election, scheduled for the 29th of November 1989. Anyways, it was a mess. But it was the charter. It was a constitution, that is to say a document that designated a distribution of power that, unfortunately, in a lot of ways was short circuited.

Q: Was the military whole-heartedly behind this or were they tolerating it?

NORTON: No, they tolerated it. They never accepted it. But still I don't think they got it. They didn't get it. They were not particularly intelligent. Don't forget that subsequent dictatorships were composed of reduced factions of the army because every time one faction of the army took power, it demobilized the other. So the army was continually reduced in its capacity to govern. They didn't get it. They didn't get it. It was suicidal. But, as I said, the dictatorial tradition was

so strong in Haiti and the alternative to that dictatorial power was not really apparent. So the electoral campaign began.

We're now in 1987 and we're heading toward the 29th of November 1987. Bloodshed. Bloodshed in the countryside. Hundreds of people massacred by death squads. The army with auxiliaries. The night before the 29th of November, the electoral counsel under siege canceled some elections in some of the departments but decided to go ahead with the other... How can you have partial general elections? They had a partial general election, and it ended, of course, in blood at the polls.

Q: Referendum March 29th, general election November 29th. Is that correct?

NORTON: Right, and then Henri Namphy holding power and new elections were called for January 1988.

Q: So what was the announced result for the so-called general elections?

NORTON: There was none. They were canceled. No election. It was the end of the great naïveté. It was the end of the massive, massive, spontaneous, joyous movement toward a new world. It wasn't a coup de grace. It was a kick in the stomach.

In Haiti, I wept twice: the 29th of November when I came back from the house of a politician who was running for president and he was already working with the military and I understood it was over.

The second time was in the year 2000, April 3rd, year 2000, when the radio director, opinion maker in the camp of Rene Préval and, at one time of Aristide, Jean Dominique, was assassinated. Jean Dominique is another story. But there are so many stories, I don't know that I'll ever have time to talk about Jean Dominique and why I wept when he was assassinated. It's not the same thing. Jean Dominique was, however, the leader of the free speech movement in the early '70's. He took Jean Claude's liberalization at his word and pushed for a democratic regime. He was a pioneer of the political revolution in Haiti. I wept because the tradition was cut. And the hope was cut. It was all over for me. There was not a glimmer of hope.

But Jean Dominique's own relationship to power was anything but clear. In early 2000, Jean Dominique was turning from Aristide. He was becoming critical. It was a heroic moment; it was a moment of heroism, in my opinion. I think he was so proud, he didn't realize he was courting death. I don't think he believed he was. But he had turned against the man he had believed he could influence. His belief was very misguided and very harmful to the country, but that's the way it is. He died heroically.

Q: Skipping around a moment, could we discuss the language of threats, both by gesture and through innuendo in the local language, Creole, that makes people's intentions clear among nations and which seems to obscure those intentions to outsiders.

NORTON: Well, that's part of the character of this country, which is not just different from the countries that are donor nations but distinct. It has to do with another kind of culture. It has to do with how this country, in which the human rights movement was born more than two hundred years ago, has survived. The French revolution brought liberty, equality, and fraternity to everyone except blacks. And Haitians said no to that when Napoleon, in 1803, decided to reestablish slavery. And this French-trained army, with its French ideals but with its Haitian interests, defeated the French army, the strongest army in the world, through superior soldiering.

People say, "No, it's not true. The French soldiers were sick – had yellow fever." On the other hand, I reply the yellow fever mosquito was Haitian and was enlisted in the Haitian army to defeat these foreign troops. I'm not joking. The sand of Iraq is on whose side? The jungles of Vietnam were on whose side? War isn't just people and guns. It's also place. Haiti defeated France to make the French words a reality - liberty, equality, fraternity – well, not exactly. The Haitian generals militarized Haiti. They installed a perfect imitation of the French masters. No, an imperfect imitation. For whatever evil slavery represented, it was a means of production. It did make people and countries very wealthy. The re-imposed lack of freedom in Haiti did not make people very wealthy. It was squandering. It was ostentation. It was madness. It made it impossible finally for Haiti to transform itself from an agrarian to an agrarian industrial society.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Haiti has been cursed with fewer and fewer resources, less and less forest cover with more and more despair, with weaker institutions, etc. Now...

Q: Well it wasn't as rich as before. The first few decades of the nineteenth century Haiti retained a relative wealth. Was this just inherited from the previous system? Also, that they remained wealthy and, in fact, conducted conquest.

NORTON: Now that's in 1822. That's another part of Haitian history. That is the imperial design of the early Haitian generals to unite Hispaniola. Haiti had, I believe, the largest standing army in the western hemisphere in the early part of the nineteenth century and was considered a threat to the security of the United States which did not recognize Haiti until, I believe, after the Civil War. I think the great Frederick Douglass was the first U.S. ambassador to Haiti, and I am generally sparing of the use of the word, "great."

Q: Now since we're in history for a moment, what was the role of Haiti in permitting the U.S. to acquire Louisiana? Much has been said about this. There've been some simplistic things. Napoleon lost his re-supply center. Therefore, he became discouraged... I know it's much more complicated than that.

NORTON: Well, let's come back instead to your original question about the language and the otherness of Haiti. This is a country that was founded by an uprising of slaves. This is an uprising of slaves. It is the only verifiable example of a successful slave uprising in the history of humanity. The other successful one may or may not have been historical. That is the one that is recorded in *Exodus* in the Bible. It has been an inspiration down the ages.

The Haitian example was not nothing. This was an achievement that should put Haiti on the map and in the schoolbooks of all students of world history. I'm just looking at a History of the World, by J. M. Roberts. The importance of Haiti in the movement toward equality is not spoken of. World history books don't talk about that. French education doesn't talk about that, and, of course, in the United States it's little known. The American black community is so alienated from its roots. Haiti was not unimportant. On the contrary, it was a great event in the history of the human spirit. It degenerated. It deteriorated. The lack of insight of its leaders. They didn't understand that the French masters were not just cruel slave drivers; they were also makers of wealth, creators of wealth. It didn't just go to spoliation. It built cities in France. The slave trade built Liverpool. Sugar built Nantes in France. How much wealth? A very important amount went to the construction of European civilization on the backs of the slaves. In Hispaniola, the richest country I think in the world at that time, it was the most productive of wealth. Then the country withdrew into itself. It was the victim of an international boycott.

The ideal of the republic, institutions that guarantee rights and demand/enforce obligations, for the new leaders of Haiti, all of that was just western BS - trappings of western civilization. Continuing the tradition – that is a safe tradition – shucking and jiving. You pretend you're Western. You've got the Republic. You've got this literature and music and art and all of that. You've got a court. You've got an emperor. You've got a king, whatever you have. You speak French. But, in fact, you don't believe a word of what you're saying, but you're really good at convincing the other person that you're on their side.

Whereas the country operates according to another set of criteria altogether. Vodou - the Vodou religion, the Vodou culture – dominates the spirit of everybody in Haiti whether he be bourgeois or peasant. You don't have to practice it. It's a way of being in the world. It's a mode of being in the world different from our mode of being in the world. It implies another conception of causation. It implies another way of conceiving of life and death. Of what is divine, what is sacred and what is not. Of how you speak, when you speak, what you speak, when you speak, who you are. Another conception of individuality. Another conception of collectivity.

Haiti is Carnival. The soul of Haiti today is in Carnival where once a year individuals meld into this extraordinary creature. I say creature because when you're part of a hundred thousand people moving, you don't know which way, you lose control. You lose your mind. You become part of another body and that body's the collective body in which you participate in a form of communion in Carnival. You're recharged. Now whether Carnival is taking place or not, it's there. The so-called disorder of Haiti is the disorder of a Carnival which is not anarchy, which is not even disorder. It's another kind of order, another way of setting things to rights. Haiti sets things to rights in a way which is different from how Western countries set things to rights. Western countries set things to rights with laws, rules and regulations, obligations. You know, rules of the road, even rules of thumb...unequivocal language.

It is the language I've been trying to speak to you in, succeeding or failing, but I'm not trying to hoodwink you. I'm trying to make myself understood. Myself understood, that's a mouthful. Who am I to make myself understood? A Haitian makes Haiti understood when he speaks, and when you try to make something like that, a Carnival, understood, you don't know whether you're coming or going. There is no guarantee that the language you are hearing is unequivocal.

I'm not saying it's not unequivocal, but there's no reason to believe that it's not equivocal. The faces are masked, the masks are faces, the faces are masks. You don't know. You don't know if people are telling you the truth because truth is not a value in itself. It's instrumental. Truth is instrumental. It furthers my cause – survival, power, whatever. That's what truth is. Truth is not transcendent. Truth is pragmatic. So lies are estimable if they're successful. You never know.

I could give you hundreds of examples – politics, daily life, wherever you wish. Haiti by definition to Western eyes is always wrong. Haitians have to set things to rights in a hostile world, a world that arrogates the right to call Haiti to account. They have to set up a false front because they are unacceptable to the standard bearers of Western civilization. Haitians do not believe that the world likes them. They're probably right. It becomes a little megalomaniac: “We were the first black republic,” etc. “We whipped the ass of Napoleon's army.” We, we, we, but that was two hundred years ago.

Few Haitians know or care to know about nineteenth-century Haitian history. And the founding fathers of Haiti are mythological figures. That's normal because that's the kind of being Haiti is, legendary.

You speak in public. You are overheard. Now my parents spoke in Yiddish. They knew they were overheard, but they didn't know they were understood. Haitians make themselves understood to foreigners in French. Haitians - in the apparatus called the state, with its judicial system and foreign relations—speak French. Yet only a small fraction of the Haitian people speaks French, a smaller fraction fluently, correctly. Everyone speaks Creole, which is not bastardized French but an example of a new language family. New, that is to say five hundred years old, called Creole. We have Creoles – English Creoles, Dutch Creoles, Papamiento, Talkie-talkie. We have Portuguese Creole. We have French Creoles. In the Caribbean, French Creole and its dialects, its versions. It's spoken by, I don't know, tens of millions of people. That's a hell of a lot of people. It's not a bastardized version of French. It uses old French words. It's not a mixture of African dialects and French. Its origin is in a contact situation where you have slaves who speak a variety of languages, and a slave-holding class. And they have to get together. They have to talk among themselves. It's a pidgin that becomes a mother tongue.

So everyone in Haiti speaks Creole. Okay. I could speak Creole to a Creole speaker and be overheard by a foreigner. I could, but it would be like my parents speaking Yiddish. Nothing guarantees that the foreigner doesn't understand my language. I understand Creole. Missionaries, and there are thousands of them coming down to convert the heathen, understand Creole very well. What do I do to ensure that, overheard, I am not understood? I speak in code. Everybody understands that it's Creole, but not everybody understands the meaning of the words. You have to be prepared psychologically, culturally to capture it. This kind of language, this coded language, is the language of an in-group which is under threat of destruction by an out-group. In Haiti, what's awful, of course, is that the out-group is, to a certain extent, interiorized by the in-group. I could give you some examples if you like.

I'll give you one example. On the 29th of February, 2004, Aristide was forced into exile at gunpoint, figurative or real. We can go a little into what I think is the background of that later. What we're talking about now is a country that uses one language to speak to the foreigner, and

another to itself. And it can, in its use of language, have its cake and eat it too, communicate and subvert communication simultaneously.

Aristide said he signed his prepared resignation, and then went off. And then later said, “I was kidnapped.” Now, there is an already well-known use of the word “kidnapped.” Now I don’t understand why the ears of people didn’t perk up when they heard that word, “kidnap.” How inappropriate. I don’t enter into the question of whether he left willingly or not, whether he is a courageous person or a coward, whether he accepted the invitation to leave or was carried onto the airplane. I don’t know. I wasn’t there. Kidnapped? He was *exiled*. He was *banished*. He was *expelled*. He was forced out. He was overturned. He was humiliated. He was an awful lot of things, but he wasn’t kidnapped. And nobody said, “What is he talking about? Is he nuts?” No, he’s kidnapped. Take it at face value, kidnapped. This is a code word. You recognize it as a code word because it stands out.

When Aristide, after a visit abroad, comes home and congratulates the people who were in his absence keeping the peace. When the people who were keeping the peace, that is to say the so-called popular organizations, ruffians, his hirelings, when they had just killed nine people in various raids... I mean, wait a minute. Thank you very much. Keeping the peace? Well, peace is a code word. It’s used in a different way. Lavalas. Marvelous use of the word Lavalas. Lavalas is the name of his movement. *Lavalas* in Creole is a flash flood. The rain falls and there are no trees and there’s no vegetation. It fills up a ravine and rushes torrentially carrying everything before it. Nothing can withstand it. And the next morning it leaves detritus in the streets. It leaves behind a terrible mess – dead dogs, dead cattle, dead babies, houses, doors, garbage. That’s a *lavalas*.

How to turn that into something positive. He said he wanted to point out that the people is an unstoppable force, but he gave it away, didn’t he? He gave it away for those who had ears to hear. Now, poor America, poor international community – a community of ignorance – couldn’t understand that. It’s not important. It’s only language. He says hell on earth is going to rain in Haiti. The toilets are going to overflow, and it’s going to leave a terrible mess. This is nihilism. Trouble is on the way. That’s what he said.

Q: “Ba-yo sa yo merite.”

NORTON: That’s something else. That’s understatement. That’s not the coded word. When he came back from the UN after insulting the Pope basically calling him a racist and got wind of the coup d’état, which he didn’t believe because Haitian leaders seldom believe the worst. They believe that they’re unmovable objects. He gave a speech telling the people to be alert, that something is afoot and *ba-yo sa yo merite* means “Give them what they deserve.” And then he went on into a kind of ecstatic extolling of the order of burnt tires, how sweet a smell it was. Okay. It’s understatement. He’s telling them to take charge of their revolution and, if necessary, execute the enemies of the people with flaming tires.

Q: Now there’s a lot of controversy over that phrase. I think that you either recorded it, or... There are some people who claimed he never said it.

NORTON: Okay. I'll tell you one thing. First of all, he said it. I heard it. But let me tell you, as forewarned as I was having been involved in Haitian affairs since 1972 and then having lived and worked day after day in Haiti since 1986. In 1991 when he gave that speech – that's 20 years after my venture into Haitian affairs – when he gave that speech, I reported it. And I didn't give that sentence in my report. I didn't say that he said, "Give them what they deserve. How sweet is the odor of flaming tire necklaces," because I didn't believe I had heard it. I had censored myself unconsciously because I couldn't believe, literally, I couldn't believe my ears. No, he could not have meant what he said. What did he say, then? What did he mean? He didn't mean *ba-yo sa yo merite* was that the enemies of the people deserve to be reeducated or something like that, that the sweet smell is of church incense. He said what he meant. I couldn't believe my ears. He was speaking unequivocally.

Let's come back to ransom. I will come back to kidnapping because, for me, it is his last masterpiece – I'm not talking about his subsequent speeches on New Year's Day which have been interpreted variously – I think it's just so perfect. So perfect, first of all, because it's a code word. Second of all, because no one, outside the circle of those it concerns, got it. Not his supporters, the Randall Robinsons of this world. (Hazel Robinson, his wife, was on Aristide's payroll.) In good faith or bad, defenders of Aristide behaved as though his use of the word "kidnap" is in no way bizarre.

To be kidnapped means what? Gangsters spirit you away. You are sequestered. A ransom is demanded of those who care for you. A ransom is paid. If the ransom is not paid, suffering will occur. If the leader identifies himself with Haiti, as Aristide does and says so many times, who is kidnapped? What is kidnapped? Haiti is kidnapped. And if its leader is not returned safely soon, suffering will occur. How strange the rash of kidnappings that occurred after his "kidnapping." "I was kidnapped." People who know how to listen hear. If you don't know how to listen, you don't hear. Who cares? I tried in my Associated Press reports to mention something about this double language. Nobody seems to have picked it up.

I was in Haiti from 1986, first a reporter for one of Haiti's main radio stations. I had an evening program that began as, quite simply, a review of the headlines for the English-speaking community that I translated from the newsroom. I learned how to be a reporter there, and then I started getting ambitious. And then I realized since it was 10 o'clock and the owners did not mind, I could do whatever I wanted. And so I started thinking and I started doing. And every night I broadcast what I called "The Evening Chronicle" where, for 45 minutes or longer I just went on and on. I tied in all of the events of the day and tried to explain what the political revolution in Haiti was.

Q: This is a crucial part of this interview – how you developed as a commentator, as an observer. Let's close the chapter on the theme of double language. The question I've been wanting to ask: is it double or is it multiple? Do Haitians understand this type of innuendo and do most foreigners just misunderstand? Or is it the type of language that has a multitude of different meanings even to Haitian listeners?

NORTON: Remember what I said, I never know what the other person thinks because, don't forget, this is a country under the shadow of slavery. Do slaves tell you what they really think?

Freed slaves tell you what they think when they have the paranoiac, or not necessarily paranoiac, impression that slavery's going to be re-imposed? When the country's militarized and there's no law and there's no recourse for justice? When the truth leaves you vulnerable to the malignity of your neighbor? Why should they tell you what they think? I used to get very angry at my bosses who would come down and would walk with me and would say, "Ask that woman what she thinks." Why would she tell me what she thinks?

So I don't know. I know that some of my friends agreed with me. Some of my Haitian friends who, at that particular moment were transparent in their discussion with me. Others were prudently quiet, which I interpreted as agreement. Others no. And, so far as the international / donor nations are concerned, they didn't get it at all.

Q: The question is, did most or all Haitians get it when these equivocal words were given – the word, "kidnapping," the word, "I love the smell of tires or the smell of..."

NORTON: Again, what does it mean, "to get?" If somebody else is in the room while I'm speaking to you and I say, "Get up," and I look at you, you'll get up. The other person will not get up. Does that mean that other person didn't get what I said? Well, yes and no. I directed my words to you. When he said kidnapping, he was speaking to his followers. He wasn't speaking to the people at large. He wasn't speaking to people elsewhere. He figured cleverly enough that his supporters abroad would take it as a colorful synonym for ousted, manhandled and forcibly ousted.

Q: Now he said, "Please keep the peace," when he went to Quebec in the year 2001...

NORTON: Absolutely to his followers. People didn't even pay attention to him by the end.

Q: When you say people: outsiders?

NORTON: No, in Haiti. The myth of Aristide's popularity is worth discussing, too. Aristide was swept into power in a 1991 landslide. Unfortunately we don't know how many people voted. I myself criticize myself for not perking up my ears because I'm a formalist. When we get to talk about the Constitution, we can talk about that. I was not faithful to my principles. I should not have said he was elected. I should have said he was swept to power by a plebiscite. In an election you count votes. An election respects the individual. Every vote counts. It's not true in fact, but morally every vote counts. Every vote is counted whether it counts or not. Every vote is counted. That means I, who cast that ballot, count. I am a citizen like you. I'm poorer than you, but I'm just like you. I'm equal. Hey, equality. And that gives us, at that moment, liberty. Maybe not at other times but...OK. Not to count the ballots, not to be able to count the ballots, is an infringement of my individual rights. To accept it saying well, "You know, Haiti is a country that has no democratic tradition. It's better than nothing, and he won, didn't he?" The American political establishment was completely blind, deaf, dumb, blind, lame, quadriplegic, lobotomized in 1991. They foresaw the victory of Marc Bazin, former World Bank project officer, Mr. Clean, etc. He was really presentable.

He was a priest – Aristide was not a parish priest – he was a priest, he was a Salesian father who gave these fantastic sermons – participative sermons. He was absolutely spellbinding, with his gifted use of language. Unfortunately the United States put their money on Bazin the way they put their money on the army in 1987, not foreseeing for one moment that, hey, with the fall of Duvalier, you opened the ports, you opened the floodgates. And you not only opened the doors of prosperity, relative prosperity, but of hope, of a heretofore obstructed future. Hope in a country that is oppressed means freedom. A country of slaves that has been humiliated. You are opening Pandora's box. You don't want Pandora's box opened.? Well, you don't get rid of Duvalier, or do something else. I don't know. But if you do open Pandora's box, judge whether or not you can co-opt whoever comes out. What was sad, tragic, pathetic was that it had been and would have been possible to co-opt those fugitives from despair.

There was nothing socialist, let alone communist, in the movement for Haitian democracy. Nothing was more foreign to it. The Soviet Union was already going to collapse. What was this fear? And so a normal transition from a dictator to a dictatorial army formed, by the way, trained by the United States in the 19 years of its occupation on the model of the Marine Corps. These are the people that are going to provide the transition to democracy? The Marines?

Anyway, that was the American policy, of course. Warned as they were by some journalists that the coup d'état reaction would occur in 1987, they didn't listen. Or perhaps they didn't care. Or perhaps they didn't know. Or perhaps they wanted it. I'm talking about the Americans. In 1991, it was a different story. Aristide was a different kettle of fish, in my opinion. Also co-optable, but you had to understand him. You had to want to understand him. Is it important to understand if you formulate policy? They didn't understand. So, Marc Bazin was going to win hands down.

I remember Jimmy Carter coming down and he was worried because Aristide, after all, was a rabble rouser. Now, Jimmy Carter believed, I believe, that Aristide was losing, but that he had enough supporters to cause a great deal of damage to the country. And in his own peanut farmer way, he went and talked to Aristide. This was marvelous. This set up a belief that never disappeared. Because Aristide interpreted Jimmy Carter's plea to him that he be peaceful. That when he loses he not unleash the hordes. It was a plea. And Aristide, of course, since every word is in a double language, took it as a threat. Nobody understands anybody. I believe that Jimmy Carter spoke unequivocally. I believe it was a plea. He had been misinformed. Aristide won. I will never forget that. Thousands and thousands and hundreds of thousands of people – poor, middle class, wealthy, black, not-so-black, mulatto – everybody, almost everybody, voted for Aristide in 1991 and it was clear why.

Why wasn't it clear why to the Americans? You have to ask them, but I have two or three ideas. Let's take the...without ascribing evil intentions. The U.S. comes into a weird country. It's the other side of the looking glass. The sentence does come before the trial. I mean, off goes their head. It really is that way. Who's going to tell you the truth about such a country? What they call in French *interlocuteur valable*. What would it be in English?

Q: A credible interlocutor.

NORTON: An "interlocutor" is a character in a minstrel show...

Q: An informant.

NORTON: A credible one. So, who are credible informants? I'm an American. Simon Pure. I go to talk to ministers of the protestant churches. I talk to bishops of the Catholic church. I talk to leading representatives of the business community, especially them. I talk to some politicians who present well, rub shoulders with civilization. Americans abroad do not know who they are talking to, because they do not know who they are. An American abroad is an American, whatever his or her color. When you're in the United States, the diversity of Americans is enormous. A black American is an American but he's quite different from the Amish of Pennsylvania. You put an Amish in Haiti or a black American in Haiti, they'd be the same. Haitians call foreigners *blancs*, white men. It doesn't mean white color; it means foreigner. But it also means white. So what you get in Haiti when you get, for example, an African American diplomat, is a white black man.

And I'll tell you a story later, the funniest one I remember, about a white black man of renown. Who do you talk to to get a hold on this crazy country? We talk to business people. Of course, these business people invested in Marc Bazin's campaign. He was an absolute shoo-in. Now I covered the beginning of Marc Bazin's campaign in 1991. I knew Marc Bazin personally.

Q: You'd been sending material to the AP for how long?

NORTON: Well, I began at AP with the coup d'état against Leslie "Margrat," remember? And then shortly after, I was with the BBC and gave these pundit performances. But Toto Bissainthe was somebody and because of her, I knew everybody. I knew many politicians already in Paris. People who became heads of parties I already knew. I had relations with them, so I was introduced, I guess as no other journalist was, I was introduced in the bourgeoisie, in the political class, and since I chose to live in poor quarters, in slums, after the death of Toto in 1994, I knew the people, too. I knew everybody. So...

Q: You were covering...

NORTON: Yah, the send-off of Bazin's campaign was another example, too, of this other world we're talking about – this *Alice in Wonderland* sort of thing. It was in St. Marc, his hometown, I believe. There I was in the town square. There were so few people, I said, "I'm not even going to cover this." Bazin doesn't exist. A buddy came up to me and said, "How many people do you think are here?" I said two thousand, I don't know. People were hanging out of the windows. Do we call them down "participants"? I don't know. They live here. Have they come to see Marc Bazin? I was overheard, but before I left, just to make a test, I asked one of Marc Bazin's supporters, "How many people do you see here? How many people have turned up for the opening rally of Marc Bazin's presidential campaign?" He looked around and said, "Seventeen thousand."

Okay. They were very mad at me. Marc Bazin didn't speak to me for a year and a half because of that. I didn't even do an article on the rally. But the figure got into the radio station where I used

to work because of my buddy who asked me how many people I saw there and because people trusted me.

Another thing, I used to have this little gadget from Radio Shack because I used to always measure. You press a button and it'll tell you how many meters to the nearest wall. So what I would do is I would measure and then I would multiply by the number of people I estimated per square meter. And when the reporters saw me with this machine, they thought it was a counting machine. So they believed me because I had the technology which could give them an exact figure. Eh? Wonderland? Where objects are magical? Where numbers are emotional vehicles? Numbers are alive? And if you say it's not 17,000, you are guilty of attempted assassination.

Q: Did you say two thousand?

NORTON: I said two thousand, and my buddy picked it up. And other stations picked it up, and, what do you know, it's two thousand. But they knew it was me because they overheard me on the plaza because I was so silly, so naïve, and I never shut my mouth in Haiti, even during the coup d'état. I never shut my mouth. I was fearless. I didn't care, but I did care. I was hurt, personally hurt. But I was in Wonderland. How can you have any right to be personally hurt since your person doesn't exist? You're different. It's different. You don't exist in the same way. The last experience I had in Haiti was when Aristide was ousted for the second time, and there were these demonstrations organized by the bourgeoisie and utilizing students and pseudo students, etc.

Q: We're now in 2003, I think.

NORTON: 2003 and 2004. Aristide was very repressive. There were clashes between his thugs and this group of people. Their slogan to oust Aristide was – it's difficult to translate, but basically – *greenn nan bounda*. The English equivalent would be, "If you got balls, prove it." I found that not charming. Aristide had perverted the hopes of the Haitian people into a racket to keep them in poverty and to enrich his buddies and himself. He was an obscurantist. He sat on the throne of truth and he used it as a cuckstool, if you know what that is. That's the worst you can do. That is evil. He enjoyed the suffering of others. That is evil, for evil is not doing my pleasure. It's preventing you from enjoying yours. And that's what Aristide did. That's why he was evil. Evil. He perverted the last, best hope of Haiti. "If you've got balls, prove it." I thought that it was necessary to oust him. He was not an elected president in the year 2000 as he was in the year 1991. The elections were basically controlled. He lied about the results. He was an illegitimate president. There was no reason not to oust and it was necessary for the political health of the body politic to oust this poison but not "if you've got balls, prove it." I found...

Q: That was the slogan of those who sought to oust him.

NORTON: Exactly, my friends thought...my friends...I didn't have any friends by now. By now I had lost almost all of my friends because there was unanimity for Aristide in 1991 in spite of his very early deviation from the Constitution. I protested on television. I don't know what gave me the idea of doing that, but I was one of five or six people who criticized Aristide publicly. Everybody was afraid before the coup d'état. All of the others were for the coup d'état. I was the

only one who wasn't because he was elected. There were other ways to do it. Aristide was furious with me. It was only the intervention of my friend and sponsor, Antoine Izmary, that saved my neck in Haiti.

So in the year 2003 and 2004, I thought that the repression in Haiti required something else, not "if you've got balls, prove it." It's just violence. It's just machismo. And at times the students were as violent as the others. It was violence, violence, violence when the only thing that can save Haiti is respect for the law and respect for the individual. Violence, violence, violence.

Okay, so get rid of them and do what? Are you prepared? Are you better prepared than your predecessors to turn this miserable savanna desert into an inhabitable region of the earth? Are you prepared? Do you know a way to bring hope to these people which is not founded, as Aristide's was, on thievery? One thing often forgotten by Aristide's defenders: Aristide supported the pyramidal scheme of banking which destroyed the savings of I don't know how many millions of people and filled the coffers of people who knew enough to get out soon. Aristide, from the presidential chair, supported this.

Q: 2002, I think.

NORTON: Yah. So I lost their friendship. And what really sealed it, of course, first of all, I was opposed to Aristide in 1991 and everybody who was in favor of Aristide believed I was for the coup d'état. And then during the coup d'état, since I reported faithfully all of the misadventures of the army, the army thought I was trying to get them ousted. Because I'm not just a reporter. I'm a political activist. But, in fact, when I came to Haiti, I didn't have to be a political activist. All I had to do was tell the truth. Every enunciation was a denunciation. All I had to do was say how things were. That's what I did. So Aristide believed I had sold out to the military. The military believed I had sold out to Aristide. It was not too pleasant, but the taboos that maintained a certain cultural order prevented me from getting killed.

Q: And the count of the people...

NORTON; So I come back. Now, we're going to get rid of Aristide. And then I didn't quite agree with the *grewn nan bounda*, "If you've got balls, show it." I started counting the demonstrators. Now I know how to estimate the size of a demonstration. You take the number of people per square meter, which varies depending on how fast they're moving. If they're standing still, it can be two, three even if it's really like in an elevator. Generally, most police forces in the world will tell you that it's one and a half person per square meter, and you multiply that by the square meters of the distance traveled. I mean at any one time. How long is and how wide is the demonstration and then you get a figure. And then if it's two thousand five hundred, you say around two thousand five hundred. Now, when I said it was around two thousand five hundred, they said it was around sixty thousand. And since I was the AP and I was the BBC and I was the most read reporter in Haiti, most widely read, it went from bad to worse. Finally, I would stand on the street corner as the demonstration went by and count them one by one. And, of course, it was like running the gauntlet standing still. They were running but I was receiving the gauntlet. Death threats, insults, spat upon, pushed. It was an experience that was at one and the same time the most inglorious and glorious I had in Haiti. I was a hero and nobody knew it except me.

Q: In favor of what?

NORTON: The Republic cannot exist without truth. There is no human betterment without respect for the truth. Without striving for the truth, you cannot strive for the betterment of man. In a society of lies, of violence, of inherited inferiority where everybody is suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome, face the truth, tell the truth no matter what the cost. The republic needs the truth. It will flounder without the truth.

And so, that was my own. Of course, it's completely romantic or idealistic, however, I don't know. You can call it what you want, but for me, I was defending the last sputtering wick, the dream of a Haitian republic. Of course, what happened? As every time, when Aristide fell, a new regime took over. Corrupt – with the worst elements from all the past regimes. Of course. Corrupt, violent, no justice, no prosperity, nothing, no prospects. And then along came Préval and that's another story.

Q: Fifteen years previous, you described yourself as a political activist. You had certain objectives. You transformed into another type of person or creature. If I understand, you did not do what you did in the name of activism but truth. Were your objectives the same?

NORTON: Yes, I think so. Of course, the anti-capitalist struggle was a pretty big thing and it was another ambition which was absolutely unrealizable. And I was a Westerner. I didn't feel bad about participating in French politics. I didn't feel bad about that. It's the same capitalism. But in Haiti, Haiti's on another planet almost. It has its own specificity; but, also, Haiti is in the avant-garde of the capitalist disaster, a dump for the superfluous, the unwanted, its soil and its soul eroded. How could I be a political activist? It didn't make any sense, accord with my former understanding of political activism. I was a political activist for what I call the republic or the political revolution of Haiti, yes, but all I had to do was tell the truth. I didn't have to take arms or paste posters or propagandize for a party. I didn't have the inclination either. All I had to do was report.

Q: When you say you were opposed to capitalism, the reader of this text will form some impressions. They will have a sense of what that means. Do you want to answer the questions that these people...?

NORTON: Sure. Look, it's the system that governs, and has governed, the world for hundreds and hundreds of years. In my opinion, communist China, communist Russia, Stalinist Russia were variants of capitalism. Capitalism tried them out and found them wanting. Same with fascism. Tried it out and found it wanting. Imperialism still remains. Colonialism still remains. They're still working. The limits which capitalism doesn't recognize are not causing capitalism to collapse because of global warming. Not yet. Capitalism is the economic, social, political, cultural system that reigns, and it secures security for the rich and insecurity for the impoverished and the impoverishable.

Capitalism lays waste to old worlds to build a new world in its image. It lays waste to lives, it produces mass migrations, a dead end for millions, garbage dumps. In our day, the truly Utopian

demand, a demand the system cannot satisfy, would be full employment. The insecurity in the United States is a case in point. The job insecurity is terrible in the United States. 47 million people don't have health insurance. What is this? Katrina destroys a city of over a million people and it's still in ruins? Capitalism is for the profit of the few. It's private ownership of the public means of production. That's what it is. It's exploitation. Everybody knows what it means to be exploited. For the moment, we seem to have no alternative. We have certain ways of diminishing its negative aspects. Perhaps, I don't know, we can never get beyond that. Perhaps we can never move into a world system where exploitation will not be the rule, where private ownership will only be of private things. Perhaps not, I don't know. It's too big of a question for me, but I bet on it: it is my secular version of Pascal's wager. Why else should I give this interview?.

Q: Am I oversimplifying if I say you were an activist at one point? You became an observer at a later point. What is the role of an observer in hoping that things will evolve in a positive way? Does an observer become involved in those events or separate?

NORTON: Well, in Haiti, it was really most special because I had a calling card. I was the representative of The Associated Press and BBC in Haiti, the two biggest news-gathering organizations in the world. I was somebody. Wow. One time, we were threatened – the news wire services – of being expelled. Once. Called in by the information minister. I think it was during the coup d'état. Fuck you, basically we said. I didn't care. I knew they wouldn't do it.

Q: Do what? Take you do the airport?

NORTON: Yah, because it'd be worse. I mean it'd be worse for them. And at least they knew who I was. And they knew I was fair even though they didn't like it. You're implicated in events when you're reporting. I was there at the massacres. I was shot at. Nobody could tell me bullets weren't flying because they shot at me. Nobody could tell me that it wasn't true. I was there. I talked to the people. I talked to the army. I had contacts all over – in the army, among the thugs, among the killers, among the victims. I was everywhere. I tried to be everywhere. I felt the extremities of the country in my fingers and my toes. I was there. I was implicated. And I spoke. And I wrote it.

Q: Was anybody not a thug?

NORTON; Yah, a lot of decent people.

Q: Were there any political formations who were not thugs?

NORTON: Yah, yah, but they all had a tendency. I'm not talking about individuals; I'm talking about the political parties. They all had a tendency to thugdom because none of them really respected the Constitution. By respecting the Constitution, that is respect the idea of the Constitution. You have to have law and order. Haiti was the only place I have ever been where law and order was a left-wing demand, not a right-wing one as it usually is. Law and order, respect the individual, respect his rights, follow the rules, let them be transparent, let them be posted, and let those who infringe be punished. Is that so hard to understand? I was there. I was

everywhere. I was implicated in all the events because I wrote about them every day. I made Haiti known to the world for almost twenty years. I was able.

I was finally evacuated from Haiti because of bad health. We can come back to that and talk about the American embassy. And I had sources in the national palace. I was evacuated to the hospital in Jamaica. From Jamaica, I called the office to tell them that Aristide was being ousted. I did. Two hours before anyone else. That's how embedded I was in reality. To be a reporter in a country, you have to be embedded in the country. You cannot come in and find your credible informants. You can't. It's an art. It's not so much a science. You feel the country or you don't feel the country. You know you can trust this person and you can't trust that. You feel that something bad is coming or you don't feel it. Now, there is a slight decline in insecurity in Haiti. I know how it works. The editor says, "What can we say about Haiti today? I have to say something." "Well, there is a slight decline." "Oh, Okay!" "Haitians breathe free after two years of violence," headline.

Come on now. You don't understand the country if you believe that headline. Thugdom takes a breather. Thugs take a breather. They go underground. They wait until, you know, the heat's off and then they come back because the causes of their thuggery have not been eradicated. Why should the thugs be eradicated? Sure, they lose some of their people, but the number of thugs is legion in Haiti because despair and desperation and despondency are deep and deepening, because the traditional value system has been knocked out of whack. That's the kind of news you get out of Haiti. Haitians breathe free after two years, etc. And the U.N. applauds itself. They've done it. They have done it. They have caused the respite, thank goodness. But it's a respite. Nothing has been done in Haiti to change its destiny, which is self-destruction, annihilation. Aristide was a nihilist. He wanted his country poor. He told an Inter-American Development Bank representative, "Please Sir, don't take away our poverty. It's our dignity." Quote unquote. "Please, Sir. Do not take away our poverty. It is our dignity. It is our strength."

Q: When observing events, did it sometimes happen that you wished for an outcome other than the one that you saw? And if so, what was happening inside you as a professional? Example: in counting the people on the streets, you gave an accurate count. Would you have wished on that day that those who said sixty thousand had been correct?

NORTON: I guess this will tie into your other question. My implication. It's true I wasn't a journalist like other journalists. There was a certain militant aspect to me. I talked to people. I tried to reason with them. I mean, I gave my point of view. You're not supposed to do that, are you? To give your point of view. I talked to leaders and said, "What the hell is this? 'You've got balls, prove it.' This has to have dignity. This has to have meaning. This has to have a future."

"You've got balls, prove it" doesn't mean anything. I would talk. It didn't affect my reporting. I would like to believe so. I mean, who knows. Listening to my voice on this interview, I don't recognize it, so maybe I'm deluding myself. I would talk to everybody. I talked to everybody, and to the extent that I thought there was a possibility to be heard, I would give my opinion. And my reason, not my opinion. I hate opinions. You have an argument. You have a reason to believe what you believe. If you have reason to believe what you believe, it's not an opinion.

I believe that Mitt Romney will be the candidate. Why do I believe that? It's an opinion. I have no idea why I believe that. Maybe because he's a corporate man, because he looks clean, because he hasn't made any extraordinary mistakes. Maybe if I look, I could justify that but that's just rationalization. It's an opinion. If I give a reason, if I say, for example, there's no fundamental difference between Mitt Romney and Hillary Clinton, you better expect an argument. You better expect an argument concerning the nature of political parties in the United States, etc. That would not be an opinion. What do you call it?

Q: You gave arguments to Haitian individuals.

NORTON: To the leaders, all the leaders.

Q: Did you ever give any of your arguments to a visiting American in a small aircraft?

NORTON: Yah, that is one of the beautiful examples of, again, American innocence, American ignorance, American indifference abroad. Haiti is a small country. Haiti is, to those of us who care about the human spirit, who know what we mean when we say the human spirit, Haiti is a monument. Haiti is Mt. Everest because it is a landmark in the conquest of human liberty and human equality.

Geopolitically, what is it? There are carpetbaggers who come down to Haiti, and some of them with connections to well-known politicians, well-known groups of politicians. There's money to be made in Haiti, obviously. There's money to be made everywhere. I don't know. Can you sell air conditioners in hell? I don't know. I suppose there's somebody who can. Or, I don't know, flaming charcoal briquettes exported from hell ready to cook your beef in Texas? There's not much economic interest in Haiti, geopolitical interest, obviously. Stability of the region. Haiti is part of Hispaniola. Eight million people in Haiti, eight million, maybe more... sixteen million people in Hispaniola. That's a hell of a lot of people. That's the Dominican Republic and then you've got Jamaica and then, wow, Cuba. What about Cuba? Where's it going? You never know. And then there are more and more Haitians in the United States. That's a political factor. I mean, one of these days they'll get their act together and, like the Cubans, they'll start voting. They've already got a couple of elected officials in local offices. It'll come. It'll come. Haitians are smart, hard working.

Haiti is small, but it has geopolitical interest. It's in America's backyard. Its presence... you know, it's like somebody who doesn't cut the lawn. If it's your neighbor, you're going to catch all that ragweed. Haiti, to be precise, is a pain in the ass. And the problem, I think, with the United States is they try to solve it with containment - coast guard sending back the refugees. It's not a threat, in my opinion, but they send them back anyways. If they open the floodgates, of course there would be but... they send them back. Then there's the U.N. who'll stay there and provide an exoskeleton of security, contain the insecurity. The problem with that is you can limit the pain, but you can't make it go away. It's your ass, and it's your pain. It's less of a pain than in Haiti because they're the ones who are suffering, but it is your ass and you've got to cover it. Is what's going on in Haiti the way to cover the ass of the United States and the Caribbean? I do not think so.

I think there never was any danger of a communist takeover in Haiti. There was never any danger of a radical movement taking hold of power. Aristide was never a socialist, much less a communist. Aristide was an upstart who wanted to enrich himself and his cronies in order to be somebody. Poor guy with his inferiority complex and his manic depression. I once heard him name-dropping, not quoting, Plato and Aristotle in a talk with peasants. In one speech at the National Palace, he called Heidegger "the philosopher of peace." Pompous. Gifted, but not gifted to be president. Insincere, hypocritical, violent. Violent. Selfish. The antithesis of the democratic republican leader. He was not interested in economic development. If you're interested in economic development, you're like Castro, right? You've got a socialist/communist party. He developed with the means at hand an economy. If you don't, you don't stay in power. It's not the problem with Aristide. Proof of the pudding is his support of the pyramid scheme. I remember poor people coming to my house and asking my opinion on the pyramidal banking scheme. They said, "But it's supported by the president. I'm putting all my money into it." They lost all their money. Economic development is not a problem for the heirs of the heirs of the French masters of slaves. Imitate the master. It's an imitation of the master. To be an imitation, you have to have slaves, but real slaves, menials, mental slaves. That was Aristide. Why was I going into that? You have to understand this.

Down comes a well-meaning former ambassador. It was in 1991, a couple of months before the ouster of Aristide, and I accompanied Mr. Andrew Young on a small plane to Cap-Haitien. Andrew Young was making rounds, spreading the word of the Lord. And here I am between Andrew Young, charming fellow, and a much less charming fellow, Colonel Valmond, commander of the garrison in Cap-Haitien which is Haiti's second largest city. And here you have the perky, bright former ambassador talking to this sandbag, expressionless but very polite. Because here we've got Andrew Young. Now Andrew Young doesn't know that he's a white man. But Valmond is listening to a white man speak to him about the virtues of democracy. So he delivered the sermon on the virtues of democracy, how the country progresses when everybody rallies around the flag, the role of the military is, we have an elected president, you have a Constitutional duty, you have a Constitutional prerogative... End of sermon.

I liked Andrew Young and, I don't know, I couldn't take it. Andrew Young seemed like somebody I could talk to. Of course, I was wrong, but what the hell. I said, "Mr. Young, I sat and listened to you for five, ten minutes, and I can't believe such an intelligent man could be so silly. You were talking to a thug. Do you think for one minute that he takes you seriously? You? A big shot white man from up north? They're going to stage a coup d'état when they goddamn well feel like it, and you're not going to stop them with these blowhard words." He didn't throw me out of the plane on the way back. I was on very good terms with Alvin Adams who was the ambassador during the coup d'état, and I very often got together with him and we chewed the fat and I irritated him. But I loved him because he was so smart. And we got along fine. Was he in on the coup d'état? How was the coup d'état staged? Very complicated questions. What was the role of the United States in the coup d'état? I think there was a role, but it wasn't simple and we can come back to that. The Company is one thing, and the State Department is another. Maybe they act together; maybe they don't. It's never clear, and why should it be clear? It's much better to be confusing. Nobody knows what everybody else is doing. Nobody knows everything. It is often convenient for the left hand not to know the right.

The Haitians had the green light to oust Aristide at the end of September 1991. The army took the ball, ran, and ran, made the touchdown, and kept running. And wouldn't give up the ball. Three years later, the Americans had to put their foot down and say, "Stooge! You're a stooge! Don't you remember? Stooge." Haitians are not stupid. "Yes, Massa," and then they slit your fucking throat at night. That's the tradition. That's the people you're dealing with. "Yes, Massa," and at night they slit your throat. Got it?

And Alvin said to me, "Mike" -- he liked to pull my leg -- "You know what Ambassador Young said about you on his trip to Haiti? You're the most cynical guy he met in Haiti."

Needless to say, two or three months later in 1991, the coup d'état had taken place. I don't remember when Andrew Young came back to Haiti, but he didn't reject me. He was very nice to me, and his staff was very nice to me. Of course, he didn't say, "Hey, what'd I miss?" Innocent, ignorant, or indifferent? Please tell me. I don't know. The unequivocal language of those who represent western civilization. I don't know what politicians are getting at. Nobody does. I think history plays through them. They do things, and they don't really examine their behavior. Not the way we would like. I mean, they rack their consciences, but do they strain their brains? Why did the United States miss the peaceful intentions of the Haitian people after Jean-Claude Duvalier was ousted? Why did they put the future of the Haitian democracy in the hands of the military? Why did they not see that Aristide was a shoo-in as president and get to work immediately figuring out how they could reach this guy. Figure out, really, what he wanted. Not the prosperity of the masses, a fair deal, down with the bourgeoisie... My foot, he married into the bourgeoisie. My foot, he could have been bought out. Cynical? I don't know. Did they figure it out? No, he was going to lose. That's very comforting.

And then he had something against the Americans. From the beginning, they were threatening him. They don't want him in. They were going to get rid of him, he believed. And then, of course, the coup d'état. And then the uncertainty. What was the U.S. going to do with him? Bush, the father, I think cut off the resources, the Bank of the Republic resources in New York. There was a gasoline embargo of sorts. Aristide pushed for a full embargo. His supporters said the embargo now is doing nothing. In fact, it's destroying the country. I went out into the countryside when the embargo began, and I didn't know what I would find. I found that the small jobs in the city had been lost and that the contribution to the countryside which was to finance repairs for irrigation pipes and things like that were no longer coming. And therefore the whole tissue of economic life was being rent by this incomplete embargo, and what Aristide was going for was a complete embargo. And when I told a "friend," a radical priest. The whole priesthood was behind Aristide. Not for religious reasons, I can tell you that. We can talk about the theology of liberation in Haiti, if you like. When I told him, it was like, "Hey Father, I went out to the countryside and this is what I found. It's hurting." He said, "It's not true."

I said, "But listen to me..." He said, "It's not true. It's not true." And that was the end of our relationship. I never spoke to him again. And that was the end of my relationship with the radical priesthood in Haiti because their boy came to power -- power hungry pigs. I repeat, power hungry pigs, not priests. Not people who care about the souls of their parishioners, their well-being, their happiness, their felicity. Power hungry pigs. They eat. They eat anything. And Aristide places priests and former priests all over the state and parastatal apparatus. And then those who have

not been invited to the banquet break with him. In Latin America, Liberation Theology aimed at the disestablishment of the Catholic Church. It celebrated a homecoming, the return of the Church to the fold, to the people, most of whom are poor. It was an attempt to purify a church that had been contaminated by power, in particular the power of military dictatorships. In Haiti, it aimed at the establishment of one faction of a highly politicized Catholic Church, the anti-hierarchical faction, in the halls of power. But Aristide was no theologian. He used everybody, politicians and priests alike. He kept some people around him, many of them involved in the drug trade or in privileged public-private business deals. But the big social categories he lost. He finally lost them all. He lost the intellectuals. He lost the bourgeoisie. He lost the towns and the countryside. He lost everybody except his thugs at the end. One of the priests was the brother of a prime minister under Préval. An enemy of the Aristidians. The prime minister's brother officiated at the wedding of Aristide and a Washington or New York Haitian-American lawyer.

Q: Mildred.

NORTON: Mildred. It was a January...I don't remember what year it was...and I covered it at his mansion outside of Port-au-Prince. The estate, the mansion was not a glorious affair. It doesn't compare with anything in Scarsdale, but it's an enormous estate. I don't know how many – ten, twenty acres. And there's a swimming pool. He ran a kind of orphanage – ran or misran it – milked charitable organizations for his own...

Q: Aristide Foundation, by the way.

NORTON: Yah, but the orphanage itself was called Fanmi Selavi – “The Family is Life.” Incidentally there was no mother, and one father: Aristide. To read between the lines, Aristide is the Staff of Life. And then he dropped it when it no longer served his purposes.

Look, I was with Aristide at the Family is Life center when the president of the electoral panel announced his 1990 presidential victory on television. I was standing. He was sitting on a bench, hands folded, looking for all the world like a virgin on her wedding night. He looked up at me and said, “You're not moved.” I was dumbfounded, flabbergasted. For, in fact, until he opened his mouth, I had been exhilarated. The battle was on! The confrontation with Haiti's retrograde forces was inevitable. And this poseur was the guy who was going to lead the future to triumph over the past?

Back to the marriage: strains of the “Blue Danube.” This is Haitian authenticity! The strains of the “Blue Danube,” and then we were there. And then he got married. Poor Mildred kept casting a glance over at him. The guy was cold, frozen stiff. You know, never a touch, never a look of affection. I felt sorry for her. I said, “What's going on? This is a State wedding.” This is a State wedding, of a dark-skinned man and a light-skinned woman. And then came the sermon because people were saying, “Eh, she's a mulatta.” “Oh, she's from the bourgeoisie and Aristide is no longer with us.” The people. That was a rumor. And this smarmy guy said, “It's not true. Aristide has married the Haitian people, will never divorce the Haitian people.” This guy broke with him a couple of months later, obviously, but he gave one last shot at power. Never did he give an auto-, a self-criticism. Nobody ever gave a self-criticism. Nobody ever said, “I was wrong about Aristide because I was blind to X, and I was blind to X because I...” Magical. One moment I'm

for him, the next minute I'm against him. No. Crazy, crazy excuses. "I thought he would do the trick and then he didn't." I said, "But Jesus Christ, you look into his eyes, if you can. Listen to his voice. Everything about him is phony. He's a wooden nickel. It's so obvious. Why don't you look at people?" People don't look at people. Categorizing people stands in the way of recognizing their individuality. People situate other people socially, and that situation is their identity.

So, how to understand Haiti? You have to understand all of this. You have to understand its cultural differences. You do not situate, and you do not identify the way Haitians do. You have to understand that you don't have a credible informant group. Groups are investments of interest. You have credible informants, but no group will give you a credible picture, a disinterested picture. And you have to weave something out of this. Now, should I go on with this theme? Should I tell you about my meeting with the DCM after Alvin left?

Q: Sure. Maybe the DCM story first. That's a very important story. But I also wanted to ask, though, can you give a sense in maybe this interview or the next one: how did the American embassy do throughout this period? Were there any individuals or periods of time where the embassy seemed to have more understanding of the situation and others really didn't? Or were they uniformly misled? But please tell the story of the DCM – the deputy chief of mission.

NORTON: It depended on the period. I found the ambassadors I had to deal with, especially Carney and Curran, open. We had very good relations. They listened to me. I don't think they were condescending, but they did not... I think they had difficulties with me because I had a very high reputation, but my point of view was basically that you're trying to force this democracy on Haiti and you're not going to succeed. You don't even know who these people are that you're trying to force something on. It's not even democracy that you're trying to force on them. You want them to be good little boys, and they're not good little boys. Haitian democracy is possible, but not on these terms. The investments in Haiti are wrong. The infrastructure development is wrong. You have to think of a different way of developing the economy of Haiti that is for the economy of Haiti. Sure, you may make more money when you have all these construction projects and you can get the money siphoned back to the United States and to the other countries that have these companies doing the infrastructure, but, hey, it doesn't cost very much. It's a small country. You can do a hell of a lot of good. There are a lot of Americans here who want to do good. Get your thinking straight.

Now, straight with respect to what? With the development of Haiti? Never that easy. It's always a jumble. You're suddenly altruistic – in the short term altruistic and in the long term you'll reap the benefit. That's what I believe. Just do it for a while. You know? There are a lot of bright people here. There's a lot of good will. In the embassy, out of the embassy, a lot of foreigners come down to Haiti. They love the country, and it breaks their hearts. They become attached to it in ways that change their lives. It's a marvelous country. Be altruistic for a while. Think it through. You want some people you can talk to? I can tell you who you can talk to. But that's not the kind of talk they really wanted to have.

Then, after 2000 when it was obvious that the legislature was a rigged legislature and that Aristide was not a legitimate president, there were all kinds of problems trying to come to some

agreement so that Haiti could function. And then you had the OAS sending 1, 2, 13, 14, 20, 25, 26 delegations headed by Luigi Einaudi coming to Haiti. I remember the last time I saw Einaudi, I think it was one of his least successful, one of his last missions. We were walking together, and I was saying something to him. He was walking by and it was at the hotel, and suddenly a vase, nobody touched it, suddenly a vase tipped over and fell.

I said, “Mister Einaudi, Haiti. You’re never going to reach your goal.” If it was the real goal. I think it was a façade. Let’s get an agreement out of this. Come on. I’m sick of this pain in my ass. Get an agreement. I said to them, and to everybody I saw, “It will never happen.” Why it will never happen I explained. I’ve given some of the reasons already. You don’t understand these people. It’s all or nothing. It’s spit in the soup. You can’t deal with them this way. It is just so much shucking and jiving. Do you understand shucking and jiving? No, they’re white people. They don’t know what it is. And if they’re black people, they don’t know what it is either because they’re not in the United States, so they’ve forgotten what it’s like to be invisible and to become visible by adopting the other person’s image. So anyways, that was the standard spiel for a long time with variations depending on the event or the moment. Okay, the DCM. I think it was when Alvin Adams left and there was a period before I think Carney came in, I can’t remember.

Q: Leslie Alexander.

NORTON: Leslie Alexander was the ambassador.

Q: Chargé.

