

Excerpts from the India Country Reader

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INDIA

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Henry Byroade	1941-1944	U.S. Army Officer, India
G. Eugene Martin	1943-1956	Childhood, India
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Richard McKee	1969-1974	Staff Aide, New Delhi
Donald M. Anderson	1970-1972	Political Officer, New Delhi
James H. Bahti	1970-1972	Political/Economic Officer, Bombay

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Albert A. Thibault, Jr.	1975-1978	Political Officer, New Delhi
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Lawrence Cohen	1989-1991	Political/Economic Consul, Madras
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Dean Rust	1999-2005	Director, Nuclear Proliferation Bureau, Washington, DC

DON CARROLL BLISS, JR
Assistant Trade Officer
Bombay (1924-1926)

Ambassador Bliss was born in Michigan and educated at Dartmouth College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1923, specializing primarily in the Commercial and Economic fields. During his long and distinguished career, the Ambassador served in Tokyo, Bombay, Batavia, Alexandria, Singapore, Prague, Bangkok, Athens, Cairo, Paris, Calcutta, London, Ottawa and Addis Ababa, where he was U.S. Ambassador from 1957 to 1960.

BLISS: When you arrived at a new post fifty years ago, this time in January of 1925, this time in Bombay, you took a room in the best hotel, this time in the Taj Mahal, and then asked everyone you met how and where to settle in for the duration. The hotel wasn't bad if you liked Victorian mahogany, chintz and rattan, pink gins and chota pegs, Mulligatawny soup and lamb curry, but it was rather expensive for a junior officer and I kept on asking.

In due course I put the question to a couple of young Americans who shared a flat on the Cooperage, only ten minutes on foot from the hotel, twenty or so from the office, and very soon they invited me to dinner. It was a matter of mutual inspection as we sat on the verandah in the cool of the evening, and next day John took the plunge. Would I like to join them in a three-man bachelor mess, share and share alike? I would indeed, and promptly checked out of the Taj.

My two mess-mates, I soon learned, were juniors in the Bombay office of American Express, that combination of travel agent and banker which was busily seducing American and other tourists away from Thos. Cook. John was of Irish extraction, quiet-spoken for one of his race but far from humorless. He was not a big man physically but our senior by some years and consequently our leader in most things. (He ended up a Vice President of the company.) His mess-mate was a tall, sallow, rather colorless Virginian christened F. Glasgow Clark. He was so proud of his middle name and his relationship to novelist Ellen Glasgow that we perversely called his "Oscar" for no other reason than that. Oscar kept the books and managed the household, his only weakness being a passion for banana ice-cream produced in the kitchen. Almost every night, it seemed, we had banana ice-cream for dessert, but when John or I protested, suggesting mango ice-cream for a change, Oscar would instantly put us out of countenance. If anyone didn't like banana ice-cream he could manage the house himself; Oscar would be happy to turn over his stewardship.

In those days every household maintained in India by the master race was awash with servants. Each of us had a "bearer" to tidy his room, shine his shoes, keep his clothes in order, draw his bath, hold his shirt for him, help him into his pants and shoes, accompany him on his travels. My bearer was a sturdy dark-skinned man from Goa, recruited by asking the others to find one for

me and hired because his chits (references) were good. He had been trained by British officers who found him invaluable at home and on hunting trips. His name was George, he said.

At least one of the three bearers was always available to wait at table, bring drinks, dump ashtrays, run errands, or do anything else required of him at any time of day or night. They slept somewhere, perhaps on the kitchen floor like the servants who guarded master or mistress in the hotel by sleeping across the door-still on a mat in the corridor. The cook did the marketing in the bazaar, returning home in a loaded rickshaw, a cake of ice slung from the axle. He furnished Oscar with a weirdly spelled account of his expenditures, by immemorial custom withholding its traditional commission of one anna in the rupee. (There are 16 annas in the rupee.) He was assisted by an apprentice who paid him for the privilege and would be a cook himself one day. A sweeper and a *mali* (gardener) were also on the roster, although only Oscar ever saw them. The sweeper scrubbed, swept and polished during the day and the *mali* kept us supplied with fresh flowers, never mind where he got them. Finally the *dhobi* came to take away a mountain of soiled white drill suits, personal linen and household linen, all returned in a day or two clean, bleached in the sun, and carefully ironed.

It was a simply but adequately furnished two-bedroom flat, the dining-room converted into a third bedroom for me, and we ate in the drawing-room. Double doors opened on a deep verandah and that was where we spent most of our time at home. The place was quite airy with fresh breezes off the sea and we didn't suffer too much from the heat. We slept under mosquito-nets, of course, and in the evening a spiral of green Japanese punk burning under one's chair also discouraged mosquitoes, but not completely. In the end we all got malaria, mosquito-born from the street. We never got dysentery, however; Oscar insisted that all ray fruits and vegetables be soaked for fifteen minutes in the "red water" of mercurochrome tablet. If any of us got dysentery the cook would be fired.

Our verandah faced the west, overlooking the dusty park known as the Cooperage. Dotted with coconut palms and clumps of shrubbery, the park boasted a bandstand where crowds of natives gathered for weekly concerts provided by the Municipality, and beyond a line of palms Malabar Hill rose above the waters of the Back Bay. From a distance Malabar was a mass of foliage through which peeped the white facades and red tile roofs of Lord Brabourne's Government House and the spacious villas of native potentates and wealthy merchants. Just perceptible were the Towers of Silence where the Parsees, unwilling to defile earth or water or fire, exposed their dead to the vultures perched on the encircling wall, waiting for the next litter-borne corpse followed to the door by silent white-clad mourners. Inside, priests split skulls and broke arm and leg bones to facilitate the cleansing process; any bits of bone the vultures left were cast down a deep well.

Malabar Hill was also the scene of a crime which caused a great scandal and provided the Times of India with material for many a column as the story unfolded. To begin with, a Bombay businessman had been waylaid and murdered as he drove along the broad highway slanting up the hill. The attackers sought to escape in a motorcar but were soon apprehended by the police; there were eye-witnesses and the fate of the criminals was sealed. There was more to it than that, however. The murderers were identified as retainers of the Maharajah of Indore and it soon became clear that their lord and master had sent them to mete out princely justice on a man who

had abducted a girl from the royal harem and was living with her in Bombay City. Under British law the Maharajah was just as guilty of murder as his henchmen, but the police couldn't touch him, the hereditary ruler of a princely state, completely independent of the British Raj and even entitled to a 19-gun salute from the armed forces. In Indore his power was absolute; he was above any law but his own whim. A crime committed on territory subject to British law and British notions of justice was, however, something else again. Punishment was clearly due, but how to enforce it was the problem, and controversy raged for weeks. The issue was finally resolved when Indore was summoned, before the Council of Princes, tried and found guilty by his peers and required by them to abdicate.

It was unthinkable that a young man living in Bombay didn't belong to at least one club. The stuffy old Bombay Club was out of the question but an American junior officer could belong to the Gymkhana; it welcomed all young white males except "counter-jumpers" employed in retail establishments. The Gymkhana occupied an open space of green turf in the heart of the European section; one leg of the all-India cricket tournament was staged there, as well as an annual "gymkhana" of tent-pegging, jousting at the ring and other equestrian sporting events. Its shady verandah was a good place to meet for *tiffin* (lunch or light meal) or to congregate with friends in the evening before going on to dinner.

The Bombay Yacht Club was more select, a haven for sailors and oarsmen, and its terrace looking out over the waters of the harbor was a delightful place on which to linger with a gimlet, that pleasing concoction of gin and Rose's lime juice. Once upon a time, according to well-established legend, the Viceroy of India, down from New Delhi, repaired to the Yacht Club with a local maharajah to sit on that terrace and was promptly accosted by the club secretary. It was a strict rule, the secretary said, that no person of color could enter the club's premises except in the capacity of servant. As a result Lord Willingdon recruited a group of wealthy Parsees, Hindus and Moslems to organize the Willingdon Club, a dream of a country club on the edge of town, complete with golf course, tennis courts, swimming pool., and what have you, centered on a marble pavilion where the best food and drink in all India were to be had. Completely free of racial prejudice, the Club even admitted white members who could afford it. For us it was a treat to be invited to the Willingdon Club for a dinner-dance.

We were by no means wholly dependent on clubs for our social life, however. As is often the case with foreigners in a large community we tended to clot into a social group, ours being mostly but not exclusively American, and the Cooperage mess was part of it. Twenty-five or thirty of us were constantly in each other's company in a shifting pattern of dinners for eight and two tables of bridge, picnics at Juhu Beach, tea-dances at the Taj Mahal, Saturday afternoons at the magnificent Bombay race course. We were all in our twenties, bachelors and young married couples, not a single girl in the lot.

Most of the men in our self-centered little social group were the Bombay representatives of American companies, responsible for developing business in western India, and they were often away on trips of some duration. This left footloose young wives, several of them at any given time, ready and willing to be amused. In the course of human events each such abandoned wife was often seen with a particular bachelor at dances or dinner parties and this kind of pairing-off was an understood thing. The husbands seemed reconciled, perhaps out of necessity, and for the

most part there was no great harm in it; when her man returned the wife would usually be telling him all.

But not necessarily. There was a story around that young Terry dropped in for a drink with Doris and in the drawing-room was surprised to find her husband unexpectedly back in town; on the table beside him lay the automatic he usually carried with him on his trips upcountry. Terry turned and fled incontinent. Guilty conscience, the tongue-waggers concluded. And there was the time when John and his boss's wife strolled into the dark from a dance at the Willingdon Club. The lady did not return and when John came into the light it was seen that the knees of his white trousers bore fresh green grass stains. This phenomenon was studiously ignored by all, including John, but he sat down rather quickly and soon went home. Nothing was ever said about this, in the mess or anywhere else.

Soon thereafter, perhaps because of this, the Cooperage mess joined the sartorial revolution which was developing. We in Bombay had scorned for some time the long-established Calcutta fashion in evening dress, slavishly copied in other cities, which combined white drill trousers with a black alpaca jacket. We thought it unattractive and impractical, especially because white drill trousers are instantly wrinkled and soon soiled, while alpaca jackets seemed more appropriate for office than evening wear. We therefore reversed the order, topping our black tropical-weight trousers with white sharkskin jackets. This was such an improvement that the new fashion caught on quickly and soon spread even to Calcutta.

The Cooperage cavaliers also developed for themselves what we called the "chit system" to mitigate the shortage of feminine society. We were particularly well equipped for this, I with colleagues at posts along the China Coast and in the Indies, the American Express boys with a far-flung network for trapping tourists. When an attractive young lady entered the system anywhere she would be picked up by one of the lads, suitably entertained, and assured that she would be well looked after at her next port of call. Thus a chit would arrive in Bombay giving the necessary particulars and we would reciprocate with similar chits covering eastbound travelers. It worked like a charm and helped to keep everyone happy.

Then came a bonanza to put all this in the shade. The Denishawn dance company arrived from California for an engagement in Bombay; they ended by touring India for three months. Until then we hadn't realized how starved for theater we were. An Italian opera company toured India annually, a magician in Chinese dress came to put on a one-man show, the Amateur Dramatic Society struggled through an occasional polite comedy, and that was literally all the theater we had, other than the aptly named "flicks" peddled by Hollywood. Now there was something we Americans could be proud of, and we were all stage-struck in varying degrees.

Ruth St. Denis, we came to understand, was an Irish girl from Hoboken who had become one of the pioneers of modern dance, breaking new ground as dancer and choreographer. Some years before she had teamed up with Ted Shawn – they were now married – to organize a dance group in California. Martha Graham had joined them after her early experience as a Spanish dancer in the "Follies" but soon left to embark on her own dazzling career. There was no lack of talent still in the company, however; Charles Weidman and Doris Humphrey were there and would later become stars in their own right, while Ted would end up with his young men at Jacob's Pillow

after path retired. For us just then the important thing was the arrival in our midst of a dozen lovely, talented, well-mannered young things. One and all they adored "Miss Ruth," they were dedicated to their art, and they worked very, very hard. Not too much time for play, therefore, and anyway June Rhodes, the little blonde dynamo who functioned as general manager, kept a careful eye on the girls. She fended off prowlers, but for some reason had a soft spot for By Wrigley and me; we were privileged to go backstage at will and we watched many a performance from the wings. It was also acceptable to take a girl to a tea-dance if there were no rehearsals, organize a swim and picnic at Juhu Beach, see her to the hotel after the show without too much loitering on the way. We were assiduous with flowers and even more practical help, as on the occasion in New Delhi when the company arrived late from Madras after a hot and dusty train journey. Only an hour to curtain-time and the show must go on. So By and I dashed to the Cecil Hotel to commandeer two waiters with cold drinks and enormous trays of sandwiches; the girls were near to tears with gratitude.

The Denishawn repertoire was eclectic, including such contrasting numbers as a lively country dance in which the youngsters pranced joyously, or Ruth alone on the stage floating to the melody of the Liebestraum waltz, or Ted displaying his muscles as a living statue or creating the illusion of a gold-crowned, many-armed Siva. For this tour Ruth had devised a number of Indian dances and a knowledgeable Indian woman told us that every movement, every pose, every gesture was an accurate rendition of a fragment borrowed from the sacred dances presented in South Indian temples. The most famous of these for us was the "Dance of the Black and Gold Sari" in which Ruth came on the stage to a tinkling little tune, bearing on her arms a rolled-up black and gold sari; kneeling front center she bowed to the audience in a deep salaam, then rose and with graceful little dance steps unrolled the sari, twisting it around her hips and tucking in the folds with clever fingers, exactly as an Indian woman does when dressing. When she reached the climax and brought the end of the sari over her head the Indian audience burst into spontaneous applause and the galleries shrieked and whistled, demanding an encore. She never did that little dance without being compelled to repeat it three times.

When the company came back to Bombay for its last repeat engagement we gave them all a party, presenting parodies of their program to the extent feasible. Wrigley, in black-face and union suit dyed black, posed on a box as a living statue while Peggy Wills played soulful music on the piano. But when she broke into an Irish jig he hopped down and did a creditable soft-shoe dance as the youngsters giggled and Ted applauded with a strained smile. It was John who brought the house down with the "Dance of the Red and White Sari." Dressed in his underwear he came on our improvised stage clasping a roll of cheap bazaar cottons stitched end to end and made a spectacular entrance when, being a little drunk, he tripped and fell flat on his face. He picked himself up, and with Peggy vamping the little tune John proceeded with his dance, winding yards and yards of cloth around himself, getting thoroughly entangled, and finally collapsing in a heap amid shrieks of laughter from the whole company, not least from Ruth herself.

Life for bachelors in Bombay was not all fun and games, of course. Most of our days we labored in offices to earn our modest salaries in a manner no better and no worse than anywhere else. For many of us, however, this was not all and from time to time we had to go on the road to the cities of western India regarded as Bombay territory, to great cities like Cawnpore, Lucknow, Lahore,

Delhi and Agra, or to smaller centers in between. For a young man this was often exciting; after his business was done he could visit all the wonderful places described in tourist guides. There was a price to pay, however. Distances were vast, travel was necessarily by rail, and that meant acute discomfort.

The British were justifiably proud of the extensive railway network they had constructed in the nineteenth century, and indeed it had contributed greatly to the economic development of India, but in 1925 its rolling-stock, apparently designed in the days of a young Queen Victoria, was not only obsolescent, it was worn out. Locomotives belched soft-coal smoke and cinders, the third-class carriages jam-packed with natives were still much as described by Kipling, while the sleeping-cars for the elite were divided into compartments accessible only from a station platform. To get a meal passengers had to climb out during a stop at a way-station, push through the milling crowd on the platform, and climb aboard the dining-car, returning at the next stop by the same route in reverse. Fortunately the stops were long, twenty minutes or so, and there was no need to hurry.

Arrayed for travel in khaki shirt and shorts topped by the khaki pith helmet characteristic of Bombay (in Calcutta they were white) I would arrive at Central Station with George shepherding the baggage coolies to a four-berth compartment. The baggage included a bedding-roll hired from American Express containing a thin mattress, a blanket, dingy sheets and a limp pillow, a cotton towel or two. George would make up my bed on one of the berths and then withdraw with his own little bundle to a cramped cubicle for servants at one end of the car, whence he would emerge whenever the train stopped, to loiter within call on the station platform. He was there to fetch from the dining-car cold drinks or hot water for my ablutions, to pack and unpack the bedding-roll, to guard my possessions when I was away in the dining-car. No one travelled without a bearer.

The so-called berths were really hard benches upholstered in a kind of black imitation leather, one above another on each side of the compartment, and the uppers could be hauled up out of the way. A small tap yielded tepid drinking water next to a door leading to a minuscule wash-room and toilet. Open windows were screened, shades could be pulled down on the sunny side, and electric fans in the corners of the ceiling could be turned on to stir the air. They also stirred the dust and cinders that leaked through rattling doors and windows and swirled across the linoleum floor. In hot weather, it was said, one could close the windows, place a cake of ice in a tin tub on the floor and direct the fans on it. That was the theory anyway; something to think about.

If a man had a compartment to himself he was lucky, or perhaps he had bribed, the guard to ticket it as full. Otherwise the discomfort increased in geometric ratio as additional passengers intruded with their baggage and sleep might be disturbed in the middle of the night when a passenger sought to board the train at an upcountry station and the guard and he raced along the cars, banging on doors and demanding entrance. A generous man would open up; a selfish one would keep quiet behind his locked door and wait for them to go away.

