

MEXICO

COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

John Wesley Jones	1931-1932	Vice Consul, Saltillo
John F. Melby	1937-1939	Junior Officer, Ciudad Juárez
Lester Mallory	1939-1944	Agricultural Attaché, FAS, Mexico City
Claude G. Ross	1940-1941	Consular and Economic Officer, Mexico City
William C. Trimble	1940-1941	Vice Consul and Economic Officer, Mexico City
Franklin H. Baker	1940-1990	Visa Officer, Washington, DC
John Howard Burns	1942-1943	Vice Consul, Ciudad Juárez
Eugene M. Braderman	1942-1945	Assistant to the Director of the Latin American Division, Foreign Economic Administration, Washington, DC
John J. Ewing	1945-1950	Contractor, Bi-National Center (later USIS), Mexico City
Park D. Massey	1947-1950	Junior Officer, Mexico City
Dorothy Jester	1948-1951 1951-1954 1966-1968	Junior Officer, Mexico City Consul, Mexicali Counselor of Embassy on Economic Affairs, Mexico City
Patrick F. Morris	1949-1950	Clerk, Department of Agriculture, Uruapan
Roy R. Rubottom	1949-1951	Director of Mexican Affairs, Latin America Bureau, Washington, DC
Edmund Murphy	1949-1952	Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Mexico City
R. Smith Simpson	1949-1952	Labor Attaché, Mexico City

Fernando E. Rondón	1949-1955	Childhood Years, Mexico City
Sidney Weintraub	1951-1954	Visa and Political Officer, Mexico City
Ben S. Stephansky	1952	Labor Attaché, Mexico City
William Belton	1952-1954	Desk Officer, Mexican Desk, Washington, DC
John L. DeOrnellas	1953-1956	Consular Officer, Mexico City
Peter M. Cody	1954-1957	Office of Technical Assistance Program Officer, USAID, Mexico City
Chester H. Opal	1954-1957	Public Affairs Officer and Attaché, USIS, Mexico City
Melbourne L. Spector	1954-1959	Deputy Director, USAID, Mexico City
Horace Y. Edwards	1955-1966	Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Allen C. Hansen	1956-1957	Publications and Distributions Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Myles Greene	1956-1958	Counsular Officer, Ciudad Juarez
David E. Simcox	1957-1960	Third Secretary and Consular Officer, Mexico City
Earl Wilson	1957-1960	Information Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Serban Vallimarescu	1958-1962	Information Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Diego C. Asencio	1959-1961 1980-1983	Protection and Welfare Officer, Mexico City Assistant Secretary, Consular Affairs, Washington, DC
Terrence G. Leonhardy	1959-1961 1962	Consular Officer, Nogales Consul General
Joseph C. Walsh	1959-1963	Executive Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Richard G. Cushing	1960-1962	Deputy Public Affairs Officer, USIS,

		Mexico City
Charles Thomas	1960-1962	Consular Officer, Ciudad Juarez
Donald Petterson	1961-1962	Visa and Welfare Officer, Mexico City
Davis Eugene Boster	1961-1962	Political Officer, Mexico City
Robert F. Woodward	1961-1962	Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, Washington, DC
Thomas Mann	1961-1963	Ambassador, Mexico
William T. Pryce	1961-1963	Consular Officer/Staff Aide, Mexico City
Kenneth N. Skoug	1961-1963	Consular Officer, Guadalajara
William P. Stedman	1961-1963	Economic Officer, Mexico City
Robert M. Sayre	1961-1964	Director of Mexican Affairs, Latin America Bureau, Washington, DC
Raymond A. Ioanes	1962-1964	Executive Officer, FAS, Washington, DC
Clint A. Lauderdale	1962-1964	Visa and Administrative Officer, Mexico City
Edwin McCammon Martin	1962-1964	Assistant Secretary for Latin America, Washington DC
Haven N. Webb	1962-1964	Consular Officer, Guadalajara
John O. Bell	1962-1965	Ambassador to Guatemala
Allen B. Moreland	1962-1965	Administrator of Security and Consular Affairs, Washington, DC
Keith C. Smith	1963-1965	Consular Officer, Tijuana
Edward Marks	1963-1965	Consular Officer, Nuevo Laredo
Victor Niemeyer	1963-1965	Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Mexico City
	1965-1969	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Monterrey
	1976-1979	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Monterrey

Jesse A. Friedman	1963-1966	American Institute for Free Labor Development Representative, Mexico City
Clarence A. Boonstra	1963-1967	Deputy Chief of Mission, Mexico City
Julius L. Katz	1963-1979	Deputy Director of International Trade, Economic Bureau, Washington, DC
Oscar J. Olson, Jr.	1964-1966	Economic/Commercial Officer, Juarez
Robert S. Steven	1964-1966 1966-1969	Consular Officer, Merida Staff Aide to the Ambassador, Mexico City
James J. Gormley	1964-1965 1965-1967 1986-1987	Vice Consul and Rotational Officer, Mexico City Vice Consul, Mérida Narcotics Officer, Mexico City
James Marvin Montgomery	1964-1967	Political Officer, Mexico City
Nancy Ostrander	1964-1967	Assistant Chief, Visa Section, Mexico City
John T. Doherty	1965-1967	Assistant Labor Attaché, Labor Department, Mexico City
C. Conrad Manley	1965-1969	Information Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Robert E. Granick	1966-1968	Deputy Counselor for Administration and Administration Officer, Mexico City
William N. Harben	1966-1969	Consul General, Mérida
Edward H. Wilkinson	1967-1969 1999-2001	Vice Consul, Mazatlan Consul General, Guadalajara
Henry Dearborn	1967-1969	Deputy Chief of Mission, Mexico City
Arnold Denys	1967-1969 1981-1984	Consular Officer, Hermosillo Consular Officer and Cultural Affairs Officer, Tijuana
William B. Cobb, Jr.	1968-1969	Transportation and Communications Officer, Mexico City

J. Phillip McLean	1968-1969	Special/Staff Assistant, Latin America, ARA, Washington DC
Stanley I. Grand	1968-1970	Alliance for Progress, USAID, Washington, DC
Robert Theodore Curran	1968-1970	Press Attaché, Mexico City
Robert E. Service	1968-1971	Political Officer, Mexico City
Robert S. Pastorino	1969-1971 1979-1982 1983-1986 1989-1991	Economic/Commercial Officer, Hermosillo Deputy Director of Mexican Affairs, Washington DC Political/Economic Officer, Mexico City Deputy Chief of Mission, Mexico City
Jack B. Kubisch	1969-1971	Deputy Chief of Mission, Mexico City
Robert Hopper	1969-1971	Rotation Officer, Monterrey
Sally Shelton-Colby	1969-1971 1977-1979	Professor, Mexico City Deputy Assistant Secretary, Latin America Bureau, Washington, DC
Louis P. Goelz	1969-1972 1972-1973	Consular Officer, Mexico City Principal Officer, Mexicali-Laredo
Suzanne Sekerak Butcher	1970-1971	Consular Officer, Guadalajara
John Allen Cushing	1970-1971	English Language Teacher, Mexico
H. Freeman Matthews, Jr.	1970-1973	Political Counselor, Mexico City
Samuel D. Eaton	1970-1974	Policy Planning Staff, Latin America Bureau, Washington, DC
David E. Zweifel	1970-1974	Political Officer, Mexico City
Gilbert J. Donahue	1971-1973	Vice Consul, Mazatlan
Mary A. Ryan	1971-1973	Consular Officer, Monterrey
Joseph G. Sullivan	1971-1973	Consular/Political Officer, Mexico City
Clarke McCurdy Brintnall	1971-1974	Military Secretary, Joint U.S.-Mexico

	1978-1983	Military Commission, Norfolk, Virginia Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Affairs, Washington, DC
Robert A. Stevenson	1971-1974	Country Director of Mexico, Washington, DC
Richard W. Teare	1971-1974	Political Officer, Mexico City
Terrence George Leonhardy	1972-1973	Consul General, Guadalajara
Diane Dillard	1972-1974	Consular Officer, Monterrey
Manuel Abrams	1972-1974	Inspector, Inspection Corps, Washington, DC
Richard Smith	1972-1974	Agriculture Department, Mexico City
Frederick H. Sacksteder	1972-1975	International Boundary and Water Commision, El Paso
	1975-1979	Consul General, Hermosillo
Charles Anthony Gillespie, Jr.	1972-1975	Supervisory General Services Officer, Mexico City
	1981-1985	Executive Assistant, Latin America Bureau, Washington, DC
Gilbert J. Donahue	1973-1974	Vice Consul, Guadalajara
Thomas M. Recknagel	1973-1975	Senior Deputy Administrator of the Bureau of Security and Counselor Affairs, Washington, DC
Joseph J. Jova	1973-1977	Ambassador, Mexico
Bruce Malkin	1974-1977	Economic Officer, Guadalajara
Mildred Marcy	1975	UN Conference of Women, USIS, Mexico City
Leonard F. Walentynowicz	1975-1977	Administrator for Security and Consular Affairs, Washington, DC
Herbert Thompson	1975-1978	Deputy Chief of Mission, Mexico City