NORTON: Well, maybe he was chargé before Leslie was chargé, I can’t remember. Anyways, he was a Vietnam War hero – bronze star, pilot – and he was bald and very, very clean. And he would go on to become a negotiator in what I believe then was still Yugoslavia. It was falling apart and he would negotiate. Anyways, my friend at the embassy, the public diplomacy officer - a very nice fellow, we were on very good terms, he respected my opinion – thought it would be a good idea for us to meet. I very often had these conversations with incoming diplomats. They would come and they would pick my brains, and then, of course, I would feel, “Oh, I’m so important.” And then not feel so important after all. Anyways, I was very important and gave my very important spiel to this very important man. At one point, it was at the Oloffson Hotel, the scene of Graham Greene’s racist book The Comedians. So there we were eating bad food.

Q: We: you and the...

NORTON: Me, the public affairs officer, and the DCM.

Q: Deputy chief of mission.

NORTON: Exactly. And there we were eating away. Me talking, more than eating. I prefer talking to eating. That’s why I love radio more than anything else. At one moment, I noticed he was looking. I don’t know if he was looking at a woman. His eyes were not making contact, and

I said, "I have the impression that what I'm saying really doesn't interest you. Maybe we should just eat and forget about this. I came as a duty."

Q: What were you telling him?

NORTON: I don't know what it was I was telling him, but something like this. Basically my spiel for all incoming diplomats was, "Consider the country. You are going through the looking glass. These are the rules. They are not our rules. You got a different kind of people with different relations from the ones we are familiar with. It is, however, possible to establish democracy on this basis if, if, if..." Basically it was that with examples drawn from the particular crisis of the moment. I gave you one when the negotiation was under way. Haitians do not negotiate. They kill. I don't agree with you. Boom. Or they slander you or they defame you. I suffered that.

Q: So the DCM said what?

NORTON: I said, "Look, so why don't we just eat. I mean, I came here as a duty." And that's true – a duty. I didn't believe it. I never believed that whatever I said to dozens of diplomats and foreign visitors and State Department officials would ever do any good. I never believed it, but God, I tried. I tried to be convincing. I tried to be circumstantial. I tried to be precise and logical and coherent. I think I was. I think I was. "Don't you think," I asked the DCM of the day eating his soup of the day, "Don't you think it's important to understand a situation if you want to act in it and on it?" And he said, over his soupe du jour, "No. I have a mission."

For some reason, I didn't stop talking to diplomats after that. I should have. No, I shouldn't have. No. I kept on. I kept on doing it because I did sharpen my analytical skills. And my spiel became better and better and better as the months and the years wore on. I think I became more and more convincing. I mean, foreign Aristide observers were somewhat shaken up when they met me. Because I was supposed to be, according to the more idiotic of my critics, the "embedded shill" of the American embassy. That's nice.

Q: Many journalists came to Haiti knowing much less than you did, and their first stop is to you.

NORTON: Yah.

Q: Why did you share all of your information with them?

NORTON: Every bit of information, everything I had and some I couldn't use because of security reasons – I gave everything to everybody because I was not in the business of journalism. Journalism was not my profession. I was busy being a hero. I was on an extraordinary adventure, and my goal was to contribute a little bit to the betterment of a people I loved. That's all. I turned out to be a pretty good journalist, I think. I was, I think, an extraordinary journalist. A remarkable journalist. But I didn't give a damn about it, and so I don't miss it at all. I cared about Haiti, did and still do, without missing it.

When I left Haiti, I became an editor at the central desk. I hated it – hated every minute of it. It's not reporting. An edited AP story is as formal as a sonnet, in length and obligatory elements, like personalization and points of view that neutralize each other and produce what is called objectivity. I did reporting in Aruba, but you see, from the sublime to the ridiculous, I covered the Natalie Holloway case. You know about Natalie Holloway because I wrote about her. Well, the television coverage was overwhelming, but so far as the printed media, I was on top of it first. And I stayed on top of it. I was a pretty good reporter, but I didn't care. I didn't have a profession. I am somebody who will die without having had a profession. I have a vocation. I'm a poet. That's what I've never been unfaithful to. I've never gone without a day writing for forty years. Thinking, writing, dreaming, misunderstanding, being confused, revising – all of those things that make writing such an adventure.

I was profoundly committed to the Haitian adventure because it was my adventure in my imagination. Because it was up from slavery. Because I identified with the Hebrews who left Egypt behind and wandered, or were led to Mt. Sinai and then were found unworthy of the tablets of the law and then were forced to wander in the desert until they came to the land flowing in milk and honey.

And then the horror of history. But I told Ambassador Curran when I first met him – I think he misunderstood me – that there are two books that he should read if he wants to understand Haiti: one is Alice in Wonderland, and the other is Exodus (not the popular novel by Leon Uris, but Exodus in the Bible). There you have a portrait of a slave revolution, and the lessons are clear: if you do not obey the law, if you do not shape up, if you do not break off all relations with those who enslaved you, if you do not exteriorize your interiorized servitude and desire to dominate, if you are not literate, if you do not learn how to read (because, to be a member of the community, a man must come to the Torah and must be able to read that part of the Haftorah or he is not a member of the community fully), if you do not follow the law, if you do not break with the past, if you do not remember fully that you were slaves in Egypt, and therefore open your hearts to those who were slaves and are slaves, you will not enter the land flowing with milk and honey. You will wander in the desert.

Now Haiti has turned into a desert as the Haitian people have wandered. Its leaders were not of the caliber of Moses. They didn't respect the law. They didn't become literate. They didn't cut that terrible link with the master. The leaders continued – not only the leaders, it goes all the way down to the Vodou priest who, to cure an ill for a woman, forces her to have intercourse – it goes all the way down. If you don't stop imitating the master, you will never be free. What was the title of that book, now? By the French Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Difficult Liberty.

Difficult liberty. Eh? I believe that firmly. Everything for me in my life came together in Haiti: my love for this extraordinary woman, my belief in the capacity of people to become better, my admiration of the Haitian people – their courage, their intelligence, Ulysses-like intelligence, their Constitutionalism - and my attachment to the fundamental myths of the Jewish tradition, to get a move on and go. There's a bright future, but you've got to move. You've got to move. You can't stay still. And that becomes concrete when it means moving out of slavery towards the land of liberty. That's Haiti for me. I lived that day and night for twenty years, more.

Q: This is the end of the second recording of Dan Whitman, Mike Norton. Puerto Rico. The 7th of September 2007.

This is tape number three – Dan Whitman interviewing Mike Norton in Puerto Rico. It's the 7th of September. Mike, can we start with some comments of the role of the U.S. government in the U.S. embassy? We're talking about Haiti now. They got, perhaps, some things right, some things wrong. They missed some cues. Were they helpful or harmful by their presence? Tell me your perceptions of that.

NORTON: I think that the earlier history of the United States' involvement in the Caribbean continued into the last parts of the twentieth century. One doesn't escape history. The past is in front of us. The United States, as I mentioned already, saw Haitian independence at the end of the eighteenth century as a threat – a threat to its own slave-holding institution. Haiti was, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a sort of Cuba of the twentieth century. It had imperial ambitions to free the slaves and conquer territory and wealth. In 1822, President Boyer conquered the eastern two-thirds of the island – what is now known as the Dominican Republic. And so on and so forth.

The Haitian government, in order to obtain recognition from France and access to certain ports of trade, agreed to pay indemnities to the slaveholders and plantation owners who had lost their properties during the revolutionary war, and that cost the Haitian treasury a great deal up until the twentieth century. We don't know exactly when the last tax on coffee was paid to the French. The international community was hostile to this black community. I don't think we realize at this time the crudeness of racism in the nineteenth century. These were people who had defeated the colonial army of France, and they were nothing but savages from Africa. Actually, they weren't savages from Africa. They were savages from the Caribbean, and that attitude of savages in our backyard continued. The United States did not recognize Haiti's independence until, I believe, after the Civil War with Frederick Douglass, the first ambassador. But the hostility, the wariness, continued on. And arrogance.

Haiti was unable to enter the modern world because of its own militarized society, because of its own incapacity, the incapacity of its leaders to seize the main chance and become a nation like other nations. This due, obviously, to the terrible traumatism of slavery and its isolation. The United States saw the opportunity to put order into Haiti as it did in other countries – the Caribbean and Central America – in the first quarter of the twentieth century. And in 1915, the Marines landed and seized hold of Haiti for nineteen years.

The assessment of the United States' heritage in Haiti is double. It's ambiguous. On the one hand, they built government buildings that, to this day, house the government offices in downtown Port-au-Prince. They built the National Palace – large scale, to say the least. And other buildings. They began to build modernized roads. Of course, the revolt against American occupation cost the Haitians thousands of lives. There were forced road gangs. They helped build those roads. A sort of forced modernization developed. Forced modernization. We've seen similar things in Russia and in China, haven't we? In a certain sense, even in the United States. After all, what is slave labor? And the labor of the Chinese in laying the Trans-Continental Railroad. Signs of the times.

In any case, the modernization was also an opportunity for a new Haitian ruling class to develop a new nationalism in face of this neighbor that treated it with arrogance. And it left behind, the United States did, a watchdog. It's called the Haitian Army. The Haitian Army that was trained on the principles of the Marine Corps. The United States also, since the U.S. occupying forces were to a large extent from the south and this was the south of apartheid, privileged the lighter skinned Haitian bureaucrats and instilled or reinforced the black versus mulatto racism that would explode virulently after other troubles. François "Papa Doc" Duvalier took power in 1957.

It's a long history that the United States accepted François "Papa Doc" Duvalier because there was Castro. They made peace with this man, with this dictator, because they didn't want to make peace with the other dictator. To each his own son of a bitch. And the United States' choice of sons of a bitches was "Papa Doc" Duvalier, and he held the fort. I believe that Haiti cast the deciding vote in the expulsion of Cuba from the organization of American States.

The United States accepted François "Papa Doc" Duvalier because there was Castro. Again, the thread through all of this is a certain selectiveness in what constitutes a credible informant. It doesn't necessarily have to be the mulattos as it was in the 1920's and '30's and let the devil take the hindmost. But a certain selectiveness in what constitutes a credible informant. Obviously, the credible informants for Washington were those that owed the most to Washington. That's one thing.

A pugnaciousness and impatience in relations. That continued. And a certain tendency toward exclusion. The best thing that could happen to Haiti with respect to the United States is that it disappear. It disappear. The boat people problem, of course, is another problem related to everything I have been saying. The economy of Haiti floundered and was less and less able to keep the Haitian people fed.

Many Haitians did become American residents and citizens, and this somewhat moderated, gave a somewhat narrower margin of maneuver, I believe, to American arrogance toward Haiti. I think the development of the Black Caucus in the U.S. Congress also put a limit on what you might call the natural tendency of American foreign policy to treat Haiti as though it were a bug that has appeared after a rock has been thoughtlessly removed. So, the problem, basically, for American foreign policy is, how to put the rock back on top of the bug. I think that just about sums it up. There's a bug, and there's a rock, and how do we get the rock back onto the bug. It's a mindset.

My idea is that there is no threat. Haiti will not threaten stability in the United States' south. Slavery no longer exists, I think. In fact, perhaps not in mind, the Black Caucus doesn't need Haiti to defend its people. There's no threat there. There's no internal threat. Haiti does not threaten the United States. The boat people. Well, when Clinton misled the Haitian people and more or less said, "Come to the United States," and tens of thousands of them did. That was a mistake of Clinton, and that was easily righted, corrected. There are a couple thousand boat people. They keep on going. They have been going, leaving Haiti, since the beginning of the twentieth century, at first to Cuba and to the United States later on. It's normal, and it's easily contained. The bug can be put back under the rock with no problem since the U.S. Coast Guard

is patrolling with great efficiency the waters.

And then those who aren't picked up drown at sea. We don't know exactly how many do make it to Florida, but I don't believe it will be necessary to seed the Florida waters with sharks. The immigration authorities have their walls to build in the southwest. They don't have to seed the waters of Florida with sharks to prevent the Haitians from coming. Those who do come legally, and about eighteen thousand do come – family members – per year, quite a considerable population come to the United States legally because of family arrangements. It's a growing community.

I think that once the Haitian population gets its act together, as I already mentioned, some things could happen. Maybe the United States foreign policy will treat Haiti with more respect. I say more respect because, as I already mentioned, I believe as soon as I reached Haiti in 1986 and saw that the categories my American friends were using to understand Haiti were completely irrelevant. When I saw the enormous hope that Haitians had – hope based upon trading, free enterprise, small businessmen – Haitians are in the Haitian mode very individualistic. They don't like the state. They fled the state because the state, in their mind, is repressive. And, in fact, is repressive. They don't want to have anything to do with collectivization or any of that stuff. There was no way to understand Haiti in that sense. There was no way to understand Haiti, either, as a conflict, as a class struggle, since the bourgeoisie was basically import/export, mercantile. It was not a productive bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie had a lot of money, but there weren't that many of them – a couple hundred families. A couple hundred millionaires in a country of eight million. The biggest fortune in Haiti is about \$40 million, not much in the modern world. In the U.S., the top one per cent owns as much as the bottom 90 per cent.

Basically, the peasantry was in disaggregation. You don't have class struggle between classes that are being declassed. So that's the end of that. The peasantry is not going to descend upon the capital and set up a Peasant People's Republic. You have to think about Haiti in different terms. And, well, if Haitians didn't have the terms, I guess you can't fault Americans for not thinking Haiti through. Too bad, but I don't think the United States had the credible informants to tell them what, to me, was so obvious.

Altruism, acting outside of the view that boxes you into your world. Think Haiti in terms of Haiti's needs and not in terms of the United States' geopolitical needs. In the short term and in the long run, the United States will benefit from the security of the Caribbean. Communist Cuba, have faith in your own system, will not last forever. That's obvious. Not because of the social benefits. People will not cease being communist in Cuba because they no longer are educated and have health care, but because of the one party system, because it's a police state and people don't like that. People have this tendency to express themselves, to communicate, and this is a world in which people can talk instantly to their neighbors on the opposite side of the world. The Cuban police state will collapse in due time, so take it easy, man. Take it easy, man. Pay attention to the case in point.

It would have been possible in 1986 and became more and more possible as time went on because Haiti did kind of launch itself into view. It had been under control by the Duvaliers for a long time as part of one of the bulwarks in the Cold War, and then suddenly the Haitian people,

as I already said, popped out of Pandora's box and claimed what? Well, what somebody in Minnesota would clamor for. What somebody in Cleveland, Ohio, somebody in Topeka, Poughkeepsie, Tampa, Portland, Lord knows where, Santa Monica, Hollywood, too. Give us a chance. We want to work. We want to make a life for ourselves and our children. We don't want a repressive government. We want people who will represent us and who will be answerable to us for their deeds. Help us to develop our country. We've got a special problem here. We've got a problem of a country turning into a desert. An enormous peasant population that doesn't have the means to convert land into a productive instrument. We have many communities outside main population centers, and they're dying.

There are projects which may not require such a heavy outlay which may not bring so much profit to construction companies who come down from Canada, the United States, from who knows where, France built roads, to build asphalt roads. Just to give you an example, asphalt roads last about three years and take about twenty years to pay for. I'm not an accountant. That doesn't seem to make much sense to me. To build asphalt roads in a tropical climate. It's been going on for years. Corruption. Haiti is said to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world. I don't quite get that. Sure, government officials are corrupt, but there isn't that much money to steal. It's a small, poor country. The Haitian bourgeoisie, which in the press is generally characterized as monstrously indifferent to the country, as flowing with milk and honey, has reached the Promised Land behind its barricades in its fortresses in the lush, upscale suburb of Pétionville—that is nonsense. The Haitian bourgeoisie is poor, poor, poor because wealth is not money in the bank.

There's no place to go where you can feel safe in Haiti. There's no river that you can walk along holding hands with your girlfriend. There are no outdoor cafes. I was in Paris. I was "dirt poor." Sometimes Toto and I, we spent a couple days eating popcorn. We were the wealthiest couple on earth. Not just because of our own particular happiness, you know? We lived in Paris, on Paris, because you had access to galleries. You had access to lovely parks. You could do a hundred things and not spend a cent. You bought a card and you took a bus and bused it all month.

What can you do in Haiti? You can live in your fancy house, and then, on the weekends, drive on these horrible roads. A number of my friends, rich and poor, died on those roads because of car accidents – terrible, terrible car accidents. You go to your seaside house and you jump into the water. And then what? You come back and...poor, poor, poor. The university is poor, poor, poor. The schools – there are a couple of good schools that cost a lot of money – but how do you get your kid to school? You need a convoy, Humvees, to get your kid to school safe?

And then there's the odor, the stench. What about smelling the fresh air in spring? Minnesota's spring has made me the wealthiest person on earth. For all my life, I just close my eyes and remember the smell of spring. That's wealth. You're poor in Haiti. Everybody is poor, poor, poor in Haiti. Pétionville, which is a suburb, a hillside suburb outside of the capital, appears to the unpeeled eye to be relatively wealthy. There are stores, there are restaurants. Some houses are visible.

Of course, I remember when Aristide was running for president in 1991 and he came to Pétionville, and the poor people of Pétionville came out to greet him. They came out of these

ravines. You see, there are no residential sections in Haiti. It's not like other Latin-American countries. There's no privileged section. You have a beautiful, big house and it's sitting in a slum. And the people who work in your house are slum dwellers, so you are in osmosis even behind your thick walls. Tens of thousands, the majority of the people in upscale Pétionville, are poor and live in shanties. You just don't see them, and you don't see them because you don't look. And there's nobody there, and I'm talking about the foreign visitors, to tell you. Well, that's not quite true. There are a lot of people doing good deeds. A lot of NGO's, a lot of missionaries, but that doesn't really affect American foreign policy. Poverty in Haiti is not rife. Poverty in Haiti is *universal*.

Q: You stated earlier what you thought was the aspiration of the typical Haitian similar to the person in Santa Monica, Topeka, Poughkeepsie, to give them a chance, allow them to function, assure that the government is not oppressing their wishes. This is pretty close to the stated policy of the U.S. government for Haiti. Where is the discrepancy between word and deed?

NORTON: The discrepancy is the urgency of the moment. You have to formulate policy and you formulate policy not with reference to principle but with reference to interest. What has happened to the American Constitution? Today in the United States, internal insecurity – insecurity that comes from real threats – exaggerated, manipulated; but structural insecurity in the United States is fundamentally job insecurity, unemployment, the threat of losing your job in a fast-changing world, of not being able to keep up and of not being able to send your kids to college and of not being able to make your payments on the house and of not having health insurance. And, if you don't do what you're supposed to do, the punishment is severe. You lose your house and you lose a roof. You get sick and you die and suffer. You can't send your kids to college, you've got your kids' ignorance on your hands.

Okay, that is the fact, and yet life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and all of those principles,.. there are reasons why the insecurity in the United States is increasing. It doesn't have anything to do with the Constitution. It has to do with policy which in the United States is based upon corporate interest. Corporate interest is not really 100% equivalent to checks and balances, is it? It's something else. It's called the economy. And the kings of the economy are not the subjects of a democracy. The United States is a plutocracy.

Q: So you're talking about principles of the U.S. Constitution that do not filter through to the daily lives on the micro level?

NORTON: No, they can't because something else is at stake. There is an Overt State, law-respecting if not law-abiding, there is a Covert State whose agents act outside the law. The State is schizoid. The tension in the democratic empire between the Republic and the Empire is not creative, it is a fatal flaw.

Q: If that's the way you see it, translate, if you would, that concept to the level of the U.S. government and Haiti.

NORTON; The problem for the U.S. in Haiti and elsewhere is how to act outside of your borders. You don't have to deal with the rest of the world on an equal footing. The Constitution is

disabled. There is a U.N. Charter now for human rights. People pay lip service to it, but there are other considerations. The consideration for Haiti is geopolitical stability, and the only way that unimaginative Americans, fed/nourished by a century of 150 years or so of arrogance and ignorance and racism and what have you, is to put the rock back on the bug.

Q: You were there for eighteen years. Looking back at it, do you feel that this was a consistent explanation that reveals what the U.S. government was doing during those eighteen years? Were there ups and downs? Were there individual cases of moments of perception or moments of ignorance? Can you break this down into the details?

NORTON: Let me explain this to you. I'm not talking to you about individuals. I may have mentioned it to you already. I found several of the ambassadors with whom I had contact to be extremely intelligent people. I think they understood or could have understood. They may have disagreed with me. I know that at the end when the problem of negotiating a settlement with Aristide and the rest of civil society became the object of American foreign policy, and an article of faith. Keep the rock on the bug meant get people to agree and at least have a façade of democracy.

I think that the diplomats, many of them, believed that it was possible. I never did. And so there were differences of opinion, but those differences were honest differences of evaluation. So I don't want to talk about individuals... There were some pretty stupid ones. I think I mentioned the case of the DCM who was on a bombing mission to North Vietnam. Some of them. There were hundreds of people working with the U.S. embassy, and I think you wouldn't even have to say that seven thousand missionaries were satellites of the embassy, too. Of course, many of them were selfless and many of them were not. I'm talking about the missionaries. Many were out to save their souls, the souls of the heathen, without having the slightest idea of what the soul was of Haitians. Many of them wanted to do good deeds but not leave the means to do good deeds in the hands of the Haitians. But that's not the point. The point is this, I'll give you in an anecdote.

Two State Department officials come to Haiti. Were they on the Haiti desk? I don't know where they were, but they were important enough to link up with me. Two of them. And they came and they sat down. I forget exactly when it was, but late on, though not all the way to the end when it really became apparent that no agreement was possible and that the only way to get on with the show would be to get rid of Aristide. The general questions, and I gave my usual spiel. And Aristide came up. I gave my character profile of the man which was incidentally, and we can come back to this subject, absolutely in contradiction to the New York Times profile of Aristide that was written when he came back to power – a puff piece if I've ever seen one. Obviously ordered up because the reporter was a good reporter, but he was ignorant and he was told, I suppose, to present Aristide as someone who had learned his lesson, who would keep his mouth shut, who wouldn't insult the Pope, he wouldn't call on people to scalp the bourgeoisie or do other horrible things. He was a changed man.

Q: 1995?

NORTON; I think it was. In any case, he was back in power. Hope against hope, the hope you see... The United States government was so hopeful about Aristide, at least the State Department was, I don't think the Company was. But both, I believe, thought Haiti was a nothing country. It was getting more publicity than it was worth.

But Haiti, for a journalist, was not a nothing country. I worked for The AP, The Associated Press, from 1988 or the fall of Manigat to the second ouster of Aristide. That's sixteen years. I must have written at least three thousand articles. That's not counting my colleagues, the news editors who came down to take a look at my...to taste my soup.

It's a colorful country. It's a wonderful country. There's Vodou, the people's smile, it's a photographer's paradise. You go down to Haiti, you can't stop taking pictures. Everything is colorful, strong, stark, violent, beautiful. Taste the life. It smells bad, but jeez. That's life. You know it's life. It's raw. It's wild. It's oof. Strong. It's strong. You know, you come from some kind of prefabricated, bleached suburb. Everything is well organized. You come down. You think it's anarchy, of course. You don't see the order. I mean, that's another one of the clichés – its “disorder.” It doesn't have an infrastructure that's functioning but the order that people impose is extraordinary. The order that people impose in great slums like Cite Soleil is extraordinary. Giving the lie to all these smug people who see people living in inhuman conditions – it's superhuman conditions they're living in. How people can make a livable enterprise out of living on a land fill at sea level with no plumbing and no potable water and no nothing and yet it's just bursting with life. It's just bubbling.

And, I tell you, if I had to choose between dying in an old folks' home or gated community in Florida and a tin hut in Cite Soleil, I'd die in Cite Soleil because I would hear children's voices. I would hear music. And I get used to the bad smells. And I'd die probably a little earlier than in the old folks' home, but maybe I would have had a taste of reality. Happiness.

So the two State Department men came down and they asked what I thought, and I gave my spiel and I gave my profile of Aristide – that Aristide was impossible, that he would never agree to anything and that his rivals for power were impossible and would never agree to anything. That's the way it is in Haiti, and I gave the reasons why and blah blah blah. And they said to me, “Mike, you really expect us to go back and to tell our bosses what you just told us?” What I had to say, and the future proved me right, was something that could not be heard. It could not be heard. It could not be heard because there was a policy. Because, as the DCM said, they had a mission.

I'll tell you another anecdote just to smooth any ruffled feelings on the part of the American diplomats. I tried to understand them. In one of our many meetings, Ambassador Alvin Adams and I discussed the possibilities. This was early on in the coup d'état. What can be done to find some compromise? Aristide is in exile in Washington learning how much money he can make making deals with the Black Caucus, preparing his return after shitting in his pants when he was ousted. I said that is very important because if you shit in your pants in front of a general who took the head of the coup d'état against you, you're full of hate and you lose it. Hate is a theme in Haiti which is very important. Bear with me. I'll come back to Alvin Adams.

Hate. I was just reading in a book this morning by A. C. Grayling. Grayling is a British philosopher – from his Meditations of the Humanist. It's a little chapter on hate, and he quotes Ortega y Gasset, the Spanish philosopher. "Hatred is a sentiment that leads to the extinction of values."

Aristide was full of hate, as many Haitians are, because of the gross injustice. Gross social injustice. (May I add that I lost my innocence in Haiti about the purity of the motives of people who clamor for justice?) And it has made many nihilists – many of them into nihilists. From the very beginning, the extraordinary pain of having been a slave. When finally they felt a little power, many Haitians were nihilists, the idea being, "The only way you can make a new world is by destroying the old world." It's similar to, but in fact opposite to, the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt, where the injunction was to separate yourself from the master, not to kill the master because you become those you kill. It wasn't a hate. It was to turn your minds elsewhere. Never to forget you were a slave, which is not the same thing as to hate for all eternity the master who made you a slave. Dessalines, his war cry was *koupe tet, boule kay*, "Cut off their heads and burn down their houses." That's how Haitian independence began. It was a common thread through all of Haitian history as though the only way you can start afresh is by destroying everything around you. It's curious. They seem not to learn the lesson because everything around them is destroyed.

Okay, now what do you do that you've destroyed everything. Aristide was a hatred-filled person, full of hate, and all you have to do is listen to his speeches. He lost it. He lost it many times. He expressed his hatred, of course, sometimes in coded words, sometimes directly in his Creole speeches, lashing out at the bourgeoisie, at the mulattos, at the Pope, at the Westerners, etc.

Anyways, so there we were, Alvin Adams and I, discussing what the United States can do with Aristide. He's in exile. There are various Constitutional provisions which are too complicated to go into here, but one of them provides for provisional power while the president is out of commission. He's still president, but he's not governing. And there's another provision which, under other circumstances, entails electing a provisional president. And the legislature has to decide.

The United States preferred, quite rightly, that provision which enabled Aristide to be president of Haiti but without officiating. That's what we were discussing. Will the legislature do it? What do you think about this?

And, of course, I said, "I don't believe that that wise step will be the step that the legislature will take, and I'll tell you why."

So I went into the composition of the legislature, the influence of the military, the fear that was all through society, etc., and I was right. Finally, when push came to shove, everybody, even those who opposed the coup d'état, voted a provisional president.

Anyways, I said, "It's not going to work, Mr. Adams. It's not going to work. You can't do it." Poor man, I kind of got on his nerves. I was insufferable. I was insufferable on more than one occasion with more than one person. I was really insufferable. I was almost never wrong. That's

not my fault. That's an insufferable thing to say, isn't it? I was wrong when I didn't think that the United States would invade Haiti. I was wrong because I was ignorant. I didn't understand the importance of the Black Caucus – the deals that Aristide had struck with them. But that's outside of Haiti. In Haiti I was never wrong, so I was insufferable – sometimes deliberately, sometimes unconsciously. Should I beg pardon? I was insufferable.

Anyways, Alvin blew up, and he said, "God damn it, Mike! You have the luxury of sitting there picking holes in everything I'm proposing. I have to *do* something. You don't have to do anything." Well, there you go. That's true. The United States has to do something. The State Department has to formulate a policy. Now that policy isn't in function only of Haiti and the welfare of Haitians. That's the way it is. There's no way around it. Now, if the Haitians knew how to influence that foreign policy theater, because their community in the United States was better organized, or if there was more unity in Haiti and more thoughtfulness about the question, perhaps that foreign policy would be more amenable to the welfare of Haiti.

Perhaps that altruism I talked about would be possible. Short term, not long term. Not unrealistic, pie in the sky, sentimental, bleeding heart altruism. A different way of looking at Haiti, endogenous, a development for Haiti. But if the Haitians aren't offering any solutions, if the Haitians aren't giving any projects, if the Haitians don't have their act together, the United States will go on its bumbling way. Bumbling, rambunctious way. Until you have what you have now, a U.N. security exoskeleton and foreign aid coming in as it will to do the same sort of old projects, and nothing good will come of it.

And if the Haitians today, in September, have a breathing spell that there's a little bit less insecurity, well it won't last. First of all, insecurity in Haiti is somewhat more than just being shot at or being kidnapped and raped. It's...a friend of mine, a very good friend of mine from the countryside, who was a welder and later became an artist, we were talking about poverty. And I said, "Poverty." I'm very sententious as well as being insufferable. "Poverty is not knowing what you're going to eat tomorrow." And he said, "Poverty is *knowing* you will *not* eat tomorrow."

Put that in your pipe and smoke it please when you think about insecurity in Haiti and that people in Haiti have a breathing spell. They will not eat tomorrow. Everybody moves because, if they don't move, they'll die because they have to scuffle in order to eat because they know that tomorrow they *won't* eat. They don't have the means and they don't have the services.

When there was a strike in the hospital - it's one of the low points in my career in Haiti was covering the hospital strike: the pitiful salaries, the janitors refused to pick up – I went down there and I found dead babies under the stairways. I found a dead baby in front of the residents' dormitory. Dead baby in the hospital, think of that. Job insecurity? There's job security in Haiti. You know you're not going to work. You know absolutely. You're sure of it.

Q: You've talked about Alvin Adams and you've avoided singling out individuals. Is it correct to say that there may have been ups and downs in talent and options made in Port-au-Prince, but that the options made in Port-au-Prince at the U.S. embassy were quite limited because everything was being driven by Washington? Is that your perception?

NORTON: My perception was that the policy was a sort of a feeling of fate. It doesn't matter whether you understood or not. In a certain sense, the DCM was right. It doesn't matter if you understand. There's a bug and there's a rock on it, or there's a bug and there's not a rock on it, so you've got to put the rock back on the bug. I mean what's there to understand? What's there to understand?

Q: Some people say that the perceptions of the U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince were very different from the perceptions of the policy makers in Washington.

NORTON: Well, I suppose. As I said, in 1986 when the shit hit the fan, nobody was prepared. It was a stick in the eye of the Cold War. It was unsteady, we decided to get rid of Duvalier. But we got it in hand that the military would step in. I don't think people were prepared, and I know that among the diplomats in the embassy as well as among the journalists that came down, a slow increasing sensitivity to Haitian realities. Completely insensitive for the first years. The military, in fact, supported by the United States, did terrible things to Haiti. It became more complicated when the military really lost its hold on things and the United States decided well, yes, we better have an elected government without the interference of the military. People went out into the countryside. I think a lot of people got over the shock of the distinction between Haiti and the United States. It's quite a culture shock for Americans. As I already mentioned, it doesn't matter what ethnic group you belong to in the United States. When you step outside of the United States, you're an American.

Haiti is living in the rough. It's what is known as a "hardship post." It's not so far away as Sudan or something like that, but what makes it even worse is it's an hour and a half away. An hour and a half away from Miami and you're on another planet? You don't have to spend a couple million dollars to go into orbital flight. It's really some place else. It's very, very hard to understand. You have to spend a lot of time and I think a lot of the officers in the American embassy did. A lot of them were condescending. A lot of them were not. Maybe the minority were not, but they were there. People got to know Haiti when they were in USAID. You're out in the fields; you learn. In the international financial agencies, the IADB for example, whatever the result was before the repetition of the past there was a lot of discussion.

I discussed very often with these people, and I was very often delighted. We were on the same wave length. I was not, by any means, a loner in Haiti. Not by any means. The problem wasn't finally understanding. Once you decide you don't know anything, just open your eyes and shut up. Listen. Move around. Compare. Try to build your understanding from the ground up. It's not so hard to understand. Be prepared. Haiti is some place where you see a god walking in the street because they're possessed by a Vodou god. Haiti is some place where atheism, the great topic of the New York Review of Books these days, is inconceivable. It's inconceivable because people see God all the time. They touch him. They are even penetrated by him. And it's very confusing. It's very infectious.

I had a friend, a woman, who convinced me, rationalist of rationalists, that she was impregnated by a god, that her pregnancy was the result of one. She convinced me. There you go. Magic works when you're in it. People are terrified of black magic because the spells *work* in Haiti. A lot of people coming down to Haiti will say, "Ah, you talk about Aristide as though he were the

devil. Stop demonizing Aristide.” And my answer to them was this. “You don’t believe in the devil, but Haitians do. And they know how to identify him.”

So, there’s no clash of civilizations. There is an incomprehension which is, at times, total. Okay, you go down, you bathe in that, you immerse yourself in that. You try to maintain your own integrity. You are not...you are who you are. If you’re lucky, you even, as I did, sharpen your own values. It’s a wonderful opportunity to find out who you are by finding out who you are not, and in mutual respect. And then you have some ideas how this can be improved. And then you talk to the powers that be. But you’re talking to the wall. That’s the problem. There’s no way to translate that understanding into a policy that’s other than the policy that a great power might have toward a little particle of dust. There’s no way.

Q: You’re saying that on some occasions, diplomats and others from the outside did have these perceptions or were able to learn.

NORTON: Yes.

Q: If that’s the case, why was the U.S. unable to do the right thing or unable to solve the problems that they might have?

NORTON; As I mentioned, because their eye wasn’t on the ball. You invite them to play handball and they’re playing checkers. It’s another game. It has to do with, I don’t know, getting Brown and Root down there to supply the troops who had landed in 1994, satisfying the Black Caucus, finding ways of making deals in the new Haiti, getting contracts, telephone contracts, dealing with the well-heeled Haitian lobby in the United States, reconciling the irreconcilable, pro-Aristide and anti-Aristide. It’s listening to the Dominican Republic. It’s doing a lot of things. Trying to figure out how you can make some money out of it. You know? What kind of contract can be given to which construction firms? All kinds of things feed into American policy. You give Aristide a chance, Okay. See what you can do, and it doesn’t work out. And you plop down and boot him out.

Haiti is not Aristide. Aristide said he was Haiti, but Haiti is not Aristide. Haiti didn’t recognize itself in Aristide at the end. Haiti is a community, a collective, which wants to live. And, in order to help it live, you need thought and action, responsiveness to Haiti. American foreign policy is primarily responsiveness to its own needs. It’s an election year. Can we risk an invasion? It’s important.

Q: You mentioned at the end, I think you’re talking about February 29, 2004.

NORTON: Yah. Why was the international left so easily duped by Aristide? The Haitian political revolution was the last revolution of the twentieth century in which the left believed it could believe. The last illusion of a belief addict, desperate for a fix. Aristide said what they wanted to hear: anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, anti-ruling class, anti-Pope John Paul II. Stuff and nonsense. The left gobbled it up. Aristide believed in money, in power, in sex and in his manic grandeur. He was the political heir of Papa Doc.

Renowned leftists deduced Aristide's good intentions from their principles and from his statements of principle, disregarding the fact that he was unprincipled. The enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend.

Q: Tell me about the activities and the perceptions of the Black Caucus at the time.

NORTON: The Black Caucus was obviously the key to Aristide's return. Why did they decide to push for his return? I think there are a number of reasons. I think, personally, they were right in 1994. Aristide was the duly elected president, however bad he was, however horrible he was, whatever his motivations were. To be consistent, Aristide was elected and his term was important to respect. The army was stupid, criminal, and flaky. So, to return Aristide I believe was absolutely essential. Why the Black Caucus did that, I believe maybe some for principle, others because they saw the coup d'état as a result of American foreign policy or, put it this way, that the CIA dumped Aristide. And it was also a way of their expressing their own racism.

Maxine Waters told me once that she believed American policy was racist, and was an apartheid foreign policy. The American foreign policy was racist. Others because they were on the pay roll. They were on the public relations payroll. Aristide paid lots of money, millions and millions of dollars, to American lobbyists. I think that's the reason. Black solidarity. Hatred of American foreign policy, characterizing it as racist. Financial arrangements. And principle. And so they got him back. Now, the problem later was why they didn't recognize how bad he was. That, in fact, if they had brought him back on principle, they were to regret it. I'm talking now about the second term.

Q: Elected in the year 2000.

NORTON: Right. "Elected." And, I think inertia, financial arrangements, I think some were on the payroll, and inertia and financial arrangements. They kept on. And, you know, a lot of people had their irons in Aristide's fire. Danny Glover was in there in the palace a couple of days before the ouster. I remember talking to him and he finally found some financing for his Toussaint Louverture film project in Venezuela. Toussaint Louverture, one of the founding fathers of Haitian independence. It was in his interest to get along with Aristide. I don't think he saw Aristide as a dictator or didn't see anything wrong with what he was doing. I don't know. Paul Farmer, the Harvard doctor who treats AIDS in the central plateau. It was in his interest. People like that.

Q: Could you explain, in the interest of Paul Farmer...what's that?

NORTON: Well, I mean, he had the advantages, granted, that he was protected by the government, and the government could propose to the international financial institutions financing that would be finally directed to his institution.

Now, I suppose Farmer has his reasons for believing that Aristide was a progressive leader. He may have had his reasons. He may be sincere. But it is also the case that it was in his interest that Aristide stay on. And a lot of the people liked him, at first. Later on was another story. His so-called popular organizations – thousands, three, four thousand, not much more than that – in the

capital city. It was in their interest that Aristide stay on because, thanks to him, they got jobs in the public enterprises – the featherbedding and all the kind of stuff. That doesn't make for a hell of a lot of people, does it? Three, four, five, six thousand. You know? It's not a hell of a lot of support.

The Haitian people were like the American people who voted for Bush in 2000. They wouldn't vote for Bush now. They certainly voted for him then – less than half of the American popular vote. Slightly less than half of the American electorate voted for Bush. Now does that mean that half the American people are stupid? Misguided, wrong, like the Haitian people, who voted in a landslide for Aristide certainly the first time. The second time, I'm not so sure with a strong opponent he would have won. But by the end, he had his thousands of thug government employees, intellectuals who had something to gain by his staying in power, Black Caucus, and fanatic Haitians abroad who didn't know anything about Haiti who just were very distraught about what their homeland was coming to and had hung on to Aristide.

Aristide's popularity abroad diminished, but it was enormous, I know, because during the coup d'état I gave weekly commentaries to the Haitian community in Montreal. They were rabid. They couldn't stand me. It was really funny. Once I even went to Montreal and had an open line. That was funny. One woman said, "I don't know why the presenter of this program says you're a great journalist. If you are in Haiti, you're not great."

Anything in Haiti is not great except Aristide, so that started to wear off, and I must admit, at least in Montreal to a certain extent, I persuaded people that there was something wrong about this guy. That he had made terrible mistakes in 1991. He didn't deserve being ousted, that is to say the Haitian people didn't deserve having their elected president ousted, but if he comes back and when he comes back, there are certain things that ought to change. Then later when they didn't, then the handwriting was on the wall because I said way back I don't know how many hours ago, it is impossible to patch together a dictatorship. You cannot build bricks without straw. There's something missing in Haiti. You can't, you know? You can't build a skyscraper out of sand and spit. The Haitian state has disintegrated. Haiti is a failed state. Haiti was a failed state a long time ago. Haiti was a failed state since Aristide demobilized the army in the year 1994.

Now that concept, the definition of which I found in a U.N. brochure, I don't know which one, I would read to my diplomat friends because I would say, "Haiti's a failed state." And they all said, "No, Haiti's not a failed state." "But look. This is what the UN says. There is no institution which covers the entire territory. No institution. No national institution. Not national education, not health, not the army, not the police, nothing. There is no order, the loosening of authority. It's a failed state." "No."

See, the resistance...Haiti can't be a failed state because, if it is a failed state, we must take certain measures. We are not prepared to take those measures. Therefore, Haiti was not a failed state. Haiti is now a failed state. Now everybody agrees. So, the result of all of this is that Haiti indefinitely will be under UN protection. Maybe there will be a revolt of Haitians or maybe people will be tired. The donor nations will get tired of footing the bill and then they'll pull out. And then they'll start all over again. They'll start all over again because nothing will stop the

free fall except respect for the individual, and there's no reason to respect the individual. And there's no hope.

Q: You said the diaspora in Montreal. There's a diaspora in New York, Miami, in Orlando, a little one in Washington...

NORTON: And Philadelphia.

Q: Philadelphia. This is not a single voice. Do you have any sense of which diaspora community is thinking along which lines?

NORTON: No.

Q: And you mentioned earlier that the diaspora, if it could speak with a single voice, might have an effect.

NORTON: No, I don't really know the communities separately or all together very well anymore. I'm thinking especially Haitians who get elected to jobs on city councils, who become mayors, but who are Haitians and will have to be answerable to Haitians, and therefore can express Haitians' concerns about their homeland. I think that may take time. It may take too much time.

Time is running out. Time is running out. The population will double in a generation. It's a catastrophe. It's an ecological catastrophe. Will you have marauding hordes of people crossing from one end of the country on camels? There are no oases in Haiti. It's nothing. On the other hand, there's everything. If there were some tourist facilities. If there were a different kind of tourism. If the Haitian state promoted its own fabulous art. There is no national art museum. Haitian art is known worldwide, but Haitian art is not expensive because Haitian bourgeois don't buy it at Sotheby's or Christie's. That's how you get the value of a painting. It's what is quoted in the international auctions. Dominican painting, which is not the same, not as good as Haitian painting, or wasn't, I don't know what it's like now, is more expensive because it's pegged on international prices, but Haitians don't care for their own art which is fabulous. Unique. Haitian handicrafts are fabulous.

There are still remarkable tourist sights in Haiti. The citadel built by King Christophe in the early nineteenth century. I saw it for the first time, I was on a bus, and there it was perched above the clouds – this enormous wedge perched on the clouds. It took my breath away. It's more impressive than the pyramids and means more. What was a pyramid? A pyramid housed the mummy of a monarch; it was in praise of authoritarianism. And here you have this remarkable fortress in defense of liberty, and the only way you can get up there is on donkey-back. It's a crying shame. Jacmel – lovely coastal town in the south. Old houses that have to be rebuilt and renovated. Guest houses could be build. Labadie which is on the north coast which receives cruisers. I thought it would be something tawdry. No, it's not. Beautiful. Absolutely beautiful and respectful of the Haitian scene. For many years when you went to Labadie, you took all these Caribbean cruises, they didn't even say it was in Haiti. They were afraid people would be afraid.

Okay, tourism is one possibility. Agro-industry is another, but for that you have to take a look at the food basin of Haiti which is in the Artibonite. You have to renovate the rivers and the streams. You have to organize the peasants. You have to set up industries. You can't be slovenly. There's a mango industry in Haiti. Just recently the mangos were forbidden entry because of some sort of bug. I don't know if it was slovenliness or not. But I tell you you have to realize you are in the modern world and there are standards. Now that depends on the Haitians. If the Haitians would say, "This is what we need. This is ours. Small is beautiful."

Q: In February 2004, two individuals left Haiti: Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Mike Norton. Can you tell us about the circumstances of your departure?

NORTON: The two departures did have something to do with each other, if I may say so. It's not because, having been a fervent supporter of Aristide, I was afraid of staying which those who led the movement to oust Aristide might have thought, although I don't think they thought that about me. I don't think I was of considerable importance. If I wasn't writing anything, they could not care less what I thought. I left because I was ill. I was very ill. I had been ill for more than a year, and I was carrying this tumor under my arm around with me. This tumor was delighted to stay on. It was growing, growing, growing, growing. I was tired. I was worn out. Not burnt out, but worn out. I was completely disgusted with the movement to oust Aristide. I believed in his ouster. I believe it was a necessary good for the country, but when I saw the people and I listened to their demands, I foresaw. It wasn't a prophecy; it follows as a bowel movement does a stomach ache. You don't have to be very intelligent. Just look at the people who are ousting him. The worst elements of reactionary regimes.

Q: Guy Philippe?

NORTON: Guy Philippe. It was more than Guy Philippe, my God. The ragtag and bobtail army of so-called soldiers had obviously been trained with the complicity of the Dominican Secret Services, and if the Dominican Secret Services knew about it, they were under orders from the Company. It was impossible. You don't train two hundred soldiers or twenty soldiers on Dominican soil without the Dominican Secret Service knowing. And the Dominican Secret Service and the CIA are hand in glove. Come on.

And, the bourgeoisie, more or less, I'm not quite sure who financed them. So they had the money and they had the permission and then they entered when things really got raw. Aristide had boxed himself in. The OAS had demanded certain things. In order for Aristide to give them what they wanted, he had to attack his own base, his own "popular organizations." His popular organizations, at least a part of them, turned against him in open revolt. The society wanted no more of him, and I was reporting all of this in this extraordinary upheaval.

It was Independence Day, celebrating independence from France and Gonaives was up in arms against Aristide. I'll never forget that. The people of Gonaives did not celebrate. Gonaives is where the independence was declared. Aristide, in spite of warnings, decided to go out there. It was a town that was shut down. In its better moments, it was bleaker than the bleakest slum in the United States, but it attained its nadir when Aristide arrived. It was shut down. In order to get some spirit into this affair, he came along with I think it was Maxine Waters and her husband. I

think she went up there with him. Mbeki wasn't there. It was too dangerous. It was crazy to go out there.

Q: He was in Haiti.

NORTON: He was in Haiti, but he didn't go out there. I think he was warned. He was quite right. Get this scene, on the public square these pro-Aristide bands which he had brought with him for the occasion from the capital. No locals appeared. And they were singing songs and scattering pictures of Aristide, etc. Music, rah rah rah Aristide. And on the roofs there were these black-masked policemen taking potshots at anybody they saw in the surrounding that had left his house. Simultaneously. Well, finally it ended and then there was a motorcade and groups/gangs threw stones and it was...the sky did fall on Gonaives that day. Heartbreaking.

I had already wept all my tears for Haiti, but I would have wept for Haiti on that day if I had had any tears left to weep. This is how you commemorate one of the greatest events in world history? The unloved president praised by glutton minstrels while your pretorian guard is shooting at the local population? I was ill. I was worn out. I saw no good coming. There was no sense. And I saw a window of opportunity, how I could somehow have closure. Lovely word: closure. The end of a book. Fin, you see it on a fish. Fin.

So I thought it would be poetic if I were to leave. So I knew he was going and I had one week or so before hinted to the American embassy that I needed help to get out. There was no way out. The airports were closed. Everything was... I had hinted to the American embassy that I was really very sick, and I really was. "Hey, I'm really sick." The public affairs officer was very preoccupied, I suppose by her pension plan. There was no responsiveness from the American embassy, and I had been very close, always, with the French embassy. I found it very much easier to speak with them. They were not playing the first role in diplomacy in Haiti. And since I love the French, I love Paris, and they were just nicer to me. All of them – the DCM's, the ambassadors, the political officers, with exceptions, of course. I just mentioned to my friend who was the DCM at the time of the French embassy that I'm really in bad shape. I have to get out of here. He sent, immediately, a cable to the defense minister in Paris, and the defense minister cabled him that I had authorization to leave Haiti on one of these Hercules.

And so the night before, I slept at the French embassy, and a motorcade crossed war-torn Port-au-Prince, and there on the airfield were two Hercules transport planes – an American and a French. Destination: the Dominican Republic. I went onto the French one. The American one? Damn their eyes.

In October 1993, as a result of what was known as the Governor's Island Accord, a cobbled-together agreement, which had as much chance of standing up as an agreement between two teenage potheads, to get a pro-Aristide government and Aristide would return at a certain time and the general would step down and la la la. Absolutely idiotic. There would be this American supply ship that would arrive in Port-au-Prince to begin the process. It was so stupid. I just don't have the time or the energy to go into this complex idiocy – this agreement that had been cobbled together at Governor's Island in New York City.

So here comes the ship and the rumor starts that they're soldiers. They're not suppliers. The militia that the army had used to control the country because the army was really small – only a couple thousand, seven thousand – and they got this militia – thugs, killers, former soldiers, out-of-work thieves, trigger-happy lunatics. They called that the FRAPH, which was a pun on the Creole word for “strike” or “blow.” And they showed up and they paraded on the wharf. “If they come, we’ll shoot.” Somebody kicked the ambassador’s car. It was incredible. It was so incredible. I have to speculate. First of all, this is the United States. The United States has informants. I know they had informants in the militia, the FRAPH. Don’t ask me how I know. And this handful of thugs frightens off a supply ship of the United States?

Q: This is Harlan County?

NORTON: Yah, Harlan County. And has the gall to kick the black limousine of the ambassador of the United States? Now, I would say that somehow the thugs were encouraged, and that the American embassy was not aware of it unless, of course, they had some kind of deal with the car repair man to fix the body and it was some kind of... I would say that it was a show and that part of the embassy was aware of it and part of the embassy wasn't.

Q: Vicki Huddleston was in the car, I believe.

NORTON: Right. So the chargé was in the car. It must have scared her. After a while you could interview her. It would be one of the exciting points of her life. She was rewarded later with the ambassadorship to Madagascar, I believe, where things were calmer. I'm sure this was one of the high points of her life. It probably was. I think that the Company had arranged it and the Company wanted the army to stay on as long as possible.

Q: What happened to you on that day?

NORTON: Anyways, so there I was covering the event, on the spot as always, breathing the fumes and the dust, getting sunburned. I wasn't yet carrying the tumor under my arm. That was a recurrence of melanoma that I had in 1998, a tumor on my back. After the recurrence in 2003, I think I wanted to die because I didn't see any reason to go on living and so I didn't treat it. But I had an opportunity to die on the day in question.

I was with an editor from the central office of AP and we covered that event and we ran back and forth. Then we went along Seaside Boulevard. We had heard that a senator had arrived and had shuffled off to the embassy, so we thought we'd get a quote from him. You know, you need a quote from an American official to make the article look official. So off we went on foot to the American embassy which was not that far away.

There we are in front of the American embassy. One of the trucks full of militia men bristling with assault weapons followed us and parked across the street from us. I would say that presence was hostile. They didn't insult us. I want to be absolutely truthful, so, if this were a court of law, I couldn't say I had been threatened. But they didn't stop for any dead dogs, and they stopped right in front of us. Right in front of the entrance to the American embassy, across the street from us.

And my friend, especially, became rather upset, and we rattled the gates of the American embassy. "Let us in! Let us in! Here's our passports. We're Americans. You see across the street? These are threatening..." and they refused to let us in. We were turned away from the American embassy with a truck full of hostile thugs. We had our papers. We had a reason to be there. They hadn't any orders to allow anybody in. I suppose it was locked down. After all, somebody had kicked the limousine of the ambassador. I mean, they may kick the wall of the embassy. Of course, if they shot us dead in front of them, that would have been less important. That was a lesson not learned, but it was a lesson. I have not forgotten. You don't ask the U.S. embassy if you're nobody for special treatment at any time. You will not get it.

Q: The date of that incident?

NORTON: I believe it was the thirteenth of October, 1993.

Q: Mike, let's have a general comment from you, if you're willing, on the people you met in Haiti – whether they were American diplomats, whether they were Haitian bourgeoisie, Haitian workers, American politicians, other journalists from other countries, diplomats from the U.S. but also from France, Spain, Mexico, Canada, and the temporary visitors (some people call them the parachute visitors who come from international organizations or the press to have a look at things and to try to find solutions) – any general comments on the various strata of people you got to know?

NORTON: Again, it's such a varied group. The job of many of them was to come down and make an evaluation as objective, that is to say as fair-minded, as possible. That includes by and large the journalists. Not always. There were puff pieces that were op eds at the beginning, especially. With the troubles in '86 until the fall of Aristide, many of the journalists were embedded in the embassy. That was clear. It was a strange country and they didn't know what to do. So, gosh, you get the American ambassador and that's always the feather in your cap. For some reason, if you can get the American ambassador into your story, that's really wonderful. That's a contradiction, in fact. Your mission is to get a hold of the situation and not to promote a policy, and you don't get from diplomats an evaluation of the situation no matter how it's couched. It's always part of policy.

So, you have the press, which, in my opinion, in Haiti, improved, gradually leaving the bar stool, leaving the marine guards at the American embassy, and going out, talking to people, and getting to know the country. Again, I am not heavily criticizing that because it was a strange country unknown to most of them. You had to speak French to talk to the people, la crème, but basically you had to speak Creole or you had to have a translator. It's never really good, in my opinion, to need a translator. You need someone because you have to, because you don't speak Arabic or whatever. But you never know who's going to check up on the translator. You never know who you're dealing with.

Anyways, it was not easy for journalists, and so they took the line of least resistance. That became less and less true. As it became less and less true for the diplomats and the officials who were in Haiti, they became more and more sensitive to the complexity of the situation without

necessarily committing themselves. Their commitment was to their job. That's true of everybody. Their commitment was to their job. It was their mission whether it was to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help me God or my publisher or my editor or my career, or to see how things were going and how possible it was or was not to implement the policy. This being the case, you had some people who were wonderfully intelligent and not doofuses at all who let me know they didn't believe what was going on, especially the long period of negotiation. There were high officials who were very, very savvy and winked, but again, their commitment is to their organization. That meant that it was not always amusing to meet these people.

I had some good journalist buddies and we could laugh a little, but you don't laugh with officials. I remember there was once this assessment by CARICOM and a question period. The leader of the delegation, who was a foreign minister, I believe of St. Lucia, and he talked about the fledgling democracy in Haiti. That's one of the models/clichés. Haiti is a country without a democratic tradition, it takes time, etc. Of course, I always said, "It certainly takes time. Everything takes time, but you have to begin in order to say it will take a long of time." That never was the case in Haiti.