With all this in mind I was not looking forward to my next trip to Delhi when an exciting alternative presented itself. Sitting at table in the Gymkhana we were listening to Larry Kent's exuberant account of his plans for a publicity stunt to put his Graham-Paige automobiles on the

map in India. He was going to stage a non-stop run from Bombay to Delhi, a thousand miles away, something no one had ever done before. The roads would be primitive, of course, but passable in dry weather and the rains were months away; most of the rivers to be crossed were unbridged but there were ferries; he knew where he could get petrol and oil; he had mapped the most practicable route. To make the trip non-stop, he said, would require three drivers to take it in turns, say in two-hour shifts, since the going might be rough, and two men would be functioning while the third could sleep. How about it? Would any of us like to make the trip with him? The big redhead's enthusiasm was contagious and two of us volunteered forthwith. Pres Wills was manager of Dupont's office in Bombay and could do as he liked. As an American official I was in a more vulnerable position. What would Washington say? What would the local firms representing Ford or General Motors have to say about any activity on my part for the benefit of a competitor? It was agreed, therefore, that my participation would be strictly anonymous and above all that my name would not be used in any publicity.

The sun was setting in a cloudless sky beyond Malabar Hill as we assembled on the Cooperage for this venture into the unknown. We were all in khaki traveling kit and everything else was in the baggage sent ahead by rail with George and the other bearers to wait for us in the Cecil Hotel. We had grease to protect our faces from windburn and goggles to protect our eyes from the glare of the sun. There was food and drink, for we would not be stopping for meals; if the car came to a standstill for any reason the motor would still be ticking over and we could claim that this run was non-stop. Larry was at the wheel for take-off, with Pres beside him to operate the spotlight. He noted the time, raced the engine, and we were off!

Memories of the next day and a half are blurred. Pres and I never knew where we were, since Larry did the navigating, and for us, whether driving or operating the spotlight or trying to sleep in the back seat, our every faculty was concentrated on the road, and only the road, as we hurtled through a pitch-black night or under a blazing sun. We swept through towns and were scarcely aware of them; although we were in open country most of the time we have recollection of the fields, the trees, the hills that must have been there. What we do remember is the road, narrow, twisting, pot-holed, sometimes rocky, surfaced only by a layer of fine white dust. Glancing back we could mark our trail by the continuous band of white thrown up by flying wheels, a cloud of dust so fine that it hung in the air for minutes before drifting away. Fortunately there was almost no motor traffic – it would have been impossible to overtake another vehicle and tunnel past in an atmosphere more impenetrable than the densest fog. Twice we met motorcars coming the other way; then it was necessary to slow down, guess at the way ahead, and plunge blindly into a blank whiteness.

There were breaks when the road ended abruptly on the bank of a river and we had to stop while the motor idled. A steep earthen ramp would lead down to the water's edge and to the ferry, hastily assembled for this exceptional burden by laying planks across two boats. With the Graham-Paige precariously aboard, this contraption would be poled and paddled to the farther bank and another earthen ramp. Here we also could refuel and roar away with a loss of no more than half an hour in running time.

Concentration on the road of course encompassed everything on it. During the first night there was little traffic other than an occasional bullock-cart plodding through the darkness, its driver

asleep on a pile of grain sacks or bales of cotton. The spotlight picked it up in good season and then it was up to the driver to slip by as quickly as possible before a panic-stricken bullock could veer across the road. Come dawn the traffic between villages came to life and the driver had to be constantly alert to avoid disaster as the car wove its way in a plume of dust between bullock-carts, handcarts, loose cattle and groups of pedestrians, or waded through an occasional flock of sheep. Special care was needed when passing a string of camels because camels can kick sideways. And so all day under the blazing sun we followed the relentless road.

During our second night we were traversing wild country through one or another of the native states in the Central Provinces. The way was particularly rough and tortuous and the spotlight was picking up the glowing eyes of wild animals on or beside the road. Most of them – jackals, antelopes, rabbits, civet cats – skipped nimbly out of the way, but at one moment I was confronted by the bulk of an enormous boar planted in the road, his white tusks gleaming, his little red eyes glaring. To hit him would have been catastrophe for us, even if he paid with his life; fortunately he lumbered just enough to one side as the car swerved past and we all gasped in relief.

Well into the small hours of that second night my eyes suddenly gave out. At one moment I was peering ahead along a beam of light, at the next there was complete blackness. Blindly I stopped the car in the middle of the road. “Sorry,” I said, “I can’t see. Somebody else will have to drive for a while.” Larry took me by the arm. “Into the back with you,” he ordered, “and stay quiet until you have had a rest.” He took the wheel and we started off again while I lay there in a semi-stupor. (The trouble was that I had been unable to accommodate the glasses I normally wore behind the goggles that were so essential during the day and the result was severe eye-strain.) When I came to I could see again and the morning light revealed the trees and fields of the tidy countryside surrounding Delhi. Larry was driving; he insisted on being the man at the wheel for the triumphant climax to our adventure.

As we climbed wearily up the steps into the Cecil Hotel our servants were there to greet us, all broad grins, but the Anglo-Indian clerk at the desk was not impressed. “Sorry, sir,” he said to Larry while Pres and I drooped against the wall, “all space in the hotel has been booked and we can’t give you rooms. We have pitched some tents on the grounds, however, and we can take care of you there.” Larry expostulated; we had made reservations from Bombay, we had motored all the way and just arrived, we desperately needed food and baths and sleep. The clerk was adamant; tents or nothing.

Then my old friend Miss Anna arrived on the scene like an angel from Heaven. She was manager of the family-owned Cecil Hotel, that comfortable old-fashioned hostelry which had ministered to travelers since the turn of the century. She was also a warm-hearted and perceptive woman; she took one look at me leaning against the wall, did a double-take, and issued brisk orders. We were to have rooms immediately, no matter who had to be bumped into a tent; this was an emergency and it had to be dealt with.

George promptly disappeared with the baggage and I was led upstairs to a comfortable room. In a mirror I caught sight of my face and realized what had prompted Miss Anna’s reaction. Layers of dust and grease formed a mask pierced by two bright scarlet holes, a truly horrendous sight.

Now George arrived through the back door, herding a gaggle of hotel servants with a tin tub and pails of hot water, and I was in his hands again. Bathed and fed, I was dropping off to sleep almost before I could reach the bed. George woke me at noon and I went down for lunch, only to fall into bed again and sleep until dinner-time.

Drinking their pink gins in the bar the three adventurers glowed with self-satisfaction. Larry was ebullient; he had been busy with reporters and photographers and was getting all the publicity he could want. The Graham-Paige, according to the press, had travelled non-stop from Bombay, its engine ticking over as sweetly in Delhi as when it had started; the air in its tires was sea-air; that marvelous American vehicle had covered a thousand miles cross-country in a day and a half! In all India there had never been anything like it. (Not for long, of course; records are made to be broken.)

Back home the Cooperage mess was soon in trouble as one after another we came down with malaria. In retrospect we know that it came from the massed listeners around the bandstand, a short hop away for a mosquito when the wind was in the west. In such a crowd there was bound to be a sizeable number of natives carrying the malaria parasite in their blood; they had no protection at all from insect bites and even our defenses were sketchy at best. We had given no thought to this and boasted that we could ward off malaria with the help of enough Scotch and soda when we sat on the verandah before and after dinner.

As it happened I was the first victim. Every Thursday at exactly four o'clock in the afternoon I would suffer a violent chill, shivering uncontrollably and obviously through with the office for the rest of the day. By the time I got home to a quinine tablet the fever was running high and when it broke I was pouring sweat, my bed so soaked that the sheets had to be changed. In the morning I was back to normal but drained of energy and barely able to stagger back to work.

This went on for some weeks until Kitty Bossi heard about it and insisted that I see a doctor, an Italian specialist on malaria. Doctor Vicente came, listened to my story, and, fingered my belly. Sure enough my spleen was enlarged and I had malaria, he said, but I wasn't really coping with it. When an attack was checked by quinine, he explained, the organisms feeding on the blood simply turned into spores which lodged in the spleen. Hence the enlargement of that organ, a sure sign of malaria. (And that was why British soldiers and policemen were warned not to hit natives in the belly, since the result was often a fatally ruptured spleen.) In due course the spores would erupt into another generation of parasites in an endless cycle. To get rid of my malaria, he insisted, I would have to eliminate every last spore, including those that remained in hiding, and that meant fifteen grains of quinine every day for sixty days. For the next two months, therefore, I went about with ringing ears, partly deaf and a bit fuzzy in the head, but it worked. In the end I was grateful to the good doctor, who later died of malaria himself.

Oscar was next, but he couldn't face the music and fled the country. Then John began to complain of stubborn constipation and turned to me for help. In view of my experience with malaria I was now regarded in the mess as a medical authority and for some time I had been dispensing home remedies with some success and only one near-catastrophe. That was the time Harry Russell said he couldn't sleep and I got some veronal tablets from the chemist. Uninformed as to veronal's potency I was nevertheless cautious enough to give him only half a

tablet; when he fell sound asleep in the middle of dinner and had to be carried to bed. I was really scared and flushed the rest of those tablets down the drain. In John's case he responded to none of our treatments, not even to a glycerin enema, and he finally went to the company doctor, who thought to take a blood test. And there it was! Malaria. There are several types of malaria, we were told, including my weekly bouts, the "quartan agues" of medieval Europe (an attack every four days), and John's mysterious paralysis. So American Express transferred him to Ceylon and a convalescence at Nuwara Eliya, where he enjoyed cool mountain air and boasted of fresh strawberries for breakfast.

The departure of our leader was the end of the line for the Cooperage mess, and as we went our several ways I moved in with a young American couple as star boarder, complete with the wardrobe trunk and George. At the same time my way of life changed completely; reversing biological processes the butterfly became a grub immured in its cocoon. Instead of flitting about town I spent my evenings and my weekends hard at work on a project which absorbed my energies and commanded all my attention seven days a week for months on end.

It all started over lunch with George Shantz, who had been trading in gold and silver on the Bombay bullion market on behalf of Irvine Trust. The bank had finally tired of this, George said, and he was going home, but he thought I might be interested in one of his activities. For some time he had been inconspicuously helping one of the leading firms in the market to prepare its weekly published reports and by doing so he had gained invaluable insights into the operations of the native traders whose activities created an important, complex and highly speculative market. He knew that one of my duties was to prepare reports for Washington on financial activities in Bombay (he was one of my sources) and he felt that if I took on this job it would pay off handsomely for me.

In due course, therefore, George took me to meet Maneklal Premchand, senior partner in Premchand, Roychand & Sons, in his solidly paneled office in Apollo Street, not far from the new building of the Bombay Bullion Exchange. From the beginning Maneklal impressed me favorably. Medium in height and weight he had no outstanding physical characteristics, but his Indian dress or London suitings were equally impeccable, his eyes intelligently alert under a brush of graying hair, his facial expression assured but calm and amiable, his speech educated, direct and always to the point. We became friends on the spot and eventually he would even eat his lunch in my presence, although as a Jain, the strictest of Hindu sects, he should have turned his back lest my shadow pollute his food. That food, incidentally, consisted of a saucer of parched grain.

After not too much palaver we came to a clear understanding. What Maneklal wanted was someone to prepare every week the text of the printed market reports he distributed, the statistical work to be done by his clerks, the text to be written in lucid English by someone with a background in economics. He soon recognized that this new young man would do just as well as Shantz had done. He also recognized that such an arrangement presented problems for me as an American official and that the Washington bureaucracy might take a dim view of it, whether or not it became public knowledge.

My collaboration would therefore have to remain a dead secret. The question of compensation was not even mentioned, it being understood that the advantage for me, as it had been for George, would be the information I acquired about what went on behind the scenes in the financial markets in Bombay: the bullion market, the stock exchange, the money market, banking operations, and anything else relevant for my purposes. Every Friday just before noon I would therefore repair to Maneklal's office and for an hour or so we would discuss the happenings of the past week, deciding what should go into the published market report, the text of which was delivered on Monday morning in shape for the printer. (Some developments would be discreetly ignored, as when His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad dipped into his fabulous treasure and broke an imminent corner on the silver market by sending a freight car floored with silver bars over his Guaranteed State Railway for spot deliveries in Bombay.)

The financial reporting from Bombay soon displayed an unprecedented sophistication which readers in Washington, unaware of what lay behind it, either took for granted or, if they happened to notice it, doubtless attributed to the competence of the reporting officer. As for him, he soon became fascinated with the lore of the bullion market and went on to undertake extensive research into the whole subject, poring over official publications and bombarding Maneklal with questions. Bombay was then the center of Indian trade in precious metals and one of the great bullion markets of the world, a highly developed complex involving banks, brokers, importers, wholesalers and retailers, organized around the Bombay Bullion Exchange, an association of the principal native dealers.

India, this research soon revealed, was a country which traditionally enjoyed a favorable balance of merchandise trade as a heavy exporter of cotton, jute, rice, wheat, oilseeds, shellac, mica and other natural products, while it was unique among nations in settling that balance mostly by imports of silver ingots, gold ingots, sovereigns or eagles, as it had done for generations. In the immediate post-war years after 1918 India was absorbing annually some 6,000,000 ounces of gold and 90,000,000 ounces of silver, 40 percent of the world's gold production and 30 percent of its silver. Unhappily for India, however, wealth in this form produced little of real value. The whole history and tradition of the people, the economic and social organization of the country and its primitive financial system induced a pervasive habit of hoarding gold and silver, whether as bullion stored unproductively in the strong rooms of princes or wealthy merchants or as ornaments adorning the wives and daughters of farmers after crops had been harvested, later to be sold at a loss when it came time to buy seed for the next crop.

All of this had many ramifications, and it took six months of hard labor to sort it all out and complete a massive report on "The Bombay Bullion Market" which was eventually published in Washington, but that is another story and here we are dealing only with matters which never reached the files.

Such a one is the story of Premchand Roychand's annual report for 1925. Maneklal and I wanted it to be more than the usual routine summary and he agreed enthusiastically to include a discussion of what we called "the fundamental problem of India's wasted resources." That problem we identified as being "in spite of the fact that the wealth of the world for many decades has been poured into India's lap in the form of gold and silver, the standard of living of the great mass of the population is distressingly low, the industrial development of the country is

obviously backward, and a large proportion of its vast natural resources is as yet practically untouched. The root cause of these conditions,” we argued, “lies in the rudimentary character of the country’s credit system. The life-blood of Western civilization is credit and its genesis is the accumulation of capital. Without these India can never develop to the extent of which she is capable. With a pitifully inadequate banking system, with savings jealously hoarded in the form of unproductive metals, with no funds available for the development of industrial enterprise, India will always be a backward nation unless her people can be educated to see the folly of their present practices.” For obvious reasons the twin evils of cow worship and over-population were not mentioned in the report, which went on to say: “If India’s gold and silver holdings were invested we would be receiving from the rest of the world, not gold and silver, which experience has proved provide little in the way of comfort or improved standard of living to the Indian people, but rather the manufactured goods, the foodstuffs, the services of the other nations – in other words, real wealth.”

This line of thought provoked admiring editorials from Bombay’s Times of India and Calcutta’s financial journal Capital. It also attracted attention in the Bombay financial community and British bankers, convinced that a “native” could never produce anything like that, besieged Maneklal with queries as to the authorship of the report. He could not honestly maintain that it was all his own work, but he kept faith with me and gave inquirers no satisfaction. One of the local bankers finally pronounced judgment: “Only an Englishman could have written such an economically sound résumé.

JOHN M. STEEVES
Office of War Information
New Delhi (1927-1942)

Office of War Information
New Delhi (1948-1950)

Ambassador John M. Steeves served in the China/Burma/India theater during World War II in the Office of War Information. His Foreign Service career included positions in New Delhi, Tokyo, Djakarta, Naha, Kabul, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Thomas Stern on March 27, 1991

Q: *While you were in India -- I have you there from 1927 to 1942 -- did you have any contact with the Foreign Service, either the embassy or our consulates?*

STEEVES: Yes, I did. Like any citizen that is interested in his country I knew the people of the time in the consulate general in Bombay, but only slightly. During the war when the special representative of the President was established in Delhi, I had more of an acquaintance with him. The name of that representative has just slipped my mind. But since India at that time was still part of the British Empire, he could not be given diplomatic accreditation. The President's

Personal Representative was a designation used where such a situation existed. So that was what he was called during the Roosevelt administration. Hazleton, was one of his deputies.

Q: Here you were knowledgeable in the politics and social movements in India during the war; did the United States seem to be following a reasonable course in our military dealing with India or was it just pursuing the war and didn't there seem to be much sense to it?

STEEVES: You mean when our armed services began to come into the theater? Yes, I had a very good impression of that and they made a very fine impression. The army in general, which was the branch of the service that came to India on there way up to the Combat Headquarters in Assam on the Burma border. General Sultan was the C.O. in New Delhi. They were very well thought of in that GHQ area in New Delhi. I think they conducted themselves extremely well. The same thing was true when we got up to the front. The facts of the case are that our magnanimity and reputation for generosity kind of made us suckers at times. But the Americans got along extremely well. At times we were the objects of a little jealousy because, quite naturally, the British were not very popular with their colonial subjects. It was rather humiliating at times when the British personnel used to trade things (like their good Scotch whiskey) to us in order to get some of the goodies unknown to them from American stores.