Richard S. Welton	1975-1979	Agricultural Attaché, FAS, Mexico City
Brandon H. Grove	1976-1978	Senior Inspector, Office of the Inspector General, Washington, DC
John A. Bushnell	1977-1982	Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, ARA, Washington, DC
Owen B. Lee	1978-1979	International Organizations Officer, OAS, Washington, DC
Michael Mahoney	1978-1979	Consular Officer, Consular Bureau, Washington DC
Leslie M. Alexander	1978-1980	Staff Secretariat, Narcotics Program Officer for Mexico, Washington, DC
William T. Pryce	1978-1981	Political Counselor, Mexico City
John A. Ferch	1978-1982	Deputy Chief of Mission, Mexico City
Allan W. Otto	1978-1982	Deputy Chief, Consular Section, Mexico City
Stephen H. Rogers	1978-1982	Counselor for Economic Affairs, Mexico City
Stanley Zuckerman	1978-1983	Counselor, Public Affairs, Mexico City
Louis F. Licht III	1980-1982	Analyst, Middle America-Caribbean Division, INR, Washington, DC
Lawrence I. Plotkin	1980-1983	USIA, Mexico and Central America Desk Officer, Washington DC
Nadia Tongour	1980-1983	Junior Officer, Mexico City
Elinor Constable	1980-1986	Deputy Assistant Secretary, International Finance and Development, Economic Bureau, Washington, DC
John David Glassman	1981	Deputy Chief, Political Section, Mexico City
Lawrence Cohen	1981-1983	Consular Officer, Monterrey

Stephen Bosworth	1981-1983	Principal Deputy, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Washington, DC
Thomas F. Johnson	1981-1984	Assistant Information Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Theodore Wilkinson	1981-1984 1991-1994	Deputy Political Counselor, Mexico City Chief Political Officer, Mexico City
George B. High	1982-1983	Deputy Chief of Mission, Mexico City
Dale V. Slaght	1982-1984	Mexico Desk Officer, Department of Commerce, Washington, DC
Robert L. Chatten	1983-1985	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Mexico City
Langhorne A. Motley	1983-1985	Assistant Secretary for Latin America Affairs, Washington, DC
Edward M. Rowell	1983-1985	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, Washington, DC
Douglas Watson	1983-1986	Administrative Officer, Mexico City
Virginia Carson Young	1983-1987	Principal Officer, Mérida
Alan Hardy	1984	Deputy Political Counselor, Mexico City
Alberto M. Piedra	1984-1987	Ambassador to Guatemala
G. Philip Hughes	1985-1986	Staff Director for Latin America, National Security Council, The White House, Washington, DC
Richard H. Morefield	1985-1987 1987-19??	Consul General, Guadalajara Economic Counselor, Mexico City
Sally Grooms Cowal	1985-1989	Minister Counselor for Public Affairs, Mexico City
Richard T. McCormack	1985-1987	U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States, Washington, DC
Theresa A. Loar	1986-1988	Visa Officer/Aide to the Supervisory Consul General, Mexico City

Lacy A. Wright	1987-1988	Deputy Political Counselor, Mexico City
Larry Colbert	1987-1991	Consul General, Tijuana
Richard H. Melton	1988-1989	Assistant Secretary for Mexico, Caribbean, and Regional Economic Affairs, Latin America Bureau, Washington, DC
Jon G. Edensword	1988-1992	Consul General, Mexico City
Lane Kirkland	1990's	Mexico and the North American Free Trade Agreement
Gus Tyler	1990s	Labor Affairs, City Unspecified
Donald McConville	1990-1993	Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs, Mexico City
William Jeffras Dieterich	1992-1995	Public Affairs Officer
Harriet C. Babbitt	1993-1997	U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States, Washington, DC
James R. Jones	1993-1997	Ambassador, Mexico
Larry Colbert	1994-1997	Consul General, Ciudad Juarez
Dennis Hays	1995-1996	Director of Mexican Affairs, Washington, DC
Paul E. White	1998-2002	Director, USAID Program, Mexico City
Edward H. Wilkinson	1999-2001	Consul General, Guadalajara
Dale V. Shaght	1999-2002	Career Minister, Mexico City

JOHN WESLEY JONES
Vice Consul
Saltillo (1931-1932)

John Wesley Jones graduated from George Washington University and entered the Foreign Service in 1931. He served in Mexico, India, Italy, China, Spain,

Libya, Peru, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Horace G. Torbert in 1988.

Q: That's great. Had you had the oral exam, too?

JONES: Yes, I had taken the oral. I stayed in Washington for the oral exam rather than going back out home. So it was a matter of great rejoicing. The new year came in, January, 1931, and I had orders to proceed to a post in northern Mexico for my neophyte training. In those days, Foreign Service Officers went first to a post abroad and then returned for their schooling in the Foreign Service School. So I left Sioux City on the 10th of January, 1931, and with four layovers en route and five days travel, I finally arrived in Saltillo, Mexico, which is the capital of the state of Coahuila. The principal officer there was Samuel Sokobin, who had served. ...

Q: How do you spell Sokobin?

JONES: S-o-k-o-b-i-n. He was a Chinese language officer and had served the first 14 years of his service in China. The Department, deciding that he needed a change, had made him principal Officer of this small consulate in northern Mexico.

Saltillo is 150 miles straight up the mountain from Monterrey, which is much better known. Monterrey, which is something like 1500 feet above sea level, Saltillo was a mile high, over 5000 feet. Beautiful small, colonial town. Charming place to be stationed for the first time abroad. Mr. Sokobin was a very thoughtful and helpful principal officer who insisted that I read all incoming and outgoing dispatches, some of them confidential, which was the highest classification, I assume, that the consulate ever received. And also that every morning for half an hour, he and I would read the Consular Regulations which was a rather formidable tome in those days. It was a splendid introduction. My salary was \$2500 a year. My rental allowance was \$50 a month and I had a post allowance to adjust my official salary to living expenses, of \$200 a year. So I wrote to my family that when all of my food and lodging had been paid at the local hotel, I had spent only \$40 a month out of my salary to maintain myself. That included my laundry and mending. I felt so affluent in those dark days in the midst of the Depression that I opened a bank account in the local Mexican bank and even had enough money left over to help my brother through school at Iowa State University at Ames. In late August, a telegram came signed "Castle, Acting Secretary" transferring me to the Foreign Service School in Washington on the 15th of September. I left with great sadness, many friends. The young Mexicans there who were my age had all, most of them, gone to school in the States so that I learned very little Spanish, since they all spoke excellent English and were delighted to have a chance to continue using their English in talking to me.

After three months in the State Department in the fall of 1931, I was assigned to Calcutta, India. I went home for Christmas.

Q: Before we get that, let's just ask you, what was your actual function in Saltillo? Were you issuing visas or...

JONES: Oh. As Vice Consul, I issued visas to Mexicans wanting to go to the United States. But also we had consular invoices which were issued to exporters of lead from the local lead mine to the United States. And I think probably that the major portion of the consular fees were collected from these invoices - there was a local mine run by an English company and they exported lead to the United States. They had to get a consular invoice before they could ship it.

Q: I just wanted to get that much so we could get...

JONES: So it was mostly consular invoices and visas and a small American colony with passports, requiring services.

JOHN F. MELBY
Junior Officer
Ciudad Juárez (1937-1939)

John F. Melby was born in Portland, Oregon. He graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University and furthered his studies at the University of Chicago. He joined the Foreign Service in 1937 and served in Mexico, Venezuela, the Soviet Union, and China. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: The training of Foreign Service officers was quite a bit different in those days. I wonder if you could describe your early experiences. You came in, you passed the exam. What did they do with you?

MELBY: The first thing they did was assign us to our probationary post, which in my case was Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, across the river from El Paso. I was there in Juárez for a year and a half.

Q: What were you doing?

MELBY: I did a little bit of everything. It was a training thing. Juárez was the supervisory consulate general for the Mexican border. But there were very few officers in there. George Shaw was the consul general. At one point, I was still a student officer, George went off on leave and left me in charge! [Laughter] Which was pretty good fun.

We did all sorts of things. I worked with the Mexican border patrol on narcotics control. I did my stint at learning what visas were all about, passports, and so on. General reporting that we did out of there, I did some of that. Political reporting, of course, George did most of it.