Well, with the referendum of the Constitution, that was year 1 or year 0, but it didn't last very long, did it? Anyways, phrases, phrases, platitudes, bromides, lack of humor, lack of wit. It wasn't very much fun. So I asked for a comment on the word, "fledgling democracy," and I asked him whether or not he didn't think it was rather an unfledged democracy and whether the bird metaphor was apt in the situation. "What do you think about the nest and that what you have in the nest is a bird's egg, and the creature moving about in the nest is a lizard?" He didn't laugh. He didn't think it was funny. Maybe you don't think it's funny.

Q: I do!

NORTON: Anyways, that was, in fact, Haiti. There was an egg in the nest and there was a lizard in the nest, and the lizard was about to consume the last best hope of the dead bird who had laid that egg. That sort of thing happened all the time. You couldn't get a rise out of these people. Dead serious. Dead serious because their commitment was to their job, their office, their mission. Not Haiti. There are lots of jokes in history, but history is no joke.

Q: You may have just answered this question, but I propose we end this third interview with your assessment of the OAS and how they behaved and what they achieved, if anything, in the last decade before Aristide's departure.

NORTON: Again, I'm not so clear about the motives. I'm not so clear about whether the objective was to get anything done or just to march in place. I don't know. It's obvious that their objective, which was to get people to sit down at the table and work on a negotiation, was a complete failure. Their persistence was remarkable and funny. Of course, it was a joke I could share with nobody. Luigi Einaudi was, I think, a smart man, but you couldn't get a rise out of him on the subject. He kept on coming back, kept on coming back, 25, 26 times, I don't know. It was completely ridiculous as though, how is it possible that these Haitians can be so stubborn? What's the matter with them? We're the OAS. We're big people. Who do they think they are? Haitians think a lot of themselves. They are the descendants of the freed and unfreed slaves who

ousted the master, who defeated the French colonial army, the greatest army the world had ever seen. Well, of course a good deal of time has passed, but that megalomania is part of the Haitian character. That's who they are. I find that not funny. I find that touching. After all, Haitian independence is one of the glories of world history.

The problem, of course, is that Haitian leadership has not been a very worthy custodian of it. Who are these guys? They just don't come to reason. Lovely, another word, *reason*. Come to reason. They don't come to reason. I spoke to these people. Their reason is not your reason. Their criteria are not your criteria. These are people who are possessed by gods, who can be possessed by gods. Haiti is a country that has a greater population of dead spirits walking about than live bodies. This is a country that functions, to a large extent, on black magic. It's not what you think. This is a country of carnival. This is a former slave society. It's still a slave society in many ways. Haitians are not individuals in the way that you are an individual. Their individuality is lived in a different way. Who are they to defy the OAS? Who are those soldiers who took that ball, made a touchdown, and kept on running. What's the matter with them? Come on back!

Well they didn't want to come on back. As I said, they didn't understand that it's, "Yes massa," and when you turn your back, they jump on you and slit your throat. They didn't understand that, and that was funny. Their naiveté, their subtlety. I mean, I don't know what they were doing. They're too subtle for me. Their subtlety in the face of this extraordinary distinction of cultures was enormously funny.

The last time I saw Luigi Einaudi was in a hotel where the negotiations were going on. I don't know. I like a lot of people I guess I shouldn't like. I like people. Why not confess it? I didn't like Aristide. He was just too evil and oof, he scared the shit out of me. But I liked a lot of soldiers. And I liked some of Aristide's followers. And I liked Luigi Einaudi. His persistence. He was doomed. I am not an excommunicator.

Q: What was he trying to do?

NORTON: Trying to get people to sit down at the same table. Of course, there was no table, in fact. Anyways, he was walking out of the conference room and I was beside him. And, as we walked in the hotel, a large vase leaned over and fell. Nobody touched it. And I said, "Mr. Einaudi, welcome to Vodou. Nobody touched that vase, you walked by, and it fell over. You're a big man."

Q: This will conclude the third interview – Dan Whitman interviewing Mike Norton in Puerto Rico on September 7th, 2007. One more interview to come.

This is Dan Whitman interviewing Mike Norton. The fourth interview, this one in the afternoon of September 7th, 2007.

Mike, on April 3rd, 2000, an assassination took place - at the time, Haiti's best-known journalist, Jean Dominique. Can you tell me what went through your mind that day?

NORTON: Haiti's best-known journalist. That's the lead of all of our articles. It is, of course, extremely misleading. He was Haiti's best-known, we'll talk about what he was best-known as. Jean Dominique, "Jean Do" to his familiars. I was not one of his familiars. I knew him very well. I crossed his path frequently. I was often attacked on his radio station. Jean Dominique was not the legend that has been made of him. Jonathan Demme made a film. He called it The Agronomist. He was trained as an agronomist, but, again, this is my view of Jean Dominique, that's misleading. He had that capacity. He had a vision for the Haitian peasants. There's no question about that. He died trying to set up a peasant union, but he wasn't an agronomist. Jean Dominique was a political animal. Political in every fiber of his body. Anyways, in every fiber of the body I ever saw and came into contact with. Power. Power to decide. Power to guide. Power to control. Power to direct. All of those infinitives. Anything that had to do with power. He was not a politician, but he was a political animal. Jean Dominique was not a journalist. Jean Dominique was a power in Haiti, and that power that he manifested in the 1970's was magnificent.

It took a lot of courage to face off against the Duvaliers. Jean Dominique, by giving birth to the free press movement, announced the freedom to come, announced the new power, a power that would take into consideration the people, the vast majority of the people. Their needs, their desires, their aspirations, that would wrest it from the hands of a small minority. That small minority – the military, the upper class – was Jean Dominique's enemy. Jean Dominique had an idea of justice that was one of class justice. In many ways, he was as archaic as his opponents. He very easily dismissed people because of their association. On several occasions on his radio stations – he was an editorialist on his radio station – he would attack the international press, the wire services, as agents of imperialism. This was his opinion. It was never based on anything.

Jean Dominique was responsible for having several people thrown into prison. Enemies that belonged to that class, the hated class of the bourgeoisie and the military. The idea of a fair trial, of the truths appearing never was particularly one of his considerations. He wasn't interested in that. He was interested in a new class arriving to power, a class that would open the possibilities of the future to the vast majority.

Jean Dominique was not a journalist. He was the owner of a radio station and an editorialist. On occasion, if you wish, a journalist, but it was not his thing. He was not interested in ferreting out the truth. He was interested in denouncing. He was interested in forming an opinion. Jean Dominique was an opinion maker. Jean Dominique was also the eminence grise of Aristide for a while, and for the current president, René Préval. Jean Dominique did not have the scruples of a journalist. Jean Dominique accused. Jean Dominique led people to believe with his irony, with his sarcasm, and, at times, with his downright nastiness. All of this is not very politically correct to say about this man who, after all, did die heroically, and I'll come to that in a moment.

I cried two times. I wept bitter tears two times for Haiti during my stay. One was on the 29th of November 1987 when the army crushed the mass democratic movement as it was on the way to the polls, and the second was on April 3, 2000, when Jean Dominique was killed. The two events are very much tied together. Jean Dominique was the voice, in 1970, of a new future, of a new power, of a new distribution of power. In fact, that possibility had already been nipped in the bud in 1987, in my opinion. The leadership had demonstrated itself absolutely incompetent to lead

Haiti anywhere than in a circle, a deepening circle, a deepening disastrous circle. People lost something – the hope, the certainty of ultimate victory. Jean Dominique announced that victory before the people took him up on it. They were tied together, but, in fact, in my opinion, it was dead before Jean Dominique was killed.

But Jean Dominique did die heroically. Jean Dominique, who prided himself on his independence of power, of course, because the power he attacked was dictatorial and he was advocating another power, was, in fact, working hand in glove with Aristide. He called Aristide “the Prophet” before he became president. He was Aristide’s man. Aristide could count on him. He also had the ear of René Préval (1996-2000) when Préval was in power advising him, I think advising him to try to find an independent basis of power independent of Aristide. Jean Dominique tried to form an independent peasant union which was destroyed by Aristide.

(A word might be appropriate here on the biblical notion of false prophesy. From Jeremiah 14: “ ‘A lying vision, an empty divination, the deceit of their own contriving—that is what they prophesy to you! Assuredly,’ thus said the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy ‘in My name though I have not sent them, and who say, “Sword and famine shall not befall this land”; those very prophets shall perish by sword and famine. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be left lying in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword, with none to bury them.’”)

Jean Dominique, gradually in the months before the election or the weeks before the legislative election in the year 2000, suddenly changed the tone. I noticed this the week before his assassination. I also noticed that he approached the American embassy. He wanted to interview somebody from the American embassy. He wanted to interview me. That meant, in his mind, he was trying to widen his base. He saw me as an antenna, as an extension of the American embassy. That’s the way he thought. He wanted to interview me. He wanted to interview somebody from the American embassy. And in his programs, it became clear that some of the information that didn’t come out before was coming out.

There was violence in the provinces, election-related violence, and he clearly stated that the perpetrators were members of Aristide’s party. I couldn’t believe it. This began about a week or so before his assassination. I couldn’t believe it. I said, “Oh my God, what’s happening?” What was happening was, for some reason, Jean Dominique didn’t agree with Aristide anymore and began to see him as somebody who had to be stopped. One of the reasons was that Aristide was an advocate of black power. Advocate...he was using racism to try and win over the population that he was losing. One of his supporters, a former soldier and then senator, made incendiary remarks against Jean Dominique, and black power seemed to be on the rise. Jean Dominique was from an upper class mulatto family. He hated the bourgeoisie, but he was not a racist. He saw the handwriting on the wall, in my opinion, had ambitions, even though people close to him deny that he had presidential ambitions.

I don’t see him running for president either, he was the fourth estate. I think he was moving toward a propaganda attack against Aristide. And he was killed on the third of April. He was killed while recovering his independent voice, and that was moving and that was great and that,

for me, redeemed him in my eyes, for Jean Dominique was nothing for me more than a lackey of power of the Lavalas power for a number of years. And he saw the error of his ways.

And he returned to the fold. I was very deeply moved. I was deeply moved and moved to tears. The hope of Haiti was, I think, extinguished before Jean Dominique died, but that independent stand was heroic. Heroism was still possible in Haiti, and what Jean Dominique would have become was nipped in the bud.

Who killed Jean Dominique, I don't know, but one thing I can tell you, nothing I say will stand up in court, nothing happens in a country like Haiti, nothing of that nature can happen without the tacit approval or explicit order of the president. That's all I can say. Things don't just happen.

A man was asked to be Culture Minister by Aristide. He turned it down. The next day his wife was shot in the head. A friend of mine, outraged for some reason, invited to the palace, told Aristide off, said that she didn't believe he was going down the right path. She didn't agree and would not support him. A week later she was attacked by four thugs and was gang raped. Coincidence? What a strange coincidence. And the stories that don't come to mind readily which other people have certainly recorded, are legion. Coincidences? The president in Haiti, so long as he has power, is a mythological being. To be president is an obsession with people. They dream of it. I'm talking about people who have a certain amount of power or education. Literally dream about it.

I had one friend who later became president of one of the many electoral councils, and I asked him, "Now why did you take on this terribly difficult job?" He said, "Well, I didn't want it. The Catholic Church who chose me to be their representative on it did. Except that one night I was dreaming and I dreamt I was in church, and, as I left the church, I heard a voice saying, 'Where are you going, Mr. President? Where are you going, Mr. President?'" For him, this was a clear designation by heavenly powers that he be president of the electoral council, and that, he told me, is why he accepted. Every Haitian young boy dreams of becoming president obviously because it's a country which is very oppressed, where powerlessness is the rule and the president is the Supreme Power. Again, when I say supreme power, put S and put P in capital letters; it's mythological. It's not Mr. President. You don't dare do things in a country like that the way you do them in a country like the United States. Satire is very dangerous unless, of course, the president is losing power, in which case there are no limits to the hatred that is expressed toward him.

Q: On April 3, 2000, the president of Haiti was René Préval. Explain the relationship between René Préval and Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

NORTON: René Préval was an activist, attended Aristide's sermons before the fall of Duvalier. He joined a group of upper class people who were trying to concoct some presidential candidate after the fall of Duvalier. It was an upper class group, and they didn't want any of the presidential candidates already there. They wanted something new. They groomed Aristide, in fact. Aristide had the touch. Aristide had magic. Aristide had charisma. Aristide could rouse people. He certainly could in small groups. He was amazing. In large groups it was different, but in small groups he could inspire them in a kind of call and response interaction. Sermons.

Participatory sermons using symbols that everybody understood but that couldn't make him blamable by the power in place. Remarkable man.

And they approached, and they made continual advances toward Aristide until finally Aristide, who I think always wanted to run for president, did run for president in 1990. René Préval was a member of his group, and when Aristide had to choose his partners, he chose René Préval to the astonishment of everyone associated with Aristide in the back halls of power, the total astonishment. René Préval was a street activist. He owned a bakery, I think. He had some job as an accountant. He was not particularly articulate, really very modest, and suddenly he's promoted to prime minister. Well, Aristide believed he could control him and Aristide wasn't wrong. Aristide proceeded, when he was president for the first time, to cut all attachment to the party that had nominated him, to any other party, and to begin his own thing in complete independence. It was, in fact, a movement that isolated him from his base, that weakened him finally when the new power had to confront the military.

René Préval didn't do a very good job according to the Parliament, and in August they tried to censure him. He was very clear. He said, "Censure me. I'm not going." And Aristide told the Parliamentarians in private, "If you censure him, I'm going to make a speech to the people and you'll see what happens."

The day that the censure was to take place, the Parliament was surrounded by Aristide's thugs, and then it was really rowdy. Préval was not censured, and, when Aristide was overthrown by the army in September 1991, I think he went to the French embassy and spent many difficult, difficult months in the embassy until he finally was able to go into exile, returned and was Aristide's candidate and spent the next couple of years unable to find an independent political base in spite of the help of Jean Dominique. He didn't have any ideas. His ideas weren't that different from Aristide. That's part of it. He didn't have an independent personality, and since there were such great difficulties between the legislature and the executive, finally he shut them out or he called the closure of the parliament, and he appointed his own prime minister and ruled by executive decree. This caused all kinds of problems with the international community, but he went on until the end of his term.

Q: On April 3, 2000, who had the power?

NORTON: Aristide *had* the power, but Préval was *in* power. Look, I think it was shortly after he took power, gunmen attacked his sister, shot his sister. You know? That doesn't happen just like that. He was under a death threat. Today, he is president, overwhelmed by problems, short of imagination, and heir to all of the problems I already mentioned. But Aristide isn't there, so, if he fails, he has nobody to blame.

Q: The last point, maybe two, on the death of Jean Dominique. His widow, Michelle Montas, survived him and is currently the spokesperson for the Secretary General of the United Nations. Do you have a sense of where she fit into the whole constellation in early 2000?

NORTON: Michelle Montas was the journalist. She was the head of the newsroom. She has a degree from the Columbia School of Journalism. As I said, her husband was a power broker, not

a journalist. He was an opinion maker. Michelle Montas ensured the integrity of the news that came out of their station which was Haiti-Inter. Jean Dominique controlled all.

Michelle Montas, I don't understand her reaction after. Perhaps it was fear. I don't understand why she has not made any accusations. Again, maybe it's fairness. Maybe she doesn't feel that there's any justification to, but, as I said, nothing happens in a country like Haiti without some sort of agreement from the president, and that man is Jean-Bertrand Aristide. I don't see any motive from any other sector of the society. Jean Dominique always attacked the supporters of the former dictatorial regimes. There was nothing special about April 2000. There was only one thing special about April 2000, which was that the country was entering a new electoral period that would culminate in the return to power of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and her husband had changed his tune.

Q: Yesterday you suggested that "the state" marked a change in the Haitian culture and the Haitian values. You said just now that your hope for Haiti's future had been snuffed out or compromised long before that date, but can you see implications for the Haitian society tied to that date, the date of his assassination?

NORTON: If Jean Dominique had lived, if Jean Dominique had been able to lay out an alternative to Aristide's power, maybe things would have been different. I doubt it because Jean Dominique was archaic. They had no particular fondness for forms. Constitutional, legislative, or executive...I think maybe things would have been different, but the megalomaniac idea that somehow I know what's good for the country and I will be able to do what's good for the country...that's so common in Haiti and yet the poverty of ideas is also flagrant. I think it would have been another cult of personality.

Jean Dominique died at the summit, as I said, heroically, because he recovered his independent voice, which didn't mean that he became a lover of the truth or a lover of justice, but his idea of power changed. The reluctance or unwillingness or refusal of his wife to shake the bars, shake the gate of the presidential palace was perhaps a political move. The ethical stance would have been different.

I remember when, several years before, a very prominent individual was assassinated by the military. It was under the government of Pascal Trouillot, I think, in 1991, and that transitional president was governing with the State Council. One of the State Council members was gunned down. It was obviously complicity between the executive and...what had happened because the State Council and the executive were in a conflict of power. They didn't agree on certain things and who was stepping on whose toes? It was a tense moment, and in that tense moment, Serge Villard was gunned down. And I remember the funeral. I remember the Information Minister coming to extend his sympathy and pay his respects to the widow, Mrs. Villard. He came into the chapel and approached her. She refused to touch his hand. I think she got up and told him to go. That was not very political, was it?

Q: No.

NORTON: I was the one who called Mrs. Villard and told her that her husband had been wounded. I called her. I felt close to her. The admiration I felt for her transcends the categories that dominate Haitian mind. The ethical stand: you are a member of a government. I'm not saying that you killed him, but you are responsible for the death of my husband. I will not touch your hand, and I refuse to admit your presence in my presence. Isn't that what it means to be a human being? And to honor the memory of her husband? Shut down the political shop. Michelle Montas did not shut down the political shop, and that's all I have to say about it.

Q: Let's approach some conclusions. You've given a number of hours of your recollections, your trajectory from childhood until your departure from Haiti in 2004. Would you like to comment on, shifting gears here, now you've made a distinction between the press and journalism. You've made a distinction between the objectives of journalists as professionals and of diplomats as professionals. Can you comment on the difference of the mission of doing and the mission of observing?

NORTON: Yes. I think the case of Jean Dominique will exemplify the first distinction. The press is a power. Its goal is power. It influences. It is what publishers of newspapers do. It's why publishers buy newspapers: so that they can influence policy. It's a power. It forms public opinion which, in democracies, counts. No one's going to contest that the press is a power.

In Haiti, the press was a power for the democratic movement, and often very heroic. Jean Dominique, in fact, isn't the only one, but he gave birth to that new power. After the fall of Duvalier, dozens of radio stations sprung up. You could, and I did, from three o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night, listen to one radio station after another in a constant stream of news. I don't know of any other country where that is possible. My radios were on from two forty five, I think it was, until eight or nine o'clock, until I couldn't stand it anymore. I went from one station to the other, one station to the other. What was happening? Hundreds of journalists were out on the street. Paid with pennies, struggling, and of course sometimes there were corrupt journalists, but by and large, the Haitian press was a power for democracy. Again, a power.

Journalists, it's different. In Haiti, and I think elsewhere, too, the distinction is forgotten. Journalists are workers. If they work hard, they may acquire authority. The goal of a journalist is to acquire authority. I trust him! Hey, guys, did you hear what he said? I trust him. He has authority because he's earned a badge.

So the press is about power, and journalism is about authority, and journalists are workers. And they should organize as workers and they have to often deal with owners of the media that want them to say one thing rather than another because their business is power. Their business is not the truth. Truth and power are uneasy bed fellows. For many years in Haiti, there was no ambiguity. The press wanted democracy. Except what is democracy? Well, we found out, didn't we? The so-called participatory democracy of Aristide that Jean Dominique supported for many years was one form of democracy. His power, the power of his press, became for me ambiguous. But he was at least clear. Other stations didn't take such strong stands. So that's an important distinction.

In the United States there are embedded journalists, especially in Washington. Aren't there? And they are used as instruments of power. They have forgotten that their job is not just to interview State Department officials or Defense Department officials but to investigate the whole picture. The New York Times before Iraq is the best example, but also the series of anti- or the pro-Bush books by the Washington Post reporter, Woodward's more or less pro-Bush series of books. And then finally when the wind is turning, he comes out with a book contesting the wisdom of the leaders. He's in bed with them. He socializes with them. And I understand very well it's a temptation. You forget it and they become your pals. You forget that you're a journalist and that you're not a power broker.

Very often, I was tempted. I had a lot to do with everyone in power. I knew the presidents. I knew the ministers. I knew the politicians. I talked to them. Wow. And what if I said something, what if I reported an event that reflected badly upon them? In Haiti, they don't forgive.

Leslie François Manigat was a personal friend for many years from before, from the 1970's. He became president in 1988 as the result of a rigged election. If Mr. Manigat reads this interview and hears that I believe that he was president because of a rigged election, an election rigged by the military, he will never speak to me again. Well, we're both pretty old. He'll probably never speak to me again anyways, but incredible. People called me on the phone and insulted me because I had put them in the same article as a political enemy. Can you imagine? "You put me in the same article with that SOB?" "But you didn't say what he said; you said the opposite." "But you put me in the same..." I mean, I put them in bed? That did not happen once. And then you lose a source. And then what do you do when something happens? It's very, very difficult.

When you're a journalist embedded in the country or embedded in the milieu, when you're a Washington Beat journalist, you have to have the source. If you don't have the sources, you don't have a job. And in my case, it was so easy. Sometimes it was dangerous. In the coup d'état, it was more than dangerous to report the misdeeds of the military. It meant that I had the militia at my door. That happened. You have to go into hiding. That happens. But you have to be clear. You're not the power broker if you're a journalist. You don't own your medium. You are a worker. You work for them. And sometimes at cross purposes because you have a different objective. You're lucky when you work together, but it's not essentially the case.

So far as the journalist and the diplomat, the diplomat has a mission to accomplish. He may not agree with it and he may inform the State Department or the embassy, that things aren't really the way they are believed to be, but he's there to represent his country. He's there to carry out a policy. And he will justify it whether it's justifiable or not.

A journalist, if he's worth his salt, has a mission to evaluate a situation – to get the facts, to interview the key players, to give the reader a sense of the lay of the land. He doesn't have a policy. If he depends upon the embassy, for example, as chief source, he will skew things totally. That happened often at the beginning of my career in Haiti for foreign journalists, especially the big ones, who came down and basically were informed by the American embassy and their credible informants. So these are distinctions – the distinction between the power and authority, the press and journalism, and, in between, the mission to accomplish and the mission to inform. They, when I speak like that, seem so separate, but when you are in the field, it's confusing.

Q: Confusing in what ways? In what ways can a mission of accomplishment and a mission of finding the truth intersect or contradict each other? And taking back to the comment about Adams...I had something to do...your belief of responsibility as a journalist...you responded to that before. I want to give you another chance to think that over.

NORTON: The diplomat may have a just evaluation of the situation, but it's only part of the picture. You're taken in, and also you're human as a journalist. You like these people. You trust these people. You don't realize, it's not that they're trying to pull the wool over your eyes, you're at cross purposes. They're not trying to abuse you. He's just giving a mission to accomplish as a piece of information. You know, it's not flagged as a mission to accomplish. You believe him, you trust him, and you assess the situation that way, too. And then you're lost because you can't take your cues from people who have missions to accomplish. That's how it's confusing. You can't take your cues from people...I'll give you an example.

I think it's a beautiful example. The 2000, it was the first round of the 2000 legislative elections. I was there with a very experienced reporter from the Central Bureau who had covered many elections in Africa. I had covered several in Haiti, but she had covered many in Africa. It was a mess. The dishonesty was patent. Ballot boxes burst open and ballots strewn in the street, miscounting, you name it. It was visibly a mess, but the international community wanted Haiti to go away. They wanted the pain in the ass to go away, but instead of taking Ibuprofen, they took morphine.

Now, morphine is hallucinatory. A very dear friend, who was Public Affairs Officer at the French embassy, took some French officials around and came back to me radiant saying, "This is one of the most beautiful elections I've ever seen." I thought I was going crazy. This was my very dear friend. The press, the big press – I think the Post, the New York Times, I'm not sure which ones, but the most important ones – reported a fantastic advance in the electoral experience in this country without a democratic tradition. It was a great election! Wow, they got a legislature afoot that is going to be legitimate and things are going to be good. And there won't be any more boat people, and we can turn our attention to what? But not to this little bitty country that's driving us crazy. And that's dirty and who knows what. We, The Associated Press, reported a shambles. We reported highly irregular voting, highly irregular tallying. My friend who knew from Africa said she had never seen something as bad, anything as bad, in Africa. Well, I've seen elections as bad in Haiti, but it sort of put things in perspective. And we stuck to the story.

The next day, I think it was at a press conference, we were blackballed, shunned by all of the reporters. I think one of the big editors, maybe it was the Washington Post, called our head office to complain about us. Luckily, the head office said, "They are the reporters in the field. We do not influence their reporting." Two or three days later, the IRI (International Republican Institute) came down. Porter Goss was the head at that time. Not exactly my cup of tea, but, God, at the time, Haiti was a political football between the Republicans and the Democrats, and so, it was in the interest of the Republican party to tell the truth. Oh, they saved our ass. They gave a beautiful, detailed report on the mishandling of the elections. And there we were. That was the end of the heat. We came out looking very good. We came out triumphant. I mean, The Associated Press

had stuck to its guns. The directive was from the embassies, "These are good elections." They cannot not be good elections. They must be good elections. Therefore, they are good elections. Blinding well-intentioned people. Blinding competent journalists. You don't take your cue from the powers that be.

Q: Not to contradict you, but the United Nations, the OAS, the U.S., the EU, and a number of individual countries, Canada and others, questioned the tabulation process. I think what you're describing is not the tabulation but the actual day of election.

NORTON: I'm describing everything. All of that came after. I'm talking about reporting the event. I'm talking about the day. Not a week after when the powers that be said it's really not that good, is it? We can't cover this. I'm talking about the moment. This is the moment. If everybody on the ground had said it was really great, then it would have been really great. We didn't, and in came the IRI to add its power to the situation, and then so it wasn't great. So it was great and then it wasn't great.

We didn't take our cue from the IRI. The IRI didn't follow us; they had their own agenda. What I'm saying is that the reporters that took their cue from the embassies got it all wrong, didn't see. They may have looked, but they didn't see. They may have listened, but they didn't hear. I repeat, you don't take your cues from the powers that be.

Q: We'll add one anecdote from the day of the first elections. I think it was in May. A senior U.S. official, actually during the day of the voting, said, "I see that this is going south. I'm out of here." That's a quote. He saw what was happening. He never said it publicly, but his response was to simply depart, to say nothing. Mike, let's now go into the final question. What might be the various possible futures for Haiti, and why should we care?

NORTON: I'll begin on a positive note. Haiti will survive me. So the door's open. The door's open for a nation. The door's not always open for an individual. So what do I know.

On the other hand, if you extrapolate from the situation now, extrapolate with no unforeseen event, then the future's not bleak. It's pitch black. If the Haitians don't get an economic development program together, if the Haitians do not get their institutional problems solved, get some coordination between the legislature, the executive if they don't get a judicial system functioning, if they're not able to attract foreign investment and control the nature of that foreign investment so that it's appropriate for its own development goals, if the donor nations do not open a door of altruism, if if if if, then it's hopeless. What does it mean hopeless? It means Haiti, as we know it, dies. It means Haitians will no longer recognize themselves. This is a subtle concept. I don't know whether I am up to treating it.

How does a country die? How does a people die? One thing we know is that oodles of peoples have died in the western hemisphere in the last five hundred years. It wouldn't be the first. The original settlers, the aborigines, were killed off. The Haitian people can die, too. How does a people die if they're still alive? It's by losing its identity.

I'll give you an example. The American people can sicken and wither away if the Republic dies and the American people no longer recognizes itself as a free nation. If the principal value of the American society is security – not job security, but security from, I don't know, the Huns, the Mongol hordes – then America will die. The American tradition will die.

In Haiti it's more delicate, because a Haitian is a member of a collective entity called Haiti. It's not a country. It's not a place really. Haiti is a state of mind in a certain sense, or rather a soul state. People participate in that. If that whole, if there is no longer a carnival possible in Haiti, if the collective body is no longer vital, if Vodou dies, if people get sick because of black magic and can no longer find the cure because the herbs that would cure have become extinct because there are no longer any trees to protect the vegetation underneath, if Haiti turns into a desert.

Haitians are from Africa. They're from equatorial Africa – Angola, Dahomey, places like that, the Congo – they're not desert dwellers. If there's no memory cultivated, if even the mythology of Haiti, if the extreme etiquette which governs peasant life is no longer possible to maintain. No population I've ever met is as polite as the illiterate Haitian. There's the tradition, there's an etiquette, courtly etiquette – if that dies – if on Sunday morning the slum dweller mother no longer braids the hair of her daughter and no longer makes sure that her pinafore is straight and simon pure clean, if that mother doesn't care any more about things like that, Haiti will die. There is only so much suffering that people can take. Haitians can take an awful lot of it, but at a certain moment, the suffering gets the better of life. Pain destroys creativity. Pain. Where were we. Pain...

Q: Destroys creativity.

NORTON: Stop there...

[Pause]

Pain is evil. The pain that Haitians can endure and have endured for centuries may become too great in which case Haitians will lose their sense of themselves, will turn into something else. The events of the last few years have shown one taboo after another falling by the wayside. Attacking a church. This was in 1988. Attacking a church. You don't attack churches. Stabbing a pregnant woman – that took place on the eleventh of September 1988. Stabbing a pregnant woman in the belly with a pig sticker. Certain things that didn't happen before. Kidnapping and torturing a foreigner didn't happen. Certain things didn't happen. There were certain limits.

Those limits are now extinct. Anything goes. That kind of insecurity may have a temporary low, but the taboo is dead. The harm has been done. When it is all right, when it is a daily occurrence to create such havoc, then the handwriting is on the wall for that society. Certain things can't happen, and, if they do, then that society cannot survive. It will become something else. I don't know what it will become, but Haiti, the Haiti that rose up and freed itself and proclaimed the universality of human rights – it's not the French that proclaimed the universality. Well, they may have said it. Instead, it's the Haitians that demanded it and won it. The universality of human rights. That will disappear from the face of the earth.

CLAUDIA ANYASO
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Port-au-Prince (1988-1990)

Ms. Anyaso was born and raised in North Carolina and was educated at Morgan State University and American University. She joined the State Department in 1968, where she specialized in Education and Cultural Affairs, with particular regard to African countries. She had several tours in Washington as well as abroad. Her foreign assignments include Lagos, Abuja, Port-au-Prince and Niamey, where she served primarily as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer. Ms. Anyaso was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Today is the 9th of October 2009 with Claudia Anyaso. Claudia, you are off to Haiti did you take Creole or French or something?

ANYASO: I took French because I felt I could use that language in many more places, Creole is somewhat limited although they told me that they speak a kind of Creole in Mauritius but I took French.

Q: Creole is a French word for mixture or something like that.

ANYASO: Exactly.

Q: Okay, what was your job?

ANYASO: I had been cultural affairs officer in Nigeria and I was also cultural affairs officer in Haiti.

Q: Let's get the date. You were there from when to when?

ANYASO: I got there, I think, in the fall of 1988 and I left in the summer of '90. I had a health problem and I left sooner than I had expected.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

ANYASO: When I was in Haiti the ambassador was Brunson McKinley. A rather interesting character and then I'm trying to remember. Before I left there was a new ambassador and I can't recall his name.

Q: Now tell me why Brunson McKinley was interesting.

ANYASO: Well you know there is a certain type-casting or stereotyping in the Foreign Service. Ambassadors are thought to be graduates from ivy league schools and they have the rimless glasses and blah, blah, blah. WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) that is the stereotypical

Foreign Service officer and he looked just like that. He was also a very knowledgeable person and he felt that he knew everything. Whatever your job was he knew it better and I really hadn't run into very many people like that at that time; I did later but at that time it was new to me. So it was sometimes hard to recommend things to him because he felt that he knew what was going on and he knew better. So I think, I know we had a bit of a run in over a cultural program. I think we were going to do a Martin Luther King program and I had some suggestions to make and he wasn't sure that these things would work. I said, "Why don't we give it a chance, let's see if it can work." They had two schools that the American kids in Haiti went to. One was the Union School which most of the diplomatic kids went to and one was a missionary school. So I got kids from the American school, the diplomatic school, and some from the other school to do a candlelight march onto the stage; they had little poems and readings to do. Then I had found an actor who was running a drug education program but anyway he was really an actor and I had him read the I Have A Dream speech. Anyway we had a very nice, it was small but very nice program. So he came to me afterwards and he said, "Well, you know, that really worked out just great." I said, "Yes, sir, Mr. Ambassador it really did thanks for all your help. But I really do know what I am doing." We got along fine after that, he just sort of got out of my lane, did the things he was supposed to be doing and let me run the cultural program.

Q: Okay, well let's take when you got there in '88 how would you describe the situation in Haiti?

ANYASO: '88 was a good window of time for our relationship. Baby Doc had just left and Papa Doc Duvalier had been a pariah for the American government and so was his son and deservedly so. They ruined the country, they sold everything that wasn't nailed down and if you visited the presidential palace it was totally empty. They had sold the railroad tracks to the Japanese for scrap metal, I mean it was just devastated; however, he left and that was a good thing. So the political situation was a bit influx with various candidates. Marc Bazin was one. I think Marc had either worked for the UN or World Health Organization or something and there were some other candidates. I think we were sort of leaning toward Marc because he seemed to be a very good guy. The generals were still around and in the barracks and still pretty much in charge behind the scenes. I'm a little hazy at this point but at some point they stepped in again so General Avril was running things for the first year or so that I was there.

Before I left, Ertha Trouillot, the first woman president of Haiti who had been a Supreme Court justice, was appointed president. Anyway, she became the president, they worked it all out and, in fact, one of our junior officers, Hoyt Lee, escorted General Avril to the airport, put him on the plane with his little poodle and off he went so the decks were clear. We felt that a new government era was in store for Haiti. There was a priest in Cite Soleil, which was a large slum in Haiti, Aristide; he was still a priest at that point who was working in the slums with young men and then slum dwellers and that kind of thing. However, he would go out of the country from time to time and make these very vitriolic anti-American speeches in Miami. I was never a fan of Aristide and I was shocked later on when he had been elected president and then I think he was thrown out and we, the U.S. government, helped to reinstall him because he had been democratically elected; sometimes even though it's a democratic election it's the wrong guy and I think he was always the wrong guy. Anyway, things were not as polarized when I was there as they had been before and so we had freedom of movement, we could move around, we could do things. The Ton Ton Macoutes, the Duvalier guards...

Q: These were the guys with the dark glasses who went around and they were bullies.

ANYASO: They were bullies and they threatened people and it was a terrible, terrible atmosphere when they were around; well they had gone away, they had sort of disappeared at that time. Economically we were hopeful for the economy of Haiti, they were still making the baseballs, and they made all the baseballs for all of our professional teams in the United States; that was a good business. The rum business was always good, Bacardi Rum; but there were a number of assembly line operations that had come down because Haiti is only about two hours from the United States by plane, by air. So it was close, you didn't have to ship things long distances, it was an ideal place to have light industry businesses. They started making beachwear and some other things. I think they might have even been assembling some cars; I wasn't the econ officer so I'm not quite sure of everything but it was hopeful. AID was there with their program and it was good. I thought culturally we had good programs for our exchanges, our IVs our International Visitors, our Fulbrighters, and we even had Humphrey people.

What I wanted to do more than anything else was to build up the speaker program when I was there because there was this fear when coming to Haiti that I wanted to get speakers down there to talk to the Haitians and get over this hump. So we did have quite a few speakers. Interestingly enough one of my first speakers was a Haitian American woman who was in social work but she had come down to talk about drug awareness. I believe her father, at one point, had been one of those quick presidents of Haiti, Hippolyte; sometimes you could be president for a month so I think her father had been one of those quick presidents of Haiti, they never quite got the leadership part right. Anyway, they have lovely museums; they had a couple of wonderful museums in Haiti. One was at the Place des Heroes, it was just for paintings and things like that and then they had the Museum of Haitian Art.

Q: That's really I mean that is really something.

ANYASO: Beautiful art, beautiful art and very popular in the United States; we had lots of tourists and visitors. The other thing that had happened to Haiti under the Duvaliers was that the tourist industry had fallen off tremendously; some of it was coming back but it just wasn't the same thing. They used to have cruise ships that would come and they would dock at Cap-Haitien in the north as a part of their tour of the Caribbean and those had stopped. They had one of the French...

Q: Club Mediterranean?

ANYASO: Yes, Club Med. They had one of those and that had closed so it was a little bit rocky but we were hopeful that things were going to get better. I worked with the university, there is one university there, I finally after many phone calls and cables I got a professor from one of the Florida universities to come down. He was supposed to be starting a linkage with the Haitian university and it had sort of been dropped so we got that reestablished. Haitian kids needed something to do and they had a sports commission there so we worked and I got a couple coaches to come down and help to coach the kids in basketball; so we got some things going again. It was a good program.

They have probably one of the best music schools in the Caribbean, in Latin America, basically run by some Episcopal nuns. The church was Sainte Trinite. And so when I had people I was looking for Fulbrighters maybe in music we had had a former Fulbrighter who had gone to Julliard and they went to that school. So I went over to talk to the nuns who were quite busy because every day when the planes came in from the States there were a lot of Americans who wanted to be helpful and they just come down to help. So this was a good thing but anyway I just went over to talk to the nuns and I said, "You know we are going to have our Black History Month program in Haiti, of course, Toussaint L'Overture but just the whole history of Haiti had been remarkable for its time so I figured there was a link there that we could have." They were quite nice and they said we could use their auditorium and I had been traveling around to various parts of the country; it's not very big it's half of an island you know. I had been traveling around and I heard this marvelous group, which had been in Les Cayes which is down south. I thought, oh yes, we need this group for our program. Then there were groups in Port-Au-Prince who knew we were doing something and my husband was working in a law office, he was consulting. One of the girls in his law office belonged to a gospel group and I said, "Sure come and bring Bernadette and her group." So we had them. I don't know whether you know that Katherine Dunham, the famous dancer...

Q: The famous dancer oh yes.

ANYASO: African American dancer.

Q: On the school of...

ANYASO: Of modern dance and hers was more...

Q: It was modern dance and talking about Martha Graham...

ANYASO: ...Martha Graham.

Q: ...of that ilk.

ANYASO: It was of that generation, it was that ilk, hers was more ethnic dancing; Martha Graham's was a little bit different but anyway they had all started together. Pearl Primus was another one and interestingly enough I think that she decided to make Haiti her home because a lot of the dancers in New York, certainly the Black dancers were Haitian Americans; fabulous dancers, fabulous singers but great dancers. So she had a home there and I started visiting her. It was a wonderful home and they call plantations in Haiti "habitaciones", habitacion, and so this particular habitacion had belonged to Napoleon's son-in-law who is actually buried in Haiti.

Q: Le Clerc or something.

ANYASO: Le Clerc, yes, exactly. So this was wonderful, very historic, very cultural and she knew everybody so she was a resource for me; she lived there. We were able to bring her to some of our programs. At that point she was not very mobile, she was not very well, she was in

her eighties but a fascinating woman. She had become a mambo, which is a voodoo priestess and so she had really gotten into the culture. It turns out she had done a lot of anthropological research in the Caribbean, Haiti, Jamaica, maybe Cuba but I know Jamaica and Haiti and had written about eight books on the cultures and the people in that area; she really was a great resource.

She was one resource and there was another American woman from Chicago whose name was Eileen Bazin who incidentally was married to Marc Bazin's, the politician's, brother. Anyway, I became friendly with Eileen who had a dance studio in Haiti and she had marvelous students; she taught them a certain technique of dance but she loved Alvin Ailey.

Q: It was the preeminent African-American ballet...

ANYASO: African-American Ballet Company in which the U.S. Information Agency had sponsored overseas many times to the Soviet Union. I think we were responsible for it being the Alvin Ailey American Ballet Company certainly for the overseas audiences. Anyway she loved Alvin Ailey and she had taught her kids some of his famous dances so I said, "Oh, I'm having this program Eileen do you think you could get the kids ready for the program?" She did and they were magnificent.

There was another American woman who was up in Petionville. Petion was a very famous Haitian general so they named this neighborhood after him. Most of the wonderful hotels and expats lived up there in Petionville. Anyway she had her jazz tap studio there and I couldn't very well invite Eileen without inviting her competition. I can't remember her name at the moment but I went up and I invited her and her kids to also do a number, too, on the show.

There was a fourth American women there who was also in dance, I really mean this sincerely that if it's dance it should be Haiti.

Q: I was just wondering I've interviewed I can't think of her name now but she was an African-American who worked on the Hill and she took ballet but it was hard for African-American women for the most part because of the configuration, a little too big of bust, a little too big of behind. But when you think of Haitians you think of rather slim people. I was just wondering...

ANYASO: It's true.

Q: ...would you say this was a factor?

ANYASO: I don't know that that was a factor I just know that they tended to be very successful and I'm not sure that the African-American's thought that those were traits that were detrimental or limiting in terms of ballet.

Q: This is actually probably a specific kind anyway you get all sorts of people.

ANYASO: Exactly. Now Lavinia Williams was also in that same age group with Martha and Katherine and she had a dance studio and she taught ethnic dancing and she also had a program

on Haitian television. So I was very good friends with Lavinia, I didn't have her and her kids on the program but we became good friends. It turns out that her youngest daughter was a ballerina and was the lead ballerina for the Atlanta ballet, all this dance. So on the night of the program I had about 700 people, with all these groups for this program. The one thing I don't do is and maybe it is because of my Meyers-Briggs type I don't rehearse people.

Q: You might explain what a Meyers-Briggs type is.

ANYASO: The Meyers-Briggs test is a test of personality. They assign personality traits and how they impact leadership and other things in your career. Then they have facets, which they go into in terms of your temperament and things like that. So my temperament is to be creative, I don't like routine or that kind of thing. So I didn't rehearse anybody I just said I want you on the program I worked out a program put them in various slots and said we are going to start at this time and I want you to be there and you will go on. Well, it was a magnificent program nobody realized it hadn't been rehearsed. I had the brother of one of my contacts in radio who had studied mime in Paris and he did a historical piece on African-American culture from slavery to freedom without saying a word; everybody talked about it for weeks. He was just tremendous. We had our former Fulbrighter who was a violinist and teaching in the schools in Haiti he did some selections, classical music. We had our choir, we had our dance groups and we had people reading. There was a woman who had lived in New York; a lot of Haitians live in New York they don't all live in Miami. She had lived in New York and come back to work with their ministry of culture and so I had Marie Lourde as the moderator and it was a great program.

Q: That brings up a good question. You are the American culture attaché when you are doing a program like this with an awful lot of talent within the country basically though you are trying to obviously encourage it but at the same time you are trying to portray America.

ANYASO: I am.

Q: How did you get the American thrust to this?

ANYASO: The American thrust was that Eileen's kids came in and did Alvin Ailey, an American choreographer/dancer. It's a Martin Luther King program so we are talking about civil rights, some of his speeches and readings so you have that. Jazz, of course, is American so the kids did the jazz dancing and some popular music, I think they did a Janet Jackson's piece; it was a Janet Jackson song they danced to. So yes I always had to have an American hook or core to my programs and they did it very well, they did extremely well. I don't think anybody else was really aware of how much talent there was in Haiti and they hadn't quite brought it all together so that people could see it and that was the comment that was made to me. That I had done something that they should have done but hadn't done in exposing all this talent and I had done it with an American twist. So they liked that.

I had a couple of music groups, the agency still sent out music groups to various countries, I had, oh golly I'm trying to remember, he was a trumpeter come down with his little trio and he was pretty well known in the United States. Yes, his name was Jimmy Owens. I think most of these

musicians lived in New York. My dream was to have them perform at the Sans Souci Palace, which was a famous palace in Haiti, which is now a ruin but the façade is still there.

Q: This is Henri Christophe, I think...

ANYASO: Henri Christophe's palace and if you looked that up and you have this band playing there it would be magnificent; that was the thinking; it was the Jimmy Owens trio. Well we went up I forget where we were going but it was up country and it rained. So we couldn't perform outside in front of this wonderful façade and the electricity had gone out so we spent some time trying to find the mayor of this little town to see if we couldn't get the electricity turned on because most of these instruments needed electricity. So we finally found him, they turned the electricity on, we found a high school auditorium and I thought we'll have no audience but we did, we had a pretty nice audience and they performed beautifully but that was an experience. While we were up there, however, they had to do some sightseeing and Haiti still has these little burros; we think of them when we look at our Westerns and televisions you have horses and these burros, especially Mexican burros.

Q: Very small...

ANYASO: Sort of small horses or mules. Anyway, but one of the tourist attractions was to get on these little burros and ride around and go up to the palace and that kind of thing; that was fun for them. Americans were always coming through; Haiti has interesting cultural ties to the U.S. and so there was a very famous poet, Quincy Troupe, who came down to Haiti and I was able to use him on a program. His wife had been an editor at the New York Times. Quincy, as I say was a poet fairly well known and he tends to be recognized as an expert on James Baldwin who is an African-American writer of some note especially in the sixties. Anyway I got him together with the writers in Haiti and there are many, many writers and that turned out to be a nice program.

I also had an actor/Director, William Reaves, come down. Haiti had a several TV stations and they had actors who performed in various programs at the various stations so we had an acting workshop. Now the gentleman who came down, I'm trying to remember his name and it's not going to come to me, but that turned out very well. So I'm on a roll, we are doing all kinds of things, there is a lot of activity, and I'm bringing different parts of the community together with Americans because, of course, we always invited our Americans to be at the programs. The ambassador would come to the programs and, in fact, we had some movie programs at his residence and it was all working very well; the American cultural program was alive and well.

Then I had another group, which was sort of a rock and roll band Luther Guitar, Jr. Johnson's band. Don't ask me, I didn't know him either and so Luther had his band come but something happened. He was going to perform in the Dominican Republic, which is the other part of the island of Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic and Haiti comprise the island. So they were going to perform in the Dominican Republic and then come over to Haiti; good, something happened to the plane and they were late. Our program was destroyed almost. By the time they got to Haiti we only had time for one program. So what to do? There was a Holiday Inn right down near the presidential palace right on this Place des Heroes which is what they called it and had a wonderful wide expanse, it was a plus it was a boulevard so we had that whole thing roped off.

One of the technicians at the radio station also had sound equipment and they rented it to musicians all the time and we got them to set up sound equipment. We just put them out on the plaza and they started playing and before we knew it we had five thousand people on the plaza dancing; it was like Carnival.

I had fun in Haiti they are wonderful people

Q: Tell me you were obviously part of the embassy, there is a public affairs officer, how did you relate to the public affairs officer?

ANYASO: She and I are still very good friends. Now she tended to handle all the press things, she knew about the radio stations, I dealt with them too from a cultural point of view but she was very pleased because the program had sort of been moribund. We had gotten it going, we had a very good cultural assistant and she participated too. She came to the programs, she was delighted that we could have ties to the university again and, as a matter of fact, when we were both leaving they invited us over to the university and they gave us these certificates for our contributions to the work that they were doing over there. Susan Clyde was my PAO and a very competent, very mild mannered person and we got along great; she was very supportive of me. I have four children so we had to make sure the house was okay and the school but she helped me through all of those kinds of things on a personal level as well as supported me in terms of the programs I was doing. I didn't have any problems at all; she was quite good.

Q: What was the feeling you got from the university? Was it one university because so often in other countries the university becomes the hot bed of oh Marxism and sort of anti-Americanism. It's the sort of thing where if you are at university you are anti-American and then you graduate and then you try to get a job at IBM. How did you find the university at that time?

ANYASO: The Haitian society is divided into two. You have an upper class and then you have the others. The upper class tends to be Mulatto and the others tend to be Black. So when you have a situation like that with many of the Mulatto's sending their kids overseas to schools a lot of them went to school in France, many went to school in the United States; we had educational advising and all of that. So you are left with the average and the lower class Haitians who see this university as a way to success and so there wasn't much philosophical thinking going on; people were bearing down wanting to take those courses and they were focused on that, learning as opposed to anything else so it wasn't a hot bed.

Q: Basically you were seeing a repetition of your experience? It was at Morgan State wasn't it?

ANYASO: Yes.

Q: I mean this was a way out of...

ANYASO: Yes you didn't have the luxury of protesting.

Q: ...the upper class kids who could play around and then daddy will get them a job after it's all over.

ANYASO: That's true, not only a job but usually daddy had the company so you worked for daddy's company.

Q: I'm somewhat familiar with the history of Haiti and you've had these essentially civil wars from time to time between the Mulatto's and the Blacks; I don't know how you describe them. It has not been a benign society.

ANYASO: No, it hasn't.

Q: Did you feel we were making an effort to turning it into I mean trying to mix up and raise the level of ...

ANYASO: We certainly were trying to raise the level of the people there. AID was very active in doing that although there is a funny story that the Haitians always told us that had to do with their little pigs; you know they raised pigs.

Q: Yes.

ANYASO: One or two, you are not talking about a big pig farm. They were a special kind of pig they were little black pigs and they have this national dish in which they use pork from these pigs; it is very good and very Haitian. Well there was some disease that attacked the poor little pigs and AID advised them that they would have to get rid of these pigs but don't worry we will replace them with these little pink pigs. Well, the Haitians never understood how that was going to be helpful to them and so the very smart ones smuggled the little black pigs over to Jamaica and hid out for a while with their little pigs until things blew over, until this epidemic or whatever it was was over and then they brought their little pigs back; they never liked those little pink pigs. It was an uphill battle because Haiti has to be the poorest country in the world, not just in our western hemisphere but in the world.

Q: How about migration? What was the migration situation while you were there?

ANYASO: I didn't really deal with that. I know consular people dealt with that and we had boat people; it was just heartbreaking because there was so much poverty. My colleague Marie Lourde who had helped me with this program had gone out to one of the villages, and there was nothing to eat. People were starving to death and she had met this one woman who had a family of seven kids and they were all starving and so she said to Marie Lourde please take one of my children to give that child a chance to live, survive. She ended up taking two; she adopted two of those children, a little boy and a little girl. I think she raised the little boy but she gave the little girl to the nuns in the convent to raise. But absolutely awful poverty in the villages, we didn't see it in Port-au-Prince. What we saw were these great heaps of trash and garbage and people, some old women bathing in the sewers. There were days you just really didn't want to go out, as it was just a little depressing. So the poverty was there, it was pretty bad and you can understand why people can get on those boats and try to have a better life.

Q: What about voodoo? I realize this is a real religion; it's not...in the States it's turned into a spooky thing...

ANYASO: Hollywood yes.

Q: ...I was wondering whether two things. One what was your impression of it and also I would think that you would attract some of the hippie types from the United States who wanted to come down. I mean they are into spiritualism and all this kind of stuff and they'd be attracted and would probably muck things up.

ANYASO: We didn't have it; it wasn't like the kids who were going to Nepal and places like that during this time. Actually since Voodoo was popular in the States you would have the priest going to the States to minister to the various Voodoo communities. In fact, there were a couple of very famous voodoo priests and one of them came to see me because he needed a visa. I could give him a reference supporting his application and I did that. For some of them it was a way to survive, they would have these shows; they would have the dancers and all the glitzy stuff and make money. Of course, when tourism fell off that was not profitable again. There was a very famous cultural institute, which was very close to the embassy, I was in the consulate building I wasn't in the embassy building and it was close to us at the consulate; the consulate was downstairs and USIS, the U.S. Information Service was upstairs. So I became friends with one of the consular officers and we decided we should understand this culture and so we decided to take courses at this institute in Voodoo. We did and Max and I can't remember Max's last name who headed it up, he was very friendly and we started taking the course. He would invite in priests and we got to know people; we went to some of the Hougan and the Voodoo temples and saw what went on there and some of the practices and the Voodoo flags. It seems that once a year and it's really around Easter time, I don't know why all these pagan activities tend to happen around Easter time but anyway the oldest Voodoo rite in Haiti was a Dahomian rite. There had been some Dahomian slaves who had come to Haiti and they had continued their religion and this old Voodoo center was up in Gonaives, which is up north. So Mary Beth, my friend and I, decided we were going to go for the ceremony this year.

Also around this time people dressed up, it was sort of like Halloween but men liked to dress up as women and then they would be pregnant, it was rowdy and they called them the rah-rahs. They would go around with these branches, dancing and singing and drinking having a good time. So the Embassy regional security officer would always lecture us at the embassy to stay away from these people and that they were dangerous and certainly don't get caught in a crowd. You could understand that and I understood that but we were going to go up and take this highway one and go up for the ceremony. Well, we got lost and we found ourselves in the midst of these rah-rah people, which we were not supposed to do. I was a little frightened, I said, "Oh God, we are going to get into trouble." So I looked over and the priest I had helped with the visa was in this group. So I waved and his wife was there, she had come with him so I knew two faces in the crowd and they came over they are lovely people and I explained how we were lost. They said, "No problem. Where are you going?" I said, "We are going up to Gonaives for the ceremony." So they got one of the young boys and sat him in the car and he showed us how to get going and then he got out and we were on our way; so I wasn't afraid of those rah-rahs anymore, they were just very helpful to us.

We did get to Gonaives and we observed a ceremony and it was very pleasant; it was nothing like the Hollywood type of Voodoo ceremony but they did have the tall hats and the candles. It was sort of mystical, the movements were very slow, it was almost like in Islam they have this group, what do they call them?

Q: Whirling Dervishes.

ANYASO: This wasn't Dervishes but there is a name for this brand of Islam.

Q: I know what you mean.