Q: You came into the predecessor of what is now the United States Information Service.

STEEVES: That's right.

Q: In what year was that, 1945?

STEEVES: Yes, late 1945. The transfer from the Wartime Agency was accomplished piecemeal. It was right out of the middle of the Office of War Information. This logically took the place of the office in the Department that had handled News and Information.

Q: Office of War Information at one time?.

STEEVES: Yes, Office of War Information from which the News Agency was first lifted. Then they asked us to interest ourselves in the office of cultural affairs. This Office of Cultural Affairs was housed in a little, beat- up building across from the old State in an old house (since torn down) on eighteenth street. It was a flea- bitten place. But those were the little roots that we were attached to before we became a full blown US Information and Cultural Service. Some of us therefore were in at the creation of the new agency when it was first organized under the very colorful Bill Benton of the well-known business of Benton and Bowles.

Q: Benton and Bowles was an advertising firm. The largest advertising firm in the United States.

STEEVES: The new Office of Information and Culture (USIS) blossomed rapidly to a pretty fulsome operation. Not altogether to the glee of the old Foreign Service in those days. But a group of us had the task of sitting down and drawing up the original charters and the organization that became the first full blown organization for the USIS. and we sure had our

original fun. We had to adjust old rules, regulations, make exceptions to old time-honored procedure as we went. I hired the first 350 people for the Near East and Africa operation. That's the way it was in my division, it was the old AND. I was the chief. The first person I hired was a guy by the name of Ernie Fisk. He was a newspaper fellow who had been with OWI in Lyon France, during the war. A wonderful person who lives out in Ohio in Oberlin, now in retirement.

Q: When you were drawing this up I find it very interesting that you were working in Africa and the Near East, both areas colonial preserves of our allies. In the Near East there was an exception such as Saudi Arabia. But the rest had French, British or our troops dominating the area. What did you see as our goals at that time in those areas?.

STEEVES: The goals were pretty clear. To help give the people of those emerging states, working for their independence and self expression, some concept of American institutions and values. We could see what was going to happen, although I don't think we had any concept of it happening quite as fast in Africa, for instance, as it did. We saw it happening in India and then in the Southeast Asian states. That area at that time was under a different division. But India, Burma and Ceylon were in my division, although it was called Near East and Africa -- NEA. I guess it was because we were attached for geographic reasons to the old NEA division that Loy Henderson was the head of for a while. Ray Hare, I think, was the head of the Near Eastern Bureau either after or before Loy Henderson. But anyway, that was where we found our attachment.

Q: Did you find yourself, after all, pushing democracy in all these places that were ready to explode, yet the European powers, particularly France and Britain, were not pushing for independence for these colonial areas?

Did you find that the geographic bureaus, particularly European Affairs, were saying, "Hey fellows, cool it, or be careful don't push this Democratic doctrine too fast?"

STEEVES: Yes, they did. They had a conservative view towards the world. The element from which the Foreign Service was taken those days had kind of ready ears for that kind of attitude.

Q: Are we talking about the Eastern establishment the ivy league, etc., from whence many of the Foreign Service establishment had been taken?

STEEVES: That's right. People from the wealthy homes of the United States. There was an inevitable movement towards Independence and Freedom, the Older Order didn't accept very happily. The old stable powers and forces found it very difficult to accept what was going to inevitably happen. I mention in my book that if you wanted to look at it from the standpoint of what was better economically for these countries, one would have to admit that most of them were far better off in their colonial status. Their plea had been "we want to be free to make our own mistakes" and they sure made them. Burma, for instance, had been the shining light of the British Empire, became the tail end of everything. As a nation it lies in ruin. Rangoon, the capital, is a horrible hole. It had been a real shining light of what British administration could do. I think I make the observation somewhere that it will take them a hundred years to get back anywhere near what they were when they gained their independence and even then they will have to do it with our help.

Q: Didn't you feel that you were sort of "young Turks" sitting down in your areas promoting plans for the spread of democracy and that you almost looked upon the European Bureau as the adversary or not?

STEEVES: I didn't feel it so much. But we did feel a lack of appreciation of the problems of the post-colonial world outside of Europe that we had to deal with. In my area when talking about the Near East especially there was an expression used that was quite apt, "those European fellows are always putting their European foot into our Near Eastern mouth." It always irked us a little bit that all the instructions we were sending to Lebanon and Syria had to be cleared by the French desk before they went out. We thought it was none of their darned business! But of course we were wrong for it did impinge on their vital interests. We had a little bit of the same problem that lasted for years with the British. There were those on both sides of the Atlantic that were still very strong for the "British Empire" view..

Q: When you were discussing the British you referred to the "spats", mentality .You are referring to the type of foot gear worn by the more au fait British as characteristic of the British generation of that mind set, were you not?

STEEVES: Yes, and they couldn't quite cotton to this new idea. Thereby hangs a little anecdote. The columnist, Pearson came out with a report in his column one day in The Washington Post.

Q: This was Drew Pearson who was sort of a muckraking columnist?

STEEVES: The story stemmed from an episode in my office one day. Where he ever got a hold of it I don't know. But we were packing the kits for all the posts in our area. I was there helping the staff get these things together and as we were putting in copies of the Declaration of Independence, I said just as a kind of a joking passing remark while picking up one of the copies, and looking at it, "Boy you know this is pretty heady stuff to be sending out to these people, I wonder if this is more than they can digest." Drew Pearson got a hold of that from somebody and said that,- he named me by description pretty well-our basic doctrines on freedom were a little too strong to be spread around the world and we ought to be careful how we put them out. That is the way he interpreted it. I got called on the carpet for that.

Q: You have to watch what you are saying even in the packaging process! Now, there were two major developments happening in your area of concern: Indian Independence and the partition of Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel. We will come to the Indian one later, but, to turn to the next page, you went to India in 1948. 1948 was a big year for partitions. You said you went with Loy Henderson.

STEEVES: Yes, that is right. I went out via one of the most beautiful sea voyages I have ever had in my life. I got on the maiden voyage of the "Silver Plane" down in Brooklyn Basin and 42 days later landed in Bombay.

Q: Did you have the feeling at the time that Loy Henderson was sent to India because he was so sympathetic with the Arab world and the idea was to get him out of the picture?

STEEVES: Every move, of a senior officer you know, takes that into consideration. Sometimes sympathetically. When we are talking about sending people into senior positions we often say, "For heavens sake don't torture the guy by making him go there and carry out a policy that he really isn't very happy about." There could have been an element of that. Henderson was not well accepted by the Zionists. They had him targeted and as you know when they have their ways of influencing action. If that was there it was out of my sight . I didn't see it.

Q: You arrived in India and what was the situation at the time?

STEEVES: When we got to India, independence had been declared the year before. They had gone through the blood bath of the first few months of it. The awful scenes of the massacres and slaughter of innocent people by the train load when they were exchanging people, Muslims allegedly going north and Hindus coming south. There was a train load of Muslims passing through the native state of Patiala that were stopped at a station and the Sikhs systematically went through that train and murdered every single individual on it. Of course, coming the other direction, the same thing was likely to happen to Hindus going south.

Q: You were in charge of public affairs. What were your major objectives in your particular field and how did you find dealing with that?

STEEVES: We still tried to do everything we possibly could to give a realistic exposure of the American scene to the people of India, whether we did it through motion pictures, or through the release of information or cultural events or the running of a library. We had three very good libraries in India: one in Bombay, one in Delhi and another in Calcutta.

Q: How did you find dealing with the new Indian government?

STEEVES: We had excellent relations.

Q: Relations were good in that period?

STEEVES: Oh yes. For instance there came the event very soon after our arrival when we went to present our credentials to the New President of India. Ambassador Henderson was the first full blown American Ambassador there in the new India-and the Indians had no other understanding of pomp and ceremony, but to carry the ceremony out about like the British had done. Having been in India before and remembering some of the same affairs with the British; there were those same Sikh guards, with their long lances , high turbans, etc-so statuesque you could have stuck a lighted cigarette in their eye and they would not have blinked.

We got up to the Durbar Hall where after all of the dramatic ceremony before the great oaken doors would be swung open, to match the scene nothing less than seeing a armored knight on a white charger come out to announce the President would have been appropriate. But instead a little man leaning on a cane came out wearing a turban, a dhoti, and dark glasses. I couldn't help but remember the story that I had heard the day before ,which I shall tell you in a bit.

Q: This was Mahatma Gandhi?

STEEVES: No, this was Rajagopalachari -- the first President of India .He was a wonderful scholar, a truly great man, but still of the old- fashioned Orthodox Brahmin ways. He was very, strict in the observance of his Brahmin cast rules. I had heard this story the day before and knowing a good deal about India I believed it. In order to purify the food that came out of the great fancy kitchen downstairs he had to have the walls smeared with cow dung in order to purify it. When he came to Loy Henderson's house for a meal, which he finally agreed to do, he had to bring his own bearers along with his own utensils to stand behind his chair and serve it to him. He couldn't touch anything in the place.

Q: Could you explain how Loy Henderson operated in the embassy and how he dealt with the Indians, because he is one of the great figures of the Foreign Service and I would like your impression of his style?

STEEVES: As you know, Loy Henderson had no peers in his knowledge of protocol and procedure and policy and things of that nature. He was a wonderful gentleman and a good teacher to learn from and take instructions from. I can see him just sitting there going over your draft and saying, "Take this or that out, save superlative words of that nature for some really demanding moment." He was a good preceptor and disciplinarian when it came to that type of form. He was the same way when dealing with people in a very correct and proper way.

Now, having said that, his usefulness with all of that ability in dealing with leaders like Pandit Nehru was diminished a little bit by the fact that secretly he disliked and mistrusted Nehru. He disliked Nehru with a passion and didn't appreciate him but dealt with him very correctly. The day that Truman ordered American troops into Korea...

Q: June 1950?

STEEVES: Yes, President Truman sent instructions out to the Ambassador to go to the prime minister, P.M. Nehru, and see if you can get his permission to send an Indian contingent in the United Nations force into Korea. Loy Henderson, with all the experience he had had in Russia and elsewhere, made a remark I found a bit strange. What he said to me in the car going up there that day,(he had asked me to go up with him to see Nehru) was "Today is one of the proudest moments of my career." He would have rocked me back on my heels if he had said that when I was standing up. I figured out in thinking about it years later that he was so glad to be the messenger of that kind of a tough message to this Nehru, and to tell him what the great United States expected of him if he wanted to be a decent member of the world community. The Ambassador couldn't forget that after all that China had done when the Communists took over the country, Nehru, in the early days of the independence of India-had been the first to recognize the brutal Communist regime. He had stabbed the poor Chinese in the back by throwing out the Nationalist Chinese Ambassador and was one of the first to invite in the Communist Chinese Ambassador.

Q: When Henderson was going up to ask Nehru to supply troops do you think he had any feeling that they would? .

STEEVES: No, and of course they really didn't. But I will tell you what they did do as a symbolic act. They sent over a very efficient military field medical unit, you know. They performed very well in Korea. So they were at least numbered among the nations that supported the United Nations effort in Korea.

Q: *What do you think was behind Henderson's antipathy towards Nehru?*

STEEVES: Well, Henderson was kind of a purest in the way he lived and thought of other people. He didn't want you to profess to be one thing and then turn out to be something else. Nehru to him was in a way a British country gentleman and then turned around and tried to be an Indian peasant in politics and the two didn't fit at all. One personality was always jarring against the other. For him to be almost kissing Gandhi's feet was next to ridiculous, almost comic opera to see him in this sycophantish way act around Gandhi.

You could see that where he really felt at home was in his tweeds with a shooting stick standing on the downs of England watching the foxes. That really was where he felt more at home. He was the fellow who had the reputation of writing a book that was looked upon by Lord Macaulay as one of the finest collection of British prose in the English literature. He was nobody's fool. Nehru was a very bright fellow.

Later we took Nehru to the United States. He acted as though he wasn't interested at all in going. He didn't look upon it as any great favor. His daughter, Indira, who we had to deal with later after Nehru was gone, carried on the same haughty attitude towards the United States.

The attitude was reciprocated. When Nehru invited us up to the Presidential Lodge -- it used to be called the Viceroy's House and is a real crown jewel of the British Empire in terms of the beautiful interior, a palatial place. The State Dining Room can seat between 100 and 150 people at one long table with a beautifully bedecked waiter standing behind every chair waiting to respond to your every wish. It was in that type of atmosphere when we went up for the State dinner welcoming the first American Ambassador to India that Mrs. Henderson picked up the silverware and wiped off the knife and said, "You can never tell what you get in these places." Here she was sitting along side of Nehru. Nehru, the perfectly trained country gentleman that he was, if he could have turned over and swatted her he would have. If looks could have killed her she would have been dead. Anyway he was too self-controlled to allow that to bother him. But that is another reason why the Indians and everybody else, including our staff, of course, too, disliked Mrs. Henderson. She was a real 'pain in the neck'.

Q: *Well she is one of the great dragons in the Foreign Service wasn't she?*

STEEVES: Oh, yes. She was terrible. I could fill rest of the tape with stories of Mrs. Henderson. She was awful.

Q: *Was there anything else we should cover in New Delhi? We covered the Korean War and the arrival there. Was there any resistance on the part of the Indians to your efforts to talk about the United States?*

STEEVES: No. We were welcomed everywhere. I had the best of reception for our libraries, our music, our efforts at promoting things American. When we were putting on our trade fair or any displays of that nature it went over very big in India.

JOHN WESLEY JONES
Junior Vice Consul
Calcutta (1932-1935)

Ambassador John Wesley Jones was born in Sioux City, Iowa in 1911. After graduating from George Washington University in 1930, he entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Mexico, India, Italy, and Washington, DC, and ambassadorships to Libya and Peru. Ambassador Jones was interviewed by Horace Torbert in 1988.

Q: *Now we were about to go to Calcutta, you said you were assigned to Calcutta.*

JONES: Yes. I arrived in September at the Foreign Service School and, after 3 months went to Sioux City for Christmas, knowing that I had already been assigned to Calcutta. In early January 1932, I proceeded to New York, where I got one of the American Export Line ships to Alexandria, Egypt. In Alexandria the Consul there had received instructions to purchase a ticket for me to proceed on to Calcutta. He confessed to me later that he had misunderstood "the first available vessel" and had bought me a ticket on a German freighter rather than waiting for the Peninsular and Oriental steamship line which most passengers took from Alexandria to Bombay. So I had a very interesting trip as the only passenger on a German freighter through the Suez Canal. We stopped at Aden; our next stop was in Ceylon, at Columbo. Tommy Thompson -- Llewellyn Thompson, was the U.S. Vice Consul in Columbo then. And since the ship was in port there for three days he kindly showed me around Columbo and I had a very pleasant and agreeable stay.

And then the ship went on, the freighter went on, to Madras and there I met the Consular Officer in Madras and had two days there and finally arrived in Calcutta on the 22nd of February 1932. I think that I expended probably the maximum allowed by the Department in those days sailing to a new post, which was 45 days.

In Calcutta the Principal Officer was Arthur G. Frost and Gerald Keith was the Principal Vice Consul. Dorsey Fisher was there as a Vice Consul. And I think I was the Junior Vice Consul, well I obviously was, when I arrived on the 22nd of February 1932. In Calcutta my job was double, number one, to issue visas to Indians wishing to visit or migrate to the United States. And, number two, the growing American colony in Calcutta required passport services. I stayed first at the Grand Hotel on Chowringhee and then eventually moved into a house with Fritz Jandrey and Russ Engdahl when they appeared as Vice Consuls in Calcutta.

Q: *Fritz Jandrey and who else did you say?*

JONES: Russ Engdahl, E-n-g-d-a-h-l.

We adopted the British custom of calling the house a chummary because there were many bachelors, principally English, in Calcutta in those days and they couldn't afford apartments by themselves, so they took houses. Our house was quite an elegant place, but it was still called a chummary. There were four of us by that time, including Wilson Flake, then an Assistant Trade Commissioner.

I spent three years in Calcutta and at the end of my three-year tour I either had to pay my own way home or wait until the Department decided to transfer me to another post. So on my salary I had saved up enough money to buy a ticket on a freighter from Calcutta to Manila. I bought a ticket on a Dutch freighter this time which took me around Southeast Asia en route to the Philippines. We stopped in Singapore where I first met Harrison Lewis, colleague of mine, same class; and then on to Hong Kong where Donald Dunham was the Vice Consul; and finally to the Philippines, where Bart Richards, former Assistant Trade Commissioners in Calcutta, was then stationed. After four or five days in the Philippines, I took an American passenger boat to San Francisco and then finally arrived in Sioux City, Iowa by train four days later.

It was while I was in Sioux City that I learned that the Department needed a Vice Consul in Rome, Italy. And since I was still on my own, I had to pay my way to Washington to pick up my official orders. Only from Washington was my travel paid to New York to board an American Export Line ship to Naples.

I arrived in Rome 1935, June. And I remember taking a taxi from the railroad station up the Via Veneto to the Consulate in the building next to the Palazzo Margherita. I couldn't believe the beauty of the city. After three years in Calcutta, to arrive in a place like Rome was like going from Hades to Paradise. In Rome the Principal Officer was Graham Kemper and his assistant was Gilson Blake. I was the Vice Consul in charge of immigration for Italians going to the United States, passports for Americans, and registration of the large American colony living in Rome.