I enjoyed it. I thought it was a great advantage to a young vice consul to go to a post like that, rather than being assigned, as some of the others were, to Mexico City or Paris or Montreal, one of these huge offices which sound glamorous, but you get there and you get stuck in the visa office. And that's all you ever do and all you ever learn sometimes. After a year and a half, I was

pretty well versed in the overall functioning of the consulate.

LESTER MALLORY
Agricultural Attaché
Mexico City (1939-1944)

Ambassador Lester Mallory entered the Foreign Agricultural Service in 1931 and became a Foreign Service Officer in 1939. His career included assignments in France, Mexico, Cuba, and Argentina, and ambassadorships to Jordan and Guatemala. Ambassador Mallory was interviewed by Hand Zivetz in 1988.

Q: I see. Now, interestingly, you came back to Paris after the war. How soon after the war were you back in Paris?

MALLORY: I arrived in Paris during the Battle of the Bulge. As I mentioned, Henry Wallace thought that Latin America ought to have some attention. So they decided the first agricultural attaché should be in Mexico. I came back from Paris in June, of '39. (Somebody in Washington was pretty clever about this, because they were beginning to close down our operation.) I spent five years in Mexico, getting things started, trying to build up a background of information, which we didn't have at all.

Q: A background of information on what?

MALLORY: On agriculture - the food production, needs, and so on. Then the war broke out, and I became terribly involved in the whole business about rubber, and medicinal plants, and strategic things of that nature.

Let's back up a little bit. These are observations. During the years I was in Mexico City, the first ambassador I had was Josephus Daniels, who had been editor of the Raleigh News and Observer. He was Secretary of the Navy, with Franklin Roosevelt as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, when - as I recall - in 1914, they sent the Navy into Veracruz. He subsequently became ambassador to Mexico, while Roosevelt was President of the United States. And it is assumed - I think I'm on pretty good authority - that Josephus felt a certain amount of guilt about the Veracruz landing. For that reason, he wanted to make some sort of atonement; he wanted to go, and he went.

And he wasn't welcomed. But he stayed on, and on; as I recall he was there seven or eight years. He was quiet, affable, friendly, didn't throw his weight around, and it got to the point that he was universally liked. I think that this is a point that we might make sometime. I don't know what's happened to the man in Japan just recently, but if you stay on long enough, and it doesn't become overburdening, eventually things wash out and you make your place. And I think Josephus did. Our relations with Mexico, at that time, were quite good. I happened to be there.

I'd like to make a footnote to history, too. This will take little while, if you don't mind. It's about the Green Revolution, which I think is a complete prostitution of what happened. In 1940 - this is history you probably don't have any place else - in 1940, General Ávila Camacho was being inaugurated as President of Mexico. The man sent down to represent the United States was Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture. Henry got to the border in a hired car, and some of us went up to meet him, and we came back in a two-car caravan, so to speak. We had the inauguration, and all that.

Then Henry, who had been interested in Latin America and Mexico, and who had been studying Spanish with some of the people from the Mexican Embassy, had an arrangement to go out and see the country. I was appointed, I suppose, as shirt holder or something; I went along. We drove out in the country, and we looked at cornfields from here to there. We saw a lot of corn; a lot of poor corn.

When Henry got to Washington, he went to see - or called - the director of the Rockefeller Foundation. He told him that they'd done a great job on public health, and the world was a lot better for it, but how about nutrition? They ought to do something about food supplies. He convinced Dr. Fosdick that they should open up in Mexico. The result was a high-powered commission of Dr. Mangelsdorf, the botanist and corn man from Harvard; Dr. Bradfield, a soils man from Cornell; and Dr. Stakman, a plant pathologist from Minnesota. They came down and looked the place over.

It ended up by the Rockefeller Foundation setting up an operation on plant breeding in Mexico. They got a good young man - not too young - Dr. Harrar, who subsequently became head of the foundation, to come down and start it up. And they did a very clever thing. They did not leave this in the Ministry of Agriculture; they set up an institute, which was free of any political influence on appointments and jobs. And they sent some young men to the States for training, and began to breed - corn, and corn, and corn, and subsequently wheat.

The result was magnificent. Mexico became self-sufficient in food stuffs. Then they began to move out. They did a job in the Philippines on rice; a tremendous job in India - the Institute did. The result was, eventually - and here's where I take umbrage - that this guy, Dr. Borlaug, was given the Nobel Prize for the Green Revolution. He had worked on wheat; the big job was corn, which is done by Wellhausen, not Borlaug. They got credit for the Green Revolution. But I think the credit ought to go to the guy that started it, which was Henry Wallace, and it's never been said as far as I know. But I was there, and went through it, and I saw this whole thing develop. So, that's my footnote to history.

Another thing out of agriculture: I'd come back to Washington, perhaps in '46, and the Assistant Secretary for Latin America called me in. And he said, "There's a lot of pressure being put on by Ambassador Messersmith to allow some brahma bulls to come in from Brazil. What do you think about it?"

I said, "No soap." The head of the agricultural department, in Mexico, in livestock, went to Brazil

and bought Brahman bulls. Well, this may be all right, but sometimes you begin to think, "Well, what was the pay-off? What did he get out of it?"

But they had the bulls vaccinated, which was a relatively new thing then; vaccinated for foot and mouth disease. They brought them to an island, just off of Veracruz. And they held them for six months. The minister of agriculture, who had a good working relationship with Ambassador Messersmith, kept pressing him about this. Finally, he won out, and they let the bulls in. Not long there afterwards, we had an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Mexico, and all hell broke loose. Fortunately, we had very good relations with the Mexican Army, on this problem; and the outbreak was contained. It cost us \$300,000,000 at that time; today it would be fabulous.

What most people don't realize is if you ever got foot and mouth disease going in this country, and cut down - even by 10% - the production of milk and meat, what it would cost for our economy.

Q: Is that why you were opposed to the importation of these bulls? Because you feared foot and mouth disease?

MALLORY: I had enough experience in Europe with foot and mouth disease, that I automatically said no. You never know, and they didn't know, at that time, whether the vaccination perhaps left them latent, which it did. Anyway, it happened. The policy part was this: there's sometimes when the Department of State has to put its foot down, and tell a really strong ambassador, "You can't do it."

Q: But I don't understand. Why would this be an American decision, rather than a Mexican decision?

MALLORY: Because we have a treaty arrangement.

Q: Arrangement on what?

MALLORY: We keep the area free of foot and mouth disease.

Q: I see.

CLAUDE G. ROSS
Consular and Economic Officer
Mexico City (1940-1941)

Claude G. Ross was born in Illinois in 1917. He graduated from the University of Southern California in 1939 and joined the State Department a year later. He served in Mexico, Ecuador, Greece, New Caledonia, Lebanon, Egypt, Guinea, the Central African Republic, Haiti, Tanzania, and Washington, DC. This interview

was conducted by Horace G. Torbert in 1989.

ROSS: That's right. We went out completely cold. In my case, I had a little work in the Visa Division, drafting replies to messages in from the field, so I knew a little bit about the mechanics of the thing. But otherwise, nothing.

We arrived in Mexico City on the 15th of August 1940, in the late morning. In the afternoon, I was at work in the Consulate General, working on visas and interviewing in French, Spanish, and German.

Mexico City at that time was an absolutely fascinating place, because there were all kinds of refugees coming through there from Europe, some hoping to make their homes in Mexico, but a great many of them hoping to come to the United States. So they would present themselves as applicants either for immigration visas or visitor's visas, as the case might be. We were really overworked. We were overwhelmed by the numbers.

Q: As visa officers all over the world.

ROSS: Yes, yes. But I think we were one of the first ones to be, and the Canadian posts, as well, because of the particular situation. It was fascinating work, I must say. It was the only time in the field that I really did intensive visa work. As you know, you have a certain satisfaction there. You can see the results of your labors, which is not always the case.

Q: You also, I think, learn a lot about humanity, which you might not learn otherwise.

ROSS: That's right, which, of course, is useful to have acquired at an early stage in a Foreign Service career, when you're dealing with people from then on. In the course of this six months that I spent on visa work in the Consulate General, I met some very interesting people. I gave an immigration visa to Arthur Rubinstein, who was a fascinating man, delightful. He was also playing a series of concerts in Mexico City. I remember, at one point after he'd gotten his immigration visa, he sent Andrea and me a couple of tickets to one of his concerts. We were right there in the first row, and he waved to us. It was really something for a 23-year-old.

Q: Were you able to keep up with him after that?

ROSS: No, unfortunately. At DACOR Bacon House, I see his photograph.

Another man was Sir Thomas Beecham, to whom I gave a visa, and the other concert pianist, Alexander Brailowski. It seems to me I also interviewed Diego Rivera. I never gave him a visa. That visa was not forthcoming for obvious reasons, but I met him. So it was, as I say, a fascinating experience.