ANYASO: Suffis, it was sort of like them. It was very slow dancing and they did have chickens. This went on for several days and every day there was something different; I think there was one day when they were going to be sacrificing cows or something, I wasn't up for that. We left it at the slow part of it but it is very much a part of the society. Voodoo had been looked down upon as was Creole but I think it had at that point, gained a certain respectability, people didn't frown upon it and think it was just demon worship and worshipping snakes. Creole was being more and more used, the upper class certainly used French but more and more people were using Creole and they were using Creole in the school so I think there was a cultural change there.

Q: Did you find yourself working with or working opposed to the French cultural attaché I assumed they had a French cultural programs there?

ANYASO: They did. The French are a very clever people and I think in the sixties perhaps, they were on this mission to civilize the world and bring French culture to the world. Haiti was a part of Francophonie and so yes they were definitely there, they had a good program and we were not competing. I found in Haiti as well as my next post, which was in Niger, they showed American movies; sometimes they would subtitle them in French. But they were pushing culture and people liked American movies and they showed American movies and so we worked together; so no we didn't compete. I always found even in Nigeria the French cultural center people, the director was always a good friend; sometimes we didn't coordinate our calendars the way we should have and I remember I had a big exhibit opening this was back in Nigeria on the night that they brought Memphis Slim the French cultural center bought Memphis Slim to Lagos. I was livid, he was a living jazz legend who had been living in Paris and they brought him down. So a lot of the audience came, they were very sweet people the Nigerians. They came and they said you know they are having Memphis Slim over there at the French cultural center so I can't stay very long but they at least stayed for the opening and then they scurried off to the French cultural center. I wanted to go myself but unfortunately I didn't have the time to do that. But no, I never competed with them I never felt that relations were bad they were very good.

Q: When you lived there did you pick up some parasite or something like that; you said you had to leave medically?

ANYASO: I did, it wasn't a parasite you know how you have certain problems and you just delay doing anything about them? I had delayed too long so the Embassy nurse and I decided I really should get back and have an operation. I should have had years ago but I didn't.

Q: So then what happened? You left there in...

ANYASO: I left there...

Q: ...1990.

DOUGLAS WATSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Port-au-Prince (1988-1991)

Mr. Watson was born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area and was educated at California State University at Los Angeles and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966, he served in a variety of posts throughout the world, including Cairo, Athens, Madrid, Saigon, Quito, Islamabad and Port au-Prince, Haiti, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in the State Department in Washington, on Capitol Hill in the Pearson program and was a member of the US delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1991. Mr. Watson was interviewed by Thomas J. Dunnigan in 2000.

WATSON: I was assigned as DCM to Haiti, where my first ambassador for the better part of a year was Brunson McKinley. Then for the second part of my three year tour our ambassador was Al Adams. These two guys were poles apart. McKinley was difficult to reason with, quite aloof, not given to listening a lot to those of us in the trenches, those who were probably less bright or educated than he, less quick, less intellectual. He thought that he knew more than most anybody. Adams, on the other hand, I could say virtually anything to, and he would take it under consideration, work it over, exchange ideas, debate, argue.

During my time there, we had a couple of coups, countercoups, elections, this, that...

Q: Had you had any special training before you went down to Haiti?

WATSON: No, aside from the DCM orientation course and a little brush-up in French - and French is not what they speak in Haiti. They speak Creole. The elite speak French and Creole. You've never seen such a racist society. There is a very small elite which is occasionally white, mostly mulatto, lighter in color, and then there is everybody else, the majority of Haitians. Those lighter in color and those who are white are terribly racist. There is a "big house" mentality. It's an ugly thing to see. It is a more subtle racism, just part of the fabric of the society. The elites see the Black masses as incapable of achieving, incapable of growth. Those who are black know that. That's the way it is.

Q: I saw a bit of it in the Philippines. It wasn't nearly as bad there, but it was there. I called it the "five percent and the 95 percent."

WATSON: It's something like that in Haiti, except that there is an even smaller percent constituting the "elites," I think. The "middle class" I would guess is probably much smaller than that of the Philippines.

Q: How did you and the ambassadors divide your duties? Or did you?

WATSON: Yes. I was the inside guy and they were the outside guys. McKinley didn't speak much Creole, very little. His comprehension though of Creole was probably not too bad. His French was very good. Adams' French was fine, but he learned Creole. He poured himself into it. He got out into the hinterland. He really loved the job. Adams was a piece of work. They both now have left the Foreign Service. Subsequent to Haiti, Al went to Peru as ambassador. Then he went up and headed the United Nations Association of the United States for about a year or a year and a half. Now he's out in California. I think he's seeking to work in the legal area once he passes the California bar, or he may work with an NGO on some progressive issue.

Brunson came back to Washington and spent some time working in refugee affairs. I think Brunson must have blotted his copybook, not having "succeeded" in Haiti. How can one "succeed" in that place? After Haiti refugees and immigration matters really constituted his career over the course over perhaps four or five years in the Department. Now he's the Director General of the International Organization of Migration in Geneva. So, he's doing just fine after a very good State career.

Q: What was the size of the embassy?

WATSON: The embassy was not large. AID was substantially larger than State and other agencies combined. AID's facility was better. Their housing was better. Their resources were better. Their entire support mechanism was better. The Foreign Service National staff was better. The contrast was incredible. They were the ones with the resources and they were the ones to whom the Haitians listened. Haiti would constitute a textbook opportunity for developmental assistance if we actually cared about Haiti and the Haitians, which we don't. That is to say, Haiti is close enough to the U.S. We could help that country change over about 50 years. You would have to develop a national language which had utility outside of Haiti, i.e., French or English, preferable English. You'd have to reform completely the educational, legal, judicial, health delivery, all those systems. Then, of course, there is the problem of agriculture. But you could make it work because the Haitian people are quite capable and hard working. There is nothing comparable to seeing Haitian women in the marketplace in downtown Port-au-Prince throughout the day working, sweating, grinding out a living, living in very primitive conditions 5, 10 or 20 miles away, a distance which they largely walk every morning and every night. It's just not to be believed. I'm fond of saying the following...it's not quite true, but it's almost true..."there is no such thing as a fat, truly dark Haitian." The resources are so thin and so are the poor. Living conditions are indeed bad. AID folks who served in Africa are not at all struck by what they find in Haiti, because you find a lot of the same or worse poverty levels in African countries. Of

course, having served in Egypt, Vietnam, Ecuador, Pakistan, I've seen poverty at different levels but nothing quite like Haiti.

But the AID mission was very important there. We tried to be as equitable as we could to make AID's accoutrements, resources, housing, and so forth not excessive to of what everybody else in the mission had. Obtaining decent housing was very difficult there. I talked with you the other day about various and sundry problems that I had down there, which had to do with housing for a special assistant to the ambassador for whom we rented a home which was considered too large by FBO (there was also a particular contract that we had for gardening which was considered excessive, although it was the same kind of contract that the embassy had used for years). The previous very large "special assistant house" had been rented for his predecessors over several years. The house FBO found too large was in fact substantially smaller than the house of the predecessor special assistants. The upshot of all that is that I was called on the carpet by the IG, who came down, found me guilty in both cases, the house and the gardening contracts, and subsequently published in its quarterly publication that a "DCM in the Caribbean had been found guilty of these..."

Q: Why you? Why not the administrative counselor?

WATSON: Because there wasn't any administrative counselor there for the first three months following my arrival. Why was that? Because that's the way Haiti was staffed, with great difficulty. We didn't have people to fill positions. So, I had to take the lead on a couple of things – including housing the special assistant so he could do his job, an important job. Anyway, to make a long story short, I couldn't believe that this IG business was happening to me. We had had the embassy's appropriately representative (all agencies) housing committee rule on this particular housing lease. The vote was eight to one in favor of renting the house; I abstained.

After the IG ruling, I was supposed to be docked a day's pay, I think, and my file would be annotated for a year, saying I had committed this particular sin. So, I appealed the IG decision. So the Director General in effect said, "Okay, we'll just annotate your file, but no fine." So, I, very angry with the IG's foolishness, appealed the decision over the course of a year or so. I was angry as hell with the decisions of the IG and the DG. Here we were in this lousy environment, busing our humps to get work done, and I had to give additional effort to dispute what I thought was a frivolous finding.

Q: Did you have to go back to Washington?

WATSON: No, I did it all by writing. It was such a pain in the neck. Anyway, so the grievance part of Personnel wrote back and said in effect, "Yes, we agree. You are not guilty of infraction X, but you are still guilty of infraction Y, the commentary will stay in your file for a year." Okay. I then appealed to the Foreign Service Grievance Board, and the Board took months to reach a decision. The Grievance Board found the IG decisions to be without basis. They informed me of this after I had returned to Washington and they informed the IG that all the records should be destroyed, and that the IG had ruled incorrectly.

So, I asked for a meeting with Sherman Funk, the then Inspector General. And his legal counsel instead responded, asking me, "What is this about?" I said, "Look, this is what happened. You charged me with these things. I was found not culpable. I want to meet with the Inspector General." The Office of the Inspector General hadn't known that I had been found not guilty by the Foreign Service Grievance Board because that is the way the Grievance Board is supposed to work. It took me two weeks to get an appointment with Funk. I figured I was going to sit down and meet with Funk, you know, a couple of honest men, face to face. Funk was there with his legal counsel, his staff assistant, and both with paper and pencil at the ready. I just tell him that they were flat out wrong. You were wrong on this count. You were wrong on that count. This is why you were wrong in the first place. This is why the Board found you were wrong. Here are the findings of these boards. Funk responded, "No, no, no, no. I still think that what you did was wrong" I said, "I don't agree with you. Not only that, you colored my record."

Following Haiti I had been sent to the UN to be the ARA representative. I was sent up to the UN as the key guy for ARA. Me, the key guy? Tom Pickering is our ambassador? His deputy is Alec Watson? Both have extensive Latin American experience. Who is kidding whom?

Q: I wanted to ask you something about the political setup in Haiti. In those days, I gather General Namphy moved out and General Avril... What were our Embassy's relations with these people?

WATSON: Very close. They had always been very close. We didn't lack for access. First we had Namphy. He had gone by the time I came. Prosper Avril had taken over in a coup. There was Avril, a general, as the president, and there was the foreign minister, General Herard Abraham. Despite anything else these scallywags might have done, our DEA agents on one occasion confiscated on the south coast of Haiti 50 kilos of cocaine. Avril, upon learning about it (McKinley was out of the country), called me in. I sat down with Avril and the foreign minister and they said to me, "Your DEA agents working with our police have 50 kilos of cocaine. We want it out of here. Can you take it off our hands? It's not going to stay where it is. If it stays it's going to be taken and used." To make a long story short, at my request the DEA flies a plane down from Miami. Our agents go out, pick up the cocaine, put it on the plane, and fly it back to Miami where it is destroyed. The Haitian Government's action for me was quite a surprise.

Q: A country turning to an embassy to do this.

WATSON: Yes. The thing is, the country was so rotten and so corrupt and this cocaine would have been worth a great deal of money. Now, did they do this so that we would think that they were good fellows, and everything else that which might go wrong we would ignore or what? Anyway, that was just one little vignette.

Q: Did we know Father Aristide, who came along?

WATSON: Not very well. We knew him a little bit, our AID people mostly. At the time of the election in 1991, of our embassy pundits willing to voice an opinion on election eve as to who would be elected, we weren't very accurate in our assessment, not very accurate at all. We had very little feel for what "the people" thought. Very few of us had a good indication of how the

Haitian electorate, the people, by and large felt about Aristide as compared with other candidates, whom we found substantially more acceptable. I am couching my observation in very diplomatic terms.

Q: In other words, we got it wrong.

WATSON: Yep.

Q: What about Cuban influence? Was there any?

WATSON: No. We would try to find it. There was hardly any. Nobody has much use for Haiti in the Caribbean, or anywhere in Latin America. The Cubans certainly don't. There was some interest, but it was very nominal.

Q: Was there any violence directed at Americans or at the embassy?

WATSON: No, never. Haiti was a rough place. Life there for non-working spouses was very difficult. The school was not good. Medical facilities were appalling. Housing was marginally acceptable. The quality of domestic help was not good. It was very difficult for dependents. Our American embassy community consequently was very close. Morale was one of my responsibilities and one of the things I think I handled reasonably well. We would use our own home for get-togethers on a regular basis. That was constructive, but it was a difficult post.

Violence? A lot of folks, most of whom were white, both dependents and employees, found the environment that Haiti presented potentially threatening. And when you see a lot of very dark Haitians on the streets rioting, or in fact burning people in tires soaked with oil or gas, it's frightening. We would see that from time to time - or the remains of those activities, what was left in the streets, the burnt tires, the stones, the corpses. You could envision a Haitian mob getting out of hand and that caused people a lot of concern. As a matter of fact, we had a potential evacuation later in my tour. When folks realized however that under those evacuation conditions they would have to pay for their own departures and returns because we had only approval from State for a limited evacuation, their concern pretty well evaporated. That is to say, many were somewhat concerned, but not very often feeling real duress.

There were very few recreational opportunities. There were almost no entertainment opportunities. You pretty well had to do for yourself. But the States were not far, so folks could get out of country at not too great an expense. We had a lot of junior officers, a lot of consular business, and we had a chance to work with our Junior Officers. Marvelous Junior Officers came through that consular section, with occasional brief stints in the economic or political sections.

Q: What about the boat people? Did we have many problems with them?

WATSON: Yes, because boats would sink offshore, often not very far offshore. This was always sad. It was a shame. The overwhelming majority of those who left by boat, by whatever means, were in most cases not "victims" of a harsh military regime or harsh, brutal authorities. They were seeking a better life, a better economic opportunity, escaping Haiti's grinding, brutal

poverty. That is not fashionable to say, but it's true. Americans in the U.S. have been led to believe the "boat people" were only a consequence of brutal leaders. Clearly there were indeed abuses by the military and police of those who were politically active. But the "boat people" did not constitute a part of the "political class". These folks were simply in dire economic straits.

Q: When President Avril stepped down, we flew him out of country.

WATSON: We sure did. That was a great success for Ambassador Al Adams. We sent accompanying Avril a young officer, Hoyt Yee, who will in time be an outstanding officer, already is (he is relatively junior; I guess he's been in 12 years or so by now). Al Adams did some tough negotiating with Avril, coordinating closely with the Department, with Bernie Aronson, the Assistant Secretary. We helped get rid of Avril. It was quite something, leading eventually (there was an interim president, Ertha Trouillot, a woman) to elections which were successful. Aristide indeed became president - and then, of course, was thrown out of the country in late 1991, returning in 1994 after the international intervention, choreographed by the U.S.

Q: Were you there for the visit of Vice President Quayle?

WATSON: Yes, right at the very end of my tour, late August, 1991. As a matter of fact, I left the day after he departed. I held off my departure until his visit. There was an accompanying gaggle of White House staffers. Bill Crystal was one of them, now a commentator and an editor. We all sat down - Aristide, Aronson, the Vice President, and the Ambassador, Bernie Aronson quietly back-benching as appropriate, but leaving the lead to the VP and the Ambassador. I was able to have some input which was useful in the discussions.

Q: As you left Haiti, what were your sentiments? Did you think that country would ever get it together or not?

WATSON: I had no doubt whatsoever in my mind that they would never get it together. As long as we continued to do for the Haitians what they would have to do for themselves, there was no hope for them ever doing it for themselves. If you are brought up in an environment which is corrupt and rotten, and you then go to replace the corrupt and rotten people with people who are not yet corrupt and rotten, those new people become corrupt and rotten because those are the models that have preceded them. So, I had no hope whatsoever that it would ever change without something very drastic, such as a 50 year serious developmental assistance program. Alas, we are in no mood to undertake such a program. Haiti is doomed to further poverty and collapse.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Deputy Assistant Secretary – Latin America
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural

and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: Okay, today is the 15th of July, the ides of July 2003. Sally, we're moving to the Caribbean. You went to ARA, and what was your portfolio?

COWAL: I think is what we talked about last time. I was hired into that job because I had Mexico experience. Although I was not a State Department officer, I had Mexico experience that was considered important as Baker and Bush tried to change around the relationship, or strengthen the relationship, improve the bilateral relationship with Mexico for the first time in 20 or 30 years, I suppose. Although I think later a DAS was picked just for Mexico. At that time, they were not so rich in DASes, so they needed to add something onto the portfolio, and the Caribbean was kind of a stepchild. I must say, I didn't know anything about the Caribbean when I began there. I had maybe been there a couple of times, probably on vacation. I don't think I ever did any work there in all of my years in Latin America, so I got the Caribbean portfolio added onto the Mexican portfolio for no particular expertise on my part. Of course, the way the State Department works, when you're at the DAS level, you have office directors who report to you. They are usually always people who have served pretty extensively in the region, although, I must say, the Caribbean for ARA, or now, I assume, WHA (Western Hemisphere Affairs) – maybe this has changed with Canada in the mix – has always been sort of apart, because it's not Spanish or Portuguese speaking.

Q: Also, I suspect this is a place where they put a relatively junior officer to get some DAS experience, too.

COWAL: I think so, although we were fortunate in having a gentleman named Joe Vasilis, who had a good, rich, I don't know, 20-year career in the State Department, but as I recall, he had never served in the Caribbean either, and he was the office director. Then you add on to that the problem that most of the ambassadors in the Caribbean are political appointees, because it's considered a safe and nice place to send somebody who's been a friend of the president or a contributor to the party, but who doesn't in fact know one hand from the other when it comes to foreign affairs. The thought is, "Oh, send him to Barbados, or send her to Jamaica."

Q: This is when sort of the second rank or third rank of political ...

COWAL: So you get second or third rank political ambassadors, most of whom are disappointed that they're there versus someplace that they've heard of, unless they're sort of California real estate agents and then they think the weather's nice and it'll probably be all right. But most of them are probably trying to get somewhere else, if they have any ambition, and they're a strange bunch, by and large, and they don't know anything about the Caribbean. Then you get Foreign Service officers and the ARA types don't really know anything about the Caribbean, because they've learned Spanish and Portuguese and they've spent most of their careers in Mexico and

Argentina and Bolivia, and even Honduras and El Salvador, which are quite different than the reality of either Haiti, Cuba or the Dominican Republic, or the whole English-speaking Caribbean.

So, for Haiti, you usually get a bunch of West African experts who try to make Haiti into West Africa. They recruit them because they have French language skills and they've served in countries where there are black people, so that makes them certainly ready to go to Haiti. Then the English-speaking Caribbean just gets a lot of odds and sods, I would say, people who can't get another job or would prefer to be close to home for one reason or another – aging parents in Florida or something – and obviously, as with all State Department posts, some of them are excellent. Some of them who know nothing about the Caribbean when they come catch it very quickly, learn it extremely well, and that goes for some of the political ambassadors as well. And some of them just stride like colossuses through the landscape, breaking it up as they go, and you run along as the desk or as the DAS trying to pick up the pieces. Generally, I would say, my experience with political ambassadors in the Caribbean was not outstanding, with some exceptions.

Then you try to give them strong DCMs, but you have a problem because the stronger DCM candidates don't really want to go there either. I would say it's, in my experience, one of the least-professionally managed parts of the State Department, given the fact that it has only one real high-priority interest to the United States, and that's proximity. But proximity, as we know, and I talked about Mexico, I think has become much more salient and much more important in the last 15 years than ever before. We have drugs and immigration, and now, I suppose, terrorism, although I've been somewhat removed from the State Department since that became the huge issue that it is. But certainly, as we have, and promote, I must say, through free trade agreements and other things, a much more open border and open flow of commerce, we also inadvertently promote a more open flow of illegal immigrants and illegal drugs.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Deputy Chief of Mission, Chargé
Port-au-Prince (1991-1993)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well then, Haiti. You were there during the Bush administration.

ALEXANDER: Yes.

Q: Bush one.

ALEXANDER: Bush one, yes. Yes, I was there. Well, I was here, excuse me.

Q: I mean here, in Washington.

ALEXANDER: Baby Doc had left and things were very unstable and we were trying to move them towards elections. Alvin Adams had just gone down there about the time I arrived here in Washington and had done a masterful job in getting the body politic there to come together and agreed to have elections and do it in a transparent, democratic way. He had to find someone to run the country in an interim basis and he managed to convince them to appoint a former judge, Madam Trouillot, as the interim president until they could have elections. They went to elections in 1990 and they voted for the former priest, Jean Bertrand Aristide. In the run up to the elections and the time after Aristide was elected there was a crisis. People were being murdered, killed, tortured, run off, it was a country gone mad. That took, without exaggeration, probably 70 percent of my time, which now in retrospect makes me ask myself, why did I go to that post immediately following my two years in Caribbean Affairs? I went to Haiti as DCM in '91.

Q: Well, how did we view Aristide at the time?

ALEXANDER: With great suspicion. Contrary to what we were accused, of being anti-Aristide and frankly, Washington, and I say this with total, absolute conviction, was agnostic. We had no candidate. Everyone says we wanted this guy Mark Bazin, who was a former IMF World Bank official and we didn't want Aristide. This is absolute nonsense. We did not have a candidate. I think if you were to ask policymakers in Washington privately, independently, "who would you like to have?" Of the two names I mentioned I think all of them would have said Bazin because they knew Bazin. He was a known quantity. Aristide was a former priest with a record of having denounced the U.S. for all kinds of things. People weren't terribly comfortable with the notion that this priest was going to be the president, but there was no program to advance one over the other. There was no money given under the table to help a candidate. This is all fiction. When Aristide was elected I think that the State Department bent over backwards to work with him. I remember this as clear as I remember anything. The then-assistant secretary, Bernie Aronson, said this man was democratically elected, it is our responsibility to work with him, to help him to help his country and that's what we're going to do. That was our policy. As a person I don't think anyone was particularly warm and fuzzy about Aristide, but we were determined to work with him and we just couldn't.

He was elected in 1990, in December of 1990. I went down to Haiti with the then-assistant secretary, with, among other people, Congressman Porter Goss, now the head of the CIA, and Congressman Jim Oberstar, who was the only Creole speaking member of the U.S. Congress. We were the official Washington delegation to observe the elections. We met with all the major candidates, including Aristide, right before the election and I'll never forget this, we were going in to meet Aristide as President Carter was coming out of his meeting. He led his own delegation from the Carter Center, and we stopped and we asked the president a few questions, "well how'd

the meeting go?" And he said, "Well you know, it's not all that easy." One of the members of his delegation made the observation and the president didn't disagree with him, he said, "this guy is a little strange." And Barry Aronson, the assistant secretary asked the president, "what happened," and the president said, "We asked him two or three times, listen, if you don't win, will you respect the outcome, the election result if you're not the winner? And Aristide had replied well, if the elections are free and fair I will win." President Carter is reported to have asked again, "well if again you don't win, will you respect the outcome?" And he repeated the same thing, "if the elections are free and fair I will win." My sense was what bothered the president was this view, this absolute conviction that he was going to win. He did win. He obviously knew something we didn't, but I think it was troubling, nonetheless, that he wouldn't even entertain the notion that there was any other outcome possible. There were other remarks that he made to us that I think made us uncomfortable and left us with the feeling that the man was, again, strange. Some of his detractors said that he was mentally unbalanced. I don't think he was, but he certainly wasn't an easy man to understand. He wasn't an easy man to speak with, and he didn't seem to have any affection for North Americans, that's for sure.

Q: Well then, what about boat people? What were we doing while you were on the desk?

ALEXANDER: We didn't have a major problem with boat people. Major in the sense, I'm talking in terms of numbers. There were always boat people, you know, 10 here, 20 there. As they were picked up, they were returned, much as they are now. The boat people became an issue when I was actually in Haiti when the numbers went from 10, 20, 50 to literally thousands. At one point we had thousands and thousands of people bobbing around in the Caribbean and the Atlantic trying to make their way to Florida. This was after Aristide's ouster, and it reached its peak in 1992. It was a major headache. They were being picked up and sent back, because that was the policy of the United States. They didn't want to encourage people to take to the seas. We'll never know how many of them perished, certainly several thousand. That was a major problem when I was in Haiti, not when I was on the desk.

Q: Alright. I was just looking at the time, this might be a good place to stop. We'll pick this up in 1991.

ALEXANDER: Okay.

Q: When you're off to Haiti as DCM.

ALEXANDER: Okay.

Q: Today is the third of November, 2005. This is tape five with Leslie Alexander. We left you the last time, you're off to Haiti; you were in Haiti from when to when?

ALEXANDER: From August of 1991 until May or June of 1993. End of May, early June. End of May, let's say.

Q: And you were DCM?

ALEXANDER: Well no. Yes. I went to Haiti as DCM. I emphasize the August because that's somewhat significant. I arrived in August and one month later there was the coup against the then-president, President Jean Bertrand Aristide. All hell broke loose. It's not that I had been at post for several months, was prepared to deal with this. Fortunately, because of the job that I came from, I had the background and the knowledge to be able to deal with what was going to be a very, very, very tough tour.

Q: Could you talk a bit about what happened? I mean, sort of the events?

ALEXANDER: At the end of September, the evening of the 30th, 29th-30th, the military decided that Aristide had to go. This was based on months and months and months of what the rank and file, what they called the petit soldat (little soldier) perceived as Aristide eroding their privileges, their position in society and other provocations, real and imagined. In any event, he had to go. So with the collusion of some NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and relatively junior officers they decided that they needed a change of leadership so they threw him out of office. There was no evidence at the time; certainly we in the embassy had nothing to warn us that this was in the works. We knew that there was a lot of unhappiness but not just in the military. The bourgeois segments of society, the middle class, the upper class certainly were unhappy with Aristide, not so much because he had eroded their privileges; in point of fact he hadn't. I was always confused by this. His supporters in the congress and elsewhere said that this was a coup instigated by the wealthy, the morally repugnant elite, the MREs as they called them, against Aristide because he was trying to help the poor. That was the most nonsensical allegation because, number one, he didn't help the poor, but at the same time he didn't really do anything to change the privileged position of the elites. He was an incompetent, as simple as that. He didn't do anything.

Q: While he was there, did sort of his strangeness, come across?

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes. That played into, I think, part of his problem. He gave provocative speeches. He encouraged horrendous deeds, the worst of which was Pere Lebrun. To make a long story short, without getting into too much Haitian history, this was necklacing. It was a buzzword for putting a tire around someone's neck and setting it on fire. It was a horrible way to kill people, but it was done on more than one occasion. Aristide would give speeches in Creole, and those of us who understood Creole would hear them and we'd say, "I can't believe the man has just said what he said." Basically he would say it's okay to go out and burn people. If you find that people are not with the program, if they're not with the people then you know what to do. You have the instrument; you have the tool that you need to set the record straight, do the right thing.

This was alarming to a lot of people, and it was done on more than one occasion. I think the straw that broke the camel's back was when a very prominent politician – well known, widely admired, a moderate, was a victim of this Pere Lebrun. Even the military stood up and said, "If Aristide is going to go after a guy like this he'll go after anybody. He's putting us on notice that we might be next." I think the fear was exaggerated. I have no doubts that had Aristide been able to get rid of the military, he would have done it in a flash. But there was little that I could see, this is just that he was in a position to do that.

After months and months and months of provocations, of inflammatory speeches, no puns intended, of actions that suggested that he was moving in an anti-democratic direction, taking on or using the Duvalier's playbook, creating his own personal gang of thugs, his political opposition, the military and the elites, began to become increasingly concerned about where this was going to end up if unchecked. Washington was becoming increasingly concerned, because we found that his voice was not one of moderation and certain things were going on in the shadows that made us very uncomfortable. I think one of the more egregious cases involved the murder of two or three young men, one of whom had a girlfriend who was the object of the desires of one of Aristide's killers. These guys were found dead, I can't remember now whether there were two or three of them; it was pretty clear from the information that we gathered that they had been bumped off by some police guy who was closely in line to Aristide's people. He had killed these kids essentially because he wanted the girlfriend. The ambassador spoke with President Aristide two or three or four times, said, "Listen, you've talked about justice. This is a horrible case and we need to get to the bottom of this, because it's really gotten a lot of attention and people are suggesting that if boys like this, decent boys, can be killed under very funny circumstances, then anybody can be killed." Aristide promised he would look into it and do something about it; it was never done.

Anyway, come September, Aristide had been in office for, well, since February, so however many months that is. Come the end of September, the military is feeling very, very threatened by Aristide, and they decide that it's time for him to go. So at the end of September they run him out of the palace and take over the country and the generals, the senior military, find themselves in a rather untenable position. They have a revolt on their hands, among their own troops who are saying the president has to go. The head of the army, ironically, was the man who headed up all the security for the election that Aristide won and made it possible for Aristide to become president—Raoul Cedras, who was later vilified and accused of being the ringleader in this whole coup thing. And there is absolutely no evidence that we had to suggest that that was true, woke up much as we did at 11:30, 12:00 at night when it became clear that this coup was well underway to be told, the army's gone berserk and they've kicked out the president and they've taken over.

So, he gets dragged into this thing and we have this crisis on our hands because Haiti's first democratically elected president in anyone's memory has just been run out of office and is in exile. Aristide eventually winds up in Washington, where he starts stirring up the Congressional Black Caucus. He convinces them that this is a Black thing, that this is the Black masses against the light skinned elites of Haiti, which again is absolutely nonsense, but it was something that Aristide, being the clever man that he was, understood what buttons to push in the Black Congressional Caucus, and he used this race thing. We in the embassy were bemused by this, because anyone who knows Haiti, Haitians and Creole, their language, when we got Black congressmen coming down to the country, Haitians, well, the Haitian word for them was *blanche*, which means, in French, white, which means in Haitian Creole foreigner. Foreigners were *blanche*. You could be Japanese, you could be Asian, you could be Black, but if you were a foreigner, you were a *blanche*—you were a white. Of course, they didn't understand this. They had ways of saying he is a Black white person or an Asian white person. The point I'm trying to make is that Haitians' view of race and color is very different than an African American's view of race and color and it goes back to the history of Haiti. Haiti didn't have the generations of

slavery that we had in the U.S.; Haitians never developed this self-loathing. Haitians never developed this attitude that whites are better than me and, you might not admit such a thing, but this deep ingrained belief in the superiority of Europeans or white people. The reason why Haitians didn't have that was because they kicked them all out. They killed them and threw them out very early on in the game. So you didn't have this slave generation, slave mentality that was bred into people. Slavery didn't exist long enough in Haiti for that to happen. Moreover, what army was it that they beat? They beat Napoleon's army. That was the best army in the world at the time. This was like the Vietnamese beating the U.S. The Haitians, quite to the contrary, didn't see white people as being superior. On occasion they saw them as being inferior. Hey, we kicked your butts, but at best they saw them as just other people with a different skin color, no more, no less. That's the end of it.

Aristide, of course, knew this. He had certain fixations about the way he looked. There is a correlation in Haiti, often, that the lighter skinned you are the more likely you are to be higher up on the totem pole. That, again, wasn't an absolute, and all you had to do was look at Duvalier and all of his cronies to see that that wasn't the case; it wasn't etched in stone. Aristide, in exile in Washington, used his race card with the Congressional Black Caucus to convince them to convince the administration that he had been wronged and we had to do something about it. There was a change in administration: President Bush Senior left office, President Clinton took over and this desire of the Black Caucus to support Aristide suddenly had resonance in the White House, while under Bush Senior it wasn't. We in the embassy, in the meantime, were caught in this nasty Washington game of what do we do? On the one hand everything we knew about Aristide, from every source, from intelligence we gathered, from conversations, from his own speeches, indicated that he was not a good president and that his policies were not going to be beneficial to us; it wasn't in our national interest to have this man as the president of Haiti. Yet on the other hand, we had others, and I think legitimately so, saying be that as it may, this man was democratically elected and we have to support the principle of democracy. This was our policy dilemma and I'm sure Haiti was not the first, nor the last, country where we had this problem. How do you support a person who was democratically elected, but doesn't rule as a democrat— who is the antithesis of the democratic leader?

While Washington was debating this, we in the embassy were sort of stuck trying to figure out, "what do we do?" We had thousands of boat people who seized the opportunity to take to the seas screaming, "We're political refugees; you've got to take us in."

Q: In a way, wasn't it the boat exodus that began to dominate political thinking?

ALEXANDER: Yes. I think so. I think that the boat exodus was the catalyst for the White House's eventual decision to take on Haiti as a major foreign policy issue. It has been suggested. I have no evidence to support this, other than comments that were made by people, as I never saw any intel that actually supported the notion that Aristide himself provoked the boat people exodus. In fact, it was called the Haitian nuclear bomb expressly to get Washington's attention and force Washington's hand, the argument being that this looks bad for you, you've got all these Haitians, these very visibly Black people washing up on these white beaches on Florida, being filmed on CNN. The contrast was stark. There they are, being rounded up and told they have to go back to a supposedly murderous military regime, while at the same time you have

these fair skinned Cubans washing up on their rafts and they're welcomed and embraced and oh, they can stay, but these poor Black Haitians can't. Well they can't because they're Black and you're racists and the whole nine yards. Aristide and his supporters used that imagery very well and, again, I don't blame them. I would have done the same thing. You know, you play the cards that you've been dealt, you use the weapons at hand and the boat people were the perfect tool for Aristide to garner the kind of support that he needed to return to Haiti.

Again, my life was made miserable. I was dealing with this issue at the same time that we were in evacuation status. We had a skeletal staff.

Q: Why were we evacuated?

ALEXANDER: Well, for two or three reasons. Number one, we couldn't support the size staff we had before, because the first thing that the Bush administration did, around November of 1991, was to impose an economic embargo on Haiti. Economic embargos usually don't work, but they can have ferocious impacts, especially in a country as poor as Haiti. We were under an economic embargo. For the embassy what that was meant was that we no longer had supermarkets that could feed our staffs, where we could go and buy food and things of that sort. There were certain everyday realities that we had to deal with and couldn't, so we had to cut down the staff. There was also the fear of violence. Again, you had a military regime in power, and they killed people, and we were concerned that if they got upset with us, they could turn their guns on us. So, for a host of reasons, we were in evacuation status, principally because we couldn't support the families and the staff that we had and also because of fears for their security.

One of the consequences of being under this embargo was that we were not allowed to make payments to the de facto government for anything, which also made things difficult because there was the state electricity monopoly, and a state telephone monopoly. If you wanted to have phone service, if you wanted to have electricity, you had to deal with the government, because they owned these services. I was sitting in my office one day and I get a phone call from someone in the Treasury Department, the head of the embargo office, who says to me, basically, that I had to stop paying the bills, the light bills, since I was supposedly directing this. I said, "Well, that's fine and dandy but what do I do? If we don't pay them we're not going to have electricity. If we have no electricity we don't have an embassy." He says, "Well I don't care about that. Executive order whatever-it-was says that Haiti's under embargo, so you have to stop paying these bills under penalty of so and so." Well, I blew up and I said, "Is this a joke or are you serious?" He says, "Do you think this is a joke? Do you think this is amusing? You're violating the law." I said, "Well I don't know whether it's amusing, I think it's absolutely insane, because the law also requires statutorily for me to provide for the protection and welfare of U.S. citizens in this country of whom there are several thousand and I can't do that if I don't have electricity. So we have a dilemma." And he says to me, "no, I don't have any dilemma. You have a dilemma. I'm telling you that you are going to" – I can't remember what I was threatened with – "if you continue." So I said, "fine, fine, fine," and hung up the phone and immediately called the principle desk, Bob Gelbard, in Western Hemisphere Affairs, what was then ARA, and I said, "Bob, I've got this problem, I've got this lunatic at Treasury from the embargo office" or something, I can't remember what it was called, "telling me that I can't pay the light bill and the phone bill. If I can't do that; I'm not going to have the services, which means you're not going to

be able to call me up 40 times a day as you do with all of your bizarre requests and instructions.” He said, “Don’t worry about it; we’ll take care of it.” A day goes by, two days, a week, a month; the guy calls me again from Treasury, all upset. I’m still paying these bills, he has evidence to suggest stuff and they’re going to have to take some kind of drastic dramatic action. So I call Gelbard again. I said, “Hey, I thought you guys took care of.” “Well, it’s not as simple as we thought.” And I said, “come on, don’t do this to me.” I said, “this is the kind of thing that you read about in novels, you see in movies, but we’ve got thousands of boat people that you want to repatriate and I’ve got officers running all over the country following every single one of the repatriated boat people to ensure that they’re not being killed, tortured, abused or anything else as they’re alleging they are, and I’ve got my own government threatening me with legal action, because I’m trying to carry out the government’s business. I don’t want to deal with this. This is a Washington problem, you deal with it.” They never solved it. State was never able to get Treasury to back off on this notion. I mean, we continued to do what we did, but I suppose if someone really wanted to do something bad to me, they could have. This is the kind of insanity that we were dealing with.

Even more insane was the number of human rights organizations, media, Aristide people, boat people advocates who were screaming and yelling that people were being slaughtered by the thousands in Haiti and how could we send back the boat people to certain peril? The fact was people weren’t being slaughtered by the thousands. The best we could figure is 300-350 people were killed during the coup itself. That’s a lot of people; I’m not going to argue that, particularly if it’s one of your loved ones. But after that, things settled down. That doesn’t mean that this was paradise on earth, but the military was not out slaughtering thousands of Haitians. For one thing, there were 7,000 soldiers in the entire Haitian army, in a country of seven million with little or no gas, little or no ammunition. They just weren’t out killing people; there was no reason for it, just no requirement for it. We were reading these tales and being told that thousands of people are being massacred, so we had people running all over the country to the sites of these supposed massacres asking the locals “can you please take me to your massacre?” And they would respond, “What massacre do you want? There was a massacre, as they say, in 1803, when we killed 200 French people and cut off their heads.” “No, no not that massacre. The massacre from the petit soldat that happened last week” and everyone would start laughing.

Anyway, after two or three or four months of chasing down these so-called massacres, we said, “listen, this is BS (bullshit). There are no massacres.” Aristide’s people insisting that the embassy’s in collusion with the military and they’re blind and they’re stupid and this. We said, “Listen, send anyone you want. We’ll go there together.” Jesse Jackson came down. We went with Jesse to the site of a so-called massacre so he could see there was no massacre. We couldn’t find a massacre. There was a suggestion that they covered up the evidence really well, but again, you can’t hide thousands of bodies. The point is we were being challenged by our own people. “You sure there’s no massacre?” “Well, I can’t state categorically. I can’t prove a negative, but I can tell you if there is one there’s absolutely no evidence that there has been one, so what do you want us to do?”

So we were going through all this madness, thousands of boat people, who we’ve got to send back and have to ensure that they’re safe. How do I do that? I have an evacuated embassy, I have no police force. If some guy comes from the countryside somewhere and goes back because he’s

been repatriated, I can't post a bodyguard. Well, you figure it out. These were the kinds of instructions I was getting.

Q: I have the feeling that when the Clinton administration came in, they're really unsure of themselves in regards to foreign affairs. I mean, they removed our ambassador from Israel because he said that we can't give a definite monetary support. I had the feeling that they were so afraid of criticism that there wasn't a very firm hand at the helm.

ALEXANDER: I can't indict the administration for being foreign policy neophytes; I can't do it, because I don't know whether the dynamic that you describe had any effect on Haiti policy. The assistant secretary-

Q: For Latin American Affairs.

ALEXANDER: For Latin American Affairs, while appointed by Republican President George Bush, was in fact a Democrat. I don't think that in the case of Haiti the problem was uncertainty. In fact, I would venture to say it was just the opposite. It was certainty. It was a certainty that what they were being told by Aristide and his people was the truth. Everyone else was wrong—including the embassy, including the CIA, including the Pentagon and so on and so forth. I thought that the policy was based more on the sort of polarizing view of Haiti; you're either good or bad and there's nothing in between: we have defined Aristide as being good; therefore, by definition, anything else and everyone else is bad. That was convenient and appealed to something that's very inherently, innately American. Too many times in our history we have based our foreign policy on how we feel about somebody. If we like the leader of a country we'll do everything that person wants, even if it means working against our own interests. History is replete with examples; the Shah of Iran, Noriega, Somoza, to name a few where we're really on the wrong side of the issue. And if we don't like someone we demonize them and everything associated with that person. We're against them. Again, history is replete with examples, most recently Saddam. This is, I think, the great Achilles heel of U.S. foreign policy. America leaders do it and the American people do it. We like our foreign policy to be black and white. We don't want any grays; we don't want any vegetables, we just want meat. We have to. In order to sell our policy it's much easier to give it a face. A good face in the case of Haiti, Aristide, a priest, a man of the people trying to help his country after years of brutal dictatorship. Or we give it an evil face: Saddam. He has nuclear weapons, he's killed people, he's going to come and drop a nuclear weapon on Washington and San Francisco. That's what we do. Other countries, I guess, do it to a certain degree, but we've perfected the art.

Q: There are two groups that can be quite important. One, in the first place, did you end up with a lot of the glitterati, you know, sort of the Hollywood types? The others were the Sandinistas, as they called them.

ALEXANDER: Yes, very good. Well, we didn't get the Sandinistas. We got a lot of the glitterati; a lot of Hollywood actors got dragged into this, all of them in support of Aristide himself. Aristide the man, Aristide the person, which again used to alarm us because, if this is about democracy, let's not wrap anyone up in the flag of democracy. That's a process that involves a lot of people. Susan Sarandon and people like that. Academy Awards, they made statements, this

is for Aristide and the people of Haiti; Danny Glover and others who were dragged into this thing. A lot of the Washington illuminati also, you know.

Q: Could you open their minds to see this is a complicated thing?

ALEXANDER: No, no, no. No, because again they had made it a personality thing; that was easy and it was fun. It didn't require a great understanding of the issues, the subtleties. You just subscribed to the notion that Aristide had been wronged, that he was a good man and we had to right this wrong. Had it been that way it would have been so much easier. But when you tried to explain to these people that this coup didn't happen in a vacuum, this man actually encouraged people to go out and kill people and people were killed; this man, because of a beef with the Vatican (he was a former priest) went out and encouraged a mob to sack the Vatican's embassy that damn near killed the Vatican's DCM and he was horribly hurt. No apologies were offered, and every week there was some violence that was incited either in speeches, very clever, often nuanced, but to those in the know, clear messages from Aristide in his public speeches in Creole, which again was another problem because none of these illuminati, glitterati and policymakers understood the language and even if they did, Haitians loved to speak in parables. Anyway, nobody wanted to hear all this. Basically we were a bunch of troglodytes— right wingers who were obviously against democracy. In fact, people wanted my head because the ambassador had left, he wasn't replaced and I took over the embassy.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

ALEXANDER: Al Adams. I was there for about 10 months when Al left and then I was told, "well we're not sending an ambassador, you're taking over the embassy." Okay, fine. So that's how I spent the rest of my tour: as the head of the embassy. I had people screaming for my head, you know. I said, "Guys, listen, I'm paid to tell the truth. Now, I may be wrong, but there's a world of difference between being wrong and lying. I believe what I'm telling you. Again, if it's wrong, I apologize."

Q: What about the media?

ALEXANDER: There were great news people.

Q: Television is not usually as serious. They're out for the sound bite.

ALEXANDER: No, the print media. The reporters that were covering Haiti were among the best I've seen anywhere in the world. There was Howard French from The New York Times, Lee Hochstetter from The Post, Don [inaudible] from The Miami Herald. There were others, Bernie Dietrich; these guys were great reporters. They knew their beat, they knew this country and you couldn't BS these guys.

Q: Were they making any headway?

ALEXANDER: Well, this is the fascinating thing. Up until this time I had spent most of my career abroad. I was terribly naïve; I was 41 or so, but I was still in many respects a babe.

Nowhere the seasoned, mature diplomat that I thought I was and this was most educating. In the case of Howard French of The New York Times, I saw a man basically get trashed by his own newspaper, because they didn't like what he was reporting. Howard was summoned to New York, saying, "Well how can you be reporting that there aren't all these massacres, that maybe Aristide wasn't the purist, the saint that everyone else claims he is? Are you really, really wrong? Because we're getting a lot of complaints from our readers that we're obviously crazy." And Howard would say, "I'm sorry, but you pay me to report things as I see them and I can't say that Aristide was this beautiful, saintly man. He wasn't." They removed Howard. I understand from some of the others that they were getting the same pressure from their editors, saying, "well you know, what you're telling us just doesn't jive with what we're hearing from other sources: that these people are fleeing Haiti because they're being massacred by the thousands." The response was, "no, they're not taking to the boats and fleeing Haiti because they're getting massacred. They're fleeing because they know that this is a window of opportunity. Under normal circumstances they'd be turned back by the U.S. Coast Guard, but because of the political turmoil, they actually have a chance to make a claim for political asylum, a chance which they never had before. All they have to do is say that someone was killed." Every single allegation – and the allegations were in the thousands – that was made by Haitian boat people who were picked up and brought to the U.S. or to Guantanamo, where we eventually brought them, every single allegation we had to run down.

We actually were able to bring back people to the post. We were in evacuated status and after several months, we were able to bring back almost all of our staff as we ratcheted up our boat people, returning refugee program, and then we brought others on board. We had so many TDYers that at one point I think we had 700 people in the mission, with 300 of them involved directly or indirectly with the whole boat people issue. Of the thousands of allegations made of murders and all this stuff, not one of them were we able to substantiate. The usual scenario was Jean would allege that he came from the village of whatever in whatever part of Haiti, it doesn't matter, and that the soldiers had broken into his house or some people had broken in and they had killed his mother, his father, raped his sister and burned down the house. We would go to the village where Jean was from, we'd find his mom, we'd find his dad, we'd find his sister. We'd ask his sister, "were you raped by soldiers?" and the sister says, "No, I wasn't raped by anybody. Who told you this?" We wouldn't tell them. The parents, "you are Monsieur So and So, you are Madam So and So?" "Yes, yes, yes." "So you have a son named Jean?" "Yes, yes, yes." "Do you know where your son is?" "Le boat. Over there." Overseas or something." "Okay. But you're okay? No one has come and beat you?" "No. Why do you ask us these questions?" Every single one of these cases followed a pattern more or less like this.

I don't blame the boat people. I used to tell reporters, if I were Haitian, a poor Haitian, I would do exactly the same thing. They are intelligent, rational people. If they are told, "listen, you want to go to the U.S., the way you do it is you show up and you tell them that your family was killed, they can't send you back," then I would do that.

Q: Did you find, were there entrepreneurs who were giving people stories to take— I mean, I'll give you a legend if you pay me so much?

ALEXANDER: There were suggestions that – I have to be careful here, because I have no evidence, even though I heard this many times – there were people, sympathetic to the ousted president, who coached whole boats on what they had to say when they arrived in the U.S. Whether this is true or not or whether this is one of the legends associated with this whole thing, I don't know. I mention this because the scenes of these people bobbing around in the ocean really really bothered most Americans. It wasn't, now that I think about it, unlike the impact that New Orleans had with Katrina right after the hurricane. You saw the sea of Black people, seemingly disenfranchised, poor Black people, just sort of abandoned. I mean, it just looked ugly on TV. It was this same, a similar dynamic. It was heartbreaking, really, to see these human beings bobbing around in the ocean. A lot of them were dying because they were setting sail in these rickety crafts, drowning.

I remember one that, I broke down and cried in my office: a boat, a raft, a Haitian woman taking her child and throwing her child in the ocean. Most Haitians couldn't swim. Fortunately they were close to shore, close to Florida, with the hope that somehow that child was going to get to the shore or be rescued and maybe they can stay. This was the degree of desperation that these people had. The problem was you could not convince anyone. You could not suggest to policymakers or to the glitterati that this was a desperation born of economic deprivation, not political turmoil, that what we were witnessing was the exodus of people from the poorest country in the hemisphere, in the world, a country where the average person lived to be 30 years old. No clean drinking water, no decent medical care. Life was miserable for most Haitians, and that's what we were seeing. We were seeing this misery, sort of the same kind of misery we saw after Katrina, but people were interpreting what we were seeing, what was being shown on CNN, to fit whatever agenda they had. If you were a supporter of President Aristide, these people are fleeing the political terror, murders in Haiti, when in fact they weren't. We never found a case of this sort. I'm not saying that no one was ever killed in Haiti. People are killed every place and I'm sure there were soldiers and others who killed people because they didn't like them, or more often because it was an opportunity to settle personal scores or to do something for personal gain, but the notion that we had tens of thousands of boat people who were out there floating around in the sea because someone had been killed or massacred, I'm sorry. If it happened, it was the best cover up in history.

Q: What response were you getting from the State Department on this?

ALEXANDER: The assistant secretary, I have to say, was, from my view of things, was great.

Q: Who was that?

ALEXANDER: This was Bernie Aronson. This is a man for whom I had worked in Washington before I went to Haiti. This is a man with whom I had accompanied to Haiti several times before I served there, and he trusted me. He knew I had no personal agenda. As I used to try to tell people when they accused me, media people, "well you're hiding the truth." I said, "To what end? I have no dog in the fight. Why would I hide the truth? For what purpose? I'm not Haitian." I didn't have to go through this with Bernie. He would call me and I would tell him, "I may be wrong, but this is what I believe. This is our analysis. This is our take on something," and he

would say “fine.” He never, ever, ever challenged – never once did he suggest – that I had some other agenda. I didn’t.

Q: Did you get any feel from where you were of pressure that was coming down from the Secretary of State or deputy secretaries?

ALEXANDER: Yes, I did, yes, yes.

Q: Because they’re the ones who feel the political pressures.

ALEXANDER: Yes, and they were feeling enormous pressure and some of it I saw and some of it I got myself, especially from the Hill. There were senators, congressmen, staffers, who were absolutely convinced that Aristide had been ousted by murderous thugs, that he was a good man who needed to go back and this was going to solve the problem. I had staffers in my home in Haiti accuse me, basically, of being a human rights abuser, because I tried to explain to them that this could be a problem. Great, Aristide comes back, but you have to realize there is this resistance to this notion here in this country by people with the guns. You’ve either got to come and kill them, and I don’t hear anyone yet talking about an invasion, or convince them, and you’re not going to be able to convince them and this is why. This is what happened when Aristide was in office. They didn’t want to hear it. That’s a bunch of propaganda, that’s a bunch of crap; you don’t know what you’re talking about. And I said, and I would say to them, “do you speak Creole?” “No, but you don’t need to speak Creole to understand this country.” I said, “Do you think someone could understand the United States if they didn’t speak English?” “Well that’s different.” I never understood why it was different. You know, people have their agenda. I got this firsthand so I knew what my masters were going through in Washington; they were getting tremendous heat. Again, this became a very popular cause. When you’ve got people standing up accepting Academy Awards at the same time, you know...

They appointed a prime minister, Marc Bazin, but he was viewed as being a puppet of the military and to a certain extent, he was. What I didn’t know at the time was that there were people behind him. One of his own military officers, Michel Francois, who was a major, was probably the mastermind or the leader of the coup that ousted Aristide. He was a very ruthless man. He is now hiding out in Honduras. He’s been indicted in the United States for drug smuggling or something or another. But Cedras, even though he was the head of the military, wasn’t a free agent either. He had to respond to these forces within the armed forces and those forces said absolutely and categorically: Aristide does not return, that’s just not an option. He’s just not coming back or over our dead bodies. So the military leadership found itself in a position that it frankly didn’t want to be in. I don’t think that Raoul Cedras was a conspirator. I don’t think he knew about this coup. I don’t think he would agree with it. I don’t think he would have supported it. As part of the evidence for my feelings I would offer up his magnificent job of providing security for the presidential election that Aristide won. He provided that security mindful, as was everyone else in Haiti, that Aristide was the probable president. Had he not liked Aristide, I don’t know if he would have done such a good job of ensuring a peaceful election. Again, this is in a country where, during the previous election in ‘68, they massacred people at the polling stations. So this is a big thing, to provide absolute security. It was never my sense that Cedras had any interest in being the president of Haiti. He was quite pleased being the head of

the military, and I think that's all he wanted to do; but politics, forget it. It just wasn't his cup of tea. Be that as it may, he, as the head of the army, stayed as head of the army, and I told him on more than one occasion, "I'm sorry, but the rest of the world's convinced that you're the dictator." "Well I'm not. You know that I'm not." "Well then, why don't you have someone else run things?" "Well, that's what we're trying to do, we're trying to find." I said, "Or you could have Aristide come back." "No, no, no, we can't do that." I said, "Okay. You can't have your cake and eat it too. You can't, on the one hand, try to convince me that you're a decent guy and, even though you had nothing to do with this coup, you won't let the democratically elected president come back." "Well, we can't let him come, because he'll kill us." I said, "Well, maybe not. Maybe you can strike a deal." "No, no, you don't strike deals with Aristide." Well eventually he did strike a deal. But we'll get to that later.

I think that the rank and file were the ones who basically told their own leadership no Aristide. "Aristide comes back, we kill you." So there was this stasis. No one knew what to do. The country was under an embargo but somehow they were surviving. And they could have survived for years probably.

Q: One of the things I've heard of during the Papa Doc, Baby Doc and all of that— that the embassy tended to come under the sway of the well to do and to be embraced by the powers that be, or those generally more light skinned.

ALEXANDER: Well, we call them MREs, the morally repugnant elite. We even had a name for them, the MREs.

Q: The morally repugnant elite.