HENRY BYROADE
U.S. Army Officer
India (1941-1944)

Ambassador Henry Byroade was born in Indiana in 1913. He graduated from West Point in 1937. He served in the Hawaiian Islands from 1937-1939. While still in the service, he received a master's degree from Cornell in 1940. His Foreign Service posts included Egypt, South Africa, Afghanistan, Burma, the Philippines, and Pakistan. He was interviewed by Niel M. Johnson on September 19, 1988.

Q: You mean they were lost over the ocean, over the jungle, or...

BYROADE: Over the ocean.

Now, we went on through Africa and arrived in Karachi [India]. There was chaos and confusion; we were going to hit Tokyo from just south of Shanghai, but it took us about three months in Florida to get organized, and underway, and by the time we got to Karachi, the Japanese had that area. The second plan was to use the Northern Philippines, but that was gone too. I was left in Karachi. General Brereton came in from Java, and he outranked our General. He took all the bombers away from us. We were left with the DC-3s and they said, "Go start a Hump run to China."

So I was on the first DC-3 that went up to Assam, India.

Q: *Where were you stationed at this time?*

BYROADE: Well, I was around Karachi, trying to decide now to get in the war. My orders were to report to the senior aviation engineer in the China-Burma-India theater. The people that wrote the order knew that I was it, that I was the only one. I was picked up by General Wheeler.

Q: *What was his first name?*

BYROADE: Raymond A. Wheeler; he was head of the Service of Supply Command in CBI; it then consisted of General Wheeler, an aide, and a secretary.

Q: *What was your rank at this time?*

BYROADE: Either a captain or a major, I'm not sure. I guess I had been promoted to major. We got up to Assam, India; Dinjan had half of one runway. The job was to build however many airfields it took to transport lend-lease supplies to China. There were lots of river boats there, full of lend-lease for China that had been in Rangoon. They thought that was going to fall, so they sent it all to Calcutta, and they thought that was going to fall, so they just sent it up the Brahmaputra River, as far as they could go, up towards Assam, waiting for us to get airfields, and airplanes to fly it across the Hump [Himalaya Mountains].

Am I going into too much detail?

Q: *No, that's fine.*

BYROADE: Well, we had to work through the British, of course. I was the American in charge of not only supplying our own forces, but building airfields and handling the air freight. We used a lot of labor, Indian coolies, breaking rocks by hand. We were to build, I think, seven freight fields, and three or four fighter fields for protection. Well, when I got there, there were two Pan-Am planes running the Hump, and two pilots; one was in bed with malaria and the other one was in the hospital. They had had a fight over some girls. At that time that was the Hump run to China. So we started from absolutely nothing, and none of us had any idea that that would build up to a couple hundred thousand tons a month.

Q: *Do you recall about when that started, that operation?*

BYROADE: Well, we left Florida, I think, in March. I was around Karachi a couple months. It would be the middle of the summer in '42, July or August.

Q: *Where were you stationed, mainly, in India?*

BYROADE: I moved up to Chabua in Assam. I built a little headquarters at Chabua and we started with elephants pulling out trees and built our first field at Chabua.

Q: *So you're in Assam. When did you get into China? I mean you didn't fly yourself.*

BYROADE: Well, not legally, but our Air Force friends let me get in lots of flying hours. I guess I could have got my service wings if I'd stayed one more week, but I couldn't do that.

I was in the India end of the Hump, I've forgotten, but I guess for maybe a year and a half. Then I was transferred to the Advance Section No. 4 of the Services of Supply, which was the eastern half of China, in support of the forward echelon of Chennault's 14th Air Force, and old AVG. It was a prewar outfit...

G. EUGENE MARTIN
Childhood
India (1943-1956)

A Specialist in Chinese Affairs and a speaker of Chinese, Mr. Martin spent the major part of his career dealing with matters relating to China, both in Washington and abroad. His overseas assignments included Hong Kong, Taipei, Huangzhou (formerly Canton), Beijing, Manila and Rangoon. His Washington assignments also concerned China and the Far East. Mr. Martin was born in Indiana of Missionary parents and was raised in the US. and India. He is a graduate of Kalamazoo College and Syracuse University. Mr. Martin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: *Today is September 21, 1999. This is an interview with G. Eugene Martin. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Well Gene, we'll start at sort of the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?*

MARTIN: I was born in Indianapolis, actually Speedway, Indiana, which is right next to the racetrack outside of Indianapolis, during the war, in 1943. My parents were missionaries in India, and they had returned in 1941, just at the beginning of the war, for furlough back in the States. Caught in the States and not able to go back to India during the war, my father took a church in Indianapolis. We were living there when I was born.

Q: What denomination was your father?

MARTIN: He was American Baptist.

Q: Yes. Where had they been working in India?

MARTIN: They were in what is now Andhra Pradesh, then it was called Hyderabad. It was about 180 miles north of Madras (now Chennai), on the east coast of India. My parents were third generation missionaries in the same area of India so that essentially was "home." My great grandfather had started the work in that town. I guess this is how I became interested in foreign affairs.

Q: So, well, I mean, you were pretty young. By the time you started being at the age where you remembered things, where were you?

MARTIN: We went out to India when I was two on an empty troop ship going out to pick up the troops from the CBI (China-Burma-India) theater. The troop ship docked in Bombay, father met us there, and we took the train home.

Q: Yes. Where was home?

MARTIN: Home was, at that time, a small town in India called Kanigiri, where we lived for a few years. That was where I have my first memories.

Q: Yes. What do you recall first memories? Sort of family life or?

MARTIN: I guess the most vivid one is when I found some red chilies out on the back porch one day. Not knowing what they were, I popped several in my mouth. I instantly found out what red chilies were all about. I probably ate a whole stalk of bananas to moderate the heat.

Q: Well, that's down in the chili belt, isn't it?

MARTIN: Well, the hot Madrasi curry is famous in that area.

Q: Where did you start going to school by the time you were put into kindergarten or whatever?

MARTIN: My mother taught my elder brother and me initially, using the Calvert course, the famous correspondence school out of Baltimore.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: I studied in the Calvert system from kindergarten through third grade, my brother and I in the class taught by my mother.

Q: How old was your brother?

MARTIN: He's about a year and a half older than I am.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: My mother was the teacher, and a strict disciplinarian. She kept the distinction that she was the teacher in the classroom and not mother, so we had to behave, sit properly, and not look for motherly attention. That was for about three years. We went back to the States in 1950 for furlough and spent a year in Ohio, where I went to fourth grade. In 1951, we returned to India and entered boarding school in Kodaikanal, one of the boarding schools in the hills of South India.

Q: Yes. Well, as a very young kid, what were you getting from your parents, and your own observations, about the part of India you were in?

MARTIN: Well, I was aware of what was going on, albeit at a child's level of comprehension. I remember when Gandhi was assassinated. I remember the emotion that overwhelmed the populace, both Indian as well as foreign. I remember independence. We didn't have a radio and TV was many years away from India at that point. But we had newspapers and magazines, and occasionally a radio notice would tell us what was going on in the world. One of the other missionaries had a radio which we heard occasionally. I remember listening to that, or watching and reading about independence, political movements, Gandhi, and so forth. I was very young, only six or seven, but it left an impression.

Q: Yes. The great separation between the Muslims and the Hindus and all didn't take place down there, did it?

MARTIN: That was mainly in the north. However, Hyderabad was still ruled by the Nizam of Hyderabad, the local maharajah, who was Muslim as was a large percentage of his populace. Quite a number of families did leave for Pakistan during partition. I don't remember that too vividly myself because there were not many Muslims in our particular area.

Q: Did you have an ayah?

MARTIN: Oh, well, not really. Peter was our cook, his wife Deenama helped with the cleaning, and a gardener cared for the garden. My brother and I ran around in short pants and bare feet, and climbed trees, and played with the cook's son, George, who was our best friend. We had just a normal childhood.

Q: Yes. What about language? Where you picking up any language?

MARTIN: One of my proudest moments was helping my father find the right Telugu word for "chimney" for one of his sermons. I can't remember why he was speaking about chimneys, but I knew the word instantly, and he had not learned that in his language class. I was quite fluent, with an eight-to-ten-year-old's vocabulary, in Telugu, which was the language spoken in the area.

Q: How old were you when you went to boarding school?

MARTIN: I had just turned eight, on the ship coming back from the States in 1951. My mother felt that she had taught us as much as she could at that stage, so we went off to boarding school in Kodai, as it was called, a hill station.

Q: What was the boarding school like?

MARTIN: Missionaries started it in 1902. They recently celebrated their centennial. There were probably about 100 students, mostly missionary kids but quite a wide variety of children -- oil company dependents from the Middle East, missionary and business children from all over India as well as from Burma and Thailand, and even a few from East Asia. Most were American, a few Europeans and Asians, almost no Indians in those days. One of my brother's roommates was a Thai who became a well-known banker in Bangkok.

Q: Well, while you were at the school, was there sort of the old...things must have been changing quite a bit as things became more Indian rather than, you know, sort of, the rajah had gone and all. I mean were you feeling that as this school _____?

MARTIN: A little, but not too much. I was there from 1951 to '56. I finished eighth grade and then came back to the States for high school. But yes, there was some change, but Kodai was really in a kind of a time warp. There were many retired British civil servants, quite a few Anglo-Indians who lived up there. It had very much of a British feel to it --cottages, English gardens, country walks, the Anglican church, and so on. It was quite isolated from the rest of the country in many ways. But over the five years I was there, I did notice an increasing number of Indians building and owning houses in Kodai.

Q: How about your teachers? Were there any Indians within the teaching ranks?

MARTIN: Not really. I think there may have been a couple, who may have taught Indian history, but I recall most of them were foreigners. We had a number of Europeans who had come from Europe either during or after the war and stayed on - a Czech, a Pole, who was a musician, a number of other people who were quite interesting. They helped broaden our perspective of the world.

Q: Did you feel sort of plugged in to what else was happening in India, or was it pretty isolated?

MARTIN: It was pretty isolated! There really wasn't much contact with the rest of the country and world. We had our sports, activities and social events. We were fairly self-contained.

Q: Well then, you went back. You were how old? Had you finished eighth grade?

MARTIN: I had just turned 13. Let me here comment that while I was in India I had my first contact with the Foreign Service. We used to go into the consulate in Madras for passport services or to register. That was my first recollection of the Foreign Service of the State Department. It made a big impression on me because I always awed when I went into the

consulate. I was eager to talk to the people who were issuing the passports. I guess that stuck with me through the years because later on, when I was thinking of a career, the memories kept coming back to me.

Q: Yes. Did you get to travel around much or?

MARTIN: We did some, not a lot. Before we left India my parents took my brother and me to New Delhi so that we could see the sights, something we always wanted to do. It was quite an excursion by third class coach on the train, but that was an experience, in itself, with hard seats, coal smoke coming in the open windows, beggars reaching hands through the windows at stations. But we didn't get to Kashmir, as we wanted to; we didn't get to Dehar Dun; lots of places in India we would have liked to have visited, but did not.

Q: Did you get any feel at that time...I mean, well, actually in retrospect, of course...about the impact of missionaries, in particular, that part of southern India?

MARTIN: Despite coming from a long line of missionaries, three generations since my great grandfather opened the mission station in 1866, I had fairly strong feelings, as did my parents, that the time of the foreign missionary was coming to an end. It was time for the Indian church to be run, controlled and manned by the Indian Christians. Christians are a very small minority in Hindu India, of course.

The big mission hospital in our town was probably the only one in over a hundred miles, over Indian country roads. My mother was deeply involved in education. The mission ran quite an extensive mission school system, from kindergarten through high school and teachers' training school. She also was active in evangelism, preaching, as she said, the gospel first and family planning second. She felt strongly about family planning as she saw the problems caused by unrestrained population growth and the resulting perpetuation of rural poverty and disease. And in her spare time she literally pitched in and personally supervised construction on school buildings – dorms, classrooms, and offices.

Q: Did you get any feel for Baptist versus Anglican versus Catholic versus, and I mean all of these inter Nicene Christian conflicts?

MARTIN: Early in the century missionaries adopted a policy that might be called "divide and conquer." They carved up India, not extraterritorially, but ecclesiastically. The Baptist in our area, the Episcopalians further south, the Presbyterians over on the Bombay side, etc. Occasionally, again toward the end of my time in India, we had a number of what we called itinerant missionaries come through and hold services. My parents always looked a little bit askance at them, perhaps being conservative in the sense that this is our turf, don't come in it.

Q: We'd own it.

MARTIN: I think the important thing was an increasing sense that, as a very small minority, Christian churches in India needed to work ecumenically. If they fought among themselves, proselytizing was going to be even more difficult.

Q: Did you have any feeling for the impact of the missionaries?

MARTIN: I think the missionaries provided a tremendous service in terms of education, in terms of medical services, and to a degree, in infrastructure. My mother built many school buildings, personally out there supervising in the sun, walking up and down the planks, and making sure they did it right. Going back four generations, my great grandfather, who was an engineer by training, was hired by the British colonial government to build part of the Buckingham Canal, a coastal waterway, to help relieve a famine in the 1870s. He supervised the building of five or ten miles of the canal, feeding and paying several thousand workers. That was a physical infrastructure improvement, which is still in use. In general, however, missionary schools, hospitals and social contributions helped India modernize. And most of their work was in rural areas or small towns, which still lag behind urban centers.

Q: In a way, it's off to one side, but how long did your parents continue to be active missionaries?

MARTIN: My father died and is buried in the same Indian town in which he had been born and married, in 1966, the year I joined the Foreign Service. My mother stayed on and finished her term in 1971. They had been there about 40 years.

Q: Oh boy! Well, then, taking you back - you're about 13, and you're back to where? Ohio?

MARTIN: When I left India to go to school in the U.S., I was just thirteen. My parents took my brother and me by train to Bombay. We entered the airport terminal, the first time we'd ever been in an airport terminal, boarded a Super Constellation with "TWA" marked on the sides in big letters, and waved goodbye to our parents, India and childhood. We took off on our very first plane flight, and flew for 48 hours, including 8 stops, all the way to New York City. It was quite an adventure for a 13-year-old and his older brother. In New York, our uncle and aunt met us as our parents had arranged for them to be our guardians when we were in the States. We went to Washington D.C. to see a cousin, which was the first time we'd been to Washington, to Williamsburg to learn a little American history, and finally to Pittsburgh where they lived. I still clearly remember that trip. After a few weeks, they took us to our boarding school in New Jersey, where we went to school.

Q: While you were in India, were you getting much in the way of Americanization, you know, American history, states, capitals, and that sort of thing?

MARTIN: We studied U.S. history and society in seventh and eighth grade social studies. I had a social studies teacher in the eighth grade, who was from the town of Corn, Oklahoma. We were studying Indians, and I decided to report on an Indian tribe. I researched the subject but had no idea how to pronounce the tribe's name. So I began my oral report by saying, "My report is on the See-ox Indians." I thought the teacher would fall out of his chair. Once he set me straight about how to pronounce the Sioux [pronounced Sue], we moved on. We learned the U.S. capitals and states, more than we did the geography and history of India unfortunately.

LOUISE ARMSTRONG
Consular Officer
Madras (1944-1947)

Mrs. Armstrong was born in 1917 in Tokyo, Japan of American missionary parents. After moving to the United States she attended Wellesley College. After graduation, Mrs. Armstrong was a researcher for Time and Life magazine before joining the Foreign Service in 1947. As a Consular and Political Officer, she served in Madras, Prague, Palermo and Montreal. Following her marriage to FSO Willis Armstrong in 1959, she resigned her commission and accompanied her husband to Ottawa, where he was assigned as Deputy Chief of Mission. Mrs. Armstrong was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q. Well, getting out in 1938, where were you pointed?

ARMSTRONG: Well, I moved into first, the Hamilton Watch Factory, first job that I could get. And that was sorting artificial diamonds for watches, a very simpleminded job. Then I worked in the Science Press, which was the press, which published, the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the AAAS.

Q. Scientific America?

ARMSTRONG: Yes, Scientific America, things of that sort. I'm sure they've moved to other publishing houses, but this is where a lot of it was done. And I had the job of proof and manuscript reader.

Q. This seemed to be the prime occupation of graduates of the Seven Sisters schools, being first rate proofreaders at the beginning.

ARMSTRONG: I'm sure it's true because you either did that or you went to Katie Gibbs.

Q. Yeah, Katie Gibbs being the secretarial school.

ARMSTRONG: Right. At any rate, I wanted to go to New York and see what I could do for myself there. So I eventually set off with one or two introductions. It took me a while to get into anything very solid. But I did finally work for Time and Life. And it was while I was there that, as a so called researcher.

As a researcher you went along with the photographer and got all the materials that related to the story that was being shot, or you helped to evolve the story in the first place, the concept of it and then went along with the photographer. But you also, if you worked in some areas, the responsibility was to check the accuracy of the stories that were churned out by the writers, but since some of them were pretty, how would you say, high flown in their style, making or developing theses as they went along, you found you had to reign them in a little bit on a factual basis.