Then in six months I went into citizenship work there - passports, protection, notarials, all that type of thing. I spent five months at that. That was also an extremely interesting assignment. It had some less agreeable aspects to it. I remember several cases of having to go and identify

bodies and collect remains of Americans who died.

Q: And probably got a few out of jail.

ROSS: And get them out of jail, yes. There were some colorful characters roaming around, colorful Americans, in Mexico City at that time. I remember one guy who had a butterfly net and was chasing all kinds of things all around the city. He ended up in the pokey, and I had to go get him out.

I remember one of the more colorful experiences I had was chasing an American around Mexico City - around Mexico, actually - to serve a subpoena for a federal case in the United States. I had looked several places outside of Mexico City for him. Finally, I discovered that he had returned to Mexico City. On the first of December 1940, which was the day in which the new president of Mexico was inaugurated, and there were great parades up and down the Reforma, I found that he had indeed gone back to the Hotel Reforma, I think it was, right there on the main street. So I threaded my way through the parade lines and went up, knocked on the door. A servant let me into the apartment, and I proceeded to serve the subpoena to Mr. Blumenthal in his bed. (Laughs)

WILLIAM C. TRIMBLE
Vice Consul and Economic Officer
Mexico City (1940-1941)

Ambassador William C. Trimble was born in Baltimore, Maryland. He received a bachelor's degree in political science from Princeton University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1931, where his career included positions in Estonia, France, Argentina, England, Brazil, and Germany, and an ambassadorship to Cambodia. Ambassador Trimble was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

TRIMBLE: And then my orders were changed. A friend of mine called me from the Department. "Bill, get some huaraches, meaning a transfer to Mexico." So I was sent to Mexico City.

That was the time when President Ávila Comacho and President Roosevelt had met on the Border.

Q: This is the President of Mexico.

TRIMBLE: Yes, Ávila Comacho. This, I suppose must have been around May 1941. I don't remember the exact date they met. And the President of Mexico said, "Our economy is in bad shape because you're concentrating on helping the Europeans with lend lease and that type of thing. So would you help us in getting raw materials, spare parts, chemicals, steel, etc.? Not oil, but other things they needed.

And President Roosevelt replied: "Yes, we'll certainly do what we can, if in turn you will sell us

exclusively certain strategic minerals such as mercury which we need for" - remember we were neutral then and the President had to be very careful about it, - "which we need for our defense buildup." And added: "We'll send somebody down there to help in getting what you need."

I knew nothing about this type of thing, but I had an economic background.

Q: Well, we really didn't have much of an economic core of officers at that time, anyway.

TRIMBLE: No. No, we didn't have. We brought in people from the Department of Commerce in 1939 when they amalgamated the Foreign Service - the State Department Foreign Service of the United States and the Department of Commerce Foreign Service amalgamated. But we didn't have many. We had a very good man in charge of economic matters in the Department, Dr. Herbert Fels, who liked me so I was chosen for the assignment and went through a crash course in Washington on what we called export licenses and certificates of necessity.

I got down to Mexico. I think that was in July 1941 with my family. The Ambassador there was Josephus Daniels.

Q: Oh, yes. Famous name going way back to Veracruz.

TRIMBLE: Veracruz incident.

Q: Yes. And that was Wilson's Secretary of the Navy.

TRIMBLE: Yes. And he didn't want to increase the size of his staff, so I couldn't move into the Embassy and had an office downtown. He didn't like to have a lot of new faces. He was-

Q: You were saying about Josephus Daniels and how he didn't want to have you as part of the Embassy.

TRIMBLE: No, he did not. He had a small staff, and he didn't want to increase it at all. But you had to at that time. All embassies in Latin America were increased because of the war period. However, he didn't want to change. He didn't, as I have said, want to see new faces. Also, he was sensitive because of the Veracruz incident, that was when we sent in the Marines. And he had been Secretary of Navy.

Q: We're talking about 1915, I guess.

TRIMBLE: '15, yes, I think it was. We sent Marines into Veracruz after Pancho Villa's guerrillas had raided New Mexico. And then there had been, just a year or so before, the nationalization of the oil companies.

Q: The Cárdenas period, wasn't it?

TRIMBLE: Cárdenas.

Q: Cárdenas, yes.

TRIMBLE: Standard Oil, British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, and one or two other companies, all nationalized and combined into what was called PEMEX, which is the national company. And it was done without any compensation. There had been a year before a long debate in the Mexican Congress on this issue, and speeches about - "Down with the *gringos*!", "Get the foreign oil companies out" and clapping. As Mr. Daniels didn't understand Spanish he also clapped. [Laughter] Anyhow, he was a very nice man but not suited for the job at all.

Then I think this was probably in July or August 1941, a congressional group of four or five congressmen came to Latin America to see what was happening down there and as they were flying from one country to another, had their mail sent to the Embassy in Mexico City which was the last stop. However, it could not be found due to the Ambassador's insistence on keeping the staff small, and they went back furious. So on returning to Washington they told President Roosevelt, "You'll have to get rid of this man. He won't let the Embassy increase in size. There's so many more duties and responsibilities they have now with the war in Europe and so on." Well, Mr. Daniels every year would go back home to Atlanta and see his family. Each time he'd call on the President, and say, "You know, Mr. President, I'm getting older and older, and I think I should resign."

And the President, who always called him "Chief" because he had been his Assistant Secretary of Navy, would reply, "Oh no, Chief, we need you down there, Chief!"

But when Mr. Daniels did so again following the mail incident he answered, "Well, if you feel that way, Chief!" [Laughter] It's a true story. So George Messersmith replaced him as Ambassador and an excellent choice for the job.

My office was moved to the Embassy building when we entered the war, Pearl Harbor was in December, 1941, and since my responsibilities now included the preparation of a series of basic reports on Mexico's import needs, [I] was given a couple of assistants.

FRANKLIN H. BAKER
Visa Officer
Washington, DC (1940-1990)

Franklin H. Baker was born in 1926 in West Virginia. During World War II, he served with the U.S. Navy and joined the State Department immediately after. Mr. Baker served in the Visa Office from 1940 to 1990. He was interviewed by William D. Morgan in 1992.

Q: And Mexico?

BAKER: And Mexico.

Q: *Had no quotas, but how did you get into the United States as an immigrant?*

BAKER: Well, you qualified, that you were physically, mentally morally and politically straight. And, there were no quotas, and you qualified on paper, either with an affidavit support, or job offer, or invitation to come to the United States.

Q: *Sounds rather easy the for western hemisphere?*

BAKER: Yes, that's right.

Q: *Was it in fact?*

BAKER: It was, in fact, except for the Mexicans, where, because of the administrative backlog. We didn't have the personnel to serve all the applicants that wanted to obtain visas.

Q: *Are you telling us that because we didn't have staff, people didn't get immigrant visas?*

BAKER: Well, there was somewhat a defacto quota for the Mexicans.

Q: *But I would have thought that somebody would have taken this to congress and say...*

BAKER: Well, congress was aware of it, and they went along with the idea that, even though the western hemisphere was the non-quota area, we should restrict immigration from Mexico in some way or another.

Q: *And we did it literally, by not having...*

BAKER: An administrative waiting list.

Q: *Oh, for heaven's sakes. And that had some basis in law?*

BAKER: No basis in law, whatsoever.

Q: *Just everybody agreed to do it?*

BAKER: That's right.

Q: *And there was no Mexican lobby out there, obviously. Well, just pause for a moment on the Mexicans. People coming in illegally - wetbacks - I suppose we had them in the '40s and '50s?*

BAKER: Yes, that's true, the Mexicans did cross the border illegally, because there was a five to 10 year wait on the processing of their immigrant visa applications.

Q: *So they just crossed over.*

BAKER: I might add, too, at this time, that there always has been a lot of talk about millions of Mexican illegals. What they don't realize is that the number of illegals that come in, are the same illegals that go back each day. They are counted each day as illegals, but they're never counted or subtracted from that list when they go back. They come and go.

Q: *Well, they come, come, come, but statistically, they never go, go, go!*

BAKER: Yes.

Q: *Which means that our statistics on them are a little bit off.*

BAKER: Right, yes.

Q: *And I do remind the reader that the man behind the numbers, again, is Frank Baker. He not only is reading off these numbers now without any reference to notes, but he managed all the numbers of the quota system, and also all of the statistical reports to congress. Every year, for example, we have an annual accounting, we must give to congress, and Frank is the one responsible for making sure those numbers jive. And I'm not sure how he counted the Mexicans that came and went, but...*

BAKER: Well, of course, there was no way of counting the illegals, but (laugh) people made estimates as to the numbers that might be.

Q: *We haven't mentioned this yet, but certainly the reader knows that our sister service, the other part of adjudicating immigration to the United States, is the Immigration and Nationality Service, INS. And, INS, of course, is responsible for any alien at the border, and after he or she enters the U.S. They're the ones that keep an eye on illegals.*

BAKER: Right.