ALEXANDER: Yes, and what a lot of people don't realize is that junior officers in the embassy coined that phrase while Al Adams was ambassador. I think it's important to know, because the embassy saw these people for what they were and created this, which later became adapted by the reporters on the scene while the origin sort of got lost somewhere, but it was junior officers at the embassy who did this and I think it reflects the attitude towards these lighter skinned elites. Yes, there was a lot of socializing with these people; it happens all over the world, especially in Latin America. I served four times in Latin America, there's not an embassy in Latin America where the average embassy officer doesn't seek out someone with whom he feels comfortable, and he or she is much more likely to feel comfortable with a person who either looks like him or her or at least thinks like him or her, which means that the probability of an embassy officer in Bolivia being good friends with an Indian out in the countryside is slight or an embassy officer in Port au Prince being good friends or hanging out with a peasant in the wherever is slight. Be that as it may, that doesn't mean that the embassy was under the sway of these people. In fact, to this day, the Haitian elites dislike the embassy, don't trust the embassy, generally fault the embassy, ironically, if not perversely, for the invasion of Haiti in support of Aristide, which happened in '95. I think that speaks volumes for this notion that there was some kind of collusion between the elites and the embassy against Aristide. Aristide alleged this and his supporters said that this was happening but if you go and talk to the elites themselves, I think they'll tell you we hate those people in the embassy; it's because of them that we suffered. The bottom line is this: no embassy

should be partisan in any country when these things happen, and if you're being accused by both sides of being partisan too, that means that, in point of fact, you were neutral.

Q: You had an awful lot of, I assume, junior officers going out, seeing the poverty and finding out that what they were supposedly doing or had been done, hadn't happened. I would think this would cause an awful lot of cynicism and potential personnel problems in dealing with the officers. Did it?

ALEXANDER: When I was there it was just the opposite. There was an esprit de corps that I have not seen at any post before or after. There was a feeling of camaraderie, we're in this together, of, God, I hate to make it all sound banal, but of adventure. You know, a lot of these junior officers spoke pretty good Creole, almost everybody in the embassy likes Haiti and likes Haitians. It was a fascinating country, a fascinating culture.

Q: They are a very nice people.

ALEXANDER: Haitians, I've said it to people and they look at me like I'm a little off, but Haitians are the smartest people I ever met, from the most humble peasant to the most exalted MRE. They were extremely talented, intelligent, clever people. Poor, yes, but they weren't poor of spirit. It was a fascinating country with a fascinating culture. It has probably the only real, I won't say legitimate culture, but because it had been a colony for such a relatively brief period of time, unlike the rest of the Americas, they had a culture that was unique and rich with great art and music and stories and architecture. I mean, you go and see the Citadel, this magnificent fortress that was built by former slaves up in the northern part in Haiti.

Q: The Sans Souci.

ALEXANDER: Well, the Sans Souci Palace is just below the Citadel. You go to the Citadel and you think, my God, how could these slaves, these so-called uneducated primitive Africans have built what is recognized today, and was recognized as being a militarily perfect fortification? It was a brilliant, brilliant fortification, brilliantly built, brilliantly conceived. These were not stupid people. This was a country that had fabulous cuisine, fabulous art. People were witty, clever. There was a lot about Haiti to like, and I think this contributed to the morale. The Haitians were good to us. Nobody ever bothered embassy people, whether you were on the right or the left politically, whether you were for or against Aristide, the Haitians, I have to say, were gracious, hospitable, and friendly. Rarely did we experience any kind of hostility. I won't say never, but rarely. In the main the Haitians were gracious people. And this helped, I think, enormously. We also had a sense of purpose, a sense of mission. And that purpose was to educate people. Yes, we were being accused of not knowing what the hell was going on, but my officers got the greatest delight in saying, "Mr. Wichita Daily," I'm making up the name of a newspaper, "you claim that there was a massacre. I have just come back and I have spoken with this person and that person and these people and I can assure you there is no such thing, and if you would like you can go back with me and you can satisfy yourself." What they were doing was tangible; there was nothing abstract about that period of time in Haiti. Those who were working with the boat people, bringing them back, this was a crisis. It was like a tsunami or something. People's livelihoods had been destroyed because the country was under an embargo. They were fleeing. They were

coming back with nothing and they were being helped. They were being met as they got off the ships by U.S. embassy people and refugee specialists from various organizations and there was a feeling of accomplishment. It was a great tragedy that had unfolded here and we were dealing with this and I don't think, certainly during my time there, I never, ever, ever had the sense of failure. I had the officers coming to me saying, "I love this job. What I'm doing is important." To this day I still have that whole Haiti bunch. When I run into any of these guys, best tour I ever had, you know? It was the most important job I had in the Foreign Service, I'll never forget you. I actually got letters. I got one from the consul general who was senior to me, because I was an OC, he was an MC, crusty old Foreign Service officer who performed magnificently in this crisis these two years, three years we were in crisis. He wrote me a letter after he retired and he said you know, he said, "of all the bosses I ever had you were the best," and I've looked back over my career and that meant the world to me. Not being told that I was the best boss, but a man that I respected, a man that I looked to and went to for guidance, he was older and had seen a lot of things, would pay me this compliment. I cite this as an example; I think that that was a very special time in all of our lives. I think we knew that we were participating in a short blip in the history of the U.S. Foreign Service, but a significant blip. Significant in the sense we were getting a lot of attention. This was newsworthy. It was being talked about and eventually the country was invaded so yes, you can't just pass it off as being some anomaly. There was this feeling that we were involved in something important and so all of this contributed to high morale.

Q: Was there the feeling that this embargo, as it usually did, had a greater impact on the poor rather than the wealthy?

ALEXANDER: Initially there was this feeling, but I think that the embargo affected Haiti more or less equally. If one was disadvantaged by 20 percent, the 20 percent applied equally, whether you were rich or whether you were poor. In point of fact, the embargo was more of an inconvenience. I think it probably hurt the Haitians as a whole. Since so few people were members of the elite, maybe two or three thousand, while six and a half million, almost seven million were not. Those people suffered because their jobs dried up and disappeared, there were offshore investments made, there was a famous Rawlings baseball factory, all of those things, if they hadn't closed down certainly were closed down during that period of time. All those jobs left Haiti. The embargo had the effect of making what was already a miserable existence in Haiti even more miserable. In fact, on more than one occasion Aristide was taken to task because he kept saying the embargo has to be stronger, and they said, "But Mr. President, this is impacting your people. They're losing their jobs. One of the complaints we're hearing from them when we pick them up, floating around the ocean, the boat people, is that there is no work, so how much suffering, you know, is required here?" He kept insisting, "No, that the embargo be made tighter." To answer your question, I think everyone suffered to a certain extent. The embargo didn't work is the bottom line. It didn't work because it was already a poor country; there wasn't much to embargo, but where it did hurt was in destroying jobs, I think.

Q: Was there any, while you were there, was there any significant relationship with the Dominican Republic?

ALEXANDER: No. The relationship between the DR and Haiti was always a difficult one. Historically, the Haitians invaded and occupied the Dominican Republic for almost 50 years in the 19th century. It was not a benign occupation. The Haitians were rather nasty and brutal and the Dominicans didn't forget that, and never forgave them for that. Today the DR is light years ahead of Haiti economically, politically, socially, and they look down on the Haitians. They have to put up with them because they share the same island, but it's an uneasy relationship. Aristide had not helped, because he accused the Dominicans of human rights abuses against Haitians living in the DR; this really upset the Dominicans very much. Their position was that "we have helped Haiti on more than one occasion by taking your castoffs because you have too many people over there and you can't support them and we've given them work and housing and eventually integrated them into our society. We've been sort of an escape valve for some of your problem and now you're going to turn around and accuse us of having human rights abuses." It was truth on both sides, but the relationship was an uneasy one.

Q: What about other countries, particularly Scandinavia, France, Britain and all, were they weighing in there?

ALEXANDER: The French were; the Canadians were; the Scandinavians, no. The French and the Canadians were very much involved in Haiti. The French because Mitterrand was the president and Madam Mitterrand had a particular interest in Haiti and was very supportive of President Aristide. The Canadians to a certain extent were also in support of President Aristide, so they came at it from a slightly different direction. Their approach included an attitude that the U.S. was somehow complicit in Aristide's ouster, so that made for somewhat difficult interactions at times with the French and the Canadians, including the embassies. Their position was to say that the only solution was to bring Aristide back, and that's all they wanted to hear. Of course, they didn't have boat people problems. They weren't accepting great numbers of refugees from the country so they weren't burdened by what had happened.

Q: Were they looking at the same things you were and reporting back to their country?

ALEXANDER: Yes, they were. The French ambassador and the Canadian ambassador spent all of their time speaking to Aristide's people. They didn't have the staffs, or appear to have the interest in going out into the country and finding out firsthand, whether there was a massacre. They claimed, it's too dangerous to do that, and they didn't have the ability, the resources. I think they're right, they didn't. But if they were told by one of Aristide's party loyalists that the massacre of the week happened in so and so, it became fact. That was reported back to Ottawa or back to Paris: there was a massacre in such and such a place. I don't fault them for that.

Q: Did you ask, "Why don't you send one of your officers out with us?"

ALEXANDER: Oh yes. I was on a first name basis with the Canadian ambassador and the French chargé, we got together all the time, several times a week, spoke all the time, on a personal level, particularly the French ambassador and myself. We were about the same age, our spouses got along really, really well. In fact, we took a trip together up to the north of Haiti, we took the kids. We each had one kid. We needed a break from Port au Prince and there was actually a little beach up in the north of the country, took us eight hours to get there; but we

drove up there after getting stopped I don't know by how many police patrols and roadblocks and everything else. We spend the weekend up there on the beach just chilling out and trying to pretend that we were in this Caribbean paradise. On a personal level we got along fairly well, but we were responding to different policy imperatives. The French and the Canadians, to a lesser extent, but certainly the French wanted to believe that Aristide was a good guy and had been wrongly ousted and had to go back and that people were being killed in his name and why didn't we understand that? And I was reporting back to Washington, "yes, Aristide was wrongly ousted, but he brought a lot of this on himself and oh, by the way, there's just no evidence of everything he's saying about massacres and rapes and all. We think that this is all hype to try to garner support for his return, but that's for you to decide whether he returns or not." So that's where we were. I don't think that the French were wrong in their interpretations, their analysis of what was happening on the ground; they were reporting based on the best information they had.

Q: Well but, I mean there is this one thing and that is to report what we hear from an interested party that something has happened. If you don't go out and verify it's happened, that's being delinquent in your duties.

ALEXANDER: Yes. But we've all been in a position where we've reported: I am told that, I am advised that, it appears that, it is my sense that. And that sometimes is legitimate, that's all you have. And when you're being, as I'm sure the French ambassador was, I know certainly with Washington, I used to tell the staff, we have to feed the machine, we have to feed the monkey as we used to say. There was this incredible, insatiable need for information in this town— was, still is, between the congress and the executive branch there are no shortage of people who demand information. And I'm sure the French probably have the same thing and, provided you get it the best way you can so then you finally, eventually, when you've exhausted your ability to go and verify with your own eyes, you fall back on this I am advised, I am told, a good embassy contact and I suspect that's what the French were required to do. There were only three or four people French people in that embassy. It's not like I had hundreds and I couldn't keep up with everything that was being told. And then, we would get well, but your information is incorrect. We're told by, and this was from the State Department, we just got a call from so and so on the Hill who's alleging that so and so, Nancy Soderberg says that you're dead wrong, that her sources are telling her. Well, I say who the hell is Nancy Soderberg? She's been down here two times, she doesn't speak a word of Creole, I don't know whether she speaks French, if she does-

Q: She was with the UN, I think.

ALEXANDER: Oh, she eventually wound up at the UN, yes, she was one of Tony, Tony-

Q: Lake's?

ALEXANDER: Tony Lake's assistant's, purportedly the relationship went farther than that but that's neither here nor there. She was an intelligent person, I'm not belittling her. I'm just citing her as an example. We had to deal with this stuff all the time and so I imagine the French did too. It wasn't a simple question of reporting what you might have witnessed yourself; it was a question of having to defend what you were reporting. We were constantly being told, basically, you guys don't know what you're talking about.

Q: Did... You mentioned the French were talking to Aristide people. Were there Aristide people you could talk to?

ALEXANDER: Yes. The fact is that they really didn't want to talk to us, they wanted to tell us, they wanted to accuse us. The view in the Aristide camp and among his followers who stayed behind was that we were in cahoots with the military in ousting Aristide. In point of fact Washington had gotten rid of Aristide. This was the mantra. And I'm sure to this day Aristide still believes that George Bush Senior was responsible for his ouster, that the CIA and the Pentagon and the State Department conspired with the Haitian military to get rid of him. I am sure he absolutely believes it, as do his followers, and that the only reason he's back is because Bill Clinton and the Congressional Black Caucus ordered the U.S. military to bring him back.

Q: You mentioned when you and the French ambassador went to this beach you were kept stopping-

ALEXANDER: French chargé.

Q: -by patrols, police. What was this about?

ALEXANDER: There was basically one highway in Haiti that ran from Port au Prince to Cap-Haïtien, which is the second largest and northernmost city in Haiti.

Q: Yes, there was a big kind of basin there; yes it's up here, up where the Citadel is.

ALEXANDER: There's one major road that goes up there and if you want to go up there that's the road you take. And every 40, 50 kilometers there was a military roadblock which we had to pass through, identify ourselves, and on two or three of them, actually, it got a little nasty. I had talked to the military before leaving on this trip, I had called General Cedras and said listen, I'm going with the French chargé up north, and I don't want any untoward incidents happening because of the French chargé, because they didn't like the French because Madam Mitterrand was clearly an Aristide person and the French ambassador, who had left, he was replaced by Phillip Sells, who was the chargé, who later became the ambassador; he was an Aristide fanatic as far as the military was concerned. And so I didn't want them provoking us or rousting us or causing us any kind of problems, not that they would have done it so much to me because they, you know, Americans, you had to be careful, but the French, no, they could do anything they wanted. But at two or three of these roadblocks they gave us a hard time. And, at one point I said, "Listen, we can do this the hard way or we can do this the easy way. I can get on the phone right now and call General Cedras." Which I actually did, and I said, "Who's in charge here? I've got General Cedras on the phone." Then they sort of, "oh, uh, well, uh, oh." But much of this was because of the French chargé. We would identify ourselves and they, okay, well. But the moment we said the French chargé, well who's that? That's the French chargé. Then they were, "well you have to get out of the vehicles." And then my guard says no, no, nobody's getting out of anything, this is the head of the U.S. embassy and cleared the way, and there were a couple of tense moments. I can't say they were so tense we were frightened.

Q: Yes, but.

ALEXANDER: But, these had the potential to-

Q: Police things, I know, I experienced this in other countries where basically police, they were shakedown police.

ALEXANDER: Well, that's what they were. That's what they were and these guys were so arrogant and they were so used to having their way with travelers that it was hard for them to back down. It went contrary to their experience.

Q: You have to pay them.

ALEXANDER: Yes, they usually got what they want. Well, that wasn't going to happen here. And that was part of the problem too. But then again, they weren't the most sophisticated people and they hear French embassy and "oh, oh, well they're the bad guys and no French embassy's coming through here," that kind of attitude.

Q: Well, you were there until what, '93?

ALEXANDER: '93. I left in May of '93 when they sent Charles Redman, Chuck Redman, who had been the Department spokesman, later ambassador to Germany; they sent him down as the special chargé. This is in response to the Congressional Black Caucus's insistence that the embassy have new leadership. I was perceived as being not anti-Aristide; I don't think anyone every accused me of that. But I just didn't understand the new reality. The Democrats were now in the White House, there was a push on to get Aristide back; I didn't fully appreciate the new dynamic. I was told that the Caucus, actually I don't know who in the Black Caucus, but had actually told the vice president or the president, I don't know who, that "we're not complaining about this man. He's done, we think, a good job, so we're not saying he's a bad guy and do something horrible to him, we're just saying that you need a new face in that embassy." So they sent Chuck Redman down. Chuck and I overlapped for about three weeks. Very gracious man, he's a very bright guy, I was amazed at how quickly he picked up the nuances of being in Haiti. He figured out a lot of things very, very quickly, which is more than I can say for a lot of the reporters who got in on the Haiti act after it began appearing on CNN every night. So I left.

I had been picked already by the Bush administration, which left office in January, just a few months before I left, to be ambassador to, where was it, to Togo. So as I was leaving I was told that, "you're still going to go off to an ambassadorship, you've done a good job, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Then I came to Washington and I didn't go to Togo. Togo never did open up and I thought, now I'm getting my comeuppance. But it wasn't anything of the sort. The Clinton administration people were good to me; they said "no, no, we'll just send you someplace else." I wound up going to Mauritius, which actually I found a heck of a lot better than going to Togo. But Haiti dogged me for two or three more years. There were a lot of people who accused me and my former boss, Al Adams, of having been involved in the coup against Aristide, that it was all part of a U.S. plot and that we knew of it. I told people, "listen, I wasn't even in country, I was in country for a month." "Ah yes, but you were the deputy director before you went so you

would have been involved in this for a long time.” And one person even went as far as to say I was the hammer, I was the guy, they were preparing the coup and they had to wait until I got there and I was the one who actually masterminded the whole thing. And I said, “This is quite fascinating. Are we talking about the same Les Alexander here, because I don’t know anything about this.” But there were all kinds of conspiracies and, again, if you read the books that have been written on that whole mess it is quite clear, depending on where you come down on the dividing line, whether you are for or against Aristide, that there are many, many people who believed and still believe that the U.S. government was responsible for his ouster.

Q: Well, there’s nothing that persists more and is more accepted than conspiracy theories, particularly what we do, particularly because you might say almost from the left- I mean, right or left, conspiracy theories abound now.

ALEXANDER: Well, as someone said, they said we find it improbable, we find it impossible to believe that a coup could have been planned and carried out without the embassy knowing about it. With all the apparatus we have in place to intercept communications and find out, that we would not know that this coup was in the making. I never really admitted to anyone before, I’m kind of ashamed that we didn’t know. I’m still stunned. How could we not have known? I mean, yes, we’ve heard grumblings and things but we were caught with our pants down. I remember when the ambassador called me; it was around 10:00 at night. He says “you’ve got to come down to the embassy.” I said “what’s up boss?” And he said “I’ll be damned, I think there’s a coup going on.” I said “a coup.” And he said, “well, didn’t you hear the gunfire?” And I said “well there’s always gunfire in Port au Prince.” But he said “there’s more gunfire than usual and we’re getting these disturbing signals that someone’s moved.” And I remember coming into the embassy and looking at him and him looking at me and I said “where did this come from?” And he says “I don’t know.”

Q: Well, you look at this and it’s in the nature, I mean, we’ve had coup after coup all around the world and often, I mean, the very fact that a coup happens means that the people who should know, that is the head of the government, they’ve got the security apparatus and all, if they don’t then why the hell should the United States know? We can always say there’s great unrest and what might happen, but in order to be successful, you have to keep the government that you’re coupling against uninformed and that means- and we would be a party off to one side.

ALEXANDER: And again, I think people find that difficult to understand. We also contribute to this myth, this notion we’re behind everything and we instigate everything because I am sure that the station chief and the defense attaché were asked by their respective organization “what, you guys didn’t have an inkling?” Well, yeah. They can’t admit that they were caught with their pants down; they’re in the intelligence business. “So you guys were asleep at the switch.” “No, we weren’t.” “Oh, then you knew.” Then they have to start equivocating and this again lends to the impression that maybe they did know or maybe they somehow were complicit. So you’re damned if you do and damned if you don’t.

Q: Well, without getting into details, how well were you served by the station and by the military attachés there?

ALEXANDER: I personally, when I was DCM my relationship with them obviously was different. When I was chargé the relationship changed. I had the feeling they liked me, respected me, were trying to do right by me but they also had their own agendas and there were things that I wasn't always told. I can't cite anything in particular, it may have been my own paranoia but the information came right after I left Haiti which suggested to me that they were not revealing to me everything. Whether this was deliberate, I don't know. I don't take it personally. I liked both; I had two military attaches, I liked them both. I liked my station chief. In fact, my station chief and I were quite friendly; we used to go diving together, scuba diving. His wife worked for my wife; they were both state officers. We saw each other after Haiti, we went to dinner and stuff and I've run across him on several occasions and was always warm greetings and highest, fondest regards. So I think that he was on the up and up with me.

Defense attaché. The first one, Pat, whom I mentioned, who's now retired, was a real character and I think that it was difficult for him to make the transition with me from being DCM to all of a sudden being effectively his real boss, at least on- I think that he, again, never disclosed everything that he should have, but again, I don't know that for a fact. But we had a good relationship, it was an easy relationship. I mean, it was very courteous, very respectful at the same time it was collegial. We were the same age, we were contemporaries. I knew his sister, we had served together, she was the spouse of an officer I had served with and we had been in high school in France at the same time, he in Paris. So we, on a personal level, we got along very well, and I think this aided in our official relationship, but it may have detracted too in the sense that if you get too friendly with people then they-

Q: Well, one of the things that happen. I mean, military attaché is supposed to get close to the military. And I mean, this always leads to, particularly in the Latin American or the Western Hemisphere context where often the military's involved in coups and this sort of thing, but did you feel that our military attachés were too close, you might say, to the junta with all their 7,000 men?

ALEXANDER: I think they were too close to those elements within the military that were involved in the coup. After the coup, some nasty organization called FRAP, which means to hit, was formed. It was made up of active duty and former military, Haitian military, people, and they went around terrorizing the local population, terrorizing the Aristide people. I did not know it at the time but apparently the guy who was the head of this FRAP organization was a good contact of the military attaché, which led me to ask myself on more than one occasion whether the military attaché wasn't somehow complicit in setting up this FRAP organization as a counterweight to the Aristide people. I don't know that for a fact, I'm not making that allegation because I just don't know it; it's just a thought that's crossed my mind on more than one occasion.

Q: Well then, you went back to Washington in '93. What were you doing?

ALEXANDER: I went back to Washington. I sat in AF; they had a little office, a little desk for me as I was waiting to go to Togo. What I didn't know at the time was that the incumbent, the person who was ambassador in Togo who had already spent his three years didn't want to leave. He had one year left in the Service and was trying to convince AF to let him stay at post and just

retire out of that, which I think is a very reasonable position. I think they should do that with all ambassadors who find themselves in a similar position but they don't, they have this very mechanical "no, three years; time is up." Well I'll be damned, they, he had his supporters in AF and they sort of did it in such a way where they, the DG, came to me, Genta Hawkins, and said, "I don't know why they're dragging their feet on getting this guy out of there. I suspect because he wants to stay in." And I told her, "I've heard that's basically it. I don't blame him." She said "you know something? I don't either." She said "let me; give me a couple of days to think about this." And sure enough, two days later she called me up and says "hey. How would you like to go to Mauritius?" I said "I'd much rather go to Mauritius than Togo." She says "fine." Problem solved. It was political, it's just gone apolitical; the White House is not interested in it and she says "so why don't you go there?" To make a long story short, I had wasted four months or so waiting for this fellow to leave Togo or for the AF to decide when he was going to leave Togo, I hadn't gone up on the Hill, I hadn't...

Q: This is tape five, side one with Les Alexander. Yes, you were saying you were left for four months sort of in limbo there.

ALEXANDER: Yes, while AF was deciding on Togo. And in the meantime Mauritius came open and so I was offered Mauritius which I said fine, an embassy's an embassy and Mauritius is a nice place. But I had to wait another four or five months to get a hearing so I was in Washington until early December or middle of December. So I spent about five months between Haiti and Mauritius.

Q: Well, I would have thought you would be prime meat for the Haitian people, the Aristide admirers or something to eat up when you were in Washington.

ALEXANDER: I was. It's funny, I thought the same thing. I thought, well, it will be interesting to see what I go through if, during my hearing if not before because, as you suggested, there were, I had my, well I won't say enemies but detractors, certainly, up on the Hill and elsewhere who felt that I had not been carrying Aristide's water and some even suggested that I was against Aristide. It never happened. I was asked almost nothing about Haiti during the time that I was waiting for my hearing and it didn't really come up during the hearing. It was as if I had never served in Haiti for some reason. And it was during that time, as a matter of fact, that I heard from someone that the Black Caucus, now it's coming back to me, that someone in the Black Caucus, I don't know what congressman it was, had talked to Vice President Gore and said we need somebody else in Haiti to take over from Alexander, someone who would reflect the views of your administration and not the last administration and he was there with the last administration. But I was told that whoever it was, and I don't know who it was so I won't name names because I just don't know, but one or two members of the Black Caucus made it absolutely clear, they said we're not saying that he's done anything wrong, we're not here to see that he's in any way hurt or his career damaged or anything or that sort. And that may have been the view, contrary to my concerns or fears that maybe I was being, that I had been seen as being antagonistic to Aristide when in point of fact I had exaggerated this in my mind, that people did not see me this way, that they just saw me as a career Foreign Service officer who was carrying out whatever the policy was as well as one could and that I didn't make any bones but not being crazy about Aristide but you know, I also recognized that listen, this is not a way to get rid of a president.

The man was democratically elected; if you don't like the way he's ruling there are other things to do. You don't send out the military to send him into exile. I guess this is why it didn't come up because I wasn't as widely perceived as I thought I was.

Q: Well, there's another side to this that we know from our experience in the Foreign Service. There really isn't much in the way of folk memory passed on. I mean, this is why we're doing these oral histories for one thing. Were you called upon to be debriefed or talk to people going out there or were you used in that way?

ALEXANDER: No, which I found very strange. I really did.

Q: That's typical in this business.

ALEXANDER: No, I find it strange in the sense that I thought I was being somewhat shunned and it really- the point was made when I was walking- I was in the State Department itself walking down the hall and Bill Swing was heading towards me, and this would have been October of 1993. Bill had already been named as the next ambassador to Haiti. And I see him, I recognized him and I said, "Oh Bill, how are you?" And he sort of looked at me in a rather unfriendly kind of way and he said "I'm fine." I said, "Oh, listen, you're going down to Haiti. I'm waiting to get a hearing and I've got plenty of time on my hands if you'd, go have lunch, want to talk and ask me." And he looked at me very disdainfully and said "no, no, I've already talked to Al." And very naively, I said "but you know, Al left quite some time ago, a year and a half ago and he went to Peru afterwards but he was held up for a year. I've just left, it's still fresh in my..." "No, no, no thank you." Essentially I was dismissed and he turned around and gave me his back and my wife was walking up the hallway behind me, I didn't realize it at the time, just sheer coincidence and saw this exchange and came up – and she was an FSO – she came to me and she says, "Jesus, what an asshole." I said "what?" She says, "He just dissed you." I said, "I kind of thought so, but I wasn't sure, and I don't know why." She said, "Well, because you're not an ambassador and he's the great, great ambassador." "You think that's it?" She said "no, not really but he's obviously been told that you were somehow politically incorrect or something." I said "yes, that was my sense."

I saw Bill years later, in fact we became friends living in Miami and playing tennis, and we never really talked about that, but I had a sense that he regretted that. Bill sort of implied briefly, in the very smooth, gentlemanly way, that he did things that he had been advised to do. I wasn't with the program and it wasn't worth talking to me because I had nothing intelligent to say on the subject of Haiti. It was quite clear that nobody wanted to hear what I had to say. Nobody.

Q: I think the real problem in the State Department is that around an assistant secretary you have staff people often who are regular FSOs, but who take it on themselves to sort of set the tone. They are one removed from policy, but I think they feel the power and they tend to make judgments based on nothing and kind of pass this on.

ALEXANDER: If that dynamic existed in the Western Hemisphere Bureau –I think it was still called the ARA even in '93 – I think that would have come more from the principle desk, Bob Gelbard, or another senior level. I don't think I was Bob's cup of tea. In fact, I know I wasn't,

because I was told later by the assistant secretary, Bernie, after he left that position that he was shocked when he found out that I didn't get an embassy in the Western Hemisphere, that I was going off someplace in Africa. He said to me, "I went and asked Bob Gelbard and I said what's this, he's going to Africa? Why isn't he going?" "Well there are no embassies." Bernie said to him, "well what do you mean there's no embassies?" "Well, there are no embassies left." "Why didn't he get one?" Bernie swore to me, he said "I was never consulted," he said "I left it up to Bob to do the personnel stuff, including ambassadors, and he would sort of run it by me." But he said mine got away from him, he said I was partially to blame because I should have taken more active interest, but he said he was stunned and angry when he found out that Bob had not lined up an embassy for me. And I thought, that explained a lot. "I thought maybe you were unhappy with me because of what had happened with Bill Swing and how no one seemed to want to talk to me in WHA" and he said no, that was not me. He said, "You know me." He said, "I thought you did a magnificent job and you were not appreciated."

I believe Bernie because four or five years later at a chiefs admission conference for Latin America, I was then the ambassador to Ecuador, all the former assistant secretaries going back 10 or 15 years were invited to speak to us. Each one of them made comments about how they saw the relationship with Latin America at the time that— this was '98. Bernie stood up and started saying, "when I was assistant secretary, I took the ambassador to Guatemala to task because he spoke out publicly and condemned the human rights record of the regime at the time. I called him up and chewed him out. I was wrong. I've realized that it was my pride, my false pride. He had done what an ambassador was supposed to do, but he had spoken out on his own, he wasn't instructed to do so. Ambassadors don't have to be instructed to do things like that, that's part of the job." He said, "I'm sorry to see that that apparently that type of attitude still exists. Les Alexander has been shunned since he condemned corruption in Ecuador which led to the ouster of the president. Many people say that he was responsible for that and he should have been applauded, but he was condemned because he did this without instructions. Again, good ambassadors don't need instructions to speak out on things of this sort." I was so shocked. I didn't know he was going to say that. Everyone turned around and looked at me. How did he know about this? I was in trouble with my then-assistant secretary and it was expressly over this issue. He came up to me afterwards and said "we didn't do right by you after Haiti; we should have given you an embassy and now I understand that you're being faulted for what you did in Ecuador, and you did the right thing." The then-assistant secretary came up to me afterwards and said "listen, Bernie was right, I want to apologize to you." I said, "Boy, what is this, I love Les Alexander week or something?" He said "no, I'm embarrassed, but he's absolutely right."

The point I'm trying to make is that I think Bernie was quite sincere and this was his way of making it up to me, after not having been more actively involved in where I went after Haiti. That also led me to believe that I wasn't being shunned by Bernie Aronson, the assistant secretary, but others in the front office who, for whatever reason, had a beef with me.

Q: When did you leave Haiti?

ALEXANDER: I left Haiti in the end of May; I believe it was, some time in May of 1993.

SARAH HORSEY-BARR
Deputy Chief of Mission, Organization of American States
Washington, DC (1992-1995)

Mrs. Horsey-Barr was born in Maryland into a Foreign Service family. She was raised in the Washington DC area and abroad and was educated at Georgetown University; and Loyola University in Rome, Italy. Her service with the State Department took her to several posts in Latin America dealing with both consular and political/management affairs. Her last assignments were with the Organization of American States, where she served in various senior capacities with the U.S. Mission. Mrs. Horsey-Barr was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: Let's talk about Haiti. Haiti was a brain issue in the Clinton-Bush campaign of '92, so when Clinton came on board. This was in many ways almost his first major foreign policy test.

HORSEY-BARR: There was a coup in 1991 in Haiti. The wave of boat people – exodus of refugees by boats, which most often are not boats at all but rafts of some sort, from Haiti seeking haven in the United States – shot up dramatically, and that's why it was a campaign issue, that's why it was one of the first, if not the first, foreign policy issue that Clinton had to deal with. The OAS had again that same collection of stars that I had spoke of was at the OAS in '91. They had passed the year before at the highest level of the Foreign Ministry a resolution talking about the democracy being an indispensable part of membership in the OAS, which is nothing new from the charter but it took it several steps further setting a new direction to democracy with grounds for hemispheric action. So this came on the heels of that. That passed in 1990. The coup, if I remember, was in October of '91, and so, a couple of months, the election was not until '92. The election was 1992, so by '92 the OAS after a couple of months been spinning around and trying various high-level missions to areas of Haiti to get the situation reversed, much of the problem in the United States, decided that it would take hemispheric action. They decided to start ratcheting up actions against Haiti in the hopes of reversing and getting the coup guys out quickly. That did work, and so what we saw over the next two or three years, via constant pressure from the United States because of the domestic implication, was a continual ratcheting up of the screws, if you will, tightening the isolation of the leadership in Haiti, and that culminated in 1993 with the imposition of an embargo. If you look at the inter-America behavior of the countries as a group in that process, one has to remember again that, unlike the United Nations where General Assembly decisions were a majority can decide and issue, the OAS works by consensus in the very rare event that the final product, the final decision, is not signed onto by all, and that makes its strength and its weakness. In the case of Haiti the criticism was that what the OAS kept on coming out with what was weaker than what was desirable, but the strength of it at the same time was that, because everybody had signed onto it, everybody, every country, in the hemisphere was prepared to support it, so there was less sort of lip service and more real attention paid to what was agreed to. It didn't stop the exodus of people.

Q: OAS sent these people down there and talking to the junta?

HORSEY-BARR: Oh, yes. They were trying on a political level. They were trying to do that sort of thing, high-level missions, not just by the OAS Secretary General but probably more importantly by groups of foreign ministers going down and speaking to them on behalf of the rest of the countries, but the impact was negligible. The embargo people argue even today about the effectiveness of the embargo. I think perhaps the greatest achievement of the embargo was the fact that it permitted the UN to act, and that then having the UN involved in support of the OAS was not only a boost to the OAS, if you will, in that whole Haiti operation, but gave the cover, if you will, or the opening for the United States to go in militarily.

Q: What really were you getting from those who went to Haiti about the junta in Haiti? Were these people blind or were they cunning or...

HORSEY-BARR: I don't think they were blind. They knew exactly what they were doing. I think they were extraordinarily cunning, and, very prejudiced now, I'd say that I think they probably epitomize the worst of what you see in many Latin societies, maybe other places as well too but I don't know, that in sort of the absence of any civic mindedness. It was everyone's out for themselves. I don't think they were different from the previous rulers. One subsequent one in manifesting that sort of cultural trait, but I think the means that they used to effect their personal gains were much more vicious certainly than since and probably than before. I think by comparison with the situation now, that might have been a cumulative effect, so after living with the two Duvaliers, Papa Doc and Baby Doc, and having real attention focused on Haiti. You know more about the atrocities of the junta. We hear about them and we heard about them after we had heard about the atrocities of the Duvaliers. They may not have been that much worse but certainly more of the public perception of them was that it was an entirely different order than before. But the OAS tried to send in a human rights monitoring team. If I remember correctly, they did send it in, and that was the only sort of foreign presence. Most other governments left Haiti during the embargo, both for political and practical reasons. It was tough. And the OAS mission monitoring human rights was a very useful source of information and political pressure, but ultimately what changed the situation was the U.S. military intervention. People wondered about that at the time.

Q: The American military, you say. When we put the troops in, what was their immediate reaction at the OAS - oh my God, there go the Americans again, or thank God there go the Americans?

HORSEY-BARR: I would say both. Fortunately for the United States, the UN cover made it a non-OAS issue officially because they were going out under UN auspices, not OAS. I think the world, this hemisphere, was tired of Haiti, and Haiti fatigue continued even after that, but I think the Haiti fatigue attenuated everybody's interests. So on the part of the Latins, all right, fine, that's great; they went in and they removed an eyesore, and that's terrific. On the Caribbean side, the Haiti situation affected the Caribbean states much more directly than it affected the Latins just because of proximity. What is not talked about is how many refugees they got and what it did to their economic situation, the other Caribbean countries that were close to Haiti, and what the embargo did to them. So I think there was a bit of happiness that we had done it for them. It was tempered somewhat by the fact it was perfectly obvious that Peru, which was in a similar kind of situation - similar but not identical, of course - was being treated differently by the

international system. So I think there was really a mix on the US intervention in Haiti on the part of the hemisphere. What happened in the years thereafter or what didn't happen in the years thereafter has also lacked in experience. What was the point? And yet, political situations don't run themselves generally into a nice and tidy solution.

DAVID R. ADAMS
Office of the Under Secretary of State
Washington, DC (1993-1995)

Mr. Adams was born in Washington, DC and raised in Virginia and abroad. He was educated at John Carroll, William and Mary and George Washington Universities. Mr. Adams joined USAID in 1973 in Washington, DC. He served in Washington and abroad, dealing primarily with matters concerning Latin American countries and Kosovo. His foreign assignments include Bangladesh, Guatemala and Haiti, where he served as USAID Mission Director. Mr. Adams was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

ADAMS: There was a perception that the state department leadership was a gang that couldn't shoot straight. Christopher was ultimately responsible for this, but he lacked confidence in some of the people underneath him. One of those was Wharton. Wharton had been a private sector senior manager of the TIAA-CREF Fund. Even though he was the son of an ambassador, I don't think he had any foreign service experience. He was a bit of a reticent fellow anyway, not very assertive. Wirth among others was getting impatient with his lack of assertiveness with AID. He was seen I think, as being too cozy with AID. That was part of his problem but not all of it. Then Wharton was pushed out. Talbott took over, and being close with President Clinton as well, and Dan Speckhard who had been the head of that unit, DP&R, the successor to Boyce and Bauerlein, had a small group of us underneath him. Talbott actually had taken Dan away before. He wanted Dan to run some of his operations in the former Soviet Union czar's office. So we were, our fate was somewhat up in the air because we didn't have an immediate successor to Speckhard. So when this move happened, when Talbott came in, he left Speckhard with the Soviet office or the Russia NIS office and we were pulled into the new configuration of the Secretary's office. Well it was the evolution that was going on there, because of the gang that couldn't shoot straight image was that Ambassador Samuel Lewis, former ambassador to Israel and SP director, had a motorcycle accident-- he was having a hard time recovering from it, but also apparently Christopher was not happy with his leadership with SP, which was seen to be falling on hard times. It wasn't generating the ideas that it had been known for in prior years. The point where they could not convince the heavy hitters to take over after Lewis was in part because he was convalescing. So they ended up pulling in Jim Steinberg who was DAS under Toby Gati in INR, a very smart fellow. Meanwhile by the way, you have to remember what was going on was there was a lot of dissension with administrative policy on Haiti, particularly by the black caucus, others who thought we were being much too timid with respect to allowing crises to fester. So there was a lot of criticism of the administration. Then you had the right saying don't you dare intervene or else. So the administration was being buffeted. There was internecine warfare going on within the State Department, between AID and State, and NSC and State. You had Tony Lake,

whom I came to know later, who was basically like Talbott, a humanitarian interventionist type. Tony was running up against Christopher and others who were saying, "Don't get involved. This is not our fight." Christopher, one of his hats was Clinton domestic advisor. He would look down and was crystal balling I think about the negative reaction for example in the '94 Congressional election if a Haiti intervention went awry. Interestingly it went very well. I think this helped Clinton in '94. So I was one of those who was militating behind the scenes for intervention in Haiti. In fact even though he never told me so, I think I can say without being immodest, that I influenced my former boss, David Obey. A paper I wrote got to him.

Q: Wasn't he head of the foreign op subcommittee.

ADAMS: Yes, House Appropriations, because David Obey was the first person of any stature in the foreign affairs community to come out for intervention. Everybody else was calling for an embargo. Which I think others and I who knew Haiti knew that it wasn't going to work. An embargo would just make the Haitian people suffer more. But even Aristide who was here at the time in exile, called for an embargo which I think belied his lack of real love for his people, frankly. He had to know that they would be the ones who would suffer. That it would leak, the embargo would leak. I wrote this and made it very clear in a briefing, as did others, not just me. It was ignored; and they tried the embargo and it was a disaster. The next thing you know the country is leaking refugees, who thought they would get a sympathetic hearing in the States, but of course Clinton didn't want to hear about it. They were being farmed out to islands all over the Caribbean. Guantanamo was full of Haitians. Anyway that is just an example of how this gang that couldn't shoot straight was, frankly had a lot to it.

Q: Well you were in was it policy planning?

ADAMS: I didn't complete the thought and was getting a little bit too all over the place. What happened was that when they brought in Steinberg, the decision that some of the staff of policy planning, which was quite large at the time, would be melded with our small unit, and we then would be established as the new office of policy and resources. Resources, planning, and policy underneath former Ambassador Craig Johnstone who had retired, still a relatively young man. They brought him back. He had done some work on NAFTA, lobbying the hill for NAFTA. He was close to Marc Grossman who was head of the secretariat at that time. So Grossman prevailed upon the secretary to bring Craig back. Well Craig had his strengths, but working the budget was not one of them at least initially. Fortunately we had several staff who knew the budget well. Ironically with this tension between AID and State, we had, state department staff and one political appointee or two that had been brought over from the policy planning staff, and then there were two of us from other agencies, both from AID. Mike Usnick, brilliant on the budget, who had been the controller at USAID, but Larry Byrne who had been head of management and took the budget as well, AID wanted his own person on the job, the CFO I guess it was called, Chief Financial Officer. So he booted Usnick and found a place for him in this new office with Craig Johnstone. Well Mike, it was ironic because Byrne had it in for Johnstone because he did not want Johnstone to do his job effectively, given his independence. He wanted power through the budget because the secretary's intention, to his credit, was to have a much more high powered budget unit, resource planning operation. That is why I think in part they took office space and officers from SP and brought us over to another corridor closer to the secretary's

office. Then with Usnick there, Usnick basically repeatedly pulled Johnstone's chestnuts out of the fire. Craig is a very nice and genuine person but he comes across as being officious, and has this affected air about him. So I will never forget that first appropriations or first budget request briefing he gave, I think for the 1995 foreign affairs budget justification to the Hill. These seasoned staffers, some of whom I had worked with closely, several of us standing behind or next to Craig, but he was doing all the talking. They were shaking their heads, as if he were treating them like children. This is another example of how State blew it on the budget and the way they interacted with the hill. Because the folks at H weren't any help to Craig. Of course they couldn't do much because he wanted to run the show. So he did his little power point thing. But it was Budget 101. It should have taken into consideration the fact that these people knew the game. So maybe I have to take some of the blame for not preparing him better or warning him. But anyway it didn't start out well. S/RPP's reputation was not that good initially, but over time it got better and Craig got into the job and he was I think, an effective interlocutor eventually.

Q: Did you get involved with the sort of major issues Haiti, Bosnia and Rwanda? Did these come within your purview?

ADAMS: Well, yes and no. For Haiti, I was actually given the portfolio initially by Deputy Secretary Wharton's staff director. I forget his exact title but it was I think his name was Jim Warfield, who was really under the gun. He had a lot on his plate, and Haiti was frustrating everybody. So when he learned that I had served in Haiti and knew Haiti, and had followed Haiti, he said, "Look, I want you to run with this stuff. Keep me informed. So I did. I sort of interacted with folks on the Hill. What was going on as well was there was an official Haiti working group led by Larry Pezzullo and Ambassador Dick Brown and Mike Kozak that had been held over from the prior administration. They basically were taking the approach that Aristide and the military were both equally bad, and that they couldn't be dealt with. I am not being simplistic, but long story short they were ticking off a lot of the traditional Democratic party constituents in the process, and being very close hold, which was a big mistake. Craig told them later, Craig Johnstone who I kept informed of my activities when we moved over to the secretary's office. I stayed in AID until the time of the intervention. So I wrote some papers and did some interaction with some folks on the Hill that were unauthorized. Pezzullo became very angry with me, frankly because of my unauthorized interaction with folks around town. At one point he asked the secretary to get me yanked and sent back to AID. Johnstone intervened in my behalf and said, "This guy is doing the right thing, and doing a good job." But after I had written my papers and tried to bring other coalitions together, once the course was set for intervention, I was pulled out and told to do other things in no uncertain terms. The other problem was the secretary was not in favor of intervention either, in fact fought it up to the end. He got rolled by Tony Lake, and possibly behind the scenes by Strobe Talbot, but I never saw that in writing. There were articles about Christopher including one by the New York Times that very clearly laid out the dynamics between State and the NSC. In fact Christopher didn't even go over to the White House, showing his disagreement with the decision to intervene, when the troops were on the way to Haiti, just before being recalled when Colin Powell, Jimmy Carter and Sam Nunn were successful in getting the Haitian military to stand down. In fact a number of us had been arguing that they would stand down. That Haiti was NOT Somalia. That was the other context. We had the Somali fiasco, and to some extent it was personal for me; I admit it. It was right after Somalia went sour

when the administration turned around that ship that was bringing U.S. advisors to Haiti, the Harlan County, and then they killed a former colleague of mine, the Haitian military did. Guy Malary, who was the Haitian minister of justice who was warned to quit the job before they killed him. So that enraged a number of us who knew Guy. I had known him when I was in Haiti the first time around; got to know him quite well. So anyway, Pezzullo was relieved of his appointment. The Haiti working group was taken over by former congressman Bill Gray who coincidentally staffed, when he was on the hill, by Hazel Robinson who was the wife of Randall Robinson, who later went on the hunger strike for Haiti. Hazel and I worked together when I was on the hill, and so she had moved over to work for Dellums who was chairman of the armed services committee, Ronald Dellums. So Hazel was one of those people I engaged on the hill about the policy and was working behind the scenes with. Then Congressman Gray was brought in to sort of handle the politics of the Haiti situation. Ambassador Jim Dobbins with the Rand Corporation was brought in to handle the day to day. So I did informally give my two cents worth to Dobbins. He seemed to appreciate my ideas. So the rest is history. I mean I learned later, and I have to eat crow on Aristide. I went back to Haiti as USAID mission director later and saw first hand what a destructive force he was. Even though I felt that the intervention was the right thing to do at the time. With the benefit of hindsight, well the administration did the right thing by basically forcing Aristide to step down after he finished his term. He still worked behind the scenes to do his thing with President Preval. Preval seemed to have learned later that he had to keep Aristide at arms length.

Q: Well did you at the time when you were back in Washington working on handling aspects of the Haiti situation, were you and others dubious about Aristide, because Aristide had become the darling of the Glitterati and all that.

ADAMS: That's right, and I became more involved in the politics. I had spoken with people who had a good or better knowledge of Haiti than I did. I became more and more skeptical, and my work reflected that in terms of well you know he could be involved with drug running and what have you. So that was reflected. So it wasn't a whole-hearted endorsement. I will tell you what argument may have had the strongest impact on policy makers was that the refugee issue was the third rail if you will. I knew Clinton himself was very paranoid about the political effects of refugees running amok, as happened to him in Arkansas when the one election he lost was his re-election as governor and reportedly had said that it was the timing of when a number of the Cuban Mariel refugees broke free from the prison in Arkansas and scared the hell out of people. They blamed Clinton evidently for accepting the refugees in the first place, in a close election. Anyway that was one reason why he was adamant that we had to control the entry of refugees from Haiti, as with Bush before him. But I borrowed from an analysis by a brilliant Congressional Research Service analyst at CRS on the refugee flows from Haiti. What were some of the levers, what were some of the buttons that would be pushed that would influence refugee flow. There was a perception that U.S. policy was going to be more lenient. As a result more refugees would attempt to flee to the U.S. despite the dangerous journey. It is interesting to note that when Aristide first came to power, in fact even before he was elected the first time, several months before that when the elections were being put together and he was the clear favorite.....the attempt at illegal migrations to the States dipped significantly from Haiti, and they stayed quite low until he was booted by the military the first time. Then attempts at migration shot up. There was a perception by the Haitians that they might get a favorable hearing

in the U.S. by some comments that Clinton or his senior people made. Then the embargo happened and with all that a huge spike in refugee departures for the U.S. And so I wrote a paper, the central thesis of which was that if you brought Aristide back, no matter what you think of him, that would create hope. And if you want to mitigate the flood of refugees to the U.S. get him back there. That was another argument of course for us to intervene. That paper was given to Tony Lake by one of my colleagues at State who used to work for Lake, Lionel Johnson. It also was given to Sandy Berger. Did it get to Clinton? I don't know, but I think the argument made it to Clinton. Again not mine, the CRS analyst deserves credit on the hill. (What was her name, Maureen Morales?) Anyway, but you asked about Bosnia and other things, Rwanda. I can't say that I was involved with Rwanda at all. I wrote a paper about Rwanda. I don't think it influenced anybody. It was about the hate radio in Rwanda, Mille Collines, and what a destructive force it was. It stoked the violence. I tried to link that with the sort of hate speech that influenced Timothy McVeigh who bombed the Murrah building in Oklahoma, and how hate speech can cause otherwise prompt volatile people to do terrible things. I had no influence, no direct involvement in Rwanda policy (until later). Bosnia, yes, I actually worked informally with Bob Gelbard. I don't know if you saw the letter from him in the package I sent you, but he clearly articulated the impact on of my arguments on Haiti policy as well as Bosnia, and Kosovo to a lesser extent. Bob was quite generous with his comments. But anyway Bosnia was another one where the administration was being very timid. It was that fear of casualties, the fear of the political ramifications. I think initially that Warren Christopher was in that camp. I give Christopher credit. He came around quicker on Bosnia than he did Haiti. And was a very important actor, of course, in the whole Dayton Accords, along with Asst. Secretary Holbrook.

HARRIET C. BABBITT
US Ambassador to OAS
Washington, DC (1993-1997)

A lawyer by profession, Ambassador Babbitt was born in West Virginia and raised there and in New York and Texas. After attending the Universities of Texas; Madrid, Spain; Arizona State; as well as Sweet Briar College and Mexico City College of the University of the Americas, she entered law practice in Arizona, the home state of her husband, Bruce Babbitt. She continued her law practice throughout her husband's political career until being named US Ambassador to the Organization of American States in 1993. Ambassador Babbitt was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Well, during this 1993 to 1997 period, was there an issue or episode that we haven't covered?

BABBITT: Four years worth. Haiti.

Q: Haiti, oh my gosh. Yes. How about Haiti. How did this play in the OAS? You might explain what the problem was with Haiti.

BABBITT: Oh, the problems with Haiti. They are still going on. Aristide was elected, but living in a little apartment in Georgetown. The United States' position was that, although he would not have been our choice, he was the people's choice. Therefore, we were going to get Aristide back. That was the right thing to do. In OAS, it played in a whole variety of ways. It covered a long period of time. There are many chapters in the saga. Many countries in the hemisphere was completely indifferent to Haiti. Many Latin American countries were not officially racists, but were unofficially in every way.

Q: Yes. Brazil, which makes great play in being multiracial, no problem. Yet, I talked with people who served in Brazil who said, "Don't believe it for a minute."

BABBITT: Many other Latin American countries feel exactly the same way. They couldn't imagine wasting time on this country with its illiterate black people. It was hard to get the level of interest in Haiti that we wanted. The Caribbeans cared about Haiti because it was in their neighborhood. When we, the United States, were getting ready to intervene militarily, and all the build up to that, Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbot had Haiti as his task. We would meet in his office at 8:00 every morning to kind of refine the strategy for the day, who had spoken to whom and what. One of the things that we wanted, and Strobe was responsible for, was a UN approval. I now have forgotten exactly what form that was to take... For United States military intervention. I assume it must have been a coalition of the willing. The Argentines gave us a boat or something. Somebody else gave us something else, so that it would be a multilateral endeavor, but essentially it was U.S. military. We were negotiating with the Turks and Caicos, and almost everybody else, for taking Haitian refugees. So, there were many parts to this. But, the political OAS task was to pass a resolution expressing to the UN the desire for the United States to invade.

Q: Yes, it was very popular.

BABBITT: So, I remember at the general assembly where we were to carry this off, was held in Baena's honor in his hometown because this was his last general assembly. This was a town poorly equipped to host a general assembly. It was hot. The hotels were awful. The transportation was terrible. Our U.S. ambassador to Brazil was brand new and indifferent to logistics. I can't quite remember who it is. Remind me who it was.

Q: It will come to me.

BABBITT: A smart, able guy. He had a heart attack. He was not interested in logistics, and apparently his folks weren't either, because there weren't enough cars. It was awful. Anyway, we flew down, and drove. The African/American preacher from Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, who was a wonderful man... anyway, his job was to mind Aristide. So, we were all trying to get this out of the OAS. My job was to deal with the Mexicans. They, of course, were going to be hard to convince about the worthiness of this cause. "Gringos go home," was repeated because of our invasion of Vera Cruz. Our members spent a lot of time sitting in the stairwell. I don't know why we sat in a stairwell. I think in the inadequate quarters in this little Brazilian town, the stairwell was the only place where you could predictably have a quiet spot away from everybody else. So, I was sitting with Jorge Pintos, who was vice minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico and Alejandro Carrillo Castro, working out language, which we essentially did.

We said that if the government of Haiti requested an invasion, then it was no longer an affront to their sovereignty. We crafted some language for Aristide to give in his speech at the OAS general assembly, which would, in effect, request an invasion.

Q: Aristide, living in Georgetown at the time.

BABBITT: Right. But, the constitutionally elected president of Haiti. That satisfied the Mexicans need from a legal basis, because the constitutionally-elected president has requested it. They didn't care very much about Haiti anyway. It satisfied Strobe's need to go to the UN saying that the important hemispheric body had requested this. So, we got our motions.

JAMES DOBBINS
Deputy Special Advisor for Haiti, Department of State
Washington, DC (1994-1996)

Ambassador James Dobbins was born in Brooklyn, NY and raised in New York, Philadelphia, Manila, Philippines and Washington, D.C. area. He attended Georgetown University and served in the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1967. He served in France, Germany and England. Ambassador Dobbins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: We'll move to Haiti. This will be what?

DOBBINS: Well, this would be '94 to '96.

Q: Jim, again, you were doing this, what was the title regarding Haiti?

DOBBINS: Well, it changed, because initially they brought in a fellow named Bill Gray, who had been a former congressman.

Q: Yes, head of the Black Caucus, from Philadelphia, I believe.

DOBBINS: Right, and he had retired from Congress a few years earlier but remained an important leader within the black community, and he was brought in as – I can't remember what his title was, but something like presidential adviser, special presidential adviser, or something like that, on Haiti, in order to give it some political visibility. And also because the administration itself was so beleaguered as the result of its mistakes over both Haiti and Somalia and had lost a lot of credibility as a result, and I think felt they needed some new faces and some effort to restore their credibility. Also, of course, this was responsive to the base of support for a more robust policy on Haiti, which was the Black Caucus in Congress, all of whom were Democrats.