And I did have the experience of reading what Clare Booth Luce sent back from a trip she made to the Far East, during the war this was, when she joined up with the Flying Tigers and General Stilwell and people like that and made stops, hop skipping around the Pacific. And her reports would come back, and I had the job of reading them from a factual standpoint. And basically, she was pretty reliable, a little fast and loose, but pretty reliable. However, when it came to names, I felt I needed some type of corroboration for the spelling, the names and things like that. Very easy to make mistakes in recording from the scene. So when she would get back from these trips, I would call her at the Waldorf and talk to her, rather I talked to secretary, and I'd say would you ask Mrs. Luce if she can confirm this or corroborate that or spell this and so forth? One day I called and I got right through to the lady herself. And she said to me, "Mrs. Armstrong, what have I done wrong now?" Very pleasant lady. She wasn't being nasty.

Q: Were you initiated into sort of the unique Time writing style at that point?

ARMSTRONG: Well, I never did any actual writing. It was while I was working for Life magazine, which at that point was developing a magazine for the armed forces, which would not only give them news but also would help them in identifying foreign and American airplanes, tanks, ships and so forth – a recognition training process. And that took me to Washington on a number of occasions. And it seemed to me everybody was going overseas except me, so I began to look into the possibility of doing something overseas. And I heard from one friend of mine that he was being hired by ANRA, I think it was.

I decided to walk into the State Department, while I was down there, and I asked if I could have an appointment with somebody in foreign service personnel. In due course I was introduced to the chief of foreign service personnel, and that was in the Old Executive Office Building. He waved me to my seat and said he understood I was interested in the foreign service. I said, "Yes, but not in an officer capacity." And I said, "Is that possible?" Well he tilted himself back in his swivel chair and put the tips of his fingers together and said, "Conceivably." And so somewhat to my astonishment I discovered that State Department security was investigating me. My boss in New York would say, "What's going on here?" And the woman who owned the apartment where I was staying, she was frightened out of her wits because security people had come to interrogate her about me.

And then they made me the offer of joining the Foreign Service Auxiliary, which you've probably heard about. And that was for, on the duration of the emergency basis. And we were given a course of sprouts in everything under the sun, a couple of months of this. And I wasn't very long into it before an announcement was made of three posts open for bids. And I was afraid I'd get something like Tegucigalpa, so when I heard that these three posts were open for bids, I pricked up my ears. One was Afghanistan; one was Jerusalem; one was Madras. I didn't think I'd be considered for Kabul, and I thought Jerusalem might be pretty depressing. And I'd read *A Passage to India*, E.M. Forster, so I had romantic ideas about India, so therefore I offered my services there. And then as I understand it, the Department made little discreet inquiries among people who had served in India, old India hands, as to whether this young woman would go down in the vice consul capacity in Madras, and they seemed to think there was no problem.

So I was the first woman officer in India. And before I left there were about six others gathered around various consular posts.

Q: You went to Madras when?

ARMSTRONG: I arrived in January '44.

Q: How did you get there?

ARMSTRONG: I sailed out of Hoboken on a passenger cargo vessel that was the Hurg Silverstar, Norwegians vessel. And we traveled in convoy, across the Atlantic, until we got to the Mediterranean by which time it was Marc Nostrum, we were free of the convoy business so we moved faster. And [we] went into Karachi. Apart from Suez, that was the only stop we made. At Karachi, I was expected, that is my boss to be in Madras had been in touch with the consular general in Karachi, and he'd made all kinds of plans for me, which made me fly Tada Airlines to Madras. Now Tada Airlines is a little bi plane with about six passengers. Had to stop over in Secunderabad, which is the twin city of Hyderabad, where Tada had its own little hotel, airport hotel arrangements.

And interestingly enough I noticed among the half dozen passengers that there was an older middle aged woman with graying hair, black graying hair, who wore a sari but was plainly not Indian. Olive skin and the sari and these leather shoes that you wear in North India, with a turned up toe. And I thought this is interesting, she is what they say has "gone native." But she was an interesting, arresting figure, accompanied by a younger man who spoke English as well as whatever he spoke to her in. I read her name off the sign in roster when we got to the hotel, and she was Maria Montessori. She was traveling around India fulfilling speaking engagements with her nephew doing the interpreting.

Q: Well, Maria Montessori established this preschool system-

ARMSTRONG: Everywhere.

Q: which is everywhere.

ARMSTRONG: Very big in India, or was. I'm sure it's still there. So anyway, one flew by way of Hyderabad, Secunderabad, overnight there. With nothing better to do, a group of us went into the local bazaar at night and that was fascinating. The craftsman were working by charcoal fires, beautiful stuff, all very inexpensive. I bought a dozen bracelets.

And then the next morning we set off for Madras. And there it was understood that my boss to be, he would meet me. It was a two officer post, Madras. And Roy Bauer, who had been in the post for some time [and] was very much settled in there, was to have met me. And then a message reached me at the airport that he couldn't leave the office and would I please take a taxi in to the hotel where I was registered and then meet him for lunch at The Madras Club. I found a fellow passenger who was going in; we shared a cab. Looking out of the plane as we approached Madras, it looked very arid and empty, and I thought, "Geez, two three years here, can I stand

it?" Then as we drove in to the town, it happened to be after the monsoon so it was a lot greener than it might have been, in fact a lot of green paddy fields everywhere, but kind of a rundown situation. Everything you saw looked in a state of decay, if not from dry weather then from humid weather. And not very reassuring. And part way into town, in the middle of the country, the taxi broke down. The driver managed to flag another car. That car towed us and just as we approached the near middle of the town, the tow rope broke. I finally got to my hotel.

Q: A great introduction!

ARMSTRONG: That's right. Having arrived at the hotel, I then went on to the Madras Club. First thing my boss did was order me a gimlet, my first experience with gimlets. And with a British Indian club. It was really very agreeable, and just what I needed was a drink at that point.

Q: You were there from 1944 to ?

ARMSTRONG: '47, September '47. I left one month after Indian Independence.

Q: What was Madras like at that time? Particularly when you just arrived, still wartime?

ARMSTRONG: Yes. Well first thing that Mr. Bauer did, over a drink and then over lunch, was to explain the social situation to me. Quite clearly I was not to drop any bricks or make any gaffes. The society was dominated by the British Civil Service, ICS, Indian Civil Service really. There was a British governor and his aides were all British. The chiefs of all the administrative offices were British. And then there were Britishers who were there in business, import export, manufacturers, cotton and things like that. And there were British military.

And the situation was such socially, there was a housing shortage, that is, a housing shortage of the West and England. I'm sure there was always a housing shortage for Indians. So the people doubled up, and as my boss explained to me, sometimes the husband would be sent home and couldn't get back, having left his wife behind. And there would be somebody else who needed a place to live, so they would have a paying guest system. And you would have some interesting situations where So and so was sharing a house with Lady So and so, but they didn't have the same last name. And he just wanted to let me understand that such situations existed, from the social point of view so I wouldn't be misled.

He also said that there was one particular charming younger woman who attended all the social functions, as a somewhat unattached woman, I think she was separated from her husband. But she was hired by the British Intelligence, so that anything that got to her ears went straight to Intelligence. They had put her in that situation because so many soldiers would come through, officers through Madras, and they would have time on their hands looking for recreation and go to the several clubs that were open to them. And if they talked too much, she would be there to pick it up. And that was among some other responsibilities I'm sure.

He also told me in local correspondence I should be very careful of what I said because there were a number of British housewives who were employed to read this kind of thing. So my letters would invariably be screened.

Then there was the missionary community, which was very significant. We had about a thousand missionaries in the consular district, which included the state of Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore, three Indian states - they all have different names now - and Madras, Presidency as it was called then. So missionaries were scattered all over this south Indian area, which was really the lower half of the Indian peninsula. And Roy Bauer was on very good terms with them; they enjoyed coming and chatting with him. He was a very approachable, easy conversationalist. He had a remarkable faculty for getting happily along with the British, the stuffiest Britishers, because he'd served in England, he'd served in Singapore, he was quite comfortable with British ways. In fact he would correct me from time to time. I was not to say "stupid," I was to say "schtupid," can you hear the difference? Because that's the way the British said [it]. He was also very comfortable with the local American community, which was small. But the missionaries were a great source of intelligence for us.

We would report on all kinds of things as they happened in our area. We would report, you see we didn't have an embassy yet in Delhi, we had the personal representative of the United States. Then in due course when it was clear that we were going to have an embassy, we had a chargé. And the first ambassador I broke in for, I'll have to take time on that, but never mind. We would send these reports back to both to Delhi and to Washington, for what they were worth. Basically we didn't have a great deal of trouble in south India. The problems that arose were chiefly in the north. Because we had a very modest Muslim community. They gave nobody any trouble, and nobody troubled them. We had some other interesting curiosities, but mostly it was a very stable community in that sense.

Q: Were we looking at the Indian Congress Party and the Gandhi general movement?

ARMSTRONG: Yes, we had a close friend in a woman congressman, and I made friends with another woman who had been a congresswoman. We had visits from Gandhi, from time to time. He would come down. I shared a platform with him. By a platform I mean a raised dais in the center of a crowd with people all around who had come for holy sight of the great man.

Q: I'm sure in making the namostay.

ARMSTRONG: That's right. The interesting thing for me was one heard so much about his fasting and his general self sacrifice. But when I saw him in person, I never saw somebody who was better fleshed out than he was. I understood in his fasting, when it took place, included in his diet orange juice and goat's milk, which was a lot better than most Indians had by way of a good diet. And when he traveled third class, in the third class car - third class in India had nothing but the bench around the periphery of the car, with most people sitting on the floor - this third class car was mostly Gandhi and his party. So it wasn't as if he had to sleep on the floor if he didn't want to. I admired him a lot, but he didn't have any great time for Americans. I suspect only for Britishers with whom he had to do business.

Q: As vice consul, what were your jobs? What were you doing?

ARMSTRONG: I had a certain amount of rubber stamping of invoices, enormous amount of invoices. Of rosters of port, and during the war time, we had a lot of American ships come in, so there was some so called shipping. But since we didn't have a Coast Guard there, if there was any serious problem, we'd refer them to Calcutta or to Ceylon, to Colombo. Because you always had incidents on cargo ships where there was some kind of a fracas going on. Some seaman was a problem or some captain was a problem. But I didn't have to deal with that type of thing directly. The invoicing was big. There was a community of Americans working in Bangalore with the Hindustan Aircraft Corporation, which was the beginning in the sense of, Bangalore is now the "silicon valley" of India. Bangalore Aircraft Corporation serviced the codas and other planes –

Q: The codas being the DC 3.

ARMSTRONG: That's right. And also serviced military aircraft. And some which later flew the hump. We had a group of American technicians and engineers working there which inevitably cohabited with Anglo Indian woman. And inevitably there were children and some consular matters involving them. And we had consular matters involving the American community, of which I said we had about 1,000. And then I was expected to mingle socially, which was very agreeable. And as I say do reporting. The more commercial economic reporting would be done by the chief Indian clerk, but it would go out under my name because I would report it. We did oil seeds reporting and reporting on coconut products and things of that sort, mainly for the Department of Agriculture I think, to some extent for Commerce. And any political reporting that we could sniff out.

Q: Was the Consul sort of under the instructions to watch this Indian Independence movement closely?

ARMSTRONG: Well, we just assumed we were under instructions if we weren't, and [we'd] report anything we thought was worthwhile. But as I say there wasn't a great deal going on in south India. South India was just moving with the times.

Q: How about the war effort? Was it your impression that the Indians you got to know, were they with the war effort or did they feel it was a British war?

ARMSTRONG: Oh, distinctly detached. In fact there was such a thing as the Indian National Army, which was working with the Japanese.

Q: In Burma.

ARMSTRONG: Well, also in India. And the daughter of this congresswoman was involved in that. She wasn't living in Madras very much, so it was just quietly spoken about. Yes she was very much involved.

Q: What about your contact with Indians? The British were still in charge, but was there an Indian class that you –

ARMSTRONG: Yes, there was an Indian community that one would regard as just as easy to mingle with as the British. One of the things I liked to do was to escape from the domain of the Raj now and again. You knew that if you spent all your time with Indians that it would create a bad impression, so you had to be a little careful. But I had quite a number of Indian friends who were what you would call upper class, prosperous, and I enjoyed learning about India through them. They provided opportunities like the missionaries. The missionaries were much closer to the Indians and the officials, of course.

Q: How about at the end of the war, which would be August of '45, did that change things at all?

ARMSTRONG: It didn't make too much difference immediately in south India. In north India, there were already riots, even before Indian independence. I went up, I joined the Foreign Service in the auxiliary, and then I was prepared to take the written examinations. They were provided, at a certain point, by courier. And I was going to be able to sit in my own office and take the examination with my supervisor next door, so to speak. The courier was a day late, after I'd done my best to bone up for this examination, I found I had to wait for the next one to come along because it was considered, that particular examination had been, what's the word you want?

Q: Compromised?

ARMSTRONG: Compromised. So when I finally took it, which was about six months later, and was discovered to have passed it I was told that I would be interviewed by a panel a traveling panel. A traveling panel came to Bombay, and I went up to Bombay for that occasion. There was a very well known man, named Joe Green, and everybody said he would be the holy terror. And it turned out he was a very fatherly type. At any rate I passed the orals, as far as I could tell, I think they told me at the time. Then I had to pass the physical. The consulate in Bombay sent me to a doctor that they had in mind, and I found myself stark naked jumping up and down on one foot and then the other for this guy. No nurses or nothing. You put up with a lot in the Foreign Service.

From there I went on to Kashmir. My mother, by the way, had come to India to join me about two thirds of the way through. She and an American woman whose husband had been Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) secretary, the three of us were going to Kashmir together. She and my mother went on ahead, and I went on from Bombay. One went part of the way by train, up to Peshawar, and then a bus from there up to Srinagar. And I could see burning villages on the ridges across the way, at that time in the spring of '47. There was plenty of trouble already.

Then when my mother and I came back we traveled separately from our friend, Marie Buck. We got on board a train with a compartment reserved for us you couldn't lock. The lock was faulty. And under normal circumstances you wouldn't feel too worried about this. But under the circumstances, it wasn't very reassuring. And at every point on the Indian railway's journey, they would stop and there would be a great hubbub of crowds on the platform. That was very characteristic, especially in North India. Crowded platforms where people would eat, sell tea, sell this and that and eat fast foods of their kind. Any hour of day or night; the Indian clock is continuous. So I found us in this unlockable compartment, and I piled everything I could think of in terms of luggage. And I suggested that my mother take the lower berth and I spent half the

night screaming at people to get away from the door, that it was private, that it was locked and so forth, ready to leap on anybody who did push their way in. Well people pushed, but nobody pushed their way in. But that was a situation I wouldn't have encountered in south India. There was more turbulence and unruliness up there.

Now in south India there was one episode that gave us concern really. A very fine man who was a member of the high court, the Madras High Court, a Britisher, Justice Byers - he and his wife were delightful, I enjoyed their hospitality more than once - he for some reason had a revolver with him driving back from the high courts, which were at the far end of town from where he lived at the other end of town. His car was being pelted by boys throwing stones and it unnerved him, and he thought the best thing to do was to fire a warning shot. And he got out his pistol and he fired a warning shot and it hit a stone wall and the bullet ricocheted and killed a boy. I have never seen a British community so upset, and I'd never seen a man so shunned after that. He just didn't stay in Madras. He lost his position, and he was out of there. He retired to Vancouver.

Q: Did you find that there was a certain amount of tension between you and the American members, particularly you and the British community and you know, our general feeling is anti colonial? Or had we sort of been absorbed into the colonial society?

ARMSTRONG: I think my experience was in fact colored by the fact of Roy Bauer, who was very pro British. Now mind you he was objective at the same time. And the more I saw of the situation in south India, the more I was satisfied that the Indian Civil Service was really a very well intentioned and well organized civil service and very competent, in the sense that the young officer would go out to a large district so he would be the only one there and somehow could be responsible for local justice, local taxes and everything else. I thought they handled the situation well. The railroads were their creation. And everything India has today, to my way of thinking, is due to a very good colonial period. When I was with Indians who were chafing at the British overrule, I could be sympathetic with them as well.

But I have to say I also admired the British. Now individual British senior people could be a little stuffy. An American was not always considered to be of the same class and status. But happily Mr. Bauer was very well established, and that made a difference in their acceptance of me. I was the subject of a certain amount of local gossip, which was the principal problem I had I would say, because here I was, an unattached woman, circulating [with] a largely identified group of people, some Indians. So my name was often being associated with somebody or other, often with somebody I'd never heard of. Again, the only thing to do was to forget about it, to laugh at it.

Q: Well did you find, when you came into the Foreign Service, were you being warned this isn't the place for a woman and that kind of thing?

ARMSTRONG: Well I was only warned about the problem of Madras being a port and unruly seamen would be coming in. So I have to tell my unruly seamen story. In fact one man, I think he's the first person I talked to in the state department, said, "You know, if you go to a place like Madras, I know of a woman foreign service vice consul who kept a big monkey wrench on her desk and any time she felt threatened she would rattle the monkey wrench."