Q: *Now, let me just confirm this. All countries, Canada, Mexico, Central America and South America, all had no limitation by the individual country, such as the rest of the world did, but had a total for the two hemispheres of 120,000 annually. And all they did was get in line, and meet the same criteria as before?*

BAKER: Right, yes.

Q: *Okay. The same qualitative inadmissibility questions as for the rest of the world. The only question was quotas per country. There was a total number.*

BAKER: No. So anyway we were instructed to charge these Cuban adjustees. Every Cuban

adjustee from the INS came into the Visa Control Section, and we marked each one off, and sent the numbers back to INS.

Q: And we're talking big numbers, aren't we?

BAKER: To the Immigration Service. Yes.

Q: Of the 120,000 a year, how many Cubans a year, roughly?

BAKER: Well, somewhere in the neighborhood of 20,000 per year. And the final total was 244 odd thousand.

Q: Adjusted and subtracted from the western hemisphere?

BAKER: Adjusted from the western hemisphere, over a period of, until '78 or '79. Yes, '79. And then some bright lawyers and organizations got together and sued the State Department for using these numbers.

Q: Sued the State Department, in a sense because you were responsible for the core of the control, not the INS.

BAKER: Right, yes. They sued the State Department for us using the numbers from the 120,000 limit. And, needless to say, after much testimony back and forth, and in the courts for two or three years, the judge finally decided for the plaintiff, and instructed the Department of State to restore these 244,000 numbers, and redistribute them among the western hemisphere applicants, who were then on an oversubscribed waiting list.

Q: So, you took these 244,000 numbers and gave them back to all these people that were waiting, because there wasn't a number available.

BAKER: That's right.

Q: And this went back over a period of six or seven years?

BAKER: Well, it started in 1980, the Silva Program, as we called it, because the lead plaintiff - it was a class action suit - was Jose Silva.

Q: What nationality was Mr. Silva?

BAKER: He was Mexican. And, of course, the Mexicans benefitted most from this suit.

Q: They were the largest group that had been held back?

BAKER: That had been denied, because of the use by the Cubans, yes.

Q: Some of the them had probably died by then, or given up their claim to...

BAKER: Some of them had given up hope, some of them had died, some of them had...immigrated in other ways, and were under cover, or whatever.

Q: They might well have been in the United States.

BAKER: So the court instructed the State Department to redistribute these numbers over a period of two years.

Q: Well, that's not too unreasonable.

BAKER: And it was somewhat ironic, I was retired at the time, that they called me back to administer the Silva Program. And, fortunately we finished it within the two year span, and everybody was satisfied.

Q: And literally 240,000 numbers were handed out to non-Cubans in the western hemisphere?

BAKER: That's right.

Q: So it worked, but you left out something I know you were aware of - and I sure was aware of as deputy director. The Silva Program demanded a tremendous drain on resources because you just don't adjudicate 240,000 immigrant visas applications with the staff you've got. We had to hire...

BAKER: Yes, there was a lot of retired people who were called back to duty. Clerical staff was hired, and so forth.

Q: But the Mexican posts suffered the most?

BAKER: Posts such as Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Mexico City, the three immigrant issuing posts, were the ones that suffered the most.

Q: What were the principal motives: sense of uncontrollable numbers of illegal aliens in the United States?

BAKER: With no control over them, and they were growing in numbers and the proponents of the bill, advised congress that these people were already absorbed in our communities, and they were not displacing the American citizens from jobs, to the contrary, they were helping our economy.

Q: These were largely Mexicans, and Central Americans?

BAKER: That's right, yes. And, there were a few Canadians, also. But the majority were Mexicans, and Central and South Americans.

JOHN HOWARD BURNS
Vice Consul
Ciudad Juárez (1942-1943)

John Howard Burns was born and raised in Oklahoma. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma before entering the Foreign Service in 1941. His career included positions in Mexico, Brazil, France, Haiti, Germany, Washington, DC and ambassadors to the Central African Republic and Tanzania. The following excerpts are from Ambassador Burns' 1995 interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *Your first post was where?*

BURNS: Juárez, Mexico.

Q: *What were you doing there?*

BURNS: Well, there is an amusing story about my going there. We have a ranch in Texas which has always been in the family. Most of my family, which is a large family, are in the cattle business, and they ranch all the way out to El Paso. So all of them knew that Juárez was in those days just a little one street town with mostly bars and bordellos. I called home with the news of the assignment, my mother being on one phone and my sister on another. With thoughts of Paris, Rome, Vienna in their minds, they asked where I would be going, and when I said "Juárez" there was a very long pause and one of them inquired faintly, "Surely you don't mean that place across the river from El Paso."

But to go back to your question, Juárez was the largest town on the border. In those days we had about 8 consulates at the border, Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Piedras Negras, Agua Prieta, Nogales, Mexicali, Tijuana and Juárez, Juárez being by some measure the largest. The Consulate was headed by a remarkable man named Bill Blocker who while I was there was named Supervising Consul General of the entire border. We had an immense amount of protection of American citizens work there as you can imagine. I didn't wait to be called to go to the police station. I went every morning to see how many Americans had been arrested during the preceding 24 hours. There were almost always several, not infrequently repeaters.

I would talk to them to make sure they had not been unfairly or unjustly arrested. And of course they never had been. If they needed help in arranging bail, I would get in touch with someone for them. There was a modest amount of commercial activity, not much. Public relations were probably of primary importance there on the border. Because, of course, there were large military establishments across the river in El Paso, Fort Bliss and Biggs Field. Naturally there was a lot of visa activity but it ran more or less mechanically and I was never involved to any extent in that

work.

Q: What did the Consul General do? Did you observe his work at all?

BURNS: Mr. Blocker was a personal operator. He worked with people and he built up a remarkable feeling of congeniality on both sides of the border. He had an excellent relationship with the immigration and customs officials on both sides and the military as well. Politics in Mexico were not like politics in the United States and Mr. Blocker understood that very well. He persuaded a good friend of his, whose name was Antonio Bermúdez, to run for mayor, to try to clean up the town. Mr. Bermúdez was elected, and the day after the election he came into Mr. Blocker's office with a list of city employees to obtain his opinion of all of them, opinions which Mr. Blocker did not hesitate to express. During my 30 years in the Service I witnessed no individual, of whatever rank, who did so effectively what he needed to do as William P. Blocker. He took a great interest in the training of new officers, something of which the Department was well aware and of which it took advantage. Two or three of every new class were assigned to Juárez.

Q: Well, how did it work? I'm an old consular hand myself. I mean with the police, if the police were arresting this many Americans you must have had very close relations with the police in Juárez.

BURNS: Mr. Blocker had been there quite a while. As a matter of fact it was his second time in Juárez and he was so well known, and so admired that that sort of ensured good relations, just because he was so popular. He could have run for mayor of Juárez himself! I had been there perhaps a few months and while I cannot remember the details of this encounter at the police station I apparently took an aggressive stance with the desk sergeant one morning. When I returned to the Consulate I came through the back door and Mr. Blocker was on the telephone with the sergeant who had called to complain about me. Mr. Blocker had a booming voice and never realized that he could be heard in all the nearby offices and I could hear him say: "Yes, I told him to say that; of course he was speaking for me. Whatever he says he is speaking for me and don't be calling me any more to complain about anything he says," all that in border Spanish, of course. Almost immediately there was a loud call, "John!" and I received a stern lecture, beginning with something like, "Who do you think you are when you go to the police station? etc." He never knew I had heard every word he had said to the sergeant and you may be sure that it was something I remembered throughout my years in the Foreign Service.

When I was transferred from Juárez to Belem, Mr. Blocker handed me a set of the Foreign Service regulations, saying, "Here's your copy of the regulations. Take these with you, study them carefully, and before making any decision be sure it is supported by the regulations and you'll be the poorest Foreign Service officer ever commissioned."

Mr. Blocker had another favorite bit of counsel for new officers which was: "Don't ever forget Rule Seven!" Rule Seven, according to Mr. Blocker was, "Don't take yourself so seriously." He didn't say what the other rules were, or who had propounded them, but all my life I have found Rule Seven a useful guide.

EUGENE M. BRADERMAN

**Assistant to the Director of the Latin American Division, Foreign Economic Administration
Washington, DC (1942-1945)**

Dr. Eugene M. Braderman was born in Pennsylvania in 1914. He received a BS from Temple University and an MA and Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. In 1966, after working for the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Dr. Braderman joined the Foreign Service. He was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1990.

BRADERMAN: The Mexican assignment was primarily analytical, supplying basic information on the kinds of goods we could get as substitutes for things that were cut off from the Far East and elsewhere: for example - sisal from Mexico versus the copra we were getting from the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia, and so on.