So I was assigned as his deputy, so I think my title was something like deputy special adviser for Haiti, or something like that. I was the senior professional on that team, and it was actually a somewhat difficult situation, because both the NSC, both Sandy Berger and Tony Lake in the NSC and Strobe Talbott in the State Department, who were managing this effectively regarded me as their personal subordinate for managing it. And they regarded Bill Gray as not a figurehead, because he was too significant for that, but as somebody who needed to be managed and kept on task, and it was sort of my task to do that. Whereas Gray regarded me as his deputy, not theirs, and so I was rather constantly being pulled in two directions, because his views were often different from those of the senior elements of the administration. So it was a difficult period, which lasted really until a few weeks after we had invaded Haiti. I guess when Gray stepped down in that capacity formally when Aristide returned, which was about a month after the actual invasion.

Q: How did one deal, your attitude, Gray's attitude and all, dealing with various political conundrums of we were allowing, essentially, Cuban people to come into the United States if they got in ...

DOBBINS: At that point, we were allowing them in if they got out. Now we're only allowing them in if they get in. That is, if we catch them at sea now, we do return them to Cuba.

Q: But there is, one can almost say gross discrimination for Haitians, because at that time the Haitians had a ...

DOBBINS: Well, at that time, the human rights situation in Haiti was a good deal worse than it was in Cuba. Yes, it was gross discrimination, and this was the core of the black caucus argument and pressures. Randall Robinson's hunger crusade, which is what really turned the policy around.

Q: It doesn't ring a bell.

DOBBINS: Well, prior to my appointment, there had been a coup, President Aristide fled the country, and he'd continued to be recognized. The U.S. and the rest of the OAS (Organization of American States) and international community continued to accord him legitimacy. He eventually located in Washington as part of a government in exile. Nobody recognized what we called the de facto regime. Political and eventually economic sanctions had been applied by the United Nations. Most of that had occurred before the Clinton administration came into office. There had been an effort to negotiate an arrangement by which Aristide would return, but there would be safeguards for the factions that had ejected him, his powers would be somewhat limited, and an international peacekeeping force, which would consist of essentially trainers rather than a more robust force, would come in to begin trying to professionalize the Haitian army, which had staged a coup.

That effort foundered just three or four days after the Blackhawk down incident. The ship that contained these UN mandated military trainers, or at least the American component – they weren't to be all Americans, but several hundred of them were to be Americans – pulled into the harbor in Port-au-Prince and a small unruly crowd that had been generated by one of the local

sort of extreme party leaders, who turned out to be a CIA agent, it was later learned, turned out a sort of small, unruly crowd on the pier. And the Clinton administration, terrified of yet another incident, actually turned the ship around and sailed out of the harbor, despite the fact that our deputy chief of mission, a slight woman, was standing on the pier, waiting for them to come ashore and was herself braving this hostile crowd without any support. These 700 U.S. soldiers sailed around and left, and this sort of retreat under fire was another extreme humiliation.

Shortly thereafter, Randall Robinson who was a black writer, leader, activist here in Washington, went on a hunger strike, saying he wasn't going to eat unless the administration changed its policy on returning Haitians asylum seekers without examining their claims to asylum, simply returning them to Haiti, making of course the comparison to the Cuban thing. He continued and got a good deal of publicity for this, for a couple of weeks, and it eventually became the catalyst that led Clinton to change the policy. It was the change in policy which led to Bill Gray's appointment, and a day or two later, my appointment.

The policy changed in two respects. One was the statement that implied that if we were not able to resolve the impasse over Haiti's political future diplomatically in a way that led to the return of Aristide, we were prepared to use force in that regard. The second was that we would not return Haitians, boat people, in effect, people who were intercepted at sea, we would not return them to Haiti until we had at least examined their claim for asylum. So that was the policy, the announcement that was more or less coincident with my appointment, and those were the policies that I was supposed to coordinate the implementation of.

Q: Could you describe our perception of the situation in Haiti, the government and that type of situation?

DOBBINS: There was a good deal of misinformation, among other things, because this was a period during which there was a considerable gap between what the administration policymakers wanted, and what the intelligence community, particularly the CIA, thought was wise. This was the period during which the CIA director at the time had reportedly poor relations with the administration, and the information, the CIA had fairly extensive assets and contacts, but they tended to be with only one spectrum of the society there, that is, those who had been in control for a while, the military in particular. So the reporting did tend to be skewed, and the embassy reporting was a little less skewed.

Q: And when you arrived on the scene, you were aware, this was general knowledge.

DOBBINS: No, I don't know that it was general knowledge, but it was pretty evident in the debates in the situation room that the intelligence community tended to paint. As things moved toward the possibility of an intervention, I think they tended to predict a greater degree of resistance and a more effective capacity of the regime there to mount some sort of prolonged resistance than in fact proved to be the case.

The intelligence community was also very skeptical of Aristide. They had apparently briefed before I got there the Congress that he was not only mentally unbalanced, but also dependent on drugs, was a drug abuser as well as mentally unstable. Now, I think to some degree in retrospect,

their cautions on Aristide have proved justified, but clearly the idea that he was mentally unbalanced drug addict was not substantiated by his subsequent behavior. Some of the other cautions about his attitudes and likely behavior in power were better substantiated. In any case, there was a pretty big gulf in the administration between those who thought he had been democratically elected, had shown poor judgment, but basically had the right instincts and with the right amount of guidance and support could be channeled constructively and those who felt that he was incorrigible. So there were pretty strong divisions on that score.

I don't know that the Pentagon had a view on Aristide. They simply didn't want to get engaged on this and were strongly resistant until a couple of months before the intervention. Then they did come around, but for the first few months of these debates, they were strongly opposed to any use of force, or even any involvement in the peacekeeping activity. So that was an uphill battle. There were a lot of debates within the administration, and the knowledge was somewhat limited simply by the fact that this was a country that the United States had largely ignored for 200 years.

Q: Well, first place, with the CIA, you mentioned that the person who demonstrated, got his 700 followers to demonstrate against our landing of troops.

DOBBINS: It was the FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti).

Q: Well, the CIA, the guy who was on the payroll, was this not a CIA action, but just sort of a rogue action?

DOBBINS: I'm not sure. There were a lot of subsequent press articles about his status with the CIA, and I'm really basing my comment on what was in the press. There are different types of agents, whether he was somebody whom they were paying to do what they wanted him to do, or somebody who was simply providing them information and doing what he wanted to do. I don't think there was any suggestion that he had mounted this demonstration at the CIA's behest, but there was a feeling that if he was and had been somebody who had been working with the CIA for an extended period of time, and the press reports suggested that was the case, that the agency ought to at least had a reasonable prospect of having known that he was doing this. And having some sense of what its dimensions were, how threatening it was, what was likely to happen if the troops came ashore, rather than having this occur as a complete surprise. At best, it demonstrated a lack of coordination within the U.S. organization.

Q: Did you take the measure personally?

DOBBINS: Constant. Constant was that guy's name.

Q: The guy who organized the ...

DOBBINS: And the head of the FRAPH, Toto Constant. He became a folk figure at the time, because then he fled to the United States, and then the Haitians wanted him back to try him for crimes against humanity, and we eventually kept him here under bizarre circumstances, largely because we didn't think they would be able to give him a decent trial. So I think he is still living

with his mother somewhere in Brooklyn – a weird case. Anyway, Haiti was among the interventions I've dealt with, the one in which the U.S. administration was most disorganized and at odds with itself.

Q: Well, did you have a chance to take the personal measure of Aristide?

DOBBINS: To some degree, but Aristide was at this point pretty much on his best behavior and Bill Gray made an effort to sort of put aside all of the previous differences and try to establish a new relationship based on trust, and it worked for that period, because Aristide had every interest in accommodating us, provided we weren't trying to negotiate away his prerogatives when he returned to Haiti, which is where he would have resisted. So Aristide was on his best behavior, and Aristide could be quite charming and engaging, and he certainly gave the lie to the idea that he was a drug-crazed lunatic. He was quite coherent.

Q: Drug-crazed is the wrong thing, but throwing this in sounds a bit like you have a policy difference, what you try to do is denigrate the person. On the part of the CIA, it sounds a little ...

DOBBINS: Well, there were certainly those who felt that that was what was happening. There was certainly a deeply felt gulf here that made the interagency process extremely difficult, and there were a lot of leaks. The most damaging was the leak in which I think it was the New York Times that actually reported an intercepted phone conversation in which Aristide was quoted, verbatim, from a phone conversation on the basis of intercepted communications.

Q: This is the NSA, National Security Administration.

DOBBINS: I'm not sure who it was, since in fact he was in Washington at the time. Assuming that the intercept was in fact accurate, who intercepted it, I don't know, but it leaked. It had been briefed to the Intelligence Committee. It leaked. It wasn't clear where it had leaked from. The reporter was a reporter that covered the CIA and the Intelligence Committee, and I think that the general suspicion was that the leak probably had occurred from the Intelligence Committee. I don't think that was ever formally acknowledged, but this was the implication of things when they said, "We've got to tighten up our procedures." There was a feeling that they needed to pay more attention to that.

I mean the leak about him being a drug-dependent psychotic was also a leak of a classified CIA briefing which had been given to the intelligence community and which subsequently leaked to the press. So all this stuff was swirling around in the press.

Q: Here in many ways was our Haitian policy under Clinton, by the time you'd got there, designed almost more than anything else to mollify the Black Caucus?

DOBBINS: No, there were other elements. After all, it had been the Bush administration, which had imposed economic sanctions and secured OAS and UN resolutions calling for Aristide's return. I think that there was a feeling that there was an issue of principle here of some consequence. By this time, you had achieved democratic transitions in every country in Latin America except Cuba. Every president in Latin America, except Fidel Castro, had been freely

elected, and so this was a reversal in a trend that was regarded as very positive, and there was bipartisan support for the concept that one should be willing to make an effort to preserve a democratic hemisphere.

There was that element, and then in the Clinton administration there was an element of what was caricatured by its critics as foreign policy is social work, that here you had an impoverished and repressed society only an overnight raft ride from our shores that needed more attention and that deserved a better future. So there were a variety of factors, and then there was the problem of refugees and that led to a lot of political pressures from Florida, for instance, to do something about the problem. So there were a variety of factors, but there's no doubt that, just as other ethnic communities in this country have influenced policy, whether it's the Polish community pushing for Poland's entry into NATO, or the Armenian community pushing us to engage on the behalf of Armenia. This is a fairly common phenomenon, so that the Haitian American community and the Black Caucus did take up the issue, in part because of the contrast to the way we were handling Cuban refugees.

The sad thing was that, unfortunately, at that point, there were no black Republicans in Congress, not one. Every member of Congress who was black was Democratic, and at that point, the Republican Party wasn't polling significantly among black constituencies across the country, and wasn't really trying to. Some of this has changed. As a result, all of the constituency was only exercising its weight in one party, and what the result was, whereas all of these interventions were controversial, they weren't partisan. That is, the controversy tended to split both parties. Even Iraq, more recently, splits the Democrats who think the war in Iraq was a good idea. There are Democrats who think it's a bad idea. And there are Republicans who think it's a bad idea and there are Republicans who think it's a good idea. Certainly that was true of the Balkans as well. There were significant Republican voices supporting the Clinton interventions, including, for instance, Bob Dole. But in the case of Haiti, there were no Republican voices who were arguing for intervention.

The support was exclusively Democratic, and so the issue became not only controversial but partisanly controversial in a way that none of the others were or subsequently became.

Q: Well, then, here you are. What were you doing? What was your organization doing?

DOBBINS: Well, first we had to create an organization, but that wasn't too big. We recruited a dozen or so people to manage the process. There were several streams. One, as it turned out to be, in many ways, the most time consuming, was dealing with the altered refugee policy, which had not been well thought out, and which quickly became almost unmanageable. The policy had been previously when Haitians were intercepted at sea by the Coast Guard, they were simply returned to Haiti without any review as to the validity of their claims to be political asylees.

The Clinton administration said that henceforth they would review those claims before returning them. The problem is that in order to review the claims, you need to interview the person and you need to make some judgment as to whether the individual is likely to suffer persecution of some sort if he returns to the country, or is he, alternatively, simply an economic refugee. He's fleeing because he's starving to death, not because he's going to get shot by the local

constabulary when he gets back. And if he's just starving to death, then you can return him, in effect. Of course, there were programs to feed people in Haiti that were underway, so you could salve your conscience in that regard.

So you needed a process in which an interviewer who was qualified, which meant somebody from INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services) who had the appropriate training, could interview these people, which you could do on Coast Guard cutters if the numbers were limited. But pretty soon the numbers overwhelmed us, because as soon as the Haitians found out that there was a chance of getting in the United States, the number of boat people magnified tremendously. From a few dozen every day, it magnified to thousands and then tens of thousands every day that were taking anything that would float, getting into the water, getting out. They didn't have to try to get to the United States. They just had to get out far enough to get picked up a Coast Guard cutter, and then they were in the system, and then they had a chance of persuading whoever interviewed them.

So the change in policy greatly expanded the number of asylum seekers, so you needed a place to put them while you reviewed their cases pending their return. There was a lot of debate about where to put them. One thought was that we'd hire a few big ocean liners that would sort of cruise around and the cutters would bring them to the ocean liner and they'd be processed on the ocean liner and then returned. And we actually did go out and hire a couple of ocean liners, although I'm not sure any were actually used for it. This was a pretty crackpot scheme, actually. But then we decided we'd put them in Guantanamo. The military didn't like that, kept saying it wasn't possible, and then when they admitted it was possible, they'd say, "Okay, we're going to take 5,000," and then when we got 5,000 there, they'd say, "Well, we can't have any more," and we'd say, "You have to," and then they'd go up to 10,000. It eventually got up to about 40,000, if I recall.

This was all complicated because there was a simultaneous outflow of Cubans and there was a change in our Cuba policy about this time, so we ended up having a lot of Cubans detained in Guantanamo in more or less the same timeframe, and of course the two had to be kept separate. So Guantanamo was clearly filling up.

Then we had a policy where we were running around to other Caribbean nations to ask them to set up refugee processing centers, and one of my tasks was to fly down to meet with the president of Panama and persuade him, which I did briefly, to accept this. A lot of time was spent going around to Jamaica and Panama and Trinidad and other places that no one had ever heard of in the Caribbean and offering them huge sums of money to accept essentially a concentration camp for Haitians on their soil. We actually started building some of these camps, although I don't think we ever put anybody in any of them. There was this mounting pressure, because the immigration policy that the administration had announced was ultimately unsustainable.

Q: Were you there at the time when the policy was developed?

DOBBINS: No, it was announced coincident with Gray's and my appointment.

Q: Was anybody saying, "Hey, this is really going to trigger something?"

DOBBINS: Yes, all the professionals were saying, "Boy, you've got to watch what you're doing."

Q: Well, then, how did this particular part play out?

DOBBINS: Well, it was one of the factors that forced the intervention. As long as you were prepared to return people that were intercepted at sea to Haiti, you wouldn't have many people who were leaving, and as long as you didn't have many people who were leaving, you didn't have a refugee crisis. You had a human rights crisis in Haiti, because up to 1,500 people a year were being killed in politically connected violence, according to NGOs (nongovernmental organizations). So you had a human rights situation in Haiti, but you didn't have a refugee problem.

Once you began to acknowledge the human rights situation, once you began to acknowledge it, you then had a refugee policy. Once you had a refugee policy, you then had mounting pressure for an intervention to correct the human rights situation so that you could then begin returning people again, and that was the dynamic that ultimately led to the intervention. So one strain of what we were doing was running around with our hair on fire, dealing with this mounting refugee crisis, and the administration was very concerned that they had another fiasco on their hands, after the gays in the military...

Their credibility was pretty strained, and then another reversal, another admission that this policy was unsustainable would have been very difficult.

Q: Who were some of the principal players at the top of the Clinton administration in this?

DOBBINS: Lake, Berger and Talbott, and John Deutch in the Pentagon.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you really weren't getting good direction from above? Were you putting out fires?

DOBBINS: Well, I was getting good direction from Lake and Berger and Talbott in the sense that we were in daily or hourly contact, and there were lots of meetings. There were usually one or two meetings in the situation room every day. What was unclear until the end was whether the president was in fact prepared to launch an intervention. I have talked about one strand of what we were doing. The other strand was to create mounting pressures on the regime with a view to securing their agreement to Aristide's return, in other words, we vastly increased economic sanctions, we put a lot of pressure on the Dominicans and closed their border. We talked about putting some kind of military observer force along the Dominican border. That's something the Pentagon hated and effectively stonewalled.

Q: Why was the Dominican border important?

DOBBINS: Because it's Haiti's only border.

Q: Yes, but I mean were people fleeing across it?

DOBBINS: No, it was because if you have economic sanctions, you've got to close the border. The main thing that was being smuggled across was gasoline in five-gallon cans. We were forbidding travel by leaving Haitians, we were trying to secure international support for tougher sanctions, more comprehensive sanctions, so that was one strain. The second strain was trying to create an international consensus on a possible intervention, a legal basis for it, and trying to create a coalition that would actually mount the intervention. It would be largely U.S., but we wanted at least some international cover and appearance of participation, so we were recruiting tiny Caribbean islands whose armies consisted of 100 men to lend us five of them so we could put their flag on top of the operation. And we eventually did create what we called the Caribbean Community Battalion, which turned out to be a large company, composed of units from a dozen different little Caribbean countries. It was militarily ineffective in the extreme, but it had considerable symbolic value. We were doing all of these things simultaneously.

Q: What was the role of our embassy in Port-au-Prince?

DOBBINS: First of all, it was administering fairly substantial humanitarian assistance programs: food, human rights watch, those kinds of things. It was reporting on the situation. Aristide still had some elements of his government that were still there. He had a prime minister who was still there, who was not in office, but who also was not under arrest, and so we were maintaining relations with the opposition and performing a number of other functions.

Q: I mean, were they part of the consultation process, these meetings?

DOBBINS: I was in contact with our ambassador pretty much daily.

Q: What was our reading of the people in power, this military group?

DOBBINS: Well, how do you mean our reading of them?

Q: I mean the personalities. Who was calling the shots?

DOBBINS: There were three leading personalities, Cedras, Biamby and Francois. Cedras, called himself president. Biamby was the chief of staff of the army. Cedras had been the commander of the army and took over the government. Biamby retained control of the army, and Francois was the chief of police. They were all military officers.

Francois was corrupt, engaged in drug trafficking and thought to be the most venal of the three. Then there were sort of minor players who we thought might be suborned or might be prepared to mount a counter-coup. There was a lot of, in the end, quite ineffectual talk about that kind of activity.

Q: Were there plans afoot for a military intervention? Had the Clinton administration realized that this had to be actively considered?

DOBBINS: That was part of the policy announcement that proceeded my and Bill Gray's appointment, was a presidential determination that he was prepared to threaten the use of force, if necessary, to secure restoration of democracy. There was always a considerable uncertainty as to under what conditions he might actually authorize it. It was clearly going to be very unpopular domestically here. It might be unpopular internationally. It might be resisted in Haiti, some people thought, and therefore we were never quite certain how sure we could be of this ultimately becoming possible until, in the end, the president did agree to do it.

But, yes, there was an assumption that ultimately an intervention was probably going to be necessary, and there were those of us who thought that the sooner the better, that the human rights situation and the humanitarian situation in the country was continuing to deteriorate, in large measure, because of the sanctions that we had applied, and that for humanitarian, if no other reasons, doing this sooner rather than later made sense. Additionally, the refugee policy we put in place was not sustainable over an extended period of time. We simply couldn't warehouse another 30 or 40 thousand Haitians every week. There was nowhere to put them, so that was another form of pressure.

So there was planning, and there was planning on an international basis. The UN had already authorized a peacekeeping force for Haiti, and the original thought was that we would beef up that force. Using its name obviously required further UN authorization, but within the framework of the existing authorizations, use that peacekeeping force. We went up and met with Boutros Ghali, and his staff's view was, "You're not talking about a peacekeeping operation, you're talking about an invasion. A UN blue-helmeted peacekeeping force is not suitable for that. What you need to do is get a UN Security Council authorization inviting you to invade, and then you can turn it over to this UN peacekeeping force at a subsequent phase, when you've established security."

We were initially somewhat skeptical that we could get a Security Council authorization of that sort, given all the traditional resistance to interference in domestic affairs, particularly within Latin America. But in the end, we did succeed. The secretary general assisted in that effort and the fact that Aristide could make a formal request to the Security Council, which he ultimately was persuaded to do, also in the end gave us what was called an all necessary means resolution, which authorized the intervention.

Q: Well, why was it Aristide had to be convinced of this?

DOBBINS: Well, he didn't want to go back simply as the puppet of the United States. He wanted to make sure that when he got back, he would in fact ultimately have a free hand in governing the country, so he was somewhat leery on those grounds, I think.

Q: You mentioned the human rights situation, the economics situation, and particularly with sanctions, that's on its own. But what else was happening politically? You said there were something like 1,500 killings a year?

DOBBINS: Well, Haiti had long been misgoverned and was continuing to be misgoverned by a combination of the army and the mulatto elites that had traditionally run the country. The coup regime wasn't very competent and it didn't have much legitimacy, even within the country. There was resistance, not violent resistance, but political resistance on the part of Aristide and his supporters, and Aristide had wide support in the population as a whole, and as a result there was continuous violence that was creating casualties. There were some really clearly targeted assassinations of prominent Aristide supporters. Other of the violence was less clearly targeted as opposed to sort of more indiscriminate efforts by the security establishment to maintain control in a society in which they lacked legitimacy and support in the population.

Q: Well, now, where did Gray fit in on this? You say that you had conflicted supervision, you might say.

DOBBINS: Well, Gray first threw himself into it, and we spent a lot of time flying around the Caribbean, both recruiting allies but also looking for places to stuff Haitian refugees while we processed them, and he became very engaged on that. He liked flying around as a presidential envoy. He also, as I said, established a relationship with Aristide. It then began to get very complicated. The refugee crisis was mounting, and we were barely keeping our head above water in terms of our capacity to cope with it. The political situation was getting complicated. The whole issue was becoming much more controversial in the country.

At some point, Gray decided that he was overexposed, that the administration, by making him the point person and always having him give the press conference, was transferring a lot of the responsibility for this policy to him, while at the same time not giving him a free hand in deciding what the policy was. And he chose to step back and become less visible and less engaged, and he did. The last six weeks or so before the actual intervention, he wasn't inactive, but he was much less active.

Q: Well, what's sort of the timeline between when you and Gray came onboard and when the invasion came?

DOBBINS: I think it was three or four months.

Q: Was there sort of a sub-theme going on of talking to the 82nd Airborne of the Army or something on what to do?

DOBBINS: Well, there were plans. Once we determined that this was going to be a U.S.-led coalition rather than a UN force, and once the Pentagon became persuaded that the President was quite likely ultimately to tell them to do this, they began seriously planning for it. Then there were discussions between State and Defense and the NSC about what the conditions might be. The Defense Department wanted a clear answer from the State Department as to whether this was going to be an opposed landing or not, whether they needed to anticipate that there would be resistance, or whether in the end their entry would be brokered.

The State Department's answer was, "You won't know until you get there. You won't know until you step off the helicopter whether you're going to have to shoot your way into town, or whether

there's going to be somebody there inviting you to lunch." They said, "Well, we can't do that. You need to tell us one or the other, because if we anticipate resistance, then we're going to shoot whoever comes to invite us to lunch." I said, "Fine, but then you're going to drive into town shooting bank guards and crossing guards, because there's no way we can tell you." As events indicated, ultimately an arrangement was made only after the 82nd Airborne got on the airplane and was halfway there that we got a brokered agreement, which allowed a peaceful entry.

What the Pentagon eventually did, although they didn't tell us at the time, was accede to this logic, however reluctantly, and they had two plans with two different forces. They sent down two different divisions, one that was going to force its way in, the other of which was going to go in voluntarily, and they had two plans, plan A and plan B, one of which involved shooting everybody as you arrived, and the other of which involved arriving and going to lunch. In the end, they were able to put into effect the second of those plans and it worked reasonably well.

Q: Was there a tipping point, where your task force or group was saying, "It's got to be an invasion," or was this taken out of your hands?

DOBBINS: I think that there was a growing recognition that it was going to have to be an invasion. There was always some uncertainty because the president was, and remained throughout his term of office, reluctant to do these things unless he felt he really had to, and needed to be persuaded there weren't any alternatives. But it mounted pretty steadily in that direction, and as the prerequisites fell into place: we got a Security Council resolution that authorized it. We got a coalition that was sufficiently broad to legitimize it. The Pentagon had a plan that it was capable of executing and the regime there remained obdurate, and Aristide was being reasonably compliant and playing his role, and the refugee crisis began to mount, eventually the pieces came together and the president authorized the use of force.

Q: Well, how did former President Jimmy Carter fit into this thing?

DOBBINS: That came at the last minute, and I wasn't involved in it. It surprised me as much as anybody. It was partly the president's desire to avoid the use of force if it could be, his sort of casting around. There had been a long discussion as to whether someone ought to go and give an ultimatum, and then who was that person? Should they send Bill Gray down there? I think there was some reluctance to do that. Who else would be the appropriate person to go down and say, "Okay, the time has come. Either you agree to the American-led peacekeeping forces coming in, or they're going to come in over your objection."

In the end, it was determined to ask Carter and Colin Powell and Sam Nunn. I think that that decision was largely made at the White House, but I was not part of the decision process, and it came very much at the last moment.

Q: Did you feel that this might muck things up or not?

DOBBINS: Aristide was very concerned, because he felt they might bargain away his prerogatives, and he was quite paranoid about it. I think those of us who had been working on this for a long time were somewhat miffed that we had been cut out of this and it was now pretty

much taken out of our hands. And there was some concern that Carter would exceed his brief and make a deal that we couldn't back away from, one, which would complicate the process of mounting the intervention, but in the end it worked out pretty well.

Q: Well, I just vaguely recall some of the report, but it seems like Carter actually found that he was being preempted when he was talking to the Haitian leadership. I mean, he was told the 82nd Airborne was on its way, or something.

DOBBINS: He knew what the timetable was. He might have wanted more time, and at that point, the president wasn't prepared to give him more time and wanted to make sure that he and his team were out of town before the paratroopers arrived.

Q: How did things evolve?

DOBBINS: Well, it went better than Somalia, but it was a more benign situation. It was always likely to go better than Somalia. There were still big gaps in our ability to plan and execute these types of missions, and these are partially dealt with in the book we published here on these nation-building missions. The military had insisted that it wasn't going to get involved in policing, and the State Department kept telling them that they were going to have to, because once they got there, there wasn't going to be any alternative. The existing Haitian institutions were ineffective, corrupt, discredited, and to the extent they did policing, they did it in an abusive fashion, which we couldn't tolerate once we were in charge.

The military responded, "Well, fine, if the State Department thinks its important that somebody do policing, then the State Department ought to find some people to do it, but we're definitely not doing it." So we spent a few weeks before the intervention rushing around Latin America, mostly, and recruiting dribs and drabs of police, including American police, and we got the former head of the New York police force, Ray Kelly, to head this effort. We eventually did deploy 1,000 U.S. and other national police as part of the intervention force, but these didn't arrive in the beginning and weren't likely to arrive in the beginning. The military were taking the position that they weren't doing policing, and then the first day, as they were getting off the ship in the middle of Port-au-Prince Harbor, a friendly crowd arrived to watch the disembarkation. The Haitian police, who were actually military, arrived to disperse the crowd and did so in their usual fashion, by knocking them over the head or shooting them, and they did that in front of CNN, and that was broadcast back here, with U.S. soldiers just sort of looking on while the human rights abuses were seen. That immediately caused the White House to tell the military to drop its objections and get some military police down there.

Fortunately, the commander of the military police elements within the Army knew he was going to be needed, even though the Army and Shalikashvili were saying they weren't, and he had units alerted and ready to go, although he had told them they weren't going to be necessary. The next day, they flew down and the U.S. military, at least in the interval before the State Department mobilized civilian police, could get there, took over responsibility for overseeing the Haitian police. So that was one small crisis. Special Forces units were dispersed throughout the countryside and did a good job of establishing security out there.

There was another incident the first week or so, the first few days, where some Haitians in one of the other cities in Haiti, in Cap-Haitien, a bunch of Haitian police looked cross-eyed at some Marines, who shot them dead, killing six or seven of them, and that pretty much ended any thought of resistance on the part of other Haitians. In retrospect, it wasn't ever clear whether they intended to do any harm. They were just looking threatening, and that was enough for the Marines.

Those were really the only early incidents, and otherwise security was established pretty comprehensively, but there were lots of other problems. We had a good plan to establish a new police force. We vetted that with Aristide beforehand. We had the assets and the people. We opened a police academy. We began recruiting. Pretty soon we were pumping out several hundred new recruits in a fairly comprehensive training program, and eventually we trained about 5,000 of them over a two-year period. That was quite a successful program. We did nothing comparable to reform the judicial or penal systems, and so the police eventually became immured in a basically corrupt system and the reforms had only limited long-term effect, but it was at least a relatively successful short program.

There was a big dispute about what we would be doing with the military. Our intention had initially been to reform and retrain the Haitian military. Aristide preferred to disband it, and we eventually went along with that, and it was disbanded completely and never replaced, so Haiti doesn't have a military. It just has a police force. Then the spokesperson for the former regime, a woman, was assassinated just three or four days before President Clinton was due to go down on a visit. That created a great furor, particularly back here on the part of the Republican opponents, who saw this as the kind of political violence that they had been criticized for condoning in Latin America for so long, and now they could criticize the Clinton administration for condoning it.

The Clinton administration responded by getting Aristide to request the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) investigate it, which they did, but Aristide and his people tended to stonewall that investigation, leading the FBI to conclude that there may have been some complicity on the part of Aristide and his people in the murder in the first place, which there may well have been. Not perhaps of Aristide personally, but some of his people, so that poisoned relations pretty thoroughly and made the whole issue much more controversial here.

We eventually succeeded in holding elections on schedule, both elections for a new parliament, and then eventually elections for a new president. The opposition decried them as unfair. Some didn't run. Some ran and then disclaimed them as having been unfair. I think most neutral observers felt that they were poorly run, but fair as things go, but again, the Republicans here decried the results and the opposition there refused to accept them, so that became extremely controversial.

Aristide was initially attracted to the idea that his five-year term should not count the three years he had spent in exile, and there was some logic to that, but we wouldn't accept it, largely because of what we knew would be the reaction from the Republican right here. The Republicans had secured control of the Congress four or five weeks after the intervention, so they were on a much stronger position. We, along with elements of his own party, required Aristide to step down, five years after he had originally entered office, even though he had three years of exile. And his

response was to run a candidate who would take orders and do nothing for five years until he could run again.

Aristide originally had espoused a fairly progressive economic reform program involving privatization of a lot of corrupt and incompetent parastatal companies, but once he got back, he backed away from these reform programs, because he felt they would give too much leeway for foreign capital and international investment, which he was opposed to, and sided with the vested interests that saw some advantage in the status quo with respect to these parastatals, the power company, the port. And, consequently, most of the economic reforms that the World Bank was prepared to fund were not funded. Our own aid program was fairly limited after the first year, largely again out of concern that we couldn't get more through the Congress.

We left within the timeframe we said we would leave, which was two years, by which time the situation was peaceful, they'd had elections, but most of the underlying reforms that would have made this of long-term value had not been put in place. The situation then gradually began to deteriorate, until in 2004, the U.S. had to intervene once again.

Q: Well, you were there for almost two years dealing with this?

DOBBINS: I was dealing with it. I was based in Washington, not in Port-au-Prince.

Q: After the intervention, did this revert to sort of a State Department Bureau of Latin American Affairs issue?

DOBBINS: No. I wasn't in the Bureau of Latin American Affairs, although I drew on it, and all of my staff was on the Bureau of Latin American Affairs. I was attached formally to the secretary's office, as I recall, and as a practical matter worked for Strobe Talbott, who took a continuing interest. It was a broad interagency effort. Richard Clark and I – Richard Clark was in the NSC – and I co-chaired the interagency committee that was in charge of managing the policy there. There was an interagency group that we co-chaired that ran this. Defense and CIA and AID (Agency for International Development) and Commerce and Justice all played important roles. It was a broad, multi-agency effort for that two-year period.

Q: Well, with this Republican resurgence in Congress, did you find yourself up having to explain it, making testimony, problems all the time?

DOBBINS: The congressional part of it was very difficult, because the Republicans were very critical of the policies. They saw vulnerability for the administration. They wanted to link this back to Central America and, as evidence, mounted that there may have been some official complicity in some of the political violence there. They were eager to renew the claims that there were death squads and that the Clinton administration was condoning this kind of activity, so that the congressional relationship was difficult, the hearings were almost always quite hostile.

Q: Did you feel that there were elements within the Republican Party that had ties to particular interests in Haiti, or was just sort of generic "Let's get at the Clinton administration"?

DOBBINS: I think that the conservative elements in Haiti had had long-term relationships in the United States. I never had any sense that there were any inappropriate ties of a sort, or strong economic ties. Haiti wasn't rich enough to have economic links that were meaningful and that would have an effect in U.S. politics. There were certainly ties in terms of where people got their information. Not all of the conservative business elites, mulattoes, wealthier people in Haiti, were malign by any means. There were people who were opposed to Aristide because they thought he was a left-wing extremist with megalomaniac tendencies and a naïve view of the economy that were opposed to him, that were genuine democrats and would like to see substantial reform, but just didn't believe that Aristide was likely to promote it, which in retrospect is probably a correct assessment.

It's not that the Republicans were necessarily allied with the worst elements in Haitian society, but the manner in which the debate had evolved forced the Democrats and the administration having to rally around Aristide as a symbol of a restored democracy and to exaggerate his virtues and their own successes. And the Republicans on the other side had to exaggerate the failures, the weaknesses, the deficiencies in the electoral system, the degree of political violence, which while not negligible was also not significant in terms of the Haitian political evolution and recent history.

You had such a polarized debate that there was no middle ground here, and there was no middle ground there. The polarization in each society fed the polarization in the other, and there was no really sensible discussion here about what were our options for dealing with an impoverished country 100 miles from our shore with a corrupt and incompetent government. There was no real dialog there about how to move forward and avoid the extremes that they were being presented.

Q: When the invasion came, we had this tremendous refugee problem. Was that resolved?

DOBBINS: Sure. As soon as we determined that we could send people back without having to examine their asylum status, it went away. That's not to say there aren't lots of people in Haiti that would like to be refugees, but they know if they get in a boat the Coast Guard will pick them up and return them. It won't ask them why they left, it won't ask them whether they had a justifiable fear of persecution, it will just send them back.

Q: Was there any political development or political pressure that was coming from the Haitian community in Florida.

DOBBINS: Some, but the Haitian community in Florida, unlike, say, the Cuban American community, has not been as effectively organized, it's not as wealthy, it hasn't been here as long, and so it's not as influential.

Q: Well, then, were there any other developments during this time that you were dealing with Haitian affairs?

DOBBINS: After the initial mistakes of not having been prepared to do policing, the programmatic elements worked fairly smoothly, we met all our deadlines. The intervention was, broadly speaking, successful against our own criteria, and was perceived as such, and the Clinton

administration felt that on balance it was a success that they could point to. But its long-term effects have been disappointing, and in retrospect it's pretty clear that we can't expect to introduce meaningful reforms in a society as corrupt as the Haitian in a two-year span. And we should have pushed more forcefully for more significant reforms when we had the momentum and the influence to do so, and then we should have been willing to stick around long enough to ensure that they kept in train.

Q: Were you concerned that you were tainted by being involved in this policy? As a Foreign Service officer, you're given a job and you do it, but did you get too high a profile in this?

DOBBINS: Yes. Certainly, there was a price to be paid. A lot of people said, "You're really willing to take this on? Have you really thought carefully? This is a real quagmire." And, unfortunately, Latin America as a whole has had that reputation. You had the same phenomenon in the '80s when Foreign Service officers were serving a Republican administration in Central America and many of them were tarred and targeted, and some never subsequently confirmed affirmable as a result of their connection with controversial policies that the Democrats have been opposed to.

I had always served before in areas where there was a broad bipartisan consensus: East-West relations, arms control, and trans-Atlantic relations. There were controversies, but they weren't partisan controversies. Some Republicans supported détente. Some Republicans opposed détente. Some Republicans supported arms control, some Republicans opposed arms control, and similarly for Democrats, so that you had a spectrum, sometimes between conservatives and moderates, but not between Republicans and Democrats.

With Latin America, it tended to be straight party line, and had been for decades, which made it a much more dangerous area for a Foreign Service officer to become engaged in. It tended to make, I think, many of the career officers that served in the region rather cautious and somewhat colorless in terms of their demeanor, behavior and willingness to go out on a limb in support of a policy, even if it was a policy they happened to believe in. But, be that as it may, certainly the controversies, which were raised at the time, continued to have an effect on my career. That said, it was a fascinating experience and an ability to make a meaningful difference on a significant issue, and I'm not sure I would have in retrospect chosen to do it differently, or chosen not to have done it, but there definitely was a cost.

JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
Special Coordinator for Haiti
Washington, DC (1996-1997)

Ambassador Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, D.C. as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to

Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: So where did you go when you left in '96?

SULLIVAN: I came back to Washington and I did a year in something called the Special Coordinator for Haiti in late August, 1996. I had some hope that my time in Cuba would have purified me to have an ambassadorial nomination but the administration was not ready to push me forward as yet. Strobe Talbot, the deputy secretary, had been taking a very strong interest in Haiti, particularly after the U.S. had sent in troops to restore Aristide. This had become quite a controversial issue, and Strobe, because he was close to President Clinton and had once been his roommate, was a particular focus of the Congressional criticism as a proxy for criticizing the President. It was an interesting period and the deputy secretary had a lot of interest in the issue, as did some people in the White House, including NSC Adviser Sandy Berger. At the beginning of my year there, the issue was very hot politically in a presidential election year. Republicans had warned against inserting U.S. troops both because some predicted many would return in body bags, which did not happen, but also because they thought that Aristide was not worthy of restoration. So in 1996, many Republicans were going to be very hard on the administration certainly up until the election and perhaps after. Strobe Talbot, who had faced heavy congressional pressure while testifying earlier, clearly preferred not to testify at future hearings. So in hearings in the fall of 1996, our Ambassador to Haiti Bill Swing and I were sent up to testify.

Q: So you were sort of designated fall guy?

SULLIVAN: It certainly was a no win situation. I remember Florida Congressman Porter Goss, who had been very reasonable in private meetings with me, asking me questions at public testimony that would have required revealing classified information in open session to respond well. And Republican members of Congress certainly were harshly critical of the Administration during that hearing.

Q: Yeah. What was your personal opinion of Aristide that you developed as you got into this?

SULLIVAN: By then he had given up the presidency. He had been persuaded by the US not to change the constitution to allow him to run for another term. Yet his successor, President Rene Preval, who served again as president of Haiti until recently, was at that point very much beholden to Aristide and reluctant to do very much without Aristide's blessing. I only met Aristide on one occasion and thought he was very intelligent and capable, but we knew he had utilized violence for his own political ends and had been personally corrupt. But Aristide was very charismatic and extremely popular with the poorest sector of the Haitian population. Aristide also had his following in the United States as well as internationally, so it was a complicated situation and one that we were working principally with the current elected president of Haiti Preval, while conscious of Aristide's influence behind the scenes.

Q: Where was Aristide at the time? Was he still in Haiti?

SULLIVAN: Yes, he was living in Port-au-Prince. I remember that my one meeting with him was while accompanying former NSC Adviser Tony Lake, who had a longstanding relationship with Aristide. We met with Preval and then later went over to meet Aristide. I don't remember the substance of the conversation, but the purpose was to seek Aristide's cooperation in allowing Preval to do those things we felt necessary to address political and economic crises.

Q: Was the Black Caucus involved in this whole business?

SULLIVAN: Yes they were and I once accompanied a fairly large delegation from the black caucus, which included Judge Conyers of Michigan, William Jefferson of Louisiana, Robert Scott of Virginia, accompanied by Congressman Bill Delahunt of Massachusetts. Judge Conyers from Detroit was probably the most prominent and most adamant of greatly increased US assistance to Haiti; he talked of a Marshall Plan for Haiti. Many of his colleagues recognized that that was not going to happen and were looking for more realistic solutions. In my position, I used to go see the Black Caucus in Washington fairly frequently, as well. They had been strong advocates of the US intervention to restore Aristide to power and were in 1996-97 supporters of the Administration on Haiti. There were a few Republicans, including Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio, who were advocating compromise between the Congress and the Administration on Haiti. But many Republicans were interested, at least until after the November presidential elections, in using Haiti as a bludgeon against the administration.

Indeed in one of the Presidential or Vice Presidential debates, the Republican candidate raised a criticism of Administration policy in Haiti. The issue never took off, as, in my view, most Americans had no interest in Haiti at that stage, except perhaps for African-Americans who had overwhelmingly supported US intervention.

Q: You were pretty much put into the furnace.

SULLIVAN: That's right. Haiti I would be the first one to say that Haiti is a very messy environment with very little going for it and it frustrates you every day. You come into a Haiti job with aspirations that things can go better but in Haiti, they usually don't. I recall in my first month on the job, there were several killings perpetrated by the presidential guard and so that became a major issue and needed to be addressed. Things are always complicated in Haiti.

On Haiti as I mentioned the worst part of the job was that period prior to the presidential elections of November 1996 when the Republican Party was bound and determined to make the case that President Clinton's decision to send American troops into Haiti was a wrong one, that Aristide should not have been restored and what was left was a mess. I had gone through a number of Congressional testimonies and other difficult meetings. But, once that election, of course, was over I would say most interest was lost; there was no remaining US political issue there, but there were a few Congressmen and, most notably staff, who retained interest.

Some Congress people, notably Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio had a very positive interest in helping to resolve what is almost a perpetual impasse in Haiti and in finding ways for the United States to provide effective help. Some of the staffers, I would say not so much. But there was one staffer who later emerged again as a foreign policy adviser in the McCain presidential campaign,

Randy Scheunemann. At that point I think Scheunemann was working for Senate Republican leader Dole. So basically his pitch to the Congressional affairs office of the State Department and to me was that most Republican's wanted to get this issue off our plate and come to some sort of agreement. So I was consulting with Strobe Talbot, the deputy secretary of State and we agreed that we also wanted to get it done and yes we could make some agreements with the Congress to reach a bipartisan compromise.

So I was the designated sacrificial lamb and sent up to the Congress with a delegation of people from AID and State in December, 1996 for a meeting with a large group of Congressional staff, mostly Republicans but also Democratic staff. We spent, I recall, four hours that first day with me handling many questions and other people handling some but many of the questions were the impossible to answer questions of the "when did you stop beating your wife" variety. But we did the best we could and were being told that this would eventually bring good results. So, we did that for four hours and afterwards Scheunemann, the intermediary in this process told us that some of these people still want more so can you come back tomorrow. So as I recall, I went back the next day and met with the only staffers who showed up, Republicans, for a two-hour replay. Then Scheunemann called that afternoon to say, "Well there was one Senate appropriations staffer who couldn't make so he wants to see you tomorrow." So again up there and I would say 45 minutes of getting beaten around and then eventually we got the deal done. I recall it was just before Christmas and I recall as I am flying up to Boston a day or so later saying to myself, "Gee, that wasn't so bad, I only got beaten up for an hour today."

Q: Oh God.

SULLIVAN: Then while in Boston over Christmas I said, these are my words, "I need a new life, this is not a good day when you feel good about only getting beaten up for an hour." So just after the New Year, when David Welch, the DAS in NEA approached me to ask if I would I be interested in taking on the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group, I took about five seconds to think and said, "Sure, getting beaten up by Israeli, Lebanese and Syrians sounds a lot more fun than being beaten up by Congressmen and Congressional staffers for hours on end."

Q: Well in this getting beaten up did you feel that the Congress...that you were getting beaten up on both sides?

SULLIVAN: No, no at that point the Democrats were basically supportive of the Clinton administration, anxious to have assistance resumed, the Black Caucus in particular was a strong supporter of assistance to Haiti so the critique was overwhelmingly by Republicans. Democrats spoke up only occasionally at that first meeting, but they really didn't have an interest in going to six hours of meetings on Haiti. I'll concede that some staffers probably were sincere in their opposition to the U.S. continuing in what they thought a feckless effort to resolve Haitian problems. But looking at Haiti for in the longer term, it was not in our interest to let Haiti wallow. Did the US wish to neglect Haiti in such a way the result would be an almost inevitable mass migration to the U.S.? I think most members of Congress probably would have said they want this resolved. And at the end of the day that's probably why they were willing to make a bipartisan accord to continue assistance dependent on certain conditions. Some of the conditions

could be delivered on and others not, so this made the congressional engagement continuous and made for a tough job.

So I was ready to leave when David Welch asked if I would be interested in Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group and I became co-chair of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group in about July of 1997 for about a year until I was selected as Ambassador to Angola.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY

Ambassador Haiti (1997-1999)

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: You were [in Haiti] for how long?

CARNEY: Until the end of December 1999.

Q: What was the situation in Haiti when you went there?

CARNEY: If you look in the "New York Review of Books," you will see in the March edition a long description of what Haiti's all about taken in the guise of a review of a book that's just come out on "Haiti, Predatory Republic." It was in the presidency of Rene Preval who had been the alter ego in many ways of Jean Bertrand Aristide, and selected for the presidency because the Haitian constitution will only let you have one term at a time. You can have another term, but it cannot be consecutive. Aristide was reinstalled by the U.S. in '94. That became a UN mission shortly thereafter. He stepped down in '95 at the insistence of the White House. His term had started 5 years earlier. Preval was elected and ran a non-government for 5 years, holding the place warm for Aristide to return. The country went to hell politically; in terms of drug transit center; and economically, and that's where it is now under Aristide's resumed presidency.

Q: What were our concerns with Haiti?

CARNEY: Our concern was no governance, no development, insufficient effort at stalling the drug transit trade from the Cali cartel in Colombia that would send its go-fast boats on a 10 hour trip with a ton of cocaine to Haiti to be transshipped through the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico and home free to the U.S.

Q: What did you find when you got there?

CARNEY: A traffic jam. We got there on a Sunday, thank God, when there isn't a traffic jam. But on Monday, every car that failed the Florida inspection was sent off to Haiti. Haiti's not very big. It's 8,000 square miles. 25,000 square kilometers. Just amazing. Eight million people. No trees except at the embassy residence, which had one of the larger forests and bird sanctuaries on that part of the island. People who simply wouldn't get together for the national good. Remarkable. A polity that was fragmented with Jean Bertrand Aristide at his retirement residence essentially running things, or putting spanners in things that he didn't want to see run.

Q: How did you view the Aristide style... What was he? He was touted as being our guy?

CARNEY: Yes, but he wasn't. He was more of the same (style of traditional predatory Haitian leader). A great pity. He could have been so much more, but he wasn't.

Q: Prior to that, there had been the Duvalier stuff, the military dictatorship. But what was Aristide doing?

CARNEY: He was a priest. He became political while he was a priest and then he essentially left the priesthood in order to marry. He's got two children now. His wife is said to be corrupt. He himself certainly tolerates corruption as a way of using and manipulating people. Interesting.

Q: Did you deal with him at all?

CARNEY: Oh, yes, I saw him once every 4-6 weeks.

Q: Was he just biding time to come back again?

CARNEY: Yes, no question. Whenever I'd ask Washington for a policy review, I'd get sent Tony Lake, who was by now in his new career but also sort of a dollar a year man for the U.S. government. Lake was the one who was so fond of Aristide. He's even a godfather to one of Aristide's daughters.

Q: Was there any disillusionment there?

CARNEY: On Tony Lake's part?

Q: Yes.

CARNEY: Yes, absolutely, but no effective way of dealing with Aristide.

Q: As ambassador, how did you deal with the government?

CARNEY: At all the levels on all the issues that we had with them whether it was trying to make sure the airport was secure, and I dealt with the prime minister on that one. We threatened to end U.S. flights to that airport. I was prepared to do it. The airport became secure.

Q: What was the problem?

CARNEY: It was just lack of access controls and lack of will to enforce them where they did exist. That's a small thing. I did get the Attorney General, Janet Reno, to increase the size of the DEA office from one person to 8. Here we were arguing that Haiti was a transit point for 15-20% of the cocaine arriving in the U.S. and we had one DEA guy there.

Q: Had the Colombian dealers more or less bought their...

CARNEY: They were in the process of doing that. They have done so to a much greater extent now, I understand, but nobody has stayed bought anymore, and I'm told the Colombians are now starting to bypass Haiti just because it's such a mess.

Q: How about the boat people?

CARNEY: We continued to monitor that but that issue had ended well before I got there. We would monitor the building of boats so we had an idea of when they were ready to go. And the Coast Guard would interdict these migrants at sea and we would just return them to the port of Port-au-Prince, give them enough money to make their way back home by bus.

But the problem and the salvation of Haiti is its diaspora, mainly in the U.S. Anywhere from 400-800 million dollars a year gets sent back to Haiti and it's a margin of survival on the one hand, and a margin of fees to buy your way onto a boat for others. It was the most unusual situation because, to his credit, (Deputy Secretary of State) Strobe Talbott knew that things were going to hell in Haiti and Bill Swing had tried to keep a lid on the reporting.

Q: Bill Swing had been ambassador?

CARNEY: Yes, before me. And I took the lid off. We actually had Fulton Armstrong, the NSC Haiti staffer, and David Greenlee from the State Department, who was Special Haiti Coordinator, come down and argue for the suppression of reporting, which I just laughed at. I said, "What are you going to do, send me to Haiti?"

Q: What was the problem?

CARNEY: The problem was with the Hill, which was looking at Haiti and saying, "What are you guys doing down there?" They were getting obfuscations. This was the earlier period when Jim Dobbins was accused of lying to the Senate, and they believe it to this day, confirmed by the State Department Inspector General on the issue. Dobbins was on the NSC staff, a special guy for Haiti, having replaced Dick Clarke. Fulton Armstrong was in there with either Jim or his successor. It was foolish. Luckily, when I would come up to Washington, I would be candid with people on the Hill, my argument being, "Yes, how are we going to deal with it? This is an approach that may or may not work," but I could never get a policy review.

Q: Was overlying the whole thing, "If we don't do something there, you're going to have a hemorrhaging of boat people coming out?"

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: And on CNN showing people drowning.

CARNEY: (The worry was that) it wasn't going to hold together long enough for our Administration to be over. That's what was going on.

Q: It was a band-aid, but it's holding it tied up together.

CARNEY: Right.

Q: Was there much of a lobby within Florida or New York?

CARNEY: There was the Black Caucus.

Q: How seriously did they take it?

CARNEY: Very seriously. I had Mr. John Conyers (D-MI) down a couple of times. Charlie Rangel (D-NJ) was there. Senator Dewine (R-OH) was regularly there. Senator Bob Graham (D-FL) as well. There was a lot of interest in Haiti.

Q: But again, no matter how you slice it-

CARNEY: It was going south.

Q: So what would they say?

CARNEY: They would say to Aristide, "You've got to do the right thing" and Aristide would say, "Of course" and he wouldn't. It was interesting. It's now broadly recognized that Aristide is part of the problem and in a way part of the solution.

Q: But do you feel realistically that there's any answer?

CARNEY: Oh, sure, you've got to get rid of Aristide, but it isn't anything I would say publicly.

Q: We got rid of the-

CARNEY: The Haitians have got to get rid of Aristide.

Q: Yes, but I mean even if you get rid of Aristide, is the society such that it's like Somalia - somebody else will come up?

CARNEY: Possibly. There is no guarantee in a place like Haiti.

Q: Was there an international presence there?

CARNEY: A Representative of the Secretary General was there, a former British foreign affairs officer, Julian Harston was there. He was replaced by an Equatorial Guinean. There was a UN police effort helping to train the police, helping to professionalize and modernize them. It was basically undercut, undermined, and defeated largely by Aristide and those cronies around him who seek their own material advantage.

Q: So, with Aristide, material advantage was what was coming out of this?

CARNEY: To give Aristide his due, it isn't so much that he likes to live well. It's that he knows so many people do that they'll do what he wants in order to get access to it. It's a tool rather than an end. Power is what he wants.

Q: As the ambassador, did you feel you were doing more than keeping your finger in the dyke?

CARNEY: There were some things we were doing that were positively good - the humanitarian aspects of our AID project, for example. Half a million kids got lunch from our monies every school day. There were some efforts at microcredit underway to help bring together a much broader entrepreneurial class at the very basic level. Those were serious, useful things. The efforts by the U.S. Coast Guard to help mentor a Haitian coast guard that would have its role not only in saving lives but also in drug suppression was sound and well founded. But that's very few. The ultimate problem was the desire on the part of those who held power to use the police and the judiciary as a tool for their own self-aggrandizement. That's what Aristide is all about.

In the long run, the fostering of a civil society in Haiti was the most important aspect of American aid to Haiti in the second half of the 90s.

Q: Did you have a problem with you and your officers of looking at this and not throwing up your hands and saying, "Oh, the hell with this?"

CARNEY: Absolutely not, for the most part. Once it became clear that I wanted Washington to know what was going on, that's what my officers did. Let me also say that it was by no means the most brilliant set, as a set, in my Foreign Service experience. But the staff was plenty good enough to figure out what was going on, to write it up, and to send it to Washington. The economic side was particularly good.

Q: It's hard for people to go to a place where you're dealing with losers.

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: All of us have felt this.

CARNEY: Like Tom Enders in Cambodia.

Q: At a certain point, you say, "Oh, God, why am I here?" You want to be with people who have a certain dynamism.

CARNEY: That was mitigated a bit by a belief that Washington wasn't doing enough, that to a degree it was somewhat our fault, it wasn't just the Haitians.