Well that didn't happen in my case, but in one instance when there was an American cargo vessel in town and by the way we had constant vessels in town because there was a big buildup for an invasion of Japan and there was a base called Avodi, which was outside of Madras, so we had shipload after shipload of aircraft parts, you name it. And these ships would frequently, almost invariably, be American vessels. Well one day this chap came in and, shirt open down to his belt buckle, he sits himself on the chair in front of my office and my desk and throws one leg over the arm of the chair and leans back and says, "Say, what is there to do in this town anyway?" Bauer had seen him come in. I talked to him – there was the Gimkana Club he could go to, and there were movies. I was scared to death he'd ask me for a date, and I'd have to say no thank you. And he began to study me and he said, "Say, you look familiar, what's your name?" And I told him Louise Schaffner. He says, "I went to school with you, I went to grade school with you. My name's Panny Beanzirfer." And I remembered Panny Beanzirfer, and I said, "I'm going to have to write my grandmother about you." At that point, we had a few other words and then he took off. Roy Bauer couldn't believe it. He couldn't believe it. I found it hard to believe too.

Q: Did you have to get seamen out of jail and things like that?

ARMSTRONG: That we left to the Coast Guard. They would come in, the captain would come in with some of the problems. Roy Bauer would talk to him and advise him what we could and couldn't do. Mainly we should ship them off to the next port. We also had problems with the local madam because these American seamen would come in and tear the joint apart. I got such a kick out of that. She would come in in this black dress, in the middle of the Madras summer heat and sit down in his office. He was very polite and very bland. He told her, "So sorry. Nothing we could do. Take it up with the police."

Q: Sometimes it's handy to have good relations with the local madams because they can sometimes keep Americans out of, they can sort of inform the Consul before they inform the police.

ARMSTRONG: I dare say. I don't know of any case like that coming up. Mostly it was just these guys who would get drunk and raise hell.

Q: You say you left there in '47?

ARMSTRONG: Yes. Incidentally, I'll tell you about Indian independence in Madras. The date was the 15th, and it was at midnight because the 14th was an unlucky [day]. Or the settlement with Mountbatten fell to the 15th. But the sky showed that the 15th was an inauspicious day. So Indian independence was officially effective as of midnight. Nehru was the one who organized it this way. At any rate that night the whole downtown Madras was, of course, ablaze with lights and sounds and music and dancing and what, I don't remember exactly. But the governor of Madras, Sir Archibald Nigh, who was later to become the first British High Commissioner, he had been deputy chief of the imperial general staff during the war, which meant that he was a senior military man. And he was a splendid man. And his wife was very interested in everything Indian. She made a point of taking part in charities, which were for the benefit of the Indians.

The two of them and their, his aide, and my mother was invited, not me, my mother, drove down to midtown Georgetown, which was the busy part of the Madras harbor area to enjoy the celebrations. And nobody laid a hand on them. It was in a jeep as a matter of fact. It wasn't in the official car, it was in a jeep.

Q. A jeep, open.

ARMSTRONG: An open jeep.

Q: Now, what was the feeling from Bauer and yourself about [unknown word] India?

ARMSTRONG: I think most Americans felt that India was entitled to independence. One's servants were very upset because they saw their established way of life as crumbling. I think India did deteriorate, initially. And whether it has in some fashion ever recovered, I doubt. I'm told I would see India very much changed. And I'm sure I will; it would be magnificent, the changes. But also you know all the troubles of India at this point too. So when the British left, they left a good system, but the system was disbanded.

Q: In '47 where did you go?

ARMSTRONG: In '47 I went on home leave, and my appointment was to be Praja. And I thought when I saw that, my gosh that must be in Latin America, [but] Praja's a name for Prague. There's a place, Paraj, I believe in Brazil. And I was confusing that in my mind.

ROYAL D. BISBEE
Visa & General Services Officer
Bombay (1947-1948)

General Services Officer
New Delhi (1948-1950)

Provincial Public Affairs Officer
Lucknow (1951-1956)

Mr. Bisbee was born of Missionary parents in India, where he was raised and schooled. After graduating from the University of Washington, he joined the US Army and spent World War II in Iraq with the Army Intelligence Corps. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947 and served, primarily as Public Affairs Officer, in Bombay, New Delhi, Lucknow, Salonika, Lahore, Freetown, Pretoria and Manila. Mr. Bisbee died in 2010. Mr. Bisbee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: What brought your father to India?

BISBEE: He felt cold. I have a letter on file to the effect that he was drawn to the prospect of serving others, the importance of serving others, and the necessity to aid and assist others in their development. This is what led him to that, and the acceptance by the church for his service.

Q: Let's talk about the state where your father worked in India. What was it like when he got there?

BISBEE: Fortunately, the Maharajah at that period of time was a progressive individual. He was very forthcoming for new ideas, thoughts and desires of new things. For instance, he asked my father at one stage to develop a prayer that would be acceptable to all peoples in his state: Muslim, Hindu, etcetera. My father did this and said, tongue in cheek, "Roy, I didn't develop anything new. All I did was translate the Lord's Prayer into the local language, which was very acceptable."

From then on, my father could do most anything. He was asked to do all kinds of things for the Maharajah. In fact, he aided the Maharajah in coming to the United States to attend one of the large evangelical movements that was held in Chicago in about 1934.

Q: Where is the state in India? I am trying to put it on a mental map of India.

BISBEE: The State of Baroda is in the western area of the country, in the area of the country that was most exposed to early progress. Here you have the Indus River coming down into the western area. All the early excavations that gave evidence for the early cultivation of civilization are here. You have to think about the river valleys such as Mesopotamia, the Indus River, and all the rivers that came together in those areas. They were all talking to one another in one form or another, through shipping or...

Q: There's a tremendous amount of shipping in the Indian Ocean.

BISBEE: What one has to visualize is that you had a state such as Baroda that was not isolated. It had its talons into a variety of civilizations. There was a highly developed culture.

Q: Again, you were born in what year?

BISBEE: I was born on February 21st, 1923.

Q: How long were you there?

BISBEE: On and off, I was there for about 17 years.

Q: Could you talk about your experiences, what you were picking up from your parents, about Gandhi and that Movement. And first of all, what about the British Raj? I don't know whether the Maharajah reached into the state or not, but what about the influence that was there?

BISBEE: First of all, my father wanted us to remember that we were Americans. He was always outspoken, saying, "Remember son, we are American. We do not involve ourselves with local

affairs. We may be sympathetic and very attuned to our democratic values, but we are American. We respect the local values, the activities that are taking place, the Gandhi movement, the activities of Nehru, and the needs of the British.”

Q: This is all very nice, but there had to be a certain point where you or your family saw either the injustices, the rationale, or something. Did you come away from there with any particular feeling for the colonial world?

BISBEE: You are asking me a question about the injustices of the British Raj. I cannot say that I saw, as a youngster, injustices of the British Raj. What I did see was law and order, the fact that the Indians respected the law and order as they saw it, and they respected it more when the British left. They were asking that the British stay on longer. That wasn't possible to do because of the needs of the times, the political developments, and splitting the country into two parts.

My family was friends of the Nehrus and Gandhi.

Q: Where did you go to school?

BISBEE: I went to school at Woodstock in Mussoorie, the Quadrangle.

Q: Was this a Methodist school?

BISBEE: This was a school that was founded during the days of the East India Company. Other schools were later incorporated into the Quadrangle.

Q: This school is located in Mussoorie, you say?

BISBEE: It is in Mussoorie, which is located at approximately 5,000 feet in the Mani Mountains.

Q: Did the student body consist of just foreign children? Were there students from the Indian ruling class?

BISBEE: At the time I was there, it consisted of children of American missionaries and included children of leading Indians. For instance, Chandralekha Pandit was in my class, the daughter of Mrs. Pandit.

Q: This was Nehru's sister.

BISBEE: Nevertheless, I knew all these people.

Q: Did the political turmoil penetrate to the school?

BISBEE: No, it did not, and it did not involve itself into that kind of turmoil.

Q: Were you able to get vacation time where you could go out on a bike into the village or the countryside?

BISBEE: Oh yes. I was with my father on his tours into the villages. That was how I learned my languages. I can tell you right now that there isn't another person in the U.S. Government who speaks it as well as I do.

Q: How many languages were you learning?

BISBEE: I learned Gujarati, which was my first language. I grew up speaking it. My father encouraged me to learn it. In fact, he often said what a wonderful creature I would make in Guajarati. Then I went on and learned Hindi and, later, Urdu. I was able to translate for Presidents Johnson and Eisenhower.

Q: Aside from your father, did you get any Americanization influence?

BISBEE: How do you mean?

Q: I was wondering whether you were sent to the States from time to time.

BISBEE: No, I was not. We would come home when we had the money. Five years is probably the earliest time we would come home. In one period, we didn't have the money to come home.

Q: Of course, we are talking about the time of the Great Depression.

BISBEE: That's right.

Q: Were you attracted towards missionary life as a kid?

BISBEE: Not particularly. I was more attracted to things which I was able to read and learn. For instance, my father would periodically have to go to Bombay. He would take me as a youngster. Bombay was a big city.

Q: Was that the closest big city?

BISBEE: It was the closest really big city. It was the commercial hub of the western part of the country.

My father would take me, because he wanted the company I guess. He and I would go and stop in front of the American Consulate General. He would point out the flag with the stars and strips, telling me the reasons for them. He would then go upstairs and closet himself with the Consul General, to talk about things up country, as a good American should do. I would be relegated to talking with the Indian staff in the back. They would all be hilarious with this little American boy, speaking in their language. John J. Macdonald interested me in the Foreign Service, and I have never forgotten that.

Q: When you were home, was there the equivalent of a gang or a bunch of boys that you played with?

BISBEE: When I was back home, I would play with the youngsters in the compound. That helped me learn the language. My father encouraged me to translate for a number of his sermons.

Q: By the time you reached college age, where were you pointed towards?

BISBEE: I was already focused on the Foreign Service. I had wanted to go to Tufts, but I couldn't make it to Tufts because of the shipping accommodation at the time. I was a whole month late because I had to go around South Africa and up through Trinidad. So I went up to my grandparents' area. I talked to the people at the University of Washington. I told them who I was, that I was an in-state student. They looked at my record and found that I didn't have all the credits necessary. I could enter the university as a special student, which I did. From then on, I went ahead with my scholastic work for the Foreign Service.

Q: Back in India, were you much of a reader?

BISBEE: Yes, I was.

Q: Where did you get your books from?

BISBEE: They were second-hand books that came from the Methodist Church in Spokane. They were books that nobody seemed to want. I used to read every one of them. That was the way it was.

Q: With your language, being American and not being tied to the British, how did you find the attitude of the Indian military?

BISBEE: The Indian military were very friendly to me. I can suggest to you, [phrase in Indian/Gujarati?], you and we are of one country. I could just about do anything for the embassy. As a matter of fact, I was asked to do almost anything for the embassy. Henderson would ask me to do all kinds of things for the embassy, him.

Q: How was Mrs. Henderson when you were there?

[laughter]

BISBEE: Are you being facetious?

Q: No. I think of the stories that supposedly when he was Ambassador to India, sitting in the grand dining hall, which was very opulent, and she was very carefully scrubbing all her utensils with her napkin saying something like, "You can never tell in places like this."

BISBEE: Elise Henderson was a very sensitive and kindly woman. She was very intolerant of what she would call abuse. She couldn't stand or accept any type of slight. Does that mean that

she was intolerant? Yes, she was intolerant as all hell. Was she intolerant towards me? No, because she needed me to deal with the servants and day-to-day aspects of the operation of her establishment. She couldn't seem to be able to keep servants in line, or order things from the bazaar. She would order things and then Henderson would say, "Roy, please take this back. I cannot have this. I cannot pay for this. I have no way to deal with this."

It is strange that you should ask that. No one else has ever asked me.

Q: Don't worry about that.

Was anybody in personnel saying okay, you've got these languages? You're off to India.

BISBEE: There was no discussion. It was just assumed I was going. It was as though someone had already asked for me. I have a sneaking suspicion that the person who asked for me was Howard Donovan. He was Consul of Embassy in New Delhi, and he knew my parents. My father said he asked that I be sent as language and consular officer.

Q: When did you arrive in New Delhi?

BISBEE: I arrived in Bombay first, in 1948.

MRS. BISBEE: It was January 7th, 1947.

Q: Was this during or after the split, partition?

BISBEE: I arrived during the whole process of the split. I had the whole business of the docks thrown at me. I had to sort out all of the embassy's shipping and seamen aspects of this whole thing. It was a nightmare, because you had materials being shipped from Karachi being transferred to Bombay, and materials being shipped back up to Karachi. It was a mess.

Q: I assume you had local employees who were having to split too, weren't they?

BISBEE: Not necessarily the ones in Bombay; they were pretty solid. The ones in the north had more of a problem.

MRS. BISBEE: His parents were in Delhi at the time.

Q: What was the Consulate General like?

BISBEE: There was a general manager, John J. Macdonald, a very fine gentleman. He was a good executive. Without his executive skills, I can assure you that place would not have operated well. You had a number of other staff members who, in my opinion, were not worth a damn. They were more interested in careers that were not possible there at that time. Nevertheless, we were able to operate, because I was immediately thrown into doing visas, the seamen and

shipping aspects. I was too worried about how I was going to proceed and learning about the job at the same time, rather than worrying what my career was going to be.

Q: Talk a little about seamen and shipping. This was an era when there were still American seamen.

BISBEE: Very much so.

Q: In later years, they've sort of disappeared. There used to be what they used to call the China Coast. What about the Indian Coast? These were pretty much people who, I won't say the dregs of sailorhood, but they weren't the greatest. They hung around and lived off the ports where they could live quite cheaply. There were girls and booze. They would get on a ship reluctantly when they had to pick up a little money to keep going. Was that the atmosphere?

BISBEE: Very much so. It was in a way a period which was volatile. You never knew whether the seamen that were in transit in nature were actually what they were pretending to be, or whether they were somehow associated with some kind of organization that was out in some fashion to divert goods and services.

As a matter of fact, my first promotion was due to my being able to find 12 cases of Scotch whisky that had not been breached in some fashion for the embassy in New Delhi, for which they were very pleased.

Q: We are talking about the immediate post-war period. Life was quite different then. You had diversions from the supply line to the Red Ball Express in France and everywhere. It was pretty freewheeling.

BISBEE: It was not only freewheeling, but people thought they could do anything they wanted to do. It was just not possible. It was just like this Miss Cox, for instance. She came to the coast of India on a ship from Nairobi. She just thought she could get off the ship, come ashore, and go do anything she wanted to. She couldn't. It was not possible to do that, certainly not without her passport and other documents. So what happened was she landed in jail.

Q: When was this? This was quite an important episode in a much later time.

BISBEE: This was in 1948.

Q: So this is early on in your career?

BISBEE: Yes.

Q: What was her first name?

BISBEE: Her full name was Una Chapman Cox.

Q: How did she come to your attention?

BISBEE: She was incarcerated, in jail. I was called by the locals. "Saab, come quickly. The police have one lady in jail and she has to be taken care of. Come quickly."

As soon as I found out what the evidence was in terms of who she was and why she was there, I went and talked with the Consul General. He said, "Do what you can. Get her out."

That's exactly what we did. What I did was to take my local right-hand man and go and interview her to find out what ship she had come from, and to send word back by the local agent to get her documents and papers, get them validated locally, and get her out of jail. The Consul General put her up and got her off to New Delhi and points east.

Q: How old was she?

BISBEE: I really don't know that.

Q: Was she a young girl?

BISBEE: No, I think she was in her late 20s.

Q: I'm surprised the authorities would make a fuss about this.

BISBEE: They didn't really. I smoothed it out as much as possible.

Q: I'm surprised it went as far as her being arrested.

BISBEE: They didn't know who she was or what she was doing there.

Q: So as far as they were concerned, was she a free floating spirit?

BISBEE: That's right. They didn't know what the hell she was up to.

The captain of the ship was of no account. He was a drunk.

Q: How did she react?

BISBEE: She was very pleased. She was a person who was interested in what was going on. That was the reason why she had come ashore, because she was interested in what was transpiring. Who was to know that later on she was going to be...

Q: You might explain the reason why we are dwelling on this. The Una Chapman Cox Foundation has been a significant factor in the Foreign Service. Many years later, she set up the foundation to help things dealing with the Foreign Service.

BISBEE: She was instrumental in donating large amounts of money to aid and further the ability of Foreign Service Officers to broaden their horizons and academic activities, without which they would not have had the opportunity to accomplish. It has been a very fine opportunity for...

Q: You had no idea this was in the offing?

BISBEE: No, I had no idea who she was or what she was until a couple of years ago when I was informed.

Q: Let's talk a bit about Bombay. Was Bombay at all affected by the partition? Or was that over the horizon?

BISBEE: Bombay was not affected by partition in the sense that you had sections of this and sections of that. Yes, you do have and always will have in places like India sections of the city that are very demarcated as Muslim or as Hindu. But to say that Bombay is one religious aspect or another would be incorrect. Bombay is a very commercial and cosmopolitan city. That's the way that it will always be. The same holds for Calcutta, which is very cosmopolitan.

Q: Had Bollywood made a foothold in Bombay at the time?

BISBEE: Not at that time. It didn't exist.

Q: Did you get involved with visas?

BISBEE: Yes, I was doing that.

Q: Was there much in the way of movement towards the United States? We had a quota of maybe 100 a year for immigrants. For non-immigrant visas, was there much going on?

BISBEE: Not at the time. It was more in the nature of people wanting to go to Great Britain. I did not have that kind of problem, although there were interested people wanting to send their children to the United States for studies. There was not a significant number.