So, I was very much involved in economics. There was no commercial activity of note because it was a wartime situation.

Q: Did this involve some field work? Did you go to Mexico?

BRADERMAN: Yes, I did go to Mexico on a couple of assignments. I also went to Venezuela on another assignment.

And I got involved in peripheral things, because in 1943 I became Assistant to the Director of the Latin American Division. He threw all sorts of odd jobs in my lap, one of the most interesting of which had nothing to do with the normal responsibilities of the Board of Economic Warfare or the Foreign Economic Administration.

The Foreign Economic Administration was essentially a combination of the Lend Lease Administration and the Board of Economic Warfare. I might just say a word about this unusual assignment.

Q: Yes, by all means. Say more than a word.

BRADERMAN: It's an unwritten chapter in the history books.

In 1942, when Rommel was advancing across North Africa, and the British were retreating, they wanted to set up shop in Tehran.

The Persians, at that time, were willing, except that they were then hosting all sorts of other immigrants, not the least of whom were Poles who had suddenly been released when the Soviet Union and the Western Powers became allies in 1941.

These were Poles who had left eastern Poland as the Russians took their half, while the Germans invaded western Poland and took their half. Most of the millions who fled or were driven into the Soviet Union perished, but some hundreds of thousands survived the ordeal.

Then when Sikorsky set up his government-in-exile in London, these people became citizens without a land. Some went into military service, but they were...

Q: They were not, however, most of them, part of the Polish Army in the first place.

BRADERMAN: No, they had been civilians. Most of the people who did not join the Polish regiments in the Allied armies were women and children and older men. And they had been shipped, temporarily, to Tehran.

They were also beginning, at this time, to talk about some kind of an international organization that might take care of refugees. It was the beginning of the thinking that led to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

As a result of the need of the British for living space in Tehran, the Poles were moved from Tehran to Karachi, several thousands of them. They were just vegetating in and around Karachi.

It was at this time, in 1943 as I recall, that General Sikorsky came and talked to President Roosevelt about doing something for these people.

The President said he would help financially, but he couldn't bring them into the United States, because he had all sorts of immigration problems on his hands. He suggested to Sikorsky that he might talk to President Ávila Camacho of Mexico.

Sikorsky went to Mexico, talked to Ávila Camacho, who said he would take up to two or three thousand of these refugees, with three provisos: (1) they couldn't engage in any activity that would compete with the Mexicans; (2) financial support would have to be found elsewhere; and (3) they had to go back to Poland at the end of the war.

So, Sikorsky came back and saw Roosevelt and told him what the conditions were. Roosevelt told Sikorsky that he would have to worry about where they go at the end of the war; but that he (Roosevelt) was willing to arrange transport to Mexico and provide the financing.

For want of a better place to put the assignment (since the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was not yet organized), responsibility was given to the Foreign Economic Administration. Since the camp was to be in Mexico, it was put in the Latin American Division - one of those accidents of fate.

As the function didn't relate to exports, imports, and the usual things we were we doing, the head of the division said to me, as his assistant, "Gene, you take care of it. It will only be a temporary assignment because it will go over to the U.N."

Well, when the charter of the U.N. Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was drawn, they were permitted to operate everywhere except in the Western Hemisphere. So, I retained this assignment until the end of the war.

Q: This was your full time, your only job, or no, just that you're doing it with your left hand?

BRADERMAN: No, that's right. It was one of many assignments. My principal job in this instance was to see that funds were available (we got funds through the usual funding process), and also to see that the camp - when it was established - was properly managed.

I latched onto a chap by the name of McLaughlin, who had been head of the Relief Administration in the State of California. He went down and was our supervisor at the camp.

The problems were fascinating. I could talk for an hour on that, but I'm not going to.

The end result of all of the activity was that, for political reasons, the Polish Government wanted the refugees to return to Poland. They did not want these people to go to the United States.

I read all the intercepts and letters that they were writing, and knew that almost all of them had some relative or connection in the United States and wanted to come here. I also worked with then - Archbishop O'Boyle and the Catholic Relief Services who were willing to sponsor those who didn't have connections. So, in the end, after the war, they did come mostly to the United States.

Q: Meanwhile, did you provide work for them, or were they just in internment camps and on the dole?

BRADERMAN: We had just a few acres of land. Most of these people were farmers, but it was not possible to farm. So they developed, essentially, an arts and crafts program and a holding operation. It was not a very joyful experience for them. I visited the camp in Mexico. It was located near León, about 250 miles northwest of Mexico City.

Q: I'd never heard of this operation before, so I think it's very valuable to have.

BRADERMAN: It was suggested that I write a book or an article, but I just never got around to doing it.

JOHN J. EWING
Contractor, Bi-National Center (later USIS)
Mexico City (1945-1950)

John J. Ewing was born in 1915 in Illinois. After receiving his BA from Pacific

Union College, he started working with the Bi-national Center in Mexico, Brazil and Guatemala. After the Bi-National Center became part of USIS he served overseas in Brazil, Australia, Burma, Indonesia, and Venezuela. Mr. Ewing was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt on August 9, 1988.

EWING: This recording concerns the beginning of one of the Bi-national Centers that was to make a significant contribution to one of the most successful public relations programs ever undertaken by the US Information Agency or its predecessor agencies. As early as 1919, President Woodrow Wilson made the observation at the Paris Peace Conference that, "It will not suffice to satisfy governmental circles anywhere. It is necessary that we should satisfy the opinion of mankind."

It was not, however, until during World War II that our nation's overseas diplomacy was to begin to establish institutions to help do this. It began as a series of small American libraries in a number of important cities throughout the Allied world. They first functioned under the auspices of the Office of War Information. These libraries were based on the now-proven theory that many people, among them many opinion makers, would like to satisfy their curiosity about us by reading the books and magazines that were available in the United States but hard to find in other countries. These same small libraries provided exhibits, films, and introduction as needed to native English speakers and language study. These budding information centers were an outstanding success from the beginning.

After the war, appropriations were cut, and this early experience with the dispersal of successful overseas diplomacy through information that was made available in small grassroots institutions came to an end. The outcry and protests by those who had benefited was quick and loud. The foreign information program was soon to be revived and its scope broadened. The State Department's international institutes and libraries reopened the old wartime libraries, and new ones were established, among them, the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City. The popularity of this institution by 1946 was hard to believe. It was the only lending library in Mexico and it was used intensively by the government opinion makers and by the general public.

As the post-war exchange of persons program developed with the United States, and between educational and government institutions, a great need to learn to speak English arose. It became evident that English language classes must be made available by the library. The University of Michigan was invited to send down a team of English-teaching specialists and linguists, to make a linguistic analysis of how to teach English to Spanish-speaking people.

In the process of doing this, the study group established within the Benjamin Franklin Library a center for learning English. The well known Dr. Freize of the English language Institute at Ann Arbor was to direct this extension institution and the English language research team. The American Institute of Learned Societies volunteered to help fund it. The future efficiency of USIA worldwide English teaching program and the many new Binational Centers that were to soon come into existence in Latin America all benefited greatly by the research and tests materials developed by the University of Michigan team.

The director of the library, Dr. Andy Wilkinson, recruited me to teach part-time while I was doing graduate work in Latin American Studies at the National University of Mexico. My salary was paid by the American Institute of Learned Societies. I had previously had experience in administration and teaching English to Mexicans in a school on the Mexican border, and in Montemorelos, in the northern part of Mexico.

In the spring of 1947, I was recruited by Dr. William Cody, the cultural attaché of the American Embassy, to apply for a State Department grant that would permit me to join the team of the English Language Institute officially at the Benjamin Franklin Library. I went to Washington and was interviewed by Elizabeth Hopkins, who in those early years was the personnel officer for the Bi-National Center grantees. These grantees, after training, were being sent to newly established Bi-National Centers overseas.

I returned to Mexico City with a grant that permitted me to teach and participate full-time in the research and writing of materials. One of the most valuable benefits for me was the in-service training seminars conducted by Dr. Freize and his assistant, Margaret Moyam. In these training sessions and seminars, the philosophy of English teaching and methods of teaching English as a second language developed that was to spread to all of Latin America. The oral method was further developed there, and ear training and speaking of conversational English by Spanish-speaking students became popularly known as the hearing-speaking method. Importance was given to teaching conversational English that brought quicker and more satisfactory results than the old translation method. The structure of the language was drilled and taught in understandable classroom experience. Learning more easily took place in a hearing and doing experience. The language was introduced and drilled into oral fashion, but the four skills of language - hearing, speaking, reading, and writing - were experienced in parallel classroom exercise.