Q: Did Aristide still maintain an aura in the U.S.?

CARNEY: Oh, yes, and in some circles he still has it. Parts of the Black Caucus to this day say, "The only problem is, we're not supporting Aristide enough." Many of those people are on the board of the foundation which Aristide created.

DAVID N. GREENLEE
Special Coordinator
Haiti (1997-1999)

Ambassador Greenlee was born and raised in New York and educated at Yale University. After service in the Peace Corps in Bolivia and the US Army in Vietnam, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. In the course of his career the ambassador served in Peru, Bolivia (three tours), Israel, Spain and Chile, as well as in the Department of State, where he was involved in Haitian and Egyptian affairs, and at the Pentagon, where he was Political Advisor. Three of his foreign tours were as Deputy Chief of Mission. He served as United States Ambassador to Paraguay and Bolivia. Ambassador Greenlee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Let's talk about Haiti. Let's start in 1492... [laughter] Okay, let's move up a little. What was the situation in Haiti in the summer of '97, when you started as special Haiti coordinator? Had Haiti ever crossed your radar before? What was the situation?

GREENLEE: No, it was not on my radar, I had not thought about Haiti in any way. I was enticed to the job by Joe Sullivan. When we were talking about the Monitoring Group, Joe mentioned the Haiti job, and suggested I would be a good fit for it. I said I didn't really have anything else going on. I thought it might be an interesting policy job. I said I'd like to be considered for it.

I had a brief interview with Strobe Talbot. Strobe, the deputy secretary of state, was in effect the Clinton Administration's action officer for Haiti. Haiti was that important in domestic political terms. The issues were so fraught with politics that there had been initially a "seventh floor" special coordinator, a person detached from the regional bureau and reporting directly to the top level of the State Department. That person was Jim Dobbins. Dobbins became a lightning rod for critics of our Haiti policy in the congress. He took the big hits, enabling WHA, which was called the American Republics Area bureau, or ARA, at the time, to stay clear of most of turbulence. He had the clout to go to the Hill and to lead the coordination of our actions with the White House and the different departments of government. Dobbins wasn't the first in that role, but his successor, Joe Sullivan, whom I replaced, operated a notch down, within the WHA (ARA) bureau.

That special coordinator job was needed to bring together the various parts of our government involved in assisting Haiti and to coordinate with other governments, as well.

Q: The troops were already in.

GREENLEE: The troops were in, and had been in since September of 1994. They were established at a camp at the edge of the airport in Port-au-Prince.

When I became special coordinator, Jean Bertrand Aristide was no longer president. He had been the democratically elected president, a demagogic leader whom we never had much faith in. After being deposed in a military coup, he hung out in the U.S. He was restored to office, for the remainder of his term, by the U.S. invasion, but he couldn't succeed himself. Rene Preval, a protégé of Aristide, was elected president. He was there when I became the special coordinator. Preval was a very weak president. (He is now president of Haiti again, and seemingly stronger. But in those days he was under Aristide's thumb. With Aristide once again in exile he has the latitude to be independent. But that wasn't the case in 1997.) As head of the Lavalas political movement, Aristide retained the real power. He controlled things from his residence in an area adjacent to Port-au-Prince called Tabarre.

The political situation was tricky in the U.S. for the Clinton administration, but it was no less complicated in Haiti. The opposition to Lavalas was shattered and under constant pressure. The Clinton administration—the Democrats—had scored a large political success with the invasion of Haiti and the restoration of democracy. But institutionalizing democracy was another matter, and by the time I became involved, the administration's boasting had turned sour, and the Republicans attacked relentlessly, often scurrilously. The special coordinator increasingly had to carry policy water for the administration and to defend aspects of our Haiti posture that did not have bipartisan support. And as the situation in Haiti deteriorated, the Republicans sharpened their political attacks.

Q: We're talking about a Republican- dominated senate and House of Representatives.

GREENLEE: Right. The dialogue, if we could call it that, between the administration and the Republicans was very nasty.

Q: Again, a feel for the times. Looking back over periods, certainly in the post-war period, I don't think things have ever been as bad between Republicans and Democrats as at this particular time.

GREENLEE: That's right. What I didn't know coming into the job was that I would be meat for the grinder. I thought that if I went to the congress and requested more or continued funding for human rights or police training, I would get a respectful hearing. I might get turned down, but I didn't know I would be attacked.

I thought the congress, or the staffers in particular, would look at me as a State Department professional making a case in an objective way—not as a political representative of the Clinton

administration trying to justify something that wasn't working. I was very wrong about that. There were things I didn't understand about how the congress works. When I interviewed for the job with Strobe, I said, "It's a real challenge but I don't know how doable Haiti is," meaning it was unclear to me whether Haiti could be pulled out of the problems it had. Strobe said, "I don't know what you mean by that," or something to that effect. He was probably thinking you really have to be committed to the effort and believe it's going to turn out right--otherwise you're not going to have the energy you need. I assured him that I could do everything that anybody could do to try to make it work. I said, "I'm an idealistic person. I'm a former Peace Corps volunteer. I want to see Haiti move forward. I just mean that the situation seems really complicated." We went forward from there.

Q: I want to get a wiring diagram. Strobe Talbot was the deputy secretary. Were you, as the Haiti coordinator, directly linked to him, or was there a level between?"

GREENLEE: The job evolved a bit. Up until my predecessor, Joe Sullivan, the special Haiti coordinator had been a seventh floor position, reporting directly to the top tier of the department. When my predecessor took the job, it went down to the sixth floor.

Q: Which is where the regional bureaus are.

GREENLEE: Correct. Where the assistant secretaries of state have their offices. And in the complex of offices around the assistant secretary of state, the special Haiti coordinator was treated as the equivalent of a deputy assistant secretary. That's the position I inherited. Key players were still around. Jim Dobbins, who had been the special Haiti coordinator, was over at the White House. He was the senior director for Latin America and special assistant to the president.

Q: I'm trying to get the background here. Dobbins has been controversial. As you saw at the time, what was the problem?

GREENLEE: Dobbins is a very smart guy who had clear ideas about what needed to be done—and a kind of take-no-prisoners approach to getting things done. The Republicans didn't like him. Before I came aboard and when he was special coordinator—this was a full year at least before I came into the job—Jim had testified before congress, and he was asked, I believe, about whether we had information about an assassination plot or something of the sort. Jim apparently dodged the question in such a way that some accused him of lying. That became a big issue and later blocked his chance to become ambassador to Argentina. It became quite a public and messy thing—above the fold on the front page of the New York Times, as I recall.

Jim was burned on that. Others dealing with Haiti were also bruised, but less so. Strobe had testified at some point on Haiti and had also been beaten up pretty badly. Others at the policy level had also had a rough time with congress. Anyway, I settled into the job and found I had access to Strobe and on a couple of occasions even to Sandy Berger.

Q: He was at that time...

GREENLEE: He was the national security advisor. Once, after I had been Haiti coordinator for a while, I was interviewing for a job at the NSC that finally went to someone else. I was alone with him in his office. He pointed to a picture behind his desk, a photograph at the airport in Port au Prince of Aristide behind a glass shield, giving a speech, after he had been returned to Haiti. There was a group of officials, including Berger, around him, and flags and so forth. Berger said, "This is the high point of my tenure here. This is it." That reinforced what I already knew—that the Haiti "success" had to stick.

Q: But a career minefield.

GREENLEE: Absolutely, that's what it turned out to be.

Q. Reporting arrangements?

GREENLEE: The assistant secretary was Jeff Davidow. Jeff was a savvy, smart politically astute and user-friendly guy. He's now the director of the Institute of the Americas, in La Jolla, California. Jeff was a former ambassador to Venezuela. After he left being assistant secretary, he went to Mexico as ambassador. Jeff knew his way around. He was my boss, but he gave me a free rein.

One time, when Preval was looking for a new prime minister, there was a Haitian at the Inter-American Development Bank who was rumored to be a good candidate for the job. This was early on, when I had just started as coordinator. At Jeff's suggestion, we went over to see him. We met this guy in his little cubicle. He was like a mid-level official. He told us what he would do if he took the job, how he wouldn't bend to any political pressure. He didn't seem to be in tune with the realities of the job, or the place, and ultimately he bowed out. In any case, after we were done talking, Jeff said to me, "Why don't you do a note to Strobe?" That again rammed home the importance of the Haiti account to the administration.

So I did a one-paragraph note saying we met this guy, he didn't inspire much confidence, but we met him. I gave the note to Jeff, and I think he made one little change in the first sentence. Then we passed it up to Strobe, and Strobe passed something back saying thanks, with a comment in the margin. Then something else came up, and there was need for another note. Jeff didn't want to be bothered by these things too much. Normally, if you wrote a memo or note to a seventh floor principal, there was a whole clearance process. It is an institutional thing. But Jeff suggested I just write an informal note and drop him a copy—no vetting, no clearance. This is what I did, and it became routine.

Once in a while we would do an information memorandum for the system which would be a page or page and a half and have all the appropriate clearances. It would go to the secretary and be distributed widely. All the principals would get it. Those notes tended to be homogenized. Any edge on a policy issue would be ground down. They had the virtue of being balanced, but also the drawback of not saying much.

Q: That's the problem of the bureaucracy.

GREENLEE: Yes, but the notes that I did for Strobe were different in that they were my impressions. After visiting Haiti or meeting with people on the Hill, I would drop him and Jeff a note. He would usually send me a note back—something he wanted to know more about, for example. He would ask more questions or write, “I faxed it over to Sandy, and he’s also interested.” This was different from what I was used to and I was careful not to abuse my access. I kept Jeff closely informed. Later, when Jeff left the job, I had the same arrangement with Pete Romero who succeeded Jeff, and Pete was comfortable with it. It did get to be a little bit more complicated with Pete. He wanted more influence over our policy, but the play was at a higher level.

Q: You did this from '97 to...

GREENLEE: I did it until late 1999, for a couple of years. During the last year I began to get more invested in the policy, and more of a player myself. I had been working closely with Jim Dobbins, at the NSC. At one point he became quite worried about the direction and increasing drift of our policy, and the way it was being implemented. He wanted someone involved, beyond the embassy, who could engage the Haitians at a credible policy level, as a White House representative. He said to me at one point, “I think I’ll try to see whether Tony Lake would be interested in doing this.” Tony was interested. Then Tony and I started working closely together.

Q: Tony Lake at that point was...

GREENLEE: He was the former national security advisor. Sandy Berger had been his deputy. In the second Clinton administration, Berger stepped up to be the security advisor, and Tony Lake went off into private sector and to academia.

Q: He was teaching in Georgetown...

GREENLEE: He was teaching—and is still teaching—at Georgetown. He was also involved in a business that did simulations and things like that. He was giving speeches. He was a very busy guy. Well, Tony was passionate about Haiti. He loved Haiti and wanted our policy to succeed. He once said to me, “You know, there are only two places I would have liked to have been ambassador.” I said, “Yeah? Which ones?” He said, “Port-au-Prince. I really would have liked that.” I said, “What’s the other place?” He said, “The Court of St. James, of course.” [laughter] Tony really liked Haiti.

I had a good relationship with Tony. There was a specific crisis in Haiti we were trying to deal with. It involved the Haitian congress. The terms of the members of congress were expiring, but new members couldn’t be installed because there was a problem with the election. There was a challenge to the legitimacy of the outcome of certain seats. Neither side would give way. This was in late 1998. It became a huge constitutional issue.

At bottom the problem was that Preval, backed by Aristide, wanted the mandate of the congress to lapse. They didn’t want a deal that would unblock the electoral problem, or a new election that likely would have given them the seats that were being contested. The congress in any configuration was inconvenient for them. It was better for them to govern without the congress.

But for us a government without a congress was no longer fully democratic. At the same time, extending the congress with its previous incumbents was problematic—and arguably not constitutional because their mandate had run out. What we were trying to do was achieve a negotiated solution, between the governing Lavalas leadership—under the sway of Aristide—and the opposition, which was crying foul not only to us, representing the Clinton administration, but directly to members of the U.S. congress. It was a mess. So Tony Lake and I practically shuttled between Washington and Port-au-Prince. One month, for example, we went back and forth four times.

My French isn't very good. I'm not a French speaker, but I took French in college and was taking early morning French at the Department. I tried to work as much as possible in French, but, if the other guys didn't speak English, we sometimes spoke Spanish. It turned out that some of these Haitian politicians had hung out in their youth in brothels filled with women from the Dominican Republic. They spoke fluid, pretty gritty Spanish. [laughter] So we used Spanish, English, French, and they spoke among themselves in Creole.

I was very much the junior person, but Tony relied on me, and I enjoyed the give-and-take. In some sense we were a problem for the embassy, because we would come parachuting in and do work that some would have said the embassy ought to do. But it's the kind of thing that happens in policy hotspots—in the Middle East, or Bosnia, at the time, for example.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

GREENLEE: At first it was Bill Swing. He was the quintessential Haiti ambassador. Then he moved on, and by the time Tony Lake got involved, the ambassador was Tim Carney.

Swing had had experience in different parts of Africa. He spoke Lingala, for example. He had been ambassador to South Africa when Mandela became president. He loved Haiti and was committed to everything about our policy. His reward was to become ambassador to Congo—which is what he wanted. Tim Carney was a top-line diplomat. He had been ambassador to Sudan and had had a distinguished career in places like Cambodia. But he had not been involved with Haiti when our troops went in. He inherited a mess. Unlike Bill and Tony, and even me, he was not so invested in our policy.

The people in Washington involved with Haiti—I mean those in the administration—were a tight group, and Bill Swing was very much a part of that group. The group included President Clinton, Strobe, Sandy Berger and Tony Lake, Janet Reno, the attorney general, and others, members of the congressional Black Caucus such as John Conyers and Charlie Rangel. I remember Conyers saying, “You know, no matter who comes in, when Bill Swing leaves, there will be a Swing ‘deficit’”—meaning it was difficult imagining anyone filling his space.

Swing touched a lot of bases, in Haiti and in Washington. He knew Aristide well, and seemed to like him. He wanted to coax him into being another Mandela, a unifier. Tony Lake was on the same track. He knew Aristide well, knew him before the invasion. He respected Aristide's

intelligence and leadership ability. Tony wanted to see Aristide develop into something bigger than a partisan power player.

Q: As you're saying this, from what I gather from other people, Aristide was actually a nasty son of a bitch. It sounds a little bit like Nyerere who wasn't a son of a bitch but somebody who captivated foreigners.

GREENLEE: Well, Aristide didn't captivate foreigners so much as he captivated masses of Haitians and a few people in Washington. Aristide was a defrocked Silesian priest. He was married to a woman of Haitian descent from Queens and had a couple of little children. He was a small, thin unassuming looking man, but he was charismatic. He knew how to ignite the crowds. His base was the impoverished majority of the population. His mantra was to lift the people from misery to poverty—one rung up. He wanted his party, the Lavalas, to control the country's infrastructure. He did not court foreign investment so much as foreign aid. He wanted handouts, which he thought the world owed Haiti because Haiti was poor.

Aristide was a very smart guy. When speaking English he chose his words very carefully, very precisely. He did not “misspeak,” as our politicians and even diplomats all too often do. It is something I noticed as well in the Middle East. Words matter so much that people choose them carefully. They want to make sure they make their point precisely, that they convey exactly what they want to convey. Aristide was like that. He spoke English slowly, but very well. He spoke other languages. As a Silesian, he had studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and spoke Hebrew. I understand that as an exile in South Africa today he is translating biblical texts from Hebrew.

It's hard to know the secret of Aristide, politically, but I have experienced the same sort of thing in other countries where there's a populist leader with a passionate following and a passionate opposition. The passion of the followers doesn't translate very well outside the country. Aristide was extremely manipulative and jealous of his power base. He could have implemented, or have caused to implement, certain domestic policies that would have freed considerable international aid. The aid could have been used to build dams and roads and would have helped a lot of Haitians. But Aristide wouldn't give the green light to assistance that didn't play to his political advantage. That was one of the frustrations of our policy. And ganging up on Aristide from the outside, what some of the Republicans wanted to do, would have only made him more popular inside Haiti.

This is something that was difficult to understand in Washington. Part of my job was going to Haiti to interpret Washington to the embassy, and then returning to interpret the embassy, and Haiti, to Washington. This involved, as well, going over to the congress to explain the situation in Haiti. That's where I experienced the most friction. It was the height of “gotcha” politics.

No matter what you did, you'd get trapped. For example, I'd return from a trip to Haiti and then go to the Hill to brief Republican staffers. They would ask, “Did you go to Tabarre?” In other words, “Did you go see Aristide?” Sometimes I would see Aristide; sometimes I wouldn't. If I said, “Yeah, I met with Aristide,” they'd say, “Don't you understand? By seeing Aristide, you're undercutting President Preval, because Aristide wants to run the country from Tabarre. So you

should only see Preval.” Okay, but if I met with Preval and not Aristide, they’d say, “Why bother with Preval, when the real power is in Tabarre” -- or that would be the sense of it. They wanted to do politics. All I wanted to do was policy. It got to be really nasty. I said earlier that I had this feeling—maybe because I had forgotten my high school civics lessons—that we in the executive branch were preeminent not only as implementers of policy, but as shapers of policy. From my interactions with congressional staff—and from what I saw of some of the members—I didn’t have high regard for what I heard on the Hill.

I didn’t fully appreciate how much the congress could tie our hands, pull us back, and how easily the members—and their staffs—could insert themselves into the minutia of policy. I didn’t go to the Hill with a chip on my shoulder, but when I started to get attacked personally, I didn’t react with, “Oh, yes, sir. I understand.” I would hit back. It happened at really high levels.

I remember once I went to the Hill with Strobe to call on Senator Mike DeWine. He was from Ohio, as was Strobe, and they had a good relationship. DeWine was a Republican, but he supported our policy generally. He had visited Haiti several times, and had a good relationship with Tim Carney, our ambassador. DeWine wanted to see our policy work. Anyway, at this meeting DeWine was saying that we had to do this and that to convince people on the Hill about what needed to be done. I reacted to what I thought was egg-sucking advice. I said, “If it’s important to all of us as a national interest, why don’t you guys on the Hill do more to back us up.” I reacted as if he was attacking us, this friendly senator. I wasn’t sure how Strobe would react. But he said, after a pause in the exchange, “I’m fascinated by this conversation.” I realized then that I had more scope than I had thought. I didn’t have to play it safe.

There were incidents inside the administration, as well. One time at the NSC there was a principals’ meeting on Haiti chaired by Sandy Berger—with Madeline Albright, Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen and other cabinet members. John Podesta, Clinton’s chief of staff, was there. Also, General Hugh Shelton, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The issue on the table was whether to pull out our military contingent. The Defense Department saw their presence at the Port au Prince airport as no longer necessary, and the troops were needed elsewhere. But politically they were useful where they were. They underscored U.S. commitment to the changes we were trying to bring about. Berger and Dobbins clearly wanted them there. I attended the meeting as a backbencher, a resource for Secretary Albright. I didn’t think I would have a chance, and didn’t want a chance, to weigh in. Cohen, the defense secretary, began the substantive part of the meeting by, in a stab at humor, holding his head with both hands and saying, “Let my people go.” The talk went around the table. General Shelton at one point talked about the high cost of force protection, keeping his troops safe. And then someone, I think it was Madeline Albright, asked me about usefulness of the military presence. So I took Shelton on. I said I didn’t see why a relatively small number of troops couldn’t provide all the force protection needed. I was way out of my lane, as they say in the military. But a decision was made that the troops should remain in Port au Prince. And both Berger and Dobbins said to me afterward, “Nice work, you spoke up to a four star.” I hadn’t thought of it that way.

Q: Let's talk about congress and some of the elements. One, the Black Caucus with the Aristide admirers. I suppose there are people in Florida whose representatives just didn't want Haitians there. Maybe they did. What was that about?

GREENLEE: It was complicated. There was a fault line in the congress on the Haiti issue. There were people who absolutely were committed to Aristide and didn't see any problem with him. They saw him as representative of Haitian democracy. A lot of them were in the Black Caucus. If we needed help on something, we could always get it, with unanimity, from the Black Caucus.

Q: Was it a black issue?

GREENLEE: Yes, with the Black Caucus. But there was also considerable support from others on the Democratic side of the aisle. From Bill Delahunt of Massachusetts, for example. And, as I mentioned before, to a certain extent from Senator Mike DeWine, a Republican. But mostly there was a split along party, not racial, lines.

Q: So you didn't feel this had a strong racist element?

GREENLEE: No, it was mostly in the area of partisan "gotcha" politics. The administration—the first Clinton administration—had crowed a lot about the success of the Haiti invasion and for a year or two were on the political high road. But things went bad. The Haitians couldn't find consensus. Their democracy locked up. Instead of checks and balances there were only checks. The Republicans feasted on that—they saw it as a Clinton administration failure. They weren't entirely wrong, but they were mostly wrong. It was a Haitian failure. Our failure was in thinking we could guide the Haitians, put them on a glide path to good governance and economic development.

The Republicans went after the administration in the proportion that the administration had boasted about its early success. It was very nasty by the time I got involved. If I were briefing on the Hill, I would be assaulted by the Republican side—the staffers for Senator Jesse Helms or Congressman Ben Gilman—and defended with varying degrees of bite by staffers for Senator Chris Dodd and others. I remember briefing some of the Helms staff one time and Roger Noriega, a nemesis at the time, slammed his notebook shut and walked out. We had a terrible relationship then, but he later became my boss—when he was assistant secretary for western hemisphere affairs and I was ambassador to Bolivia—and we got along very well.

Then the time came when I was tapped to testify before the full House International Relations Committee, which today is called the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Then it was the HIRC. I don't know how many were on the HIRC, over 40 members of congress, probably, with about 25 showing up for a hearing. The Republican members had delighted in going after Strobe Talbot some months earlier. They wanted Talbot to testify, and he wasn't going to do it. They wanted the under secretary for political affairs, Tom Pickering to testify. He wasn't going to do it. They said, "OK, we'll settle for Jeff Davidow," the assistant secretary. But Jeff wasn't going to do it.

Q: Can members of the administration say, "Screw you"?

GREENLEE: They don't say it quite that way. [laughter] Well, this was a policy issue, not a personal one. They could deflect and say, "We'll give you this person but not that person." This was an extraordinary cascade downhill, with me at the bottom. It was unusual to have somebody of my equivalent rank, like deputy assistant secretary, testify before the full HIRC rather than a sub committee.

Q: You say the full HIRC.

GREENLEE: I had never testified before, but I wasn't too worried, because I kept remembering that when I worked on Gaza, I didn't know as much as I wanted to know, but I knew more than others at the embassy—so I was the expert. Well, compared to the congress, I was the Haiti expert. They could challenge me, but I could challenge back. There were certain things that I was quite sure that it was impossible to convince anybody about, but I could make the argument. In fact I like to argue.

The truth, though, is that, at least at first, I wasn't taking this responsibility very seriously. About two or three days before the testimony, Jim Dobbs said, "Let's see your opening statement." In fact, I didn't write the opening statement. The opening statement was written by a good guy in our Haiti working group, John Rath, a very good writer. I presided over a working group that was like a mini-office. It had about four or five people, and they were constantly turning out things, answering letters and so forth.

John had been doing this sort of thing for a while, and he laid everything out. I looked at what he had done and made a couple of changes, and sent it over to Dobbins. He looked at and said, "OK," but indicated I would be in for a rough ride. Jim had really gotten burned by his testimony, and assured me that no matter how badly they treated me, it wouldn't be as bad as the raking over he got.

I think that was true. I found that I enjoyed the testimony. I went before the Committee and read the statement, and there was a DEA guy who also made opening remarks. It was just the two of us and about 25 Committee members, some shuffling in and out. And a CSPAN camera trained on us.

Q: The DEA is...

GREENLEE: The Drug Enforcement Administration. This guy got some questions, but the big guns were trained on me. I got a battery of questions. It turned out well, though, from my standpoint. I had the rare experience of seeing myself on CSPAN afterward and listening to myself on the radio. They played some of the stuff over and over again.

There was only one sour note afterward. I think I did well on the testimony in the sense that I turned back the Republican probes and taunts. At one point I even said to Porter Goss, who later became CIA Director, that his focus was off base. I said, "Mr. Goss, I can answer your questions, but frankly if I were writing them, I would have written them a different way." I realized later that I was being smug, but didn't at the time. Goss seemed taken aback, but didn't dress me down. He seemed embarrassed, actually. Anyway, I answered his questions, which reflected

uninformed staff work on his part. It reinforced what I had learned from working Gaza. I had maneuver room, although my own level of knowledge was far short of what I wanted it to be.

The most gratifying exchange was with Jim Leach, who then was a Congressman from Iowa. He asked me what the U.S. interest was in Haiti. I gave a stock answer, which he found inadequate. He said it didn't sound as if we had "tangible" interests. I insisted that we did, and talked about the boatloads of refugees that pitch up on Florida before the invasion. I said it was certainly a tangible U.S. interest to inculcate in some way a stable environment so that the Haitians could make their lives in Haiti. He said, "Now you've said something."

Q: Would you characterize some of the staff members? I get the stories on Helms' staff. I have heard there were some people who essentially hated the foreign service, hated the State Department, or smart brats who... Did you get any feel for this at all?

GREENLEE: More than a feel, I got a dose of it. There were staff people on both sides of the aisle who were passionately partisan, but you could talk to them--and there were ones who were passionately partisan who you couldn't really talk to. I mentioned Roger Noriega earlier, and he certainly fell into that category. He was Senator Jesse Helms' attack dog. Roger, I think, sensed that I didn't have a whole lot of respect for the congress. I certainly had reservations about much of the staff, and I wondered about the integrity of some of the members who seemed more interested in politics than in forging a policy that could work. Roger and I did not have good chemistry. I was tagged as a partisan defender of the Clinton administration. But I wasn't partisan, or political. At least I didn't see myself that way.

The partisan bickering actually had an impact on my career. After I had been special Haiti coordinator for a while, I was nominated to be ambassador to Paraguay. I was supposed to have a hearing at the end of September of 1999. A few weeks before, while I was still Haiti coordinator—the Helms staff cut off funding for a joint UN/OAS human rights monitoring group called MICIVI. Those were the initials in French. They put a hold on the funding for the OAS part of the group.

Q: OAS being the Organization of American States.

GREENLEE: Right. So I told the OAS people about the cutoff, but that they could continue to spend what was in the pipeline. I was very clear, however, that they could not spend new money, money they didn't yet have. But that in fact is what the OAS people did, and the Helms staff then went after me. They had a self-serving source in the OAS who I think was responsible for the mistake and tried to lay it off on the State Department, basically on me. So Noriega in the name of Helms put my hearing as ambassador to Paraguay on hold and requested an OIG investigation. It was to see if I had fostered a situation where money was spent that wasn't there, potentially a criminal charge. Well, I knew that I wasn't culpable, but also that an investigation would take time. There was some effort to get it done before the congress folded its tent in November. But it wasn't until about February that it was concluded, with the OIG report saying, in effect, we don't know why were asked to look into this. But I knew why. It was to derail my nomination.

So in the late winter of 2000 I was told that the Helms staff had lifted their hold and, since there was no chance of a hearing for months, would not object to a recess appointment. But I didn't want a recess appointment. I wanted the imprimatur of senate confirmation.

What was I going to do? I had left the Haiti coordinator job at that point. I was adrift. It was February. I wasn't going to get a hearing until May or June, so I thought, maybe I could learn some Guarani. That's the indigenous language of Paraguay, spoken by 90 percent of the population, in addition to Spanish. There was a Paraguayan lady at the Foreign Service Institute, a Spanish teacher, who knew Guarani. So, with the cache of being on deck to be ambassador to Paraguay, I was able to go over to FSI for a few months to get one-on-one instruction in Guarani.

I want to keep talking about my relationship with Roger Noriega, because I don't think he realized what he'd done to me, that he'd bollixed up my appointment that much. When I finally was confirmed, he congratulated me. He was very nice. Later, when I was in Paraguay, George W. Bush became president, and there was a big shuffle in the State Department. Noriega became the U.S. ambassador to the OAS. As ambassador to Paraguay, I briefed him a couple of times on Washington visits, and we were civil to one another. Then, after I became ambassador to Bolivia, Roger moved over to become assistant secretary for western hemisphere affairs, my direct boss. Bolivia became very turbulent—I'll get into that later—and Roger was very supportive of me, personally and politically. We agreed on where our policy should go. Just to show how a relationship develops, toward the end of my time in Bolivia, Roger proposed me for another ambassadorship—a very important one. I didn't get it—it went to a political donor. But it was a good example how an adversarial relationship can evolve into a constructive one. What's the adage? Where you sit is where you stand.

Q: I go back to people in these oral histories that go back to people who got caught up in the McCarthy period. That shows you how far back we go. That's ancient history now. One of the things that comes through is that if things are going badly and the congress is unhappy, they'll need somebody like you, pretty far down in the pecking order-- they'll throw you at congress and not back you up. Did you feel that you had good solid backing not only in the career system but also from the political system, or did you feel that you were out there on your own?

GREENLEE: I never worried about that. I had good solid relationships with Jeff Davidow, the assistant secretary, and later Pete Romero, and good relationships with people like Tony Lake and Strobe Talbot. I felt that they backed me totally. What was strange for me was that I was not a political person, but, as Haiti coordinator, I was in a politically charged role. I think some looked at me as if I was a partisan Democrat. But I wasn't. I was a career civil servant. That's how I saw myself, right through my career.

In the department, though, my role was understood and I felt well supported. Paraguay was not a large ambassadorship, but it was what was available. I'd been offered a couple of other posts, which were the equivalent of Paraguay, but I didn't want them. But I liked the idea of Paraguay, and was willing to close my career there.

Q: We talked about the Washington thing. What were you seeing in Haiti, some of the personalities and all? For one thing, I've heard people say Aristide advocated putting burning tires around people's necks, "necklacing," mob killings and all of that.

GREENLEE: Haiti was a very chaotic and violent place. The police didn't have control of Haiti. Maybe certain areas and zones, but if you were driving a vehicle out of Port-Au-Prince and you ran over a child, you would either have to try to explain what happened to a potentially homicidal mob, or keep driving. There were incidents where people were killed by mobs in the wake of driving accidents.

I never felt threatened or unsafe in Haiti, but I was always inside an envelope, a secure envelope. You always had a feeling in Haiti that you were in a place where unexplainable things would happen. Like in Graham Greene's novel The Comedians, there might be a corpse floating in the swimming pool of your hotel. I remember talking to Caleb McCarry, a Republican staffer, one time. We had both read the novel, and he reminded me of the part of the book in which the protagonist asked how the man had died. The answer was, "He died of his environment." I thought, "That's right. That's Haiti. You can die because of your environment."

Haiti was a subject of much good writing. And also of much good art. What was interesting was that a great artist might make a painting that would sell for a great deal of money. Then journeymen artists of lesser talent would copy what he had done. And then he might knock off his own work, turning out quick reproductions of the original. This is what happened with Prosper Pierre Louis and the Saint Soleil "school." The high end product would be for the collectors. The other stuff might be unloaded in Jamaica to tourists from a cruise ship.

Once, while I was coordinator, a Swiss guy who had lived in Haiti about 40 years—he had been a missionary—came in to talk to us about his impressions, his experience, about Haitian culture, basically. He was trying to explain why the Haitians couldn't get together, why they couldn't do something for their greater collective benefit. What he said was that every Haitian is "connected to his own god." They're tremendously creative people, but except in small groups, they don't seem to bond. It's interesting, because there is a perception that when they come to the U.S., they fall back on our system for support. It's not so. Of all the immigrants, the Haitians are the least likely to go on welfare, and the least likely to commit crimes. They know that productive work is a luxury.

Q: You say you loved Haiti and other people love Haiti. But it sounds like a mud belt.

GREENLEE: It's easy to say we love Haiti because we don't live in Haiti. We don't live in the conditions of Haitians in Haiti. It's an enchanting place. But what can somebody like me, who has never even lived there, really understand about it?

The Haitians have a mystical sense of themselves. Maybe that helps them endure crushing poverty. I could see how dictators such as Papa Doc Duvalier were able to use superstition and voodoo to consolidate power. Political devastation has led to other kinds of devastation--deterioration of the land, over-fishing of the sea, garbage-strewn streets. If you fly over the border from Haiti into the Dominican Republic, or along the border, you see two different worlds.

The Haitian landscape is blighted. It looks like Arizona. On the Dominican side are thick green trees, lushness. Haiti is eating itself up.

Several hundred of thousand people make charcoal for their living. They have to cut down trees to make charcoal. You can plant millions and millions of trees, but they never reach maturity because they are cut down to make charcoal. How do you solve that problem? You talk with development experts. They've studied this thing. One idea I heard was that Haiti should develop its cement industry and trade cement for wood from abroad. The wood could then be used for charcoal, allowing Haitian trees to grow unmolested. There are lots of ideas, creative ideas, about what to do about Haiti's many problems. But nothing seems to work. I think the word is *anomie*—when a country implodes, when it can't pull itself back up.

The question when I was doing Haiti was whether it was on its way to becoming a failed state or whether it could become independently viable. I don't think it's a failed state, but there is a question, and still a question, about what will happen to it. How can a country that far behind get to the point where people will be content to stay rather than flee in flimsy boats with a fair chance of drowning.

Q: Did the Dominican Republic play any role there in your time?

GREENLEE: The attitude of the Dominicans, as I understood it, was that Haiti's extreme poverty and turbulence were a latent threat. Haiti was a difficult neighbor. The border was porous. Haitians could pass for Dominicans physically, but even Haitians who spoke Spanish well had trouble merging with the Dominican population. The Dominicans could be very tough on them. In recent history Haitians were massacred.

The two countries have been entwined throughout their histories. The island they share is not that large. After the slave revolt, the Haitians invaded what is now the Dominican Republic and occupied it for a number of years. Not so long ago—maybe 50 years ago—the per capita GDP of Haiti and the DR was about the same. Now there's a wide gap between them, because Haiti has been mired in the politics of self-destruction.

Q: Is there anything in Florida, Florida being such a political state, where the Cuban exiles play such a role. Were you feeling an influence of a Haitian exile group?

GREENLEE: Yes. There are influential Haitians in exile in Florida, and some who have prospered economically. Also in places like Texas. We tried to persuade some of them to invest in Haiti. They were interested, but they were more interested in business, so we didn't have much success. There are Haitians who are politically influential in certain districts in Florida, but they don't have anything like the clout of the Cubans. Haitians complain that they don't have the immigration rights of the Cubans. Some see the difference in how they are treated as racially based.

Q: Obviously, at the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Cohen would say, "Let my people go." The military wants to get the military out. But how did the U.S. military on the ground feel? What was their attitude?

GREENLEE: It was different. There were a couple of commanders--I think they were reservists—who were very enthusiastic about being in Haiti. The “Let my people go” thing was at a high level in Washington and had to do with the big picture of where our troops were most needed. Bosnia was a challenge at that point. But our military on the ground in Haiti wanted to stay.

Q: It sounds like the troops would get along with the Haitians.

GREENLEE: They did, except the Haitians were so poor that there were incidents. A military guy would be driving through Port-au-Prince and stop at an intersection. He would have his hands on the steering wheel, and all of a sudden some little kid would come over and distract him, while some other kid would steal his camera from the seat.

I remember once talking with staffer on the House Appropriations Committee. He told me we had to get our troops out because they were in constant danger. I said, “We have foreign service people who go all over Haiti with no problem. You take precautions and assume normal risks.” The response was, “Yeah, but if something happens to a foreign service officer, that’s only a diplomat. If something happens to a U.S. troop, that’s something else.” [laughter]

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Ambassador
Haiti (1999-2000)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well, let’s talk about Haiti. You were there, when?

ALEXANDER: The second time?

Q: Yes.

ALEXANDER: I went there January 3rd or 4th, something like that until around June the 1st of 2000.

Q: What was the situation when you got there?

ALEXANDER: It was nasty. They were killing journalists and political opponents. They were gearing up for legislative elections and, later in the year, for presidential elections. We had to have the legislative elections first; they had been postponed for a year and a half and, without legislative elections, you couldn't have the presidential elections. Washington said, "You've got to do everything in your power to see this thing gets organized." And I said, "Wait a minute, guys, this is Haiti. I went through this election business back in 1989 or 1990, getting Aristide elected, and this is even worse." "Yes but you've got to do it. And oh, by the way it has to be fair and transparent, we don't want anyone killed." They always kill people during elections in Haiti. And I said, "Is there anything else you want me to do while I'm at it, go to the moon?" They said, "No, if you do that we'll be happy."

Well, we did it. How we did it, I don't know. Combination of luck and I guess the fact that I had been there and had the experience. I knew what to expect. USAID did a really great job in organizing all the stuff that we had to organize. I had a good staff and we did it. In fact, after it was over, the assistant secretary said to me, "I'll be honest with you, I thought if anyone could do it, it would be you, but we didn't give you very high odds of succeeding. We kind of figured that something was going to go wrong." But he said, "You guys did great."

Q: Was your friend Aristide still there?

ALEXANDER: Aristide was there, he was not in power per se.

Q: What had happened to him?

ALEXANDER: As a condition of returning him on the backs of the U.S. military in '95, we said you're going to finish the term you started in February of 1991, your five-year term and when it's over, that's it. You don't run for re-election. You step down and you let somebody else take over. He didn't want to do that, but he did. He stuck to the agreement. He finished up his presidency in '96 and one of his protégés was elected president, Rene Preval, who had been his prime minister when he was president the first time. Rene Preval became the president and Aristide moved back to his private residence, which was a new residence, by Haitian standards a rather comfortable residence which raised a lot of questions about where did the money come from. Be that as it may, he remained very much the power behind the scenes. He was the power broker, the man that you had to get the nod from to do anything. Preval tried to be his own man to the extent that he could.

Q: This is tape eight, side one with Les Alexander. Go ahead

ALEXANDER: I would say that President Preval tried to be his own man but he didn't really have a power base. His power base was Aristide's power base and so Aristide continued to assert enormous influence over the affairs of state. It was pretty much a given that Aristide was going to run again after that interlude that we required him to step down. He was going to run for and be president once again, which is exactly what happened. When I first went there in early 2000, I resisted going to see Aristide, even though my masters in Washington said you have to go see Aristide. The deputy secretary, Strobe Talbott, said to me two or three times, "you have to see

Aristide.” The funny thing is Sandy Berger didn’t even want me to go to Haiti because he had heard from other sources that Aristide and I didn’t get along, which was half true. I had talked to Aristide in the past, knew him before he was president. I didn’t like Aristide, that’s true, but I think that what got to his ears was somewhat of a distortion that I absolutely despised Aristide and I was just going to cause trouble when I went down there. So anyway, he had to be convinced, and Strobe convinced him that he had talked to me and I was a career FSO and I would follow instructions, which I did. But the one thing I resisted was going to see Aristide. No sooner did I get down there I started getting phone calls, “when are you going to go see Aristide?” I said, “I don’t know.” Who is Aristide really? He’s a private citizen.” “Yes, but you know he’s the power behind the throne.” I said, “be that as it may, he’s a private citizen. Why does the head of the U.S. embassy have to go see a private citizen? You’re making Aristide a power broker.” “No, he is a power broker.” I said, “I know that, you know that, but we don’t have to give the impression that he’s somehow the president already. But I’ll get around to it.” I was so pressured eventually I did go see Aristide. We had a very nice conversation. He was a very genteel, very polite, pleasant person. It was clear, before I went to see him and after I went to see him, that yes, Aristide was Aristide, and he was the man to beat in the presidential election later on that year.

I do think that Aristide helped make the first election – the legislative elections – a successful election. I think he did send word to his partisans to call for no violence, no nonsense; we have to have a clean election. In fact, he and I talked about it. I said if the election is tainted then your election and what appears to be your certain victory in the presidential election will be tainted. So it’s not in your interest to do this. After I left they indeed had the presidential elections, he went on to win that and then he got chased out of power by the former military and others who didn’t like him.

Q: How stood the military when you were there the second time?

ALEXANDER: The military had been disbanded; that was a condition that he imposed on us. We said you finish up your term, he said fine, but I want the armed forces disbanded. Haiti doesn’t need an army. They’ve been nothing but a source of trouble, coups, and we just don’t need an army. So the U.S. disbanded the Haiti army, the result being that there was no army when I went back the second time. There was a police force. Aristide obviously miscalculated when he disbanded the military because he had several thousand unemployed soldiers with plenty of time on their hands and one hell of a beef and, as it turns out, they were the ones who threw him out of office. Not that the violence wasn’t visited upon him, but certainly upon others, and they’re the ones who went into Port au Prince and he had to flee. The question in my mind is, had he found a different solution to deal with the military, would he have remained in power? I don’t know. But there is no army, there’s some talk about restoring the army. I don’t think they’re going to restore the army. I think what they’ll try to do, if anything, is integrate those soldiers who are still young enough to be integrated into the police force. There were some, myself included, who felt that they should have created a gendarmerie. Some sort of a paramilitary, para-police, that would have resolved all the beefs, all the gripes of what they call the petit soldat, the little soldiers. Yet at the same time it would have given Haiti what it so desperately needs, and that is a force for public order. Such a creature doesn’t exist. You’ve got a police force that’s corrupt, abusive, and there are no checks and balances. Before, the army was more powerful, but

there were some checks and balances. Now, the crime in Haiti has just gotten so out of hand that it's the Wild West. It's crazier than it's ever been.

Q: Did you have a feeling that Haiti had disappeared off the radar of U.S. politicians or not?

ALEXANDER: Oh absolutely, absolutely. I think the Clinton administration, once they put Aristide back on the throne, they immediately began to distance themselves from him. There was just too much out there indicating that Aristide was not the guy his supporters had tried to convince Clinton that he was. Domestic politics, particularly pressure from the Black Caucus, I think Clinton felt compelled to put Aristide back on the throne. After he did that I think he said that's it. I've done what you people want; I've got other things to do. And they kept an eye on Aristide. There were certain people like Tony Lake who felt a certain, not loyalty, to Aristide, but a certain commitment to him. But Tony was no longer the national security advisor and so his influence on the situation was very, very limited. Sandy Berger just wanted Haiti to be quiet. Basically, no boat people, nothing so explosive as to raise questions about why we invaded Haiti on Aristide's behalf. As it turns out, a lot of Aristide's critics felt vindicated because Haiti became what it was accused of being under the opponents of Aristide. It became, among other things, a dysfunctional state, a little narco country, all the things which the Black Caucus said it was when Aristide was in exile. Aristide comes back and becomes president and all of a sudden our Coast Guard and our DEA and everybody else is pulling out its hair because Haiti is involved up to its eyeballs in drug trafficking and Aristide is abusing human rights left, right and center. Didn't we invade Haiti to bring this guy back? And wasn't he Mr. Democracy? And what happened here? I think a lot of people had a lot of egg in their faces, but as long as Haiti was relatively quiet and didn't make the front pages, it was okay.

Q: Had the boat people business but pretty well stopped?

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes. The boat people business stopped for two reasons. We stopped it, physically stopped it, we just put so many cutters out there between Haiti and the U.S. and just made it impossible for them to get anywhere. Once Aristide was restored there was no way that human rights advocates, immigration lawyers who were advocating for the rights of the Haitian boat people, didn't have legs anymore to stand on, legal legs. Aristide was restored, he was synonymous with democracy; therefore boat people couldn't be fleeing persecution because Mr. Democracy was back in power. The argument was gone and the justification for letting them in was gone and so taking to the seas so that you could claim political asylum if you made it wasn't going to work anymore. You had to now go back to the old fashioned way, getting in the boat and sneaking in, you know walking across the beach, Pompano Beach or Hollywood or Miami in the middle of the night, and hoping you didn't get caught.

Q: Were you seeing any improvement in the economy of Haiti?

ALEXANDER: Absolutely not. When I went back the second time, I left in '93, Aristide was restored, we invaded in '95, Aristide was restored to power, I came back in, I left in, around June 1st, 1993, I came back the 4th or 5th of January, 2000, so that was what? Six-and-a-half years. It was a poor country when I left; it was the Fifth World when I came back. I was absolutely stunned at how much the country had degenerated in such a short time. Absolutely miserable

place. Not that it was a paradise when I left in '93, but when I first saw Haiti in the '80s it was a Third World poor country, but there were still a lot of beautiful houses and decent restaurants. In the '90s, especially after we clamped an embargo on the country as a consequence of Aristide's being ousted, the country very quickly went to the dogs; it never recovered. I haven't been back since I left in 2000. I still read Haitian newspapers and get information all the time and talk to people, and I'm told that if I thought it was bad when I left in 2000, I wouldn't recognize it now. I do know that the crime has gotten just insane, absolutely crazy.

Q: Well then, you resigned or retired in 2000?

ALEXANDER: 2000, officially July the 1st 2000.

DAVID R. ADAMS
Mission Director, USAID
Port-au-Prince (2001-2004)

Mr. Adams was born in Washington, DC and raised in Virginia and abroad. He was educated at John Carroll, William and Mary and George Washington Universities. Mr. Adams joined USAID in 1973 in Washington, DC. He served in Washington and abroad, dealing primarily with matters concerning Latin American countries and Kosovo. His foreign assignments include Bangladesh, Guatemala and Haiti, where he served as USAID Mission Director. Mr. Adams was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Well then we are moving up towards 2000. Where did you go after?

ADAMS: Yes, we talked a little bit about this earlier. My sons finished high school. My second one was going to finish that following summer, 2001. So I said to Washington eight years, time to get overseas again. So I applied for the AID representative position in Mexico. It was a relatively small office, but because I had not served as a deputy mission director, the advice from my personnel counselor was applying for a full fledged mission, because you haven't been overseas for so long number one, and even though the job I had in my last overseas assignment, long term assignment as head of the program office in Guatemala was roughly equivalent to political counselor in an embassy. That served me in good stead. But not being a deputy mission director, I was at a disadvantage with my competitors. But Mexico being a small office for AID, they said, there shouldn't be a problem in you getting that if they want you in the Latin American bureau. In other words the committee that does this sort of thing wouldn't vote to say eliminate you. So I had some folks in the Latin America bureau championing my cause, and I was given the assignment. So as far as I knew at that point I was heading to Mexico. I was in Spanish language training because my Spanish was rusty. It had been many years since I had served. The next thing you know, as I mentioned in an earlier interview, the next thing you know the mission director in Haiti retired. Haiti was considered one of the toughest missions anywhere because of the conditions in Haiti. There was a lot of money involved, although this was the beginning of

the Bush administration. Haiti had been one of the highest priorities under Clinton. Under Bush it was winding down in priority.

So word got out they were searching for an experienced mission director to be the director in Haiti. Initially I said well, it is the kind of job that I, you know having served in Haiti back in the early 80's I would find interesting but I wouldn't be qualified for it given the fact that not only did they want someone who had been a deputy director, but also a mission director before. The problem was they had at least a couple of people in mind who turned it down because it was such a can of worms. Not only had the then director quit early and retired, he came back to head up the mission in Iraq about a year later. They enticed him back to go to Iraq as the first mission director there. But the director before him who shall remain nameless, was featured in a very unflattering way on 60 Minutes because of alleged mismanagement, corruption, what have you. So that had not ended well. So Haiti was seen as having a lot of political landmines as well as other things. Anyway, so a couple of the folks who were approached turned it down. I went and I talked to the fellow who had assigned me, who had been my champion for Mexico. I said, "You might think I am crazy, but it was a much bigger job and better chance for promotion and I know Haiti." I said, "If you can't find somebody you want, then keep me in mind. I would be interested in jumping." There were other reasons too, but long story short, he decided that the people who had come forward they didn't want for whatever reason. Even though I hadn't been a mission director, I had the background in Haiti and I had served, what I had done when working for the secretary on Haiti, word had gotten around on that in terms of my policy activities if you will. So they figured this guy knows Haiti quite well. Even though he is a little short on recent field experience blah, blah, blah. Well there was a big fight with the committee because there were folks on the committee who said, "No, we need an experienced director. It is like sending an ambassador to Iraq who had not been an ambassador before," somewhat comparable. So there was a brouhaha. Finally the head of the agency, Natsios, decided that he wanted to give me the chance. So I then switched and got my French brushed up.

Q: Well you were there from when to when?

ADAMS: 2001-2004.

Q: To set this up, what was sort of the situation in Haiti when you got there? First who was the president and the type of government, and the ambassador, and where had AID fit in? What was it doing?

ADAMS: Sure. Well AID was still the biggest kid on the block because we had a lot of money even though the trajectory was down in the funding. I think it had been about a couple of years before I was assigned as high as \$200 million a year. By the time I got there the budget was about \$75 million, still significant. Mexico was about \$10 million. But anyway it was a huge mission, a lot of staff even though it had been in the process of downsizing. The ambassador was an experienced hand named Brian Dean Curran, who had been the ambassador to Mozambique before Haiti. He had been in Haiti about a year at that point. He had like about a 4-4 or a 5 in French. He also spoke Creole, a real linguist, and had also been a DAS for legislative affairs at H for State before he went to Mozambique. Aristide was president. He had been re-elected after the Preval regime finished the first time around in 2000, disputed elections. There had been a lot of,

there had been ballot box stuffing and what have you for not so much Aristide. He was such a prohibitive favorite that there was no accusation that his election had been fraudulent, but there were other senators who from his party had been alleged to have been fraudulently elected, and it is very possible that some of them were. So there was that. There was still the great divide in the society between the elite and the masses. I will never forget my first meeting with my foreign service national staff because some of them remembered me 20 years ago. A few were still around who had been there in the early 80's. But I began to describe U.S. policy toward Haiti, and said something about how we needed to support the Aristide government because Aristide himself needed to have a chance. Most of the white collar folks were very anti-Aristide, coming from the elite. So they blasted me about being sympathetic to him. He is a bum, blah, blah, blah. Whereas the blue collar folks were still pretty pro Aristide, the lower paid employees if you will. So I realized early on this was a political thicket I had to be careful of. That was the trickiest part of the job, managing the politics. The rest of it was not an issue. I could delegate a lot of it, but I had to handle the politics. I was struggling earlier for the name of the Republican equivalent of NDI was IRI, the International Republican Institute. Well I had a little bit of a political challenge early in my stint because the NDI was going great guns and doing a good job there and could operate openly. The IRI folks could not work in Haiti because of threats against their security by the Aristide goons, especially because they saw them being linked to the Republican party which was usually anti-Aristide. So we had tremendous pressure from key constituencies on the hill to help IRI not only give them a grant. The ambassador and I wanted to give them what was known as a cooperative agreement which involves some oversight, more oversight than a grant. You have got three basic instruments for giving money in Haiti. Contracting, you give a contract that involves the most oversight. The AID cognizant technical officer or project manager has every right to get into the weeds of who in an organization is managing the contract. A cooperative agreement it is not quite as intrusive. A grant it is pretty much they do what they want to do and they give you reports. If they don't give you reports you can make a stink. But they give you reports, that's it. The folks at IRI knew that. Because it was not only such a politically-delicate situation. The fellow who was the lead officer for IRI was a Haitian American who had a very strong political agenda, a guy named Stanley Lucas. The ambassador was very suspicious of him because he was known to spread rumors about U.S. policy that were false and spread personal rumors about key U.S. personnel like the ambassador, which he did. So it was, I was trying to negotiate an agreement to allow IRI to get involved again if you will in political development and democracy and governance in Haiti, political party development, which is what the contract is for. But the ambassador wanted to make it a very tight agreement. Well guess what, the people on the hill, some of the key Republican staffers and political folks in the State Department said, "No, you have got to give IRI as much leeway as you can." Luckily I had a very good democracy and governance office chief at the time, a woman who is now mission director in Cambodia. Erin Soto is her name, and she was very good about knowing the politics of the situation. So she protected me, and we worked together with the ambassador to put together the best deal we could. I also made it my business to befriend and work closely with the vice president of IRI, Georges Fauriol, who knew Haiti very well, and to try to work with him to insure that his Haitian-American staffer didn't muddy the waters.

Q: How did you work around the Haitian American? Did you sort of isolate him or what?

ADAMS: Well I basically said, "I will deal with the VP. I don't want to deal with this guy. I don't want to communicate with him." He was such a hot potato. So my office director worked with him. Remember that there wasn't because of the security issues and threats against IRI staff earlier in Haiti, and it gets even more complicated because one of my supervisors in Washington was a former IRI staffer in Haiti before they got chased out by Aristide's folks in the late 90's. She was deputy assistant secretary-equivalent at AID responsible for Haiti in Washington. So it got complicated because she used to work for IRI, and she should have recused herself frankly from the situation, but she didn't. She got involved in oversight from Washington. So she and our ambassador ended up butting heads to some extent. So I had sort of several masters, and these two were both my supervisors. It got a little tricky. I didn't always please them each. But most of the time it worked.

Q: What role was the black caucus, because the black caucus in congress would be basically democratic wouldn't it?

ADAMS: Right.

Q: And they were great Aristide supporters?

ADAMS: They had begun to sour on him. Not entirely because there were some of the folks who were pro Aristide. Some of the female members of the black caucus, Barbara, I forget her name. There were two or three of them. I think some of the folks like Charlie Rangel soured on him and figured this guy has gone bad. There were others who were very reasonable to deal with. Kendrick Meek was one, out of Miami. He was a good fellow, and he knew the challenges and the problems with Aristide.

Q: Was Aristide, had he learned his lesson or was he back to, you know he had been out and he is now back in?