Q: Were there any social unrest or political movements going on in the area that concerned us? The Cold War was getting its start, and you had a little farther south the communist area. Were those things going on?

BISBEE: The movements were. In 1947, you had communist movements going on in what was known as Kerala. Nehru was attempting to deal with that. There were separatist movements going on in Eastern India, but there were not separatist activities in Bombay.

MRS. BISBEE: There was mass slaughter, while Muslims were trying to get to Pakistan, and Hindus were trying to get to India.

BISBEE: I'm trying not to deal with that entirely.

It had to do with money, with wages, and the differences between the people who were members of a scheduled caste and those of a non-scheduled caste.

Q: I'm not familiar with the terms. Does scheduled caste mean the Brahmins?

BISBEE: Yes.

Q: And then moving to the Untouchables?

BISBEE: There were Sudras and others. There were caste differences.

Q: What was the team like at the consulate general?

BISBEE: I found the team fractured. The Consul General was almost by himself. I did not find him to be the leader of a team, but almost by himself.

MRS. BISBEE: Macdonald was replaced by Charles O. Thompson, who was very controversial. His second-in-command thought he should have been elevated.

BISBEE: There were about three or four others in the consulate general who, in my opinion, were all acting on their own and not acting as a team. Quite frankly, I was quite pleased to be transferred to New Delhi.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. The next time, we'll pick up when you are off to New Delhi in 1948.

How was living in Bombay?

BISBEE: We were youngsters and as far as we were concerned, we were perfectly fine. We did not have any problems. There were just the two of us and one child. We had a nice apartment with free servants. We thought we were doing pretty well.

Q: Very good. We'll pick this up in 1948 when you are off to New Delhi.

Today is May 26th, 2010. This is the second interview with Royal Bisbee.

In 1948, you were rather happy to get out of Iraq and go to New Delhi.

BISBEE: Let's amend that. I was pleased to be able to serve my country and to be able to go on and get my degree at the University of Washington. For that purpose, yes, I was pleased. I also introduced my new wife to my family in Bombay and to see to the birth of my new child.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

BISBEE: I met my wife in Baghdad. It was not a dramatic experience. We were joyfully united. She was a visa officer. In those days, they deigned to send women to do visa work, because they

couldn't find men since the men were in the army. We poor young fellows were without the joyful experience of intelligent young ladies.

Q: In 1948, you went to New Delhi.

BISBEE: In 1948, I went to New Delhi.

Q: What was your job?

BISBEE: My job was two-fold. One was to serve with due diligence my ambassador, Loy Henderson. He asked me to do all kinds of services. He knew that I had considerable experience, both educationally as well as linguistically. Secondly, he asked me to do general services work. General services work is, as we all know, whatever you want to call it.

Q: It's the glue that makes the embassy run.

BISBEE: You're exactly right.

MRS. BISBEE: It's a great place to use a person with languages.

Q: Before we get to your work, 1948 rings loud and clear in India. What was happening from the perspective of the embassy then? How were things going?

BISBEE: The embassy itself was being reorganized. It was being rethought because they had no idea that there would be such tumult in the country. Nehru was a new factor to them. In many respects, Nehru himself was a new intellectual. They had to revamp their thinking. They suddenly recognized that India was going to need many things in the way of reorganization, administration, food, and more understanding. There were going to be two countries, not just one. Suddenly, there were two countries. And here they were, unprepared.

The British had not prepared them for two countries, and the British were certainly not prepared for this whole aspect.

Q: We had become used to dealing with the British, as the rulers of the country. All of a sudden, we are having to deal with the Congress Party. This can be very difficult. Sometimes our officers get more anglophile than the British themselves.

BISBEE: I think that some possibly were. Others were not. Henderson was not. He was more of a Middle Eastphile.

Q: And also Eastern Europe.

BISBEE: Correct.

Q: Was his wife from Estonia?

BISBEE: Yes.

He was not, but that was probably the hardest wrench for him in many respects. I think this is where he ran into heavy weather in Congress. As a result, he was eventually replaced.

Q: What was the problem with Congress?

BISBEE: I think Congress suddenly realized that they were going to have to come up with a great deal of largesse. They were very much taken with our friend, Mr. Nehru, and his ability to persuade. Suddenly, there he was on the scene. They wanted to keep him on our side, as it were. There were many who also thought at the time that he was very much left wing.

Q: He was. He was a London School of Economics standard bearer.

BISBEE: And he had Mr. Menon.

Q: When I was much younger, I remember Krishna Menon as the evil presence.

BISBEE: As I saw it and as I advised Howard Donovan, this man was a menace to the joint development of an alliance of a strong nature on the subcontinent. And in my opinion he destroyed the intelligence services of the Pakistan-India compact that was developing at the time. He was a real son of a bitch.

Q: You were obviously a very junior officer, but because of your language ability, were you able to sit in on meetings with Henderson and Nehru.

BISBEE: I didn't sit in on meeting with Henderson, but I did with Howard Donovan who was the Deputy Chief of Mission. I had to be extremely careful. As you suggested, I was an extremely junior officer. As I told Howard Donovan, I was not in any way to push myself forward.

Q: One of the things I find interesting about these oral histories, when I talk to people who were officers, they were often the flies on the wall. While the great people were meeting, there is a Royal Bisbee sitting off in the corner taking notes or something. Were you picking up from the Nehru entourage and the American Henderson entourage a certain antipathy? Nehru had very little regard for the United States.

BISBEE: No, he had a great deal of regard for the United States, but he did not have much regard for Henderson.

Q: Why?

BISBEE: I think because he thought Henderson was shallow. Mrs. Henderson did not help.

Q: From what I gather and I may be putting words in your mouth, I was told she had the racial traits of the petty aristocracies...

BISBEE: He felt that Henderson was arrogant. That didn't mean that he wasn't arrogant.

I probably knew Nehru very well for a number of reasons. One was the fact that I had been to his home in Surrey, where his daughters went to school. His daughter, Chandralekha Pandit, was in my class, and we were good friends. I had been to their home in New Delhi on several occasions. As a matter of fact, Henderson didn't know that, but Donovan did. Donovan requested me to keep him informed of any new developments.

Henderson went to Nehru and said, "I want to send a party to rescue Lowell Thomas."

Nehru said, "Oh fine. How is the party going to be comprised?"

Henderson said, "I'm going to send an embassy officer and a nurse. In addition, I would request that the Government of India send a comparable party of a doctor and a nurse."

Nehru, in his usual shrewd way, said, "And who is this officer that you are going to send?"

He said, "I'm going to send Royal Bisbee."

When he came back to the embassy, Henderson called me into his office and said, "Mr. Nehru has approved of you leading the party. And by the way, Bisbee, I was not aware that Nehru knew you."

"I see, sir. I hope I have been useful."

That was all that was said.

Q: What was this party, the group you went with?

BISBEE: I think it was a birthday party. You always tried to keep things on as low a key as possible, not make it something official.

Incidentally, that's in my book.

Q: Did the embassy sort of divide up into parties? Sort of pro-Indian government and – I won't say anti-Indian government. This was not easy. From what I gather, the Indians have never been an easy people to deal with. They tend to preach and we tend to preach. Two sets of preachers don't make for a very good combination.

BISBEE: You are asking a question which is extremely difficult to respond to. Perhaps I can put it this way.

There are those who sought to make themselves useful to the Indian government by perhaps acting as favorites. They hoped therefore to be useful to their own embassy. That doesn't always make for success. I think many of them fell short of that. There were other people, like Andrew

Cory who was very useful. I believe he was able to play a very good part in the general dynamics of the policy within the embassy. There were others whose – who was the lady who was assigned for social welfare work in India? Somebody in Washington thought this was a marvelous thing to do because of the activities of women on the Indian scene. Somebody like a social welfare person assigned to show what wonderful works we do. The name was Hersey.

MRS. BISBEE: She was a relative of John Hersey, the writer who wrote Hiroshima and A Bell for Adano.

BISBEE: She provided nothing.

MRS. BISBEE: The Labor Attaché...

BISBEE: That's another kettle of fish. You could argue that why assign a Labor Attaché to India? There is nothing you could add to the labor scene in India by a Labor Attaché from the United States. They were at right angles to each other.

Q: It may have been somewhat of a reflection of what happened in London. When the Labour Government came in in 1945, we had practically no one who knew the Labour Party people, except for the Labor Attaché. I think there was a boosting of Labor Attachés around the world because you better have somebody who knew something about this.

BISBEE: What is the point of a Labor Attaché in India who cannot speak the language of the labor people? He used to ask me how was this particular labor movement organized? How did this man arrive at this particular position? He was a perfectly fine man. I liked Sokoloff. He was welcomed by the Russians at their festivities. But what use was this?

Q: Where do you find somebody who comes out of the labor movement in the United States who would know about Indian migration? We had a quota of 100. Other countries sent people off to Argentina for instance. They spoke Spanish because they were of Spanish heritage and they were union members. I'm not excusing this...

BISBEE: I know what you are saying.

MRS. BISBEE: You don't mean to say people have to have the language.

BISBEE: No, I don't.

Q: Obviously, we don't make much headway in situation like that, but there it is.

What was your impression of the Indian bureaucracy, which was well trained?

BISBEE: The ICS, the Indian Civil Service.

Q: Were they an effective organization under the new regime.

BISBEE: They were very effective. From stem to stern, the Indian Civil Service was one of the finest organizations then and now, and has been the glue of the country that has held it together. It is going to need that glue. Otherwise, that country is going to shatter.

Q: Was there the feeling at the time that you had this country – I'm sure you called it a state – with rulers scattered about, that it would not shatter?

BISBEE: At the time, no. Most of us recognized at the time that it was the Indian Civil Service that was going to hold the country together and was holding it together. Nehru himself recognized it. He relied on the Indian Civil Service to hold the states together, and to hold the central government together. When in the face of communist problems in Kerala and other areas of the country, it was the Indian Civil Service on whom he relied to hold it together. He didn't rely on anybody else.

Q: Remembering that you were way down in the embassy, but again you were a fly on the wall. Were we concerned about Kerala, where the Communist Party was very strong?

BISBEE: The Communist Party was strong in the eastern, southwest, and central part of the country. And it is today. Don't let anybody tell you it is not.

Q: Today nobody gives a damn, but in those days, from the American point of view...

Given your language and your contacts, were you able to break loose from the embassy social set? Did you get out and around?

BISBEE: I was out all the time. I was not a member of the social set. I didn't live at the Taj Mahal. I lived separately in a portion of my parents' home in Old Delhi. I had little or not contact with the social aspects. All my social contacts, whether with the Indian Civil Service or others, came and visited me. For instance, John Law visited me after our sojourn together up in Tibet. I was a part of it, yet I wasn't.

Q: What was your impression of the Indian society you were dealing with? How were they dealing with this partition? It was the very early days.

BISBEE: They were dealing with it as best they could. I was living in an area where shots were being fired right across our living areas. Let's put it this way: they were dealing with it in a quiet subduedness. That's the best way I can tell you. There wasn't any other way for them to deal with it. The police weren't much good. They were a bunch of flunkies, as far as that went. Everybody was concerned about their own existence, and how best to survive, where to go and what to do.

Q: How long were you in this posting?

BISBEE: Do you mean the total Indian posting?

Q: No, just when you went to New Delhi in 1948?

BISBEE: I was there until the first period of 1950.

Q: So the Korean War hadn't broken out when you left?

BISBEE: No, the Korean War hadn't broken out. I was asked to join, but I was already a vice consul, and I decided I was going to remain a vice consul.

Q: When you left in 1950, where did you go?

BISBEE: In 1950, I was assigned to Washington, although Washington is not the right word for it. What I was assigned to was the University of Pennsylvania.

Q: Doing what?

BISBEE: At the University of Pennsylvania, I was assigned to language training.

Q: What language?

BISBEE: Hindi.

Q: Good heavens. How much Hindi did you need?

BISBEE: I didn't need any more. I finally had to tell Washington this was a waste of everyone's time. I'm not getting anywhere. I'm not doing you justice. I need an assignment. Isn't there something in the wings? There was. What was in the wings was the Voice of America

They asked me to start up the Voice of America broadcast to South Asia. Wonderful. I was able to recruit, monitor, and tailor the programs directly to the South Asia area in Hindi and Urdu.

Q: How long were you doing this?

BISBEE: Unfortunately, I did it only for about eight months.

Q: This was until when?

BISBEE: Until the beginning of 1952. Then I was assigned to go to India to open up the posting in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.

Q: What was the situation? I think of the siege of Lucknow and the Indian Mutiny. I assume we got involved in observing what was going on there.

BISBEE: You've got to understand that there is a saying in India that how Uttar Pradesh goes politically, so goes the country. Just as in the adage of the Middle East, the way that the Pushtunstan area goes, so goes Afghanistan. People better not forget it, because that is the politically controllable area.

I'm sorry. I digress, but what I'm trying to get across is that there are two areas of the world which are very important. One is where we are now, and where we went into Lucknow. It was to Lucknow that I was sent.

Uttar Pradesh was the home of Nehru. Uttar Pradesh is the capital.

We were asked to open up a post at Lucknow. I arrived there with my family in December. Chester Bowles arrived about the same time. He was very generous in that I was not versed in the politics of the time, although I had gotten to know the governor who was a Gujarati. He and I became very good friends. He encouraged me in my Gujarati language. He got a big kick out of Bowles when he first arrived.

I'll tell you this story because it is anecdotal. When Bowles arrived, I had to make arrangements for luncheons, dinners, and for the ladies to see various sights in the area. It's a very historic area. The dining table was beautifully set up. The cards on the table were beautifully engraved. Except for one thing: the name was spelled Bowels.

Q: I'm sure it wasn't the first time it happened.

BISBEE: No, I'm sure. I had to ask, "Why did you do that?"

He said, "I didn't mean to do that Roy. Why would I do that?"

I said, "I think you might have done that simply to have a good laugh."

I held meetings for Bowles. He wanted to know whether or not there had been any individuals who had gone to Everest. He was on his way to send his credentials to Nepal. I told him not to my knowledge, but the time would come, I was sure. It did, and I put it into my book.

Q: What was your impression of Bowles as ambassador? He was a major figure in the advertising world, which was a very important world in that era.

BISBEE: He was a mess. He was coming to a country where the ambassador was looked upon as someone who was well turned out and well featured. When he arrived, he was – what shall I say? – dressed down?

Q: Unkempt?

BISBEE: Unkempt is the right word. What is the matter with people? Don't they recognize what we as a country are? How we should be showing ourselves? At least keeping up with the local Joneses?

Q: The Korean War must have been quite an issue that you had to deal with in your time.

BISBEE: No, the Korean War was not the issue that I had to deal with. What I had to deal with was arms aid to Pakistan. The Chinese propaganda was vicious. I had to fix that. So did our people who came out to make speeches. They had to face some very vicious diatribes.

Q: Were there lots of demonstrations against you?

BISBEE: No, believe it or not, I did not have demonstrations against me. There were demonstrations all around me, but none directly against me.

Q: How was Chinese influence projected in your area?

BISBEE: Through their publications, all kinds of publications. If you want to pursue it further, you could say that throughout the bazaar, the kiosks and through people showing their various Chinese publications. But, there were no demonstrations, per se.

Let me change it a bit. There were such things as *Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai*, that is, Chinese-India brothers. There was that kind of demonstration, but there was nothing jointly of that nature demonstrated against us Americans.

As a matter of fact, I went out of my way to try to make sure that we did not in some fashion do something that would emulate or in some fashion annoy the local Communist Party. The problem with a lot of this is that many of our people will feel that it is essential to counter the demonstrations and the effects of, they think, the local Communist Party movements. There was no need for that, because most of it was hollow. I did not find it necessary to try to counter that. My counter was to present a good American face.

Q: Did you get much direction from the Voice of America?

BISBEE: No sir.

Q: Did they just let you do your thing?

BISBEE: No, the Voice of America never gave me any direction.

Q: For a while you were working with the Voice of America, weren't you?

BISBEE: For a while there, we were operating closely with the Voice of America, with the directions, as it were. But it was always implied directions. There was never any saying, "You will do so-and-so."

Or it would simply be, today the news will be that the Chinese have taken over the Tibetan government. The news would come through Bombay.

Q: Were the Soviets and the Chinese, from your observation, playing the same line in India? Or were they doing different things?

BISBEE: The Soviets were playing their own distinctive line, not a Chinese line. The Chinese were playing their own line. The Russians, in my opinion, were concerned that the Chinese would take matters into their own hands. I was being attacked by the Russians on Radio Moscow as a spy for the Americans in the Northwest Frontier. The Russians were concerned about the possibility to some degree that the Chinese would take that into their own hands on the border.

Q: The border, of course, was a prime focus in Chinese-Indian relations, wasn't it?

BISBEE: Not quite at that time, but it was becoming so. It became so in about 1954.

Q: As a practical point of view, did the United States have much interest in India.

BISBEE: The United States had a considerable interest in India, but they didn't know what they would be able to do with it. How would they be able to protect it? They wouldn't want it to go communist. At the same time, how much largesse were they able to produce?

Q: At that time and for decades, India was not much of a market because of Indian mercantile policies that didn't allow much trade.