The results obtained in a relatively short period of exposure soon flooded the institute with requests for enrollment by Mexican government employees, business concerns, and schools. The program was too successful for the space available and the quarters available to us in Benjamin Franklin Library. It was evident that there was a real need for a Bi-National Center in Mexico City. I shall never forget registration day, the period before we moved into our Yucatan 63 building. That was made possible by a State Department grant in 1947. We had needed as large an enrollment as possible if we were soon to meet the expense of maintaining the rent of our own building, so we put our first ad for students in the newspaper. To our horror, the line of people to register was over three blocks long. We had to call for the help of the police to keep order until a solution could be worked out. We took all we could, which was only a few over 300. Then we mimeographed an announcement that we would have room for everyone at the new location in about 12 weeks. The publicity of this event in the newspapers guaranteed us a full house when the BNC opened that fall.

The excellent work of the University of Michigan's extension institute was coming to a close. Its personnel left or had been converted to BNC grantees. Frank Thompson, who had been serving as the director of courses in the transition period to BNC personnel, was transferred. I was assigned as director of courses for the new BNC. I had been the understudy of Margaret Moyam,

whose work I tried to carry on as we set up the expanded new center. With the help of other BNC grantees, we had to organize and train 50 new teachers in order to meet the needs of the new enrollment. The enrollment was to increase from a few hundred professional people at the Benjamin Franklin Library to more than 3,000 at the new location by May of 1950. We no longer were just a very successful English language institute; we were now a fully organized Bi-National Center, with a local board of directors and a full cultural relations program.

To indicate the expanded program, our new name was El Instituto Mexicano-Norte Americano de Relaciones Culturales - the Mexican-[North] American Institute of Cultural Relations. We had the full program support of our mother institution, the Benjamin Franklin Library, and its personnel. Dr. William Bias was recruited from the University of Illinois International Institutes and Libraries to be our first administrative director.

An auditorium was built on the premises. Lectures by visiting American professors were scheduled, concerts of American music and exhibits of life in the United States, as well as a regular schedule of documentary and informational films, were all part of the center's cultural program. This was made available to both students and members of the center. The American community was encouraged to take part in the cultural and social activities of the center. It was popular not only to become a registered member of the center, but many became students of Spanish, which we taught using the same successful methods we had learned to us in the English Language Institute.

The BNC grantees such as Jim and Katherine Passereli, Molly Moore, Virginia Williams, and I helped with this cultural and social program, as well as continuing to perfect the English teaching materials left behind by the University of Michigan team. They were soon published in book form, books one to eight. I was in charge of writing a new introductory course of study that we called preparatory, which we required all new students to take for 12 weeks before they took placement tests to be enrolled in homogeneous groups in the regular courses of one to eight.

In future years, these original materials were to develop into an improved series of textbooks that were to be shared and sold in many other Latin American countries. Even in the early years, American cultural content was built into these books. It was the precept of Dr. Freize that our language is best taught in context with the culture of our country, our vocabulary best taught in a phrase, and our intonation in conversation.

The Bi-National Center was sponsored by USIA, and their activities were to come the closest to education in the purest sense of the word. By 1954, there would be 35 Bi-National Centers in the principal cities of the free world. Unfortunately, in those early years, the American grantees often had to return to their universities after a short assignment. This became an administrative weakness in institution building. Dr. Bias could only stay away from his university one year. When he left, I became acting director for eight or nine months until Dr. Elmindorf arrived in 1949.

In 1948, we had issued attractive enamel membership pins displaying the two flags in color as a part of a membership drive that was looking forward to the day, not far off again, when we would

have to move to larger quarters in order to accommodate those who wanted to be a part of the Mexican-[North] American Cultural Relations Program. These pins could be seen in government offices, at the university, and in many business establishments. It was in style to be a member of the Bi-National Center in those years.

By 1949, we had established two branch centers in different parts of the city. A few months before my transfer to Brazil in 1950, I was sent to Guadalajara to select and train teachers for the new Bi-National Center that was opening in space that had been made available by the University of Guadalajara. The parent center in Mexico City at Yucatan 63 by that time was bursting at its seams. Its popular cultural program was seriously handicapped for the lack of space to accept all who wished to participate. The center was soon to move again into larger and more permanent quarters that were more suited to a successful cultural exchange and English teaching program.

In many years since, this very special Bi-National Center has enjoyed high prestige, not only in Mexico, but in Latin America at large. By 1953, members of the United States Advisory Commission on Information were able to state in their report of January 1953 that our work in the field should become less and less that of Americans conducting propaganda on foreign soil, and more and more a partnership arrangement between Americans and others, to the mutual welfare of both.

In 1955, Oren Stephens, the USIA Deputy Assistant Director for Policy and Programs, was to write in his book, Facts to a Candid World, the following: "Of all propaganda, the most effective is that which has the least appearance of propaganda. The greater seeming objectivity of the material, the more it will be accepted as disinterested and reliable information on which the audience can base a judgment."

The Bi-National Center program was right on course, and it would expand dramatically during the period from 1950 to 1960, especially in Brazil. I was transferred to Porto Alegre, Brazil, in May of 1950. This assignment was to begin with further training in Washington in linguistics and American Studies under Professors Smith and Tragor. Bi-National Center grantees were being taught to be cultural ambassadors to the overseas Bi-National Centers, where they would serve as administrative directors, directors of courses, or directors of activities. Each would be a catalyst in a Bi-National Center for the United States information program.

PARK D. MASSEY
Junior Officer
Mexico City (1947-1950)

Park D. Massey was born in New York in 1920. He received a B.A. from Haverford College and later graduated from Harvard University. After serving in the U.S. Army for four years and gaining some private experience, Mr. Massey joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Mexico, Italy, Germany, the Ivory Coast, and Upper Volta. In 1962, he began working for

USAID, serving in Nicaragua, Panama, Bolivia, Chile, Haiti, and Uruguay. This interview was conducted by Morris Weisz in 1992.

Q: You entered the Foreign Service and your first posting?

MASSEY: My first posting was Mexico City, where I served in the economics section, commercial, consular, and political, because Mexico City at that time was used very much as a post to rotate young officers to the various aspects of the embassy's work.

Q: So you had a broad experience within the first posting in Mexico City?

MASSEY: Very broad.

Q: That would have been when?

MASSEY: That would have been from 1947 to 1950. It was there that I first encountered labor diplomacy in the person of a man named Smith Simpson.

Q: ...to whom I just spoke over the telephone the other day by the way. He's going to be giving us an interview shortly?

MASSEY: Smith Simpson was assigned as Labor Attaché, and, of course, in Mexico the trade union movement was extremely important because the official majority party was a three-legged stool, based essentially on the support of the trade unions, the military, and the bureaucrats and career politicians. This was known as the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* and these were the three elements that supported it. I felt that Smith Simpson's work was obviously necessary; it was one-third of the political power of the country, and yet I did not have the feeling, at that time, that he was very much heeded. He wrote reports, and they were sent off and disappeared into nowhere. Certainly when I was in the political section, I never recall at a staff meeting with the Ambassador any extensive discussions of important developments and changes in the trade union movement as they affected the political development of the country.

Q: The Ambassador at the time?

MASSEY: Walter Thurston, a career ambassador with many years experience.

Q: That was before the days of a Labor Attaché named Ben Stephansky, who later became an ambassador also?

MASSEY: Yes, that was before Ben Stephansky.

Q: Did you know him?

MASSEY: I knew Ben Stephansky later in various capacities, mostly in Latin America. In fact, I knew him when he was an ambassador at one post.

One thing sticks in my mind as to why there was any interest at all in labor. At that time apparently people remembered that in 1945 when Clement Attlee defeated Winston Churchill, the American Embassy in London had no contacts whatsoever with the Labor Party or the labor movement in England which was taking over power with the single exception of the Labor Attaché, whose name at the time, I believe, was Sam Berger.

Q: But he was not the Labor Attaché. It's almost by accident that that happened. He was an assistant to Harriman, who was the Lend Lease Administrator, and just happened to be there but had a background at the University of Wisconsin in labor studies with Commons. So it was fortuitous that that happened, and you're about the third or fourth person, including a couple who served in Latin America, who might not have been expected to know about that happenstance, John Fishburn being one, Dan Horowitz another, who point to this instance, and who also identify Sam as the Labor Attaché, which he was not at that time. It's curious. It was very important at that time. He later, of course, had a wonderful career.

Now that was your experience in Mexico, and you felt there was sort of a blank there that could have been attributed to what? Foreign policy generally, the Ambassador or the lack of specific attention to labor, and its importance by the Labor Attaché? I know you don't want to criticize Smith or anything like that...and by the way, he became very interested in precisely the direction you're pointing to later on in his career, and when I spoke to him about filing a statement with us, he made the point that he wanted that indicated. Very interesting.