ADAMS: He had become increasingly authoritarian. You know, there were a lot of allegations that he was corrupt. We think he was, but I don't in terms of direct evidence he was slick. He was involved in the narcotics we think or he was getting funds from narcotics traffickers to get the police to stand down. Don't know if it was ever proven. We know there was a part of the budget that went to the palace that was quite large. The National budget, and there was no accountability for it. Then there was evidence near the end of his second tenure that he ordered hits on people. People were killed, and I think ultimately that was why he was driven out. He became very transparent and ordered a hit on a fellow that used to be an ally of his. That did it. That was the catalyst that gave the people outside the country who wanted to come back in.

Q: Were you there when this happened?

ADAMS: Oh yes.

Q: Did you have any dealings with Aristide?

ADAMS: Only superficially. Actually I did deal with him behind the scenes. In terms of face to face it was all very formal and the ambassador had to be there, and so forth. But one of the other tricky situations I faced when I got there was the former, somebody who worked with me in Haiti the first time around who I stayed in touch with loosely speaking, a woman, a program officer in Haiti who was very close to Aristide. In fact a key Republican congressional staffer told me before I took up my assignment, "you had better do something about her. You know, she is funneling information to Aristide about what is going on within the U.S. mission. The ambassador didn't necessarily buy this. So I basically worked with her over time and she retired voluntarily. There were family and other reasons why she decided to leave, so I didn't pressure her to leave immediately. I wasn't about to; there was no real cause. So anyway, but she would tell me, she would read the president's pulse for me to keep me informed as to what was going on inside the palace, so she was useful. But she was also a bit of a hot potato to have.

Q: It sounds like here you are with this very difficult basically a political problem for you. How good, during the time you were there 2001-2004, how good would you say was the delivery system?

ADAMS: It was quite good because none of the aid was going to the government. That created a whole...

Q: Except right at the end.

ADAMS: Except during the end.

Q: And this was deliberate wasn't it?

ADAMS: Yes it was, and in fact when I was in Haiti the first time around in the early 80's under Duvalier, we evolved to an NGO based strategy because of corruption in the government. And inefficiency. It wasn't just corruption, it was not being able to get the job done. So when I came back in 2001, we were almost exclusively channeling aid through NGO's, U.S. and local. Except in order to keep the government from really being unhappy with us, even though Aristide would make pronouncements about Embargo on Aid and this is why we are so far behind the U.S. and others won't give us the aid directly, we did in the health field do scholarships and short international visits for key health ministry officials to the U.S. and elsewhere for seminars and what have you. There wasn't much more than that. Although interestingly it is funny how you see things, you can see some things 20 years later the seeds for which you planted earlier. Two things that I was involved in during the early 80's that were still going strong. One were potable water systems that we had built mainly with NGOs but with some government involvement mainly in the south, were still working, feeding different communities, gravity fed systems. But also there was an office in the government sort of a parastatal entity that was implementing what was known as the PL-480 title III program which involved local currency that had been generated over the years as a result of the sale of U.S. grain under an agreement with the government that we negotiated in the early 80's, that because they did implement a number of policies that we had required, the loan was forgiven, a loan of the food. Theoretically they owed us the money that was obtained from the sale of the food back in the 80's, in the 90's should

have come back to the U.S. government. But since it was local currency we would have used it for local projects.

Q: As we did in India.

ADAMS: Right and elsewhere. That was still going. There were a number and I had a couple of my staffers go out and check the projects that had been handled by the government. It was usually roads, simple tertiary road construction or rehabilitation using local labor, hand labor. That sort of thing was happening.

Q: Could you do anything, one hears story after story for decades of the problem of trees.

ADAMS: Oh yes. Well back in the 80's in fact just as I arrived in '81, the guy that was my boss at the time was very much involved in finishing up a design for a major agro-forestry project. Of course when I arrived back in 2001 we sort of looked back and said, what happened? Well I don't know how many millions of seedlings were planted. I think by one count something like 5 million a year. A tremendous number of seedlings. The idea was that the farmer would want to harvest some of that for charcoal, which is the big issue in tree cutting. But that he or she or the family would want to allow a lot of the trees to mature to use either for charcoal or in the case of fruit trees, mango especially, to obtain the fruit for the market. So that strategy had evolved over the years into one where we were really focusing heavily on the fruit trees. So that part of the project, you know when people say Haiti is 95% deforested or what have you, the situation is bad believe me. I am not going to deny that, but as I was reminded when I was traveling in the south of Haiti recently, the claw, the southern claw, that area is still very much forested. This right here. Up here in the northern and central part of the claw there are still areas where the tree growth is not bad. A lot of that is new tree growth that has been generated by programs like ours. It is the fruit trees that they won't cut down because they want as I said...

Q: I was going to say ___ stops erosion, all sorts of good things happen.

ADAMS: So a lot more could be done, should be done. A lot of people have tried agro-forestry in Haiti with mixed results at best. The deforestation continues especially in the central and northern part of the country.

MICHAEL NORTON
Radio News Reporter, BBC & AP
Haiti (2003-2004)

Born and raised in Minnesota, Mr. Norton was educated at Hamline University and the Universities of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Chicago. After several years in Europe and Martinique, he moved to Haiti, where he spent a large portion of his career as a radio news reporter for the Associated Press and the BBC. Mr. Norton was a keen observer and reporter of Haiti's political, social and economic difficulties over the years and of the personalities involved.

Q: That was the slogan of those who sought to oust him.

NORTON: Exactly, my friends thought...my friends...I didn't have any friends by now. By now I had lost almost all of my friends because there was unanimity for Aristide in 1991 in spite of his very early deviation from the Constitution. I protested on television. I don't know what gave me the idea of doing that, but I was one of five or six people who criticized Aristide publicly. Everybody was afraid before the coup d'état. All of the others were for the coup d'état. I was the only one who wasn't because he was elected. There were other ways to do it. Aristide was furious with me. It was only the intervention of my friend and sponsor, Antoine Izmerly, that saved my neck in Haiti.

So in the year 2003 and 2004, I thought that the repression in Haiti required something else, not "if you've got balls, prove it." It's just violence. It's just machismo. And at times the students were as violent as the others. It was violence, violence, violence when the only thing that can save Haiti is respect for the law and respect for the individual. Violence, violence, violence.

Okay, so get rid of them and do what? Are you prepared? Are you better prepared than your predecessors to turn this miserable savanna desert into an inhabitable region of the earth? Are you prepared? Do you know a way to bring hope to these people which is not founded, as Aristide's was, on thievery? One thing often forgotten by Aristide's defenders: Aristide supported the pyramidal scheme of banking which destroyed the savings of I don't know how many millions of people and filled the coffers of people who knew enough to get out soon. Aristide, from the presidential chair, supported this.

Q: 2002, I think.

NORTON: Yah. So I lost their friendship. And what really sealed it, of course, first of all, I was opposed to Aristide in 1991 and everybody who was in favor of Aristide believed I was for the coup d'état. And then during the coup d'état, since I reported faithfully all of the misadventures of the army, the army thought I was trying to get them ousted. Because I'm not just a reporter. I'm a political activist. But, in fact, when I came to Haiti, I didn't have to be a political activist. All I had to do was tell the truth. Every enunciation was a denunciation. All I had to do was say how things were. That's what I did. So Aristide believed I had sold out to the military. The military believed I had sold out to Aristide. It was not too pleasant, but the taboos that maintained a certain cultural order prevented me from getting killed.

Q: And the count of the people...

NORTON; So I come back. Now, we're going to get rid of Aristide. And then I didn't quite agree with the *greenn nan bounda*, "If you've got balls, show it." I started counting the demonstrators. Now I know how to estimate the size of a demonstration. You take the number of people per square meter, which varies depending on how fast they're moving. If they're standing still, it can be two, three even if it's really like in an elevator. Generally, most police forces in the world will tell you that it's one and a half person per square meter, and you multiply that by the square meters of the distance traveled. I mean at any one time. How long is and how wide is the

demonstration and then you get a figure. And then if it's two thousand five hundred, you say around two thousand five hundred. Now, when I said it was around two thousand five hundred, they said it was around sixty thousand. And since I was the AP and I was the BBC and I was the most read reporter in Haiti, most widely read, it went from bad to worse. Finally, I would stand on the street corner as the demonstration went by and count them one by one. And, of course, it was like running the gauntlet standing still. They were running but I was receiving the gauntlet. Death threats, insults, spat upon, pushed. It was an experience that was at one and the same time the most inglorious and glorious I had in Haiti. I was a hero and nobody knew it except me.

Q: In favor of what?

NORTON: The Republic cannot exist without truth. There is no human betterment without respect for the truth. Without striving for the truth, you cannot strive for the betterment of man. In a society of lies, of violence, of inherited inferiority where everybody is suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome, face the truth, tell the truth no matter what the cost. The republic needs the truth. It will flounder without the truth.

And so, that was my own. Of course, it's completely romantic or idealistic, however, I don't know. You can call it what you want, but for me, I was defending the last sputtering wick, the dream of a Haitian republic. Of course, what happened? As every time, when Aristide fell, a new regime took over. Corrupt – with the worst elements from all the past regimes. Of course. Corrupt, violent, no justice, no prosperity, nothing, no prospects. And then along came Préval and that's another story.

Q: Fifteen years previous, you described yourself as a political activist. You had certain objectives. You transformed into another type of person or creature. If I understand, you did not do what you did in the name of activism but truth. Were your objectives the same?

NORTON: Yes, I think so. Of course, the anti-capitalist struggle was a pretty big thing and it was another ambition which was absolutely unrealizable. And I was a Westerner. I didn't feel bad about participating in French politics. I didn't feel bad about that. It's the same capitalism. But in Haiti, Haiti's on another planet almost. It has its own specificity; but, also, Haiti is in the avant-garde of the capitalist disaster, a dump for the superfluous, the unwanted, its soil and its soul eroded. How could I be a political activist? It didn't make any sense, accord with my former understanding of political activism. I was a political activist for what I call the republic or the political revolution of Haiti, yes, but all I had to do was tell the truth. I didn't have to take arms or paste posters or propagandize for a party. I didn't have the inclination either. All I had to do was report.

Q: When you say you were opposed to capitalism, the reader of this text will form some impressions. They will have a sense of what that means. Do you want to answer the questions that these people...?

NORTON: Sure. Look, it's the system that governs, and has governed, the world for hundreds and hundreds of years. In my opinion, communist China, communist Russia, Stalinist Russia were variants of capitalism. Capitalism tried them out and found them wanting. Same with

fascism. Tried it out and found it wanting. Imperialism still remains. Colonialism still remains. They're still working. The limits which capitalism doesn't recognize are not causing capitalism to collapse because of global warming. Not yet. Capitalism is the economic, social, political, cultural system that reigns, and it secures security for the rich and insecurity for the impoverished and the impoverishable.

Capitalism lays waste to old worlds to build a new world in its image. It lays waste to lives, it produces mass migrations, a dead end for millions, garbage dumps. In our day, the truly Utopian demand, a demand the system cannot satisfy, would be full employment. The insecurity in the United States is a case in point. The job insecurity is terrible in the United States. 47 million people don't have health insurance. What is this? Katrina destroys a city of over a million people and it's still in ruins? Capitalism is for the profit of the few. It's private ownership of the public means of production. That's what it is. It's exploitation. Everybody knows what it means to be exploited. For the moment, we seem to have no alternative. We have certain ways of diminishing its negative aspects. Perhaps, I don't know, we can never get beyond that. Perhaps we can never move into a world system where exploitation will not be the rule, where private ownership will only be of private things. Perhaps not, I don't know. It's too big of a question for me, but I bet on it: it is my secular version of Pascal's wager. Why else should I give this interview?.

Q: Am I oversimplifying if I say you were an activist at one point? You became an observer at a later point. What is the role of an observer in hoping that things will evolve in a positive way? Does an observer become involved in those events or separate?

NORTON: Well, in Haiti, it was really most special because I had a calling card. I was the representative of The Associated Press and BBC in Haiti, the two biggest news-gathering organizations in the world. I was somebody. Wow. One time, we were threatened – the news wire services – of being expelled. Once. Called in by the information minister. I think it was during the coup d'état. Fuck you, basically we said. I didn't care. I knew they wouldn't do it.

Q: Do what? Take you do the airport?

NORTON: Yah, because it'd be worse. I mean it'd be worse for them. And at least they knew who I was. And they knew I was fair even though they didn't like it. You're implicated in events when you're reporting. I was there at the massacres. I was shot at. Nobody could tell me bullets weren't flying because they shot at me. Nobody could tell me that it wasn't true. I was there. I talked to the people. I talked to the army. I had contacts all over – in the army, among the thugs, among the killers, among the victims. I was everywhere. I tried to be everywhere. I felt the extremities of the country in my fingers and my toes. I was there. I was implicated. And I spoke. And I wrote it.

Q: Was anybody not a thug?

NORTON; Yah, a lot of decent people.

Q: Were there any political formations who were not thugs?

NORTON: Yah, yah, but they all had a tendency. I'm not talking about individuals; I'm talking about the political parties. They all had a tendency to thugdom because none of them really respected the Constitution. By respecting the Constitution, that is respect the idea of the Constitution. You have to have law and order. Haiti was the only place I have ever been where law and order was a left-wing demand, not a right-wing one as it usually is. Law and order, respect the individual, respect his rights, follow the rules, let them be transparent, let them be posted, and let those who infringe be punished. Is that so hard to understand? I was there. I was everywhere. I was implicated in all the events because I wrote about them every day. I made Haiti known to the world for almost twenty years. I was able.

I was finally evacuated from Haiti because of bad health. We can come back to that and talk about the American embassy. And I had sources in the national palace. I was evacuated to the hospital in Jamaica. From Jamaica, I called the office to tell them that Aristide was being ousted. I did. Two hours before anyone else. That's how embedded I was in reality. To be a reporter in a country, you have to be embedded in the country. You cannot come in and find your credible informants. You can't. It's an art. It's not so much a science. You feel the country or you don't feel the country. You know you can trust this person and you can't trust that. You feel that something bad is coming or you don't feel it. Now, there is a slight decline in insecurity in Haiti. I know how it works. The editor says, "What can we say about Haiti today? I have to say something." "Well, there is a slight decline." "Oh, Okay!" "Haitians breathe free after two years of violence," headline.

Come on now. You don't understand the country if you believe that headline. Thugdom takes a breather. Thugs take a breather. They go underground. They wait until, you know, the heat's off and then they come back because the causes of their thuggery have not been eradicated. Why should the thugs be eradicated? Sure, they lose some of their people, but the number of thugs is legion in Haiti because despair and desperation and despondency are deep and deepening, because the traditional value system has been knocked out of whack. That's the kind of news you get out of Haiti. Haitians breathe free after two years, etc. And the U.N. applauds itself. They've done it. They have done it. They have caused the respite, thank goodness. But it's a respite. Nothing has been done in Haiti to change its destiny, which is self-destruction, annihilation. Aristide was a nihilist. He wanted his country poor. He told an Inter-American Development Bank representative, "Please Sir, don't take away our poverty. It's our dignity." Quote unquote. "Please, Sir. Do not take away our poverty. It is our dignity. It is our strength."

Q: When observing events, did it sometimes happen that you wished for an outcome other than the one that you saw? And if so, what was happening inside you as a professional? Example: in counting the people on the streets, you gave an accurate count. Would you have wished on that day that those who said sixty thousand had been correct?

NORTON: I guess this will tie into your other question. My implication. It's true I wasn't a journalist like other journalists. There was a certain militant aspect to me. I talked to people. I tried to reason with them. I mean, I gave my point of view. You're not supposed to do that, are you? To give your point of view. I talked to leaders and said, "What the hell is this? 'You've got balls, prove it.' This has to have dignity. This has to have meaning. This has to have a future."

“You’ve got balls, prove it” doesn’t mean anything. I would talk. It didn’t affect my reporting. I would like to believe so. I mean, who knows. Listening to my voice on this interview, I don’t recognize it, so maybe I’m deluding myself. I would talk to everybody. I talked to everybody, and to the extent that I thought there was a possibility to be heard, I would give my opinion. And my reason, not my opinion. I hate opinions. You have an argument. You have a reason to believe what you believe. If you have reason to believe what you believe, it’s not an opinion.

I believe that Mitt Romney will be the candidate. Why do I believe that? It’s an opinion. I have no idea why I believe that. Maybe because he’s a corporate man, because he looks clean, because he hasn’t made any extraordinary mistakes. Maybe if I look, I could justify that but that’s just rationalization. It’s an opinion. If I give a reason, if I say, for example, there’s no fundamental difference between Mitt Romney and Hillary Clinton, you better expect an argument. You better expect an argument concerning the nature of political parties in the United States, etc. That would not be an opinion. What do you call it?

Q: You gave arguments to Haitian individuals.

NORTON: To the leaders, all the leaders.

Q: Did you ever give any of your arguments to a visiting American in a small aircraft?

NORTON: Yah, that is one of the beautiful examples of, again, American innocence, American ignorance, American indifference abroad. Haiti is a small country. Haiti is, to those of us who care about the human spirit, who know what we mean when we say the human spirit, Haiti is a monument. Haiti is Mt. Everest because it is a landmark in the conquest of human liberty and human equality.

Geopolitically, what is it? There are carpetbaggers who come down to Haiti, and some of them with connections to well-known politicians, well-known groups of politicians. There’s money to be made in Haiti, obviously. There’s money to be made everywhere. I don’t know. Can you sell air conditioners in hell? I don’t know. I suppose there’s somebody who can. Or, I don’t know, flaming charcoal briquettes exported from hell ready to cook your beef in Texas? There’s not much economic interest in Haiti, geopolitical interest, obviously. Stability of the region. Haiti is part of Hispaniola. Eight million people in Haiti, eight million, maybe more...sixteen million people in Hispaniola. That’s a hell of a lot of people. That’s the Dominican Republic and then you’ve got Jamaica and then, wow, Cuba. What about Cuba? Where’s it going? You never know. And then there are more and more Haitians in the United States. That’s a political factor. I mean, one of these days they’ll get their act together and, like the Cubans, they’ll start voting. They’ve already got a couple of elected officials in local offices. It’ll come. It’ll come. Haitians are smart, hard working.

Haiti is small, but it has geopolitical interest. It’s in America’s backyard. Its presence...you know, it’s like somebody who doesn’t cut the lawn. If it’s your neighbor, you’re going to catch all that ragweed. Haiti, to be precise, is a pain in the ass. And the problem, I think, with the United States is they try to solve it with containment - coast guard sending back the refugees. It’s not a threat, in my opinion, but they send them back anyways. If they open the floodgates, of

course there would be but...they send them back. Then there's the U.N. who'll stay there and provide an exoskeleton of security, contain the insecurity. The problem with that is you can limit the pain, but you can't make it go away. It's your ass, and it's your pain. It's less of a pain than in Haiti because they're the ones who are suffering, but it is your ass and you've got to cover it. Is what's going on in Haiti the way to cover the ass of the United States and the Caribbean? I do not think so.

I think there never was any danger of a communist takeover in Haiti. There was never any danger of a radical movement taking hold of power. Aristide was never a socialist, much less a communist. Aristide was an upstart who wanted to enrich himself and his cronies in order to be somebody. Poor guy with his inferiority complex and his manic depression. I once heard him name-dropping, not quoting, Plato and Aristotle in a talk with peasants. In one speech at the National Palace, he called Heidegger "the philosopher of peace." Pompous. Gifted, but not gifted to be president. Insincere, hypocritical, violent. Violent. Selfish. The antithesis of the democratic republican leader. He was not interested in economic development. If you're interested in economic development, you're like Castro, right? You've got a socialist/communist party. He developed with the means at hand an economy. If you don't, you don't stay in power. It's not the problem with Aristide. Proof of the pudding is his support of the pyramid scheme. I remember poor people coming to my house and asking my opinion on the pyramidal banking scheme. They said, "But it's supported by the president. I'm putting all my money into it." They lost all their money. Economic development is not a problem for the heirs of the heirs of the French masters of slaves. Imitate the master. It's an imitation of the master. To be an imitation, you have to have slaves, but real slaves, menials, mental slaves. That was Aristide. Why was I going into that? You have to understand this.

Down comes a well-meaning former ambassador. It was in 1991, a couple of months before the ouster of Aristide, and I accompanied Mr. Andrew Young on a small plane to Cap-Haitien. Andrew Young was making rounds, spreading the word of the Lord. And here I am between Andrew Young, charming fellow, and a much less charming fellow, Colonel Valmond, commander of the garrison in Cap-Haitien which is Haiti's second largest city. And here you have the perky, bright former ambassador talking to this sandbag, expressionless but very polite. Because here we've got Andrew Young. Now Andrew Young doesn't know that he's a white man. But Valmond is listening to a white man speak to him about the virtues of democracy. So he delivered the sermon on the virtues of democracy, how the country progresses when everybody rallies around the flag, the role of the military is, we have an elected president, you have a Constitutional duty, you have a Constitutional prerogative... End of sermon.

I liked Andrew Young and, I don't know, I couldn't take it. Andrew Young seemed like somebody I could talk to. Of course, I was wrong, but what the hell. I said, "Mr. Young, I sat and listened to you for five, ten minutes, and I can't believe such an intelligent man could be so silly. You were talking to a thug. Do you think for one minute that he takes you seriously? You? A big shot white man from up north? They're going to stage a coup d'état when they goddamn well feel like it, and you're not going to stop them with these blowhard words." He didn't throw me out of the plane on the way back. I was on very good terms with Alvin Adams who was the ambassador during the coup d'état, and I very often got together with him and we chewed the fat and I irritated him. But I loved him because he was so smart. And we got along fine. Was he in

on the coup d'état? How was the coup d'état staged? Very complicated questions. What was the role of the United States in the coup d'état? I think there was a role, but it wasn't simple and we can come back to that. The Company is one thing, and the State Department is another. Maybe they act together; maybe they don't. It's never clear, and why should it be clear? It's much better to be confusing. Nobody knows what everybody else is doing. Nobody knows everything. It is often convenient for the left hand not to know the right.

The Haitians had the green light to oust Aristide at the end of September 1991. The army took the ball, ran, and ran, made the touchdown, and kept running. And wouldn't give up the ball. Three years later, the Americans had to put their foot down and say, "Stooge! You're a stooge! Don't you remember? Stooge." Haitians are not stupid. "Yes, Massa," and then they slit your fucking throat at night. That's the tradition. That's the people you're dealing with. "Yes, Massa," and at night they slit your throat. Got it?

And Alvin said to me, "Mike" -- he liked to pull my leg -- "You know what Ambassador Young said about you on his trip to Haiti? You're the most cynical guy he met in Haiti."

Needless to say, two or three months later in 1991, the coup d'état had taken place. I don't remember when Andrew Young came back to Haiti, but he didn't reject me. He was very nice to me, and his staff was very nice to me. Of course, he didn't say, "Hey, what'd I miss?" Innocent, ignorant, or indifferent? Please tell me. I don't know. The unequivocal language of those who represent western civilization. I don't know what politicians are getting at. Nobody does. I think history plays through them. They do things, and they don't really examine their behavior. Not the way we would like. I mean, they rack their consciences, but do they strain their brains? Why did the United States miss the peaceful intentions of the Haitian people after Jean-Claude Duvalier was ousted? Why did they put the future of the Haitian democracy in the hands of the military? Why did they not see that Aristide was a shoo-in as president and get to work immediately figuring out how they could reach this guy. Figure out, really, what he wanted. Not the prosperity of the masses, a fair deal, down with the bourgeoisie... My foot, he married into the bourgeoisie. My foot, he could have been bought out. Cynical? I don't know. Did they figure it out? No, he was going to lose. That's very comforting.

And then he had something against the Americans. From the beginning, they were threatening him. They don't want him in. They were going to get rid of him, he believed. And then, of course, the coup d'état. And then the uncertainty. What was the U.S. going to do with him? Bush, the father, I think cut off the resources, the Bank of the Republic resources in New York. There was a gasoline embargo of sorts. Aristide pushed for a full embargo. His supporters said the embargo now is doing nothing. In fact, it's destroying the country. I went out into the countryside when the embargo began, and I didn't know what I would find. I found that the small jobs in the city had been lost and that the contribution to the countryside which was to finance repairs for irrigation pipes and things like that were no longer coming. And therefore the whole tissue of economic life was being rent by this incomplete embargo, and what Aristide was going for was a complete embargo. And when I told a "friend," a radical priest. The whole priesthood was behind Aristide. Not for religious reasons, I can tell you that. We can talk about the theology of liberation in Haiti, if you like. When I told him, it was like, "Hey Father, I went out to the countryside and this is what I found. It's hurting." He said, "It's not true."

I said, “But listen to me...” He said, “It’s not true. It’s not true.” And that was the end of our relationship. I never spoke to him again. And that was the end of my relationship with the radical priesthood in Haiti because their boy came to power – power hungry pigs. I repeat, power hungry pigs, not priests. Not people who care about the souls of their parishioners, their well-being, their happiness, their felicity. Power hungry pigs. They eat. They eat anything. And Aristide places priests and former priests all over the state and parastatal apparatus. And then those who have not been invited to the banquet break with him. In Latin America, Liberation Theology aimed at the disestablishment of the Catholic Church. It celebrated a homecoming, the return of the Church to the fold, to the people, most of whom are poor. It was an attempt to purify a church that had been contaminated by power, in particular the power of military dictatorships. In Haiti, it aimed at the establishment of one faction of a highly politicized Catholic Church, the anti-hierarchical faction, in the halls of power. But Aristide was no theologian. He used everybody, politicians and priests alike. He kept some people around him, many of them involved in the drug trade or in privileged public-private business deals. But the big social categories he lost. He finally lost them all. He lost the intellectuals. He lost the bourgeoisie. He lost the towns and the countryside. He lost everybody except his thugs at the end. One of the priests was the brother of a prime minister under Préval. An enemy of the Aristidians. The prime minister’s brother officiated at the wedding of Aristide and a Washington or New York Haitian-American lawyer.

Q: Mildred.

NORTON: Mildred. It was a January...I don’t remember what year it was...and I covered it at his mansion outside of Port-au-Prince. The estate, the mansion was not a glorious affair. It doesn’t compare with anything in Scarsdale, but it’s an enormous estate. I don’t know how many – ten, twenty acres. And there’s a swimming pool. He ran a kind of orphanage – ran or misran it – milked charitable organizations for his own...

Q: Aristide Foundation, by the way.

NORTON: Yah, but the orphanage itself was called Fanmi Selavi – “The Family is Life.” Incidentally there was no mother, and one father: Aristide. To read between the lines, Aristide is the Staff of Life. And then he dropped it when it no longer served his purposes.

Look, I was with Aristide at the Family is Life center when the president of the electoral panel announced his 1990 presidential victory on television. I was standing. He was sitting on a bench, hands folded, looking for all the world like a virgin on her wedding night. He looked up at me and said, “You’re not moved.” I was dumbfounded, flabbergasted. For, in fact, until he opened his mouth, I had been exhilarated. The battle was on! The confrontation with Haiti’s retrograde forces was inevitable. And this poseur was the guy who was going to lead the future to triumph over the past?

Back to the marriage: strains of the “Blue Danube.” This is Haitian authenticity! The strains of the “Blue Danube,” and then we were there. And then he got married. Poor Mildred kept casting a glance over at him. The guy was cold, frozen stiff. You know, never a touch, never a look of affection. I felt sorry for her. I said, “What’s going on? This is a State wedding.” This is a State

wedding, of a dark-skinned man and a light-skinned woman. And then came the sermon because people were saying, “Eh, she’s a mulatta.” “Oh, she’s from the bourgeoisie and Aristide is no longer with us.” The people. That was a rumor. And this smarmy guy said, “It’s not true. Aristide has married the Haitian people, will never divorce the Haitian people.” This guy broke with him a couple of months later, obviously, but he gave one last shot at power. Never did he give an auto-, a self-criticism. Nobody ever gave a self-criticism. Nobody ever said, “I was wrong about Aristide because I was blind to X, and I was blind to X because I...” Magical. One moment I’m for him, the next minute I’m against him. No. Crazy, crazy excuses. “I thought he would do the trick and then he didn’t.” I said, “But Jesus Christ, you look into his eyes, if you can. Listen to his voice. Everything about him is phony. He’s a wooden nickel. It’s so obvious. Why don’t you look at people?” People don’t look at people. Categorizing people stands in the way of recognizing their individuality. People situate other people socially, and that situation is their identity.

So, how to understand Haiti? You have to understand all of this. You have to understand its cultural differences. You do not situate, and you do not identify the way Haitians do. You have to understand that you don’t have a credible informant group. Groups are investments of interest. You have credible informants, but no group will give you a credible picture, a disinterested picture. And you have to weave something out of this. Now, should I go on with this theme? Should I tell you about my meeting with the DCM after Alvin left?

Q: Sure. Maybe the DCM story first. That’s a very important story. But I also wanted to ask, though, can you give a sense in maybe this interview or the next one: how did the American embassy do throughout this period? Were there any individuals or periods of time where the embassy seemed to have more understanding of the situation and others really didn’t? Or were they uniformly misled? But please tell the story of the DCM – the deputy chief of mission.

NORTON: It depended on the period. I found the ambassadors I had to deal with, especially Carney and Curran, open. We had very good relations. They listened to me. I don’t think they were condescending, but they did not... I think they had difficulties with me because I had a very high reputation, but my point of view was basically that you’re trying to force this democracy on Haiti and you’re not going to succeed. You don’t even know who these people are that you’re trying to force something on. It’s not even democracy that you’re trying to force on them. You want them to be good little boys, and they’re not good little boys. Haitian democracy is possible, but not on these terms. The investments in Haiti are wrong. The infrastructure development is wrong. You have to think of a different way of developing the economy of Haiti that is for the economy of Haiti. Sure, you may make more money when you have all these construction projects and you can get the money siphoned back to the United States and to the other countries that have these companies doing the infrastructure, but, hey, it doesn’t cost very much. It’s a small country. You can do a hell of a lot of good. There are a lot of Americans here who want to do good. Get your thinking straight.

Now, straight with respect to what? With the development of Haiti? Never that easy. It’s always a jumble. You’re suddenly altruistic – in the short term altruistic and in the long term you’ll reap the benefit. That’s what I believe. Just do it for a while. You know? There are a lot of bright people here. There’s a lot of good will. In the embassy, out of the embassy, a lot of foreigners

come down to Haiti. They love the country, and it breaks their hearts. They become attached to it in ways that change their lives. It's a marvelous country. Be altruistic for a while. Think it through. You want some people you can talk to? I can tell you who you can talk to. But that's not the kind of talk they really wanted to have.

Then, after 2000 when it was obvious that the legislature was a rigged legislature and that Aristide was not a legitimate president, there were all kinds of problems trying to come to some agreement so that Haiti could function. And then you had the OAS sending 1, 2, 13, 14, 20, 25, 26 delegations headed by Luigi Einaudi coming to Haiti. I remember the last time I saw Einaudi, I think it was one of his least successful, one of his last missions. We were walking together, and I was saying something to him. He was walking by and it was at the hotel, and suddenly a vase, nobody touched it, suddenly a vase tipped over and fell.

I said, "Mister Einaudi, Haiti. You're never going to reach your goal." If it was the real goal. I think it was a façade. Let's get an agreement out of this. Come on. I'm sick of this pain in my ass. Get an agreement. I said to them, and to everybody I saw, "It will never happen." Why it will never happen I explained. I've given some of the reasons already. You don't understand these people. It's all or nothing. It's spit in the soup. You can't deal with them this way. It is just so much shucking and jiving. Do you understand shucking and jiving? No, they're white people. They don't know what it is. And if they're black people, they don't know what it is either because they're not in the United States, so they've forgotten what it's like to be invisible and to become visible by adopting the other person's image. So anyways, that was the standard spiel for a long time with variations depending on the event or the moment. Okay, the DCM. I think it was when Alvin Adams left and there was a period before I think Carney came in, I can't remember.

Q: Leslie Alexander.

NORTON: Leslie Alexander was the ambassador.

Q: Chargé.

NORTON: Well, maybe he was chargé before Leslie was chargé, I can't remember. Anyways, he was a Vietnam War hero – bronze star, pilot – and he was bald and very, very clean. And he would go on to become a negotiator in what I believe then was still Yugoslavia. It was falling apart and he would negotiate. Anyways, my friend at the embassy, the public diplomacy officer - a very nice fellow, we were on very good terms, he respected my opinion – thought it would be a good idea for us to meet. I very often had these conversations with incoming diplomats. They would come and they would pick my brains, and then, of course, I would feel, "Oh, I'm so important." And then not feel so important after all. Anyways, I was very important and gave my very important spiel to this very important man. At one point, it was at the Oloffson Hotel, the scene of Graham Greene's racist book The Comedians. So there we were eating bad food.

Q: We: you and the...

NORTON: Me, the public affairs officer, and the DCM.

Q: Deputy chief of mission.

NORTON: Exactly. And there we were eating away. Me talking, more than eating. I prefer talking to eating. That's why I love radio more than anything else. At one moment, I noticed he was looking. I don't know if he was looking at a woman. His eyes were not making contact, and I said, "I have the impression that what I'm saying really doesn't interest you. Maybe we should just eat and forget about this. I came as a duty."

Q: What were you telling him?

NORTON: I don't know what it was I was telling him, but something like this. Basically my spiel for all incoming diplomats was, "Consider the country. You are going through the looking glass. These are the rules. They are not our rules. You got a different kind of people with different relations from the ones we are familiar with. It is, however, possible to establish democracy on this basis if, if, if..." Basically it was that with examples drawn from the particular crisis of the moment. I gave you one when the negotiation was under way. Haitians do not negotiate. They kill. I don't agree with you. Boom. Or they slander you or they defame you. I suffered that.

Q: So the DCM said what?

NORTON: I said, "Look, so why don't we just eat. I mean, I came here as a duty." And that's true – a duty. I didn't believe it. I never believed that whatever I said to dozens of diplomats and foreign visitors and State Department officials would ever do any good. I never believed it, but God, I tried. I tried to be convincing. I tried to be circumstantial. I tried to be precise and logical and coherent. I think I was. I think I was. "Don't you think," I asked the DCM of the day eating his soup of the day, "Don't you think it's important to understand a situation if you want to act in it and on it?" And he said, over his soupe du jour, "No. I have a mission."

For some reason, I didn't stop talking to diplomats after that. I should have. No, I shouldn't have. No. I kept on. I kept on doing it because I did sharpen my analytical skills. And my spiel became better and better and better as the months and the years wore on. I think I became more and more convincing. I mean, foreign Aristide observers were somewhat shaken up when they met me. Because I was supposed to be, according to the more idiotic of my critics, the "embedded shill" of the American embassy. That's nice.

Q: Many journalists came to Haiti knowing much less than you did, and their first stop is to you.

NORTON: Yah.

Q: Why did you share all of your information with them?

NORTON: Every bit of information, everything I had and some I couldn't use because of security reasons – I gave everything to everybody because I was not in the business of journalism. Journalism was not my profession. I was busy being a hero. I was on an extraordinary adventure,

and my goal was to contribute a little bit to the betterment of a people I loved. That's all. I turned out to be a pretty good journalist, I think. I was, I think, an extraordinary journalist. A remarkable journalist. But I didn't give a damn about it, and so I don't miss it at all. I cared about Haiti, did and still do, without missing it.

When I left Haiti, I became an editor at the central desk. I hated it – hated every minute of it. It's not reporting. An edited AP story is as formal as a sonnet, in length and obligatory elements, like personalization and points of view that neutralize each other and produce what is called objectivity. I did reporting in Aruba, but you see, from the sublime to the ridiculous, I covered the Natalie Holloway case. You know about Natalie Holloway because I wrote about her. Well, the television coverage was overwhelming, but so far as the printed media, I was on top of it first. And I stayed on top of it. I was a pretty good reporter, but I didn't care. I didn't have a profession. I am somebody who will die without having had a profession. I have a vocation. I'm a poet. That's what I've never been unfaithful to. I've never gone without a day writing for forty years. Thinking, writing, dreaming, misunderstanding, being confused, revising – all of those things that make writing such an adventure.

I was profoundly committed to the Haitian adventure because it was my adventure in my imagination. Because it was up from slavery. Because I identified with the Hebrews who left Egypt behind and wandered, or were led to Mt. Sinai and then were found unworthy of the tablets of the law and then were forced to wander in the desert until they came to the land flowing in milk and honey.

And then the horror of history. But I told Ambassador Curran when I first met him – I think he misunderstood me – that there are two books that he should read if he wants to understand Haiti: one is Alice in Wonderland, and the other is Exodus (not the popular novel by Leon Uris, but Exodus in the Bible). There you have a portrait of a slave revolution, and the lessons are clear: if you do not obey the law, if you do not shape up, if you do not break off all relations with those who enslaved you, if you do not exteriorize your interiorized servitude and desire to dominate, if you are not literate, if you do not learn how to read (because, to be a member of the community, a man must come to the Torah and must be able to read that part of the Haftorah or he is not a member of the community fully), if you do not follow the law, if you do not break with the past, if you do not remember fully that you were slaves in Egypt, and therefore open your hearts to those who were slaves and are slaves, you will not enter the land flowing with milk and honey. You will wander in the desert.

Now Haiti has turned into a desert as the Haitian people have wandered. Its leaders were not of the caliber of Moses. They didn't respect the law. They didn't become literate. They didn't cut that terrible link with the master. The leaders continued – not only the leaders, it goes all the way down to the Vodou priest who, to cure an ill for a woman, forces her to have intercourse – it goes all the way down. If you don't stop imitating the master, you will never be free. What was the title of that book, now? By the French Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Difficult Liberty.

Difficult liberty. Eh? I believe that firmly. Everything for me in my life came together in Haiti: my love for this extraordinary woman, my belief in the capacity of people to become better, my admiration of the Haitian people – their courage, their intelligence, Ulysses-like intelligence,

their Constitutionalism - and my attachment to the fundamental myths of the Jewish tradition, to get a move on and go. There's a bright future, but you've got to move. You've got to move. You can't stay still. And that becomes concrete when it means moving out of slavery towards the land of liberty. That's Haiti for me. I lived that day and night for twenty years, more.

Q: This is the end of the second recording of Dan Whitman, Mike Norton. Puerto Rico. The 7th of September 2007.

This is tape number three – Dan Whitman interviewing Mike Norton in Puerto Rico. It's the 7th of September. Mike, can we start with some comments of the role of the U.S. government in the U.S. embassy? We're talking about Haiti now. They got, perhaps, some things right, some things wrong. They missed some cues. Were they helpful or harmful by their presence? Tell me your perceptions of that.

NORTON: I think that the earlier history of the United States' involvement in the Caribbean continued into the last parts of the twentieth century. One doesn't escape history. The past is in front of us. The United States, as I mentioned already, saw Haitian independence at the end of the eighteenth century as a threat – a threat to its own slave-holding institution. Haiti was, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a sort of Cuba of the twentieth century. It had imperial ambitions to free the slaves and conquer territory and wealth. In 1822, President Boyer conquered the eastern two-thirds of the island – what is now known as the Dominican Republic. And so on and so forth.

The Haitian government, in order to obtain recognition from France and access to certain ports of trade, agreed to pay indemnities to the slaveholders and plantation owners who had lost their properties during the revolutionary war, and that cost the Haitian treasury a great deal up until the twentieth century. We don't know exactly when the last tax on coffee was paid to the French. The international community was hostile to this black community. I don't think we realize at this time the crudeness of racism in the nineteenth century. These were people who had defeated the colonial army of France, and they were nothing but savages from Africa. Actually, they weren't savages from Africa. They were savages from the Caribbean, and that attitude of savages in our backyard continued. The United States did not recognize Haiti's independence until, I believe, after the Civil War with Frederick Douglass, the first ambassador. But the hostility, the wariness, continued on. And arrogance.

Haiti was unable to enter the modern world because of its own militarized society, because of its own incapacity, the incapacity of its leaders to seize the main chance and become a nation like other nations. This due, obviously, to the terrible traumatism of slavery and its isolation. The United States saw the opportunity to put order into Haiti as it did in other countries – the Caribbean and Central America – in the first quarter of the twentieth century. And in 1915, the Marines landed and seized hold of Haiti for nineteen years.

The assessment of the United States' heritage in Haiti is double. It's ambiguous. On the one hand, they built government buildings that, to this day, house the government offices in downtown Port-au-Prince. They built the National Palace – large scale, to say the least. And other buildings. They began to build modernized roads. Of course, the revolt against American occupation cost

the Haitians thousands of lives. There were forced road gangs. They helped build those roads. A sort of forced modernization developed. Forced modernization. We've seen similar things in Russia and in China, haven't we? In a certain sense, even in the United States. After all, what is slave labor? And the labor of the Chinese in laying the Trans-Continental Railroad. Signs of the times.

In any case, the modernization was also an opportunity for a new Haitian ruling class to develop a new nationalism in face of this neighbor that treated it with arrogance. And it left behind, the United States did, a watchdog. It's called the Haitian Army. The Haitian Army that was trained on the principles of the Marine Corps. The United States also, since the U.S. occupying forces were to a large extent from the south and this was the south of apartheid, privileged the lighter skinned Haitian bureaucrats and instilled or reinforced the black versus mulatto racism that would explode virulently after other troubles. François "Papa Doc" Duvalier took power in 1957.

It's a long history that the United States accepted François "Papa Doc" Duvalier because there was Castro. They made peace with this man, with this dictator, because they didn't want to make peace with the other dictator. To each his own son of a bitch. And the United States' choice of sons of a bitches was "Papa Doc" Duvalier, and he held the fort. I believe that Haiti cast the deciding vote in the expulsion of Cuba from the organization of American States.

The United States accepted François "Papa Doc" Duvalier because there was Castro. Again, the thread through all of this is a certain selectiveness in what constitutes a credible informant. It doesn't necessarily have to be the mulattos as it was in the 1920's and '30's and let the devil take the hindmost. But a certain selectiveness in what constitutes a credible informant. Obviously, the credible informants for Washington were those that owed the most to Washington. That's one thing.

A pugnaciousness and impatience in relations. That continued. And a certain tendency toward exclusion. The best thing that could happen to Haiti with respect to the United States is that it disappear. It disappear. The boat people problem, of course, is another problem related to everything I have been saying. The economy of Haiti floundered and was less and less able to keep the Haitian people fed.

Many Haitians did become American residents and citizens, and this somewhat moderated, gave a somewhat narrower margin of maneuver, I believe, to American arrogance toward Haiti. I think the development of the Black Caucus in the U.S. Congress also put a limit on what you might call the natural tendency of American foreign policy to treat Haiti as though it were a bug that has appeared after a rock has been thoughtlessly removed. So, the problem, basically, for American foreign policy is, how to put the rock back on top of the bug. I think that just about sums it up. There's a bug, and there's a rock, and how do we get the rock back onto the bug. It's a mindset.

My idea is that there is no threat. Haiti will not threaten stability in the United States' south. Slavery no longer exists, I think. In fact, perhaps not in mind, the Black Caucus doesn't need Haiti to defend its people. There's no threat there. There's no internal threat. Haiti does not threaten the United States. The boat people. Well, when Clinton misled the Haitian people and

more or less said, "Come to the United States," and tens of thousands of them did. That was a mistake of Clinton, and that was easily righted, corrected. There are a couple thousand boat people. They keep on going. They have been going, leaving Haiti, since the beginning of the twentieth century, at first to Cuba and to the United States later on. It's normal, and it's easily contained. The bug can be put back under the rock with no problem since the U.S. Coast Guard is patrolling with great efficiency the waters.

And then those who aren't picked up drown at sea. We don't know exactly how many do make it to Florida, but I don't believe it will be necessary to seed the Florida waters with sharks. The immigration authorities have their walls to build in the southwest. They don't have to seed the waters of Florida with sharks to prevent the Haitians from coming. Those who do come legally, and about eighteen thousand do come – family members – per year, quite a considerable population come to the United States legally because of family arrangements. It's a growing community.

I think that once the Haitian population gets its act together, as I already mentioned, some things could happen. Maybe the United States foreign policy will treat Haiti with more respect. I say more respect because, as I already mentioned, I believe as soon as I reached Haiti in 1986 and saw that the categories my American friends were using to understand Haiti were completely irrelevant. When I saw the enormous hope that Haitians had – hope based upon trading, free enterprise, small businessmen – Haitians are in the Haitian mode very individualistic. They don't like the state. They fled the state because the state, in their mind, is repressive. And, in fact, is repressive. They don't want to have anything to do with collectivization or any of that stuff. There was no way to understand Haiti in that sense. There was no way to understand Haiti, either, as a conflict, as a class struggle, since the bourgeoisie was basically import/export, mercantile. It was not a productive bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie had a lot of money, but there weren't that many of them – a couple hundred families. A couple hundred millionaires in a country of eight million. The biggest fortune in Haiti is about \$40 million, not much in the modern world. In the U.S., the top one per cent owns as much as the bottom 90 per cent.

Basically, the peasantry was in disaggregation. You don't have class struggle between classes that are being declassed. So that's the end of that. The peasantry is not going to descend upon the capital and set up a Peasant People's Republic. You have to think about Haiti in different terms. And, well, if Haitians didn't have the terms, I guess you can't fault Americans for not thinking Haiti through. Too bad, but I don't think the United States had the credible informants to tell them what, to me, was so obvious.

Altruism, acting outside of the view that boxes you into your world. Think Haiti in terms of Haiti's needs and not in terms of the United States' geopolitical needs. In the short term and in the long run, the United States will benefit from the security of the Caribbean. Communist Cuba, have faith in your own system, will not last forever. That's obvious. Not because of the social benefits. People will not cease being communist in Cuba because they no longer are educated and have health care, but because of the one party system, because it's a police state and people don't like that. People have this tendency to express themselves, to communicate, and this is a world in which people can talk instantly to their neighbors on the opposite side of the world. The

Cuban police state will collapse in due time, so take it easy, man. Take it easy, man. Pay attention to the case in point.

It would have been possible in 1986 and became more and more possible as time went on because Haiti did kind of launch itself into view. It had been under control by the Duvaliers for a long time as part of one of the bulwarks in the Cold War, and then suddenly the Haitian people, as I already said, popped out of Pandora's box and claimed what? Well, what somebody in Minnesota would clamor for. What somebody in Cleveland, Ohio, somebody in Topeka, Poughkeepsie, Tampa, Portland, Lord knows where, Santa Monica, Hollywood, too. Give us a chance. We want to work. We want to make a life for ourselves and our children. We don't want a repressive government. We want people who will represent us and who will be answerable to us for their deeds. Help us to develop our country. We've got a special problem here. We've got a problem of a country turning into a desert. An enormous peasant population that doesn't have the means to convert land into a productive instrument. We have many communities outside main population centers, and they're dying.

There are projects which may not require such a heavy outlay which may not bring so much profit to construction companies who come down from Canada, the United States, from who knows where, France built roads, to build asphalt roads. Just to give you an example, asphalt roads last about three years and take about twenty years to pay for. I'm not an accountant. That doesn't seem to make much sense to me. To build asphalt roads in a tropical climate. It's been going on for years. Corruption. Haiti is said to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world. I don't quite get that. Sure, government officials are corrupt, but there isn't that much money to steal. It's a small, poor country. The Haitian bourgeoisie, which in the press is generally characterized as monstrously indifferent to the country, as flowing with milk and honey, has reached the Promised Land behind its barricades in its fortresses in the lush, upscale suburb of Pétionville—that is nonsense. The Haitian bourgeoisie is poor, poor, poor because wealth is not money in the bank.

There's no place to go where you can feel safe in Haiti. There's no river that you can walk along holding hands with your girlfriend. There are no outdoor cafes. I was in Paris. I was "dirt poor." Sometimes Toto and I, we spent a couple days eating popcorn. We were the wealthiest couple on earth. Not just because of our own particular happiness, you know? We lived in Paris, on Paris, because you had access to galleries. You had access to lovely parks. You could do a hundred things and not spend a cent. You bought a card and you took a bus and bused it all month.

What can you do in Haiti? You can live in your fancy house, and then, on the weekends, drive on these horrible roads. A number of my friends, rich and poor, died on those roads because of car accidents – terrible, terrible car accidents. You go to your seaside house and you jump into the water. And then what? You come back and... poor, poor, poor. The university is poor, poor, poor. The schools – there are a couple of good schools that cost a lot of money – but how do you get your kid to school? You need a convoy, Humvees, to get your kid to school safe?

And then there's the odor, the stench. What about smelling the fresh air in spring? Minnesota's spring has made me the wealthiest person on earth. For all my life, I just close my eyes and remember the smell of spring. That's wealth. You're poor in Haiti. Everybody is poor, poor, poor

in Haiti. Pétionville, which is a suburb, a hillside suburb outside of the capital, appears to the unpeeled eye to be relatively wealthy. There are stores, there are restaurants. Some houses are visible.

Of course, I remember when Aristide was running for president in 1991 and he came to Pétionville, and the poor people of Pétionville came out to greet him. They came out of these ravines. You see, there are no residential sections in Haiti. It's not like other Latin-American countries. There's no privileged section. You have a beautiful, big house and it's sitting in a slum. And the people who work in your house are slum dwellers, so you are in osmosis even behind your thick walls. Tens of thousands, the majority of the people in upscale Pétionville, are poor and live in shanties. You just don't see them, and you don't see them because you don't look. And there's nobody there, and I'm talking about the foreign visitors, to tell you. Well, that's not quite true. There are a lot of people doing good deeds. A lot of NGO's, a lot of missionaries, but that doesn't really affect American foreign policy. Poverty in Haiti is not rife. Poverty in Haiti is *universal*.

Q: You stated earlier what you thought was the aspiration of the typical Haitian similar to the person in Santa Monica, Topeka, Poughkeepsie, to give them a chance, allow them to function, assure that the government is not oppressing their wishes. This is pretty close to the stated policy of the U.S. government for Haiti. Where is the discrepancy between word and deed?

NORTON: The discrepancy is the urgency of the moment. You have to formulate policy and you formulate policy not with reference to principle but with reference to interest. What has happened to the American Constitution? Today in the United States, internal insecurity – insecurity that comes from real threats – exaggerated, manipulated; but structural insecurity in the United States is fundamentally job insecurity, unemployment, the threat of losing your job in a fast-changing world, of not being able to keep up and of not being able to send your kids to college and of not being able to make your payments on the house and of not having health insurance. And, if you don't do what you're supposed to do, the punishment is severe. You lose your house and you lose a roof. You get sick and you die and suffer. You can't send your kids to college, you've got your kids' ignorance on your hands.

Okay, that is the fact, and yet life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and all of those principles, there are reasons why the insecurity in the United States is increasing. It doesn't have anything to do with the Constitution. It has to do with policy which in the United States is based upon corporate interest. Corporate interest is not really 100% equivalent to checks and balances, is it? It's something else. It's called the economy. And the kings of the economy are not the subjects of a democracy. The United States is a plutocracy.

Q: So you're talking about principles of the U.S. Constitution that do not filter through to the daily lives on the micro level?

NORTON: No, they can't because something else is at stake. There is an Overt State, law-respecting if not law-abiding, there is a Covert State whose agents act outside the law. The State is schizoid. The tension in the democratic empire between the Republic and the Empire is not creative, it is a fatal flaw.

Q: If that's the way you see it, translate, if you would, that concept to the level of the U.S. government and Haiti.

NORTON; The problem for the U.S. in Haiti and elsewhere is how to act outside of your borders. You don't have to deal with the rest of the world on an equal footing. The Constitution is disabled. There is a U.N. Charter now for human rights. People pay lip service to it, but there are other considerations. The consideration for Haiti is geopolitical stability, and the only way that unimaginative Americans, fed/nourished by a century of 150 years or so of arrogance and ignorance and racism and what have you, is to put the rock back on the bug.

Q: You were there for eighteen years. Looking back at it, do you feel that this was a consistent explanation that reveals what the U.S. government was doing during those eighteen years? Were there ups and downs? Were there individual cases of moments of perception or moments of ignorance? Can you break this down into the details?

NORTON: Let me explain this to you. I'm not talking to you about individuals. I may have mentioned it to you already. I found several of the ambassadors with whom I had contact to be extremely intelligent people. I think they understood or could have understood. They may have disagreed with me. I know that at the end when the problem of negotiating a settlement with Aristide and the rest of civil society became the object of American foreign policy, and an article of faith. Keep the rock on the bug meant get people to agree and at least have a façade of democracy.

I think that the diplomats, many of them, believed that it was possible. I never did. And so there were differences of opinion, but those differences were honest differences of evaluation. So I don't want to talk about individuals... There were some pretty stupid ones. I think I mentioned the case of the DCM who was on a bombing mission to North Vietnam. Some of them. There were hundreds of people working with the U.S. embassy, and I think you wouldn't even have to say that seven thousand missionaries were satellites of the embassy, too. Of course, many of them were selfless and many of them were not. I'm talking about the missionaries. Many were out to save their souls, the souls of the heathen, without having the slightest idea of what the soul was of Haitians. Many of them wanted to do good deeds but not leave the means to do good deeds in the hands of the Haitians. But that's not the point. The point is this, I'll give you in an anecdote.

Two State Department officials come to Haiti. Were they on the Haiti desk? I don't know where they were, but they were important enough to link up with me. Two of them. And they came and they sat down. I forget exactly when it was, but late on, though not all the way to the end when it really became apparent that no agreement was possible and that the only way to get on with the show would be to get rid of Aristide. The general questions, and I gave my usual spiel. And Aristide came up. I gave my character profile of the man which was incidentally, and we can come back to this subject, absolutely in contradiction to the New York Times profile of Aristide that was written when he came back to power – a puff piece if I've ever seen one. Obviously ordered up because the reporter was a good reporter, but he was ignorant and he was told, I suppose, to present Aristide as someone who had learned his lesson, who would keep his mouth

shut, who wouldn't insult the Pope, he wouldn't call on people to scalp the bourgeoisie or do other horrible things. He was a changed man.

End of reader