BISBEE: What was a concern was who was going to control the trade in Southeast Asia? That was of concern. And it later proved to be the case. The Chinese have attempted, and Mao himself in several of his speeches pointed out their interest in controlling the trade of Southeast Asia, and spilling over into Africa.

Q: Was the atmosphere of the Foreign Service beginning to feel McCarthyism? Was that striking around you?

BISBEE: No, I never felt it.

Q: No people you knew?

BISBEE: No.

Q: India was sort of out of the line of sight. It was more Europe and China, I guess.

BISBEE: McCarthyism was a matter of Europe and China. This is where you began to have the problems with respect to the opening up of China, which was important to the United States at the time.

Q: We didn't really open up relations until the 1970s, but when you and your colleagues, particularly the junior officers, were talking about it, was there a feeling of gee, we should really open up to China?

BISBEE: No, not where I was, but I knew that was going on. Of course, that was where it came to pass – who was the fellow who went off to the island? What was his name? They had to decide.

Q: Do you mean Chiang Kai-shek going to Taiwan?

BISBEE: Thank you. Yes. There was a big decision that had to be made about opening up various parts of China.

Q: It was a very difficult time.

Did you leave there in 1953?

BISBEE: No, I left Lucknow in 1956.

Q: It was a fairly long tour there.

BISBEE: It was a hell of a long tour there.

Q: How did you feel about relations with the embassy?

BISBEE: I felt as though the embassy could have done more. I did not think in terms of what they were doing for me. I was thinking in terms of how we were being able to do for our own policy in the country. As far as I was concerned, I was satisfied with what was happening in Lucknow. I had no issues there. I had all the support I could possibly have. They were sending me people to give speeches and do all kinds of things. I was asked to do give talks, really great speeches. I was asked to translate for the Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson. I was extremely busy.

Q: Did Eisenhower make a visit to India while you were there?

BISBEE: Yes he did.

Q: How did that go?

BISBEE: I don't like to speak about Eisenhower in terms of India, because I was in Lahore at the time. As far as my information was concerned, he did very well. The Indians liked him, particularly the Indian intelligence services. That's was they told me. Good for him.

Q: Did you have good contacts with the intelligence service?

BISBEE: Yes I did. I had to continue to dissuade them however that I was not an intelligence officer.

Q: I understand that. We look at it today and there is a real problem in the neighbor, Pakistan, with their intelligence service. It seems to be playing a two-sided game of who they are supporting.

BISBEE: I understand.

Q: How stood the intelligence service that you could observe the intelligence service during this time? Were they political? Were they professional? Or what?

BISBEE: Excuse me, but the language you used is slightly doubled.

Q: Let's talk about the Indian intelligence service.

BISBEE: The Indian intelligence service is highly trained, and highly Western. You also have to understand it has highly religious aspects in it. Taking those things into consideration, you also have to realize that it also has in it elements of local prejudices. This is where it takes very careful analysis to work out what is essential in their needs. I find it difficult to sit here and respond to your question, because I know there are going to be six different responses, or more, to what you are asking. Yet I understand what you are saying to me. Where is the loyalty? Where is the focal point? Where is the direction that is essential that you can depend upon? This is very difficult.

Q: We are talking about the early 1950s.

BISBEE: When you go back to the 1950s, you had the opportunity, particularly with Ayoub who wanted to have a joint intelligence service.

Q: Do you mean the Prime Minister of Pakistan?

BISBEE: Yes. It fell apart as a result of both Krishna Menon and the problems with the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO). So you had those issues.

Q: Pakistan was in SEATO and India was not.

BISBEE: That is correct.

Q: Was Kashmir a major issue while you were there?

BISBEE: Let me point this out to you. Kashmir must be treated as an internal issue of India and Pakistan. It must not be given the slightest hint of it being treated separately as a matter of concern to the international community. If that ever happens, you are going to have a totally different kettle of fish going on in that area.

If I may go back, I mentioned a country, and Kandahar is what I wanted to mention there. That area through Kandahar in Afghanistan – but that's a different issue.

Where was I? Kashmir is an issue that is a tribal issue. It is an issue that has to be treated locally. If it is given the slightest hint of being treated as an international affair, it's going to really be a bombshell in the area. I think you are aware of it as a result of the Maharajah, who was a real idiot, deciding to opt for India, when the bulk of the population of Muslim. He was an idiot.

When President Johnson came to Pakistan, he gave a big speech there. He asked me to translate. I think I did a good job, because he never swore at me. He was asked a question from the audience during the question and answer period saying, "When sir, are you going to do something about the Kashmir question? Are we going to have a solution?"

The President put his hand over the mike and said, "Son, have you got an answer for this? Sometimes there are answers from the mouths of babes."

I said, "Yes, I do. You don't say anything sir. You simply say that this is in the hands of your illustrious leaders, who are very capable of taking care of matters of this nature. They are doing a wonderful job to settle the situation."

It went off okay.

My response to a question of that nature is that is going to settle itself, but it is going to take money and political pressure from within.

Q: Where did you go after you left India?

BISBEE: I wrote to Henderson saying that I have been here long enough. I think you had ideas that I was to go on elsewhere. In the meantime, Lowell Thomas had also written to Henderson and said, "What are you doing for Royal Bisbee?"

I had not written to anybody.

Q: Loy Henderson was in charge of administration in the Department of State, a very powerful figure.

BISBEE: He was. He wrote me back a beautiful letter, as was his wont, and as I expected, saying nothing. He said yes, I must do something. Thank you very much for drawing this matter to my attention. So I found myself in Greece, in Thessaloniki.

HOWARD IMBREY
CIA Officer
Bombay (1948-1950)

CIA Officer
Kerala (1950-1951)

Upon receiving an education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Howard Imbrey joined the CIA in 1948. Among Mr. Imbrey's CIA postings included India, Sri Lanka, Congo, France, and Italy. Mr. Imbrey was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 2001.

IMBREY: So, that was pretty good. At any rate, after training, let's see. They sent us to various courses in world affairs and in the countries of our interest. I was immediately singled out for India because of the language and the fact that I'd been there before and prepared for a post in Bombay. And we had a little trouble with the State Department as you can imagine getting our people into various posts. The two brothers Allen and John Foster Dulles.

Q: Well, this is still 1948, so Foster didn't get in until '53?

IMBREY: No, Dean Acheson was there at the time, but the State Department was jumpy as usual.

Q: Well, it was a new thing, too.

IMBREY: Yes. Then the guy whom I was replacing, Lennox Fogg, his parents were of the Fogg Museum in Boston. This chap had a drinking problem that culminated with the thought that he might be able to fly. He flew out the first floor or second story window where he was living. Didn't do him any good. He was too drunk, I guess. He survived very well. The State Department said that's enough and they said to the CIA to get that man replaced right away. So, immediately I was shipped out there to replace this guy.

Q: This was in '48?

IMBREY: Yes. '48.

Q: When did the great partition of India take place?

IMBREY: '47.

Q: '47? So, it was sort of immediately afterwards?

IMBREY: Yes.

Q: You were in Bombay from when to when?

IMBREY: '48 to '50. Just two years. The ambassador there was Timberlake. He was a leader and ambassador to the Congo and Peru and a few other places. We got along splendidly.

Q: But you were in Bombay rather than New Delhi, is that right?

IMBREY: Yes, that was in Bombay. It was a Consulate General. There were all sorts of people to meet there. First of all there was a navy. We were interested in the Indian navy's ability to cooperate with us and CIA developed sources there. A lot of funny things that were going on there, the guy that I had there was the chief of operations for the Indian navy and he was an admiral and his headquarters were in Bombay. One of the things that interested him that he tried to get me interested in was pornographic pictures, which he had by the ton.

Q: Well, you already had good training with the comic books.

IMBREY: Yes, I had wonderful training for them, but he said, "Do you think you could get me some others?" So, I didn't tell headquarters about this because I thought that was a little risky, but I had a friend who was the chief of station, Dick Clise, in New Delhi. I said, "Dick, what are we going to do?" And, he said, "Don't worry. I have sources for that sort of stuff and they produce a lot of the stuff here." What they have are these little books, some are even typed scripts of various methods of intercourse you wouldn't believe. So, I always had a supply of these things to give him and so our relationship was very good. The only funny thing about that was I went to Delhi on one occasion with my wife and four of us went out to dinner and on our way to the restaurant a guy came running pell-mell with a handful of these things and saying, "Mr. Clise, Mr. Clise, I have some more for you." His wife didn't know anything about this.

Q: You mentioned a wife. When did she appear on the scene?

IMBREY: We were married in Bombay.

Q: What was her background?

IMBREY: She was the sister of my roommate in college. I used to visit my roommate in New York when she was a little girl and eventually we got together and I proposed when drunk.

Q: Great. What was your impression of how India was settling in as a new nation?

IMBREY: There was enough time for Bombay. There were a lot of people who were being oppressed in Pakistan, the new Pakistan and particularly the Sindhi population. Sindhis are a national element from the province of Sin in Pakistan. They're generally distrusted for very good reasons. They're very sly people and they have a lot of attributes that are not particularly inviting. These people came down to Bombay in droves, set up shops, displaced merchants that had been there for years and Bombay was seething. There was a lot of trouble. A lot of fighting in the streets. A lot of loss of control, but it was a very interesting place to be of course. The key to Indian society for most Americans who, especially those who were in Bombay with parcees who are a very cultivated and interesting bunch, you have sympathies with both the Muslims and the Hindus. By now by getting with the parcees you could expand tremendously your cover of friendships and relationships. So, Bombay was in that sense a very good post to begin.

Q: How did you find your relations with the State Department people there?

IMBREY: In my case, it turned out very well. The ambassador...

Q: The ambassador or the consul general?

IMBREY: Oh, well, Timberlake, consul general, yes. Ambassador Timberlake stood in as father of the bride when I married my wife in Bombay and all the other people were extremely supportive and happy to have me along. I had no enemies and I appreciated they all had jobs to do and we worked together.

Q: How did you find some of the Indian government? Did they pay much attention to your activities?

IMBREY: No, as a matter of fact I had good relationships with the police and that was one of my chores of my job was to find out from the police what was going on. We had several communist parties at the time and that, of course, was of tremendous interest to us and to the police. So, I got a great deal of information from them that was reportable and through them I also got relations with labor unions and spent a lot of time developing relations with the labor unions who with the nature of their work were very upset and concerned about communism in their ranks.

Q: The Indian communists at that time which you had seen, were they sort of local grown or were they a disciplined group coming from or getting orders from Moscow?

IMBREY: At first it was one united party under a man named Nikay Rondevey, a very able politician who was elusive. He would have been arrested if they had ever found him. He managed to get a number of people behind him. Moscow-oriented, and certainly the Russians were supporting him to a good extent until the split of the Russians with the Chinese, at which time a Maoist group grew up particularly in the south of India. So, we were watching Membership very carefully, too. So, between the police and my military contacts and the labor contacts I could report a good deal on what was going on in the communist party.

Q: Did you cover Kerala?

IMBREY: The Kerala? Not then. Kerala had a consulate general in Madras and our guy in Madras was supposedly covering it. Unfortunately, he too was an alcoholic.

Q: You were saying the consul general of Madras was a

IMBREY: No, no, the consul general who was stationed there was unfortunately an alcoholic.

Q: That was part of the problem, wasn't it? I think in some of these places where they've been doing this a long time, drinking becomes quite a way of life?

IMBREY: Oh, in the Foreign Service we all drank.

Q: It was a real, real problem.

IMBREY: Yes, it was a problem and you probably remember yourself when the houseboy came in with eighteen different kinds of liquor.

Q: Oh, yes.

IMBREY: Yes, a lot of people were under the influence.

Q: So, how did that work out for you?

IMBREY: Yes, they sent me from Bombay; they said well you handled things so well in Bombay with the first incident, why don't you go down to Madras and relieve the situation there. So, they sent the guy in Madras home and I went down to Madras with the kit and caboodle and family, down to Madras and then I did come to Kerala.

Q: Then Kerala of course for a long time was always looked upon with great suspicion from the American point of view because there was a very strong communist party there.

IMBREY: Well, only after the Maoist thing and that sort of a caste thing. The man who was in charge of that was a Nambuteripod. That is not only a family name, but a caste name and a very high up caste name so you show a lot of respect among the other castes. He was taken in by the Chinese and they were doing very well in a community in which every third guy had a Ph.D. The most amazing thing in all of Kerala is that the people are all so over-trained, over-educated and splendidly over-educated, and, of course, there are no jobs. Who needs all of these professors?

Q: So, they couldn't expand outside of the area?

IMBREY: They had that problem, too, but they were tremendously intelligent and the communist party appealed to them as a haven.

Q: Well, what were we doing? Were we trying to co-opt any of these people or just report on them?

IMBREY: No, Kerala was a specialty. You go about it in a peculiar way. For example, there's a group in Kerala of Syrian Christians. They came over with Thomas the apostle in the fourth century I think it was. They were Syrian Christians. Those guys were amenable to recruitment and reporting. Then there was another group the Maccabean Jews, the black Jews of India who have an area around called Bajetown over on the west coast and their own synagogue and their own tabernacle and God knows what and they were recruitables, too.

Q: What were we seeing there, even if the Maoists were going doing well there, it was sort of a self-sealed operation in that they really couldn't penetrate the rest of Indian society.

IMBREY: There was a tremendous evolution and what began merely as a pocket communist party in two different places spread. North of Madras is another province called Ambhra and all of them were under the influence of this man Ramadini who started a civil war. They sent the Indian army down there to deal with this and so there were security situations for the whole subcontinent that you reported on. In Madras I was the only one really reporting on that. So, we had the consul general and two other people who had consular jobs. So, I had a lot of responsibility in keeping the government informed on the status this little war that was going on in Ambhra.

Q: How did you find the Indian officials at that time? Were they concerned about what was going on?

IMBREY: Oh, tremendously yes because their jobs depended on how they treated their own people. We saw them regularly, we had good relations with a great many of them.

Q: How were you able to find out what was happening?

IMBREY: Through agents. As I said we had agents that were Syrian, Christian, Jewish and various Indian communities and we met surreptitiously, got our information, submitted it. In those days we had to type it on the thatch forms, remember those forms?

Q: Oh, yes. Were Indian officials in the central government concerned about I suppose a somewhat obvious operation of the CIA person there?

IMBREY: I don't think so, because they could have easily have put a stop to it; they could have easily identified us. In those days we certainly had a number of security options at our disposal, but nothing like we have today and the Indian government could have penetrated us immediately and probably had.

Q: So, you were both basically working the same side?

IMBREY: That's right. No objections. I don't recall being harassed by the Indians.

Q: How did the Indian army do when it was brought down?

IMBREY: It won the war. After all most of the people who were fighting that war were dirt poor, there were no weapons, nothing much could be done. It wasn't like today's arms or rebellions.

Q: Also, at the time India was just beginning to put itself together, wasn't it? You had the princely states, which were still quasi-independent or something?

IMBREY: Yes. They were going out of fashion and weren't happy about it; so you had that, too.

Q: How did you find society in Madras as compared to the society in Madrid in Europe in your perspective?

IMBREY: Madras was a peculiar place, everybody was super intellectual. Everybody's family has children who must be artists or in some way prove that they are better than the family that lives next door. Well, the result is they all have to play a musical instrument, dance or Indian dancing or classical Indian dancing. When a girl is about thirteen or fourteen she has to do a sort of coming out, a debut. So, they hire a hall, they put her on the stage with an orchestra and she has to do about four hours of classical dancing. You think it is tough on her; it's also tough on the backsides of those people who are called in to witness this. Anyhow, you went to dinner and just about as the dinner was ending somebody would say, oh, my sister is here and she plays the

vina and we were treated to a concert of about three hours of vina music. They're all talented. It's not to say they didn't dance well or play well, but ...

Q: You're saying you found that the hand of Washington or even in New Delhi in your point of view your superiors rested lightly on you?

IMBREY: Very lightly, yes. We were concerned with other things. World communism was in fashion and we had other fish to fry. We were in the middle of Bombay then came along Korea. Korea came in 1950 and so the real attention was on Korea, not what was going on in Bombay.

Q: But wasn't there a concern because the Indians were beginning to play a nasty role. I mean this was when the Indians began with Krishna Menon. I mean, all of a sudden, the Indians weren't really the nice guys. They were a problem. They were a burr under the saddle.

IMBREY: They sure were. Krishna Menon and the United Nations? We really hated them. Colonialism.

Q: He was basically a British socialist snob in a way.

IMBREY: He was under the anti-colonist credentials. So, I'm sure he and Kwame Nkrumah got on very well.

Q: Did this affect your role?

IMBREY: Not really. Most Indians with whom we had contact, they enjoyed the prestige of having contacts with somebody in the consulate and even more so in Delhi in the Embassy. They looked forward to those contacts. They, as a matter of fact, they referred to their own people as Buddhist people.

Q: When you were in Madras, did you see any problem with Tamil separatism or connections with at that time called Ceylon; later it was Sri Lanka?

IMBREY: No. That hadn't come up yet. As far as their own aspirations went, all of the southern Indians have a literature that goes deeper and earlier than the Sanskrit literature of the north. You have writings in Talaygoo, Malayan. All of those have a literary history that is four thousand years old, not to mention Bengal. Bengalis think they have it all, too. So, these are people that are very concerned about the past and their own glory. We have that all the time.

Q: You left Madras when?

IMBREY: '51 I guess.