MASSEY: The fault was not that of the Labor Attaché, who was extremely hard working, and extraordinarily knowledgeable. I think this reflected an attitude that permeated the Department of State. We sometimes pejoratively speak of the Department of State as, you know, Eastern Establishment WASPs (White Anglo Saxon Protestants). I can't imagine a more Eastern Establishment WASP than Smith Simpson, but that's all right. And I think that is the reason...the reason the Ambassador was indifferent. He understood intellectually, but did not understand emotionally. In Washington on the Mexican Desk, they may have understood intellectually but did not understand emotionally. After all, they had assigned a talented officer to the job, who was very good at doing the job. They just didn't pay much attention to him.

Q: Could you reflect for a minute on the possibility that that lack of interest by the Mexican Desk might have been due to the fact that a policy decision was made to have a labor office in a separate division of the State Department, rather than having it built into the geographic bureaus. You know, the labor interest was reflected at that time by a central office called, I think, ILH - International Labor and Health, under very good people, Otis Mulliken, Tobin, Horowitz himself, and those people, but it was separate from the operating geographic bureaus. And should we learn from that that there's more of a necessity to have the geographic bureaus?

MASSEY: I was not at that time, as a young officer, sufficiently familiar with the organization of the Department, or the importance of organizational placements. What you suggest is a possibility, but I think the problem is an attitude rather than an administrative or organizational problem.

Q: And this is an attitude shared by some very good people, but Eastern Establishment, Acheson himself, and those people. You served there then for three years with a growing interest in labor at that time, or was this a conclusion you arrived at after?

MASSEY: No, I had no growing interest in labor. At that particular time, I left that up to Smith. We talked about it at length, but I did not include any reference to labor affairs or labor matters in my own political reporting. I was not terribly interested.

Q: That's interesting in light of what happened later. It's very interesting. You finished that then after three years. It was sort of a training assignment in which you got a broad view, and I see that Mexico, with its large Embassy, was used for that purpose as, later on in my career, New Delhi was. It was a training post with a very large staff, and we had young people coming in and serving a few months in different capacities.

DOROTHY JESTER
Junior Officer and Counselor of Embassy on Economic Affairs
Mexico City (1948-1951, 1966-1968)

Consul
Mexicali (1951-1954)

Counselor of Embassy on Economic Affairs
Mexico City (1966-1968)

Dorothy Jester was born in Mesa, Arizona in 1914. She obtained a bachelor's degree from Stanford University and entered the foreign service in 1942. Her career included assignments in Peru, Germany, Mexico, Nicaragua, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Washington, DC. Ms. Jester was interviewed by Laurin Askew in 1998.

Q: What happened next?

JESTER: I was assigned to Mexico City as a junior Foreign Service officer on loan to the United States Information Agency. It was because State was still short of funds, or so I understood, that about 100 FSOs were lent out to other agencies.

But I really enjoyed the work of scholarship exchange, essentially screening young Mexican candidates for in-service assignments in some of our government agencies, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Public Health Service or the Department of Agriculture. I helped other students get undergraduate or graduate education in the United States with the help of the Institute for International Education in New York.

Q: How long did you stay in Mexico City?

JESTER: Until 1951, when I was transferred to the American consulate in Mexicali, up on the California border. There I issued visas and passports until 1954, when I was glad to be sent to Managua, Nicaragua, as an economic officer.

Q: Then from Munich did you go back to Mexico City?

JESTER: No, it would be the first time in Mexico City.

Q: 1948 to 1951. What was your responsibility there?

JESTER: As I mentioned earlier, I was assigned on loan to the U.S. Information Agency, and I worked on student exchange programs. When I was assigned to Mexico City later in my career, I was to see examples of the impact of such programs. I remember once at a cocktail party being introduced to a doctor who was head of the national mental health hospital. He said, "Oh, Miss Jester, you sent me to Johns Hopkins!" I think I was diplomatic enough to say, "No, doctor, you sent yourself. I only took care of the paper work." I met others who had become bank presidents or were being sent out as ambassadors to Japan and other important countries. It really was a program with impact.

Q: Right. I think you already mentioned what satisfaction you got from your job there. Now to Mexicali.

JESTER: Yes. There I had a consular assignment issuing visas and passports. Incidentally, I also got a letter from the personnel office of the State Department saying, "Miss Jester, I hope you understand that when you are in Mexicali you will not be in charge when the principal officer is away, even though you have the rank of consul (as FSO-5), because the Mexicans would not understand. Taking charge will be the vice consul, Mr. Williams." Some years later, I learned that a copy of the letter was sent to the supervising consul general, Carl Strom, who responded with a blistering letter to the Department. But the old meanie didn't send me a copy.

Q: Do you think that was motivated by the attitude in the Department toward women generally in the Foreign Service, or was it really a concern of the Mexicans?

JESTER: That's the way it was expressed, that the Mexicans would not understand.

Q: Then to Mexico City, in January 1966, back to your old stomping ground.

JESTER: Right, January 1966. I was number two in the very large economic section, but four years later I moved up to be head of the section, assuming the title of Counselor of Embassy for Economic Affairs. That's the title I had when I retired.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the business relationships with Mexico at that time.

JESTER: They were fine. I felt we had really good relations with the Mexican government through the various ministries we routinely had contact with. I remember a conversation I had with an officer in the Ministry of Finance, who got on the subject of relative military budgets. I reminded him that Mexico did not need a big military because it had the well-armed United States right above it. He was happy to agree with me.

At times, my job involved helping businessmen, but only if it was something that the commercial attache felt had a potential problem of a broader economic nature.

For a while, I was the only woman on the ambassador's country team, but later another female officer named Margaret Hussmann arrived to be the supervising consul general, responsible for the work of the embassy's consular section as well as that of six or seven consulates in other Mexican cities.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

JESTER: He was Robert McBride, a career officer. Yes, I really enjoyed Mexico. I liked it so much that I was not ready to return to the United States when I retired. So I moved to the second largest city, Guadalajara.

Q: Did you?

JESTER: Yes. I lived there for 10 years and got to be very active in the American Society and in a group organized to raise money for the symphony. I had many friends among both Mexicans and Americans. We also had a good bridge club. All in all, it was very pleasant.

Q: What, if any, one experience stands out in your recollection?

JESTER: I can't think of any one experience, but the totality of experiences in Mexico was, for me, the best. I loved Mexico. I still do. However, I don't want to go back to Mexico City, because the beauty of the city is gone. It is so contaminated. When I was there for the first time in 1948, you could see snowcapped volcanoes on any day that it wasn't raining. Now it is a rare sight. It is a shame, but that enormous growth had to bring its problems.

PATRICK F. MORRIS
Clerk, Department of Agriculture
Uruapan (1949-1950)

Mr. Morris was born and raised in Montana. Educated at Georgetown University, Mexico City College, and San Marcos College, Lima, Peru, Mr. Morris served in

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

Q: Well now, then we move to Mexico. You were in Mexico; this would be '49, '50 or so?

MORRIS: Yes, the end of '48. Actually I stayed in Washington, I graduated in June but I stayed in Washington because I wanted to vote in the elections in November.

Q: This was the Truman-Dewey.

MORRIS: Truman-Dewey. And it looked like poor old Harry Truman was going to get beaten and I thought, well I am going to stick around long enough to vote for Truman. We were so happy when Truman beat Dewey. And then right after the elections I went to Mexico.

Q: Well you got involved in this, the Department of Agriculture hoof and mouth disease but what were you doing?

MORRIS: I started as an administrative clerk. We had regional offices and under the regional offices there were area offices and an administrative clerk was in charge of an area office. That was where I really learned my Spanish, I will tell you. At Mexico City College and living in Mexico, my Spanish became much improved but boy, working out there. I was in charge of the office. Under the office I had two veterinarians and 50 cattle inspectors, both American and Mexican. The veterinarians were American and Mexican too; they were co-workers, one American vet and one Mexican vet. They were out in the field doing the vaccinating.

Q: Where are we talking about?

MORRIS: Well, I was in western Mexico, southwestern Mexico in the town of Uruapan in the state of Michoacán. I was in charge of making sure that the vaccinators had enough supplies and vaccine. The only other American with me was a pay master and he had to go out and pay the Mexicans for letting us vaccinate. Otherwise they would not bring their cattle so there was an incentive program. I had charge of the office and I had charge of all of the supplies and making sure that there was enough vaccine and there was enough ice to keep the vaccines. And I got the full reports every morning on how many cows were vaccinated and how many sheep were vaccinated, how many goats were vaccinated, how many pigs were vaccinated, etcetera. Every morning we had these two-way radios and I would sit down and they would go through their reports with me and I would take it all down. And this was all in Spanish. Then, after they finished their reports, they would then list all of the supplies that they needed and we had contracted with a little company there that had two-seater airplanes and they would fly over the area and just drop the stuff out, you know; they would fly low and drop the stuff out because

there were no roads; all these cattle inspectors were on horseback. So they would give me the list of supplies- I tell this story because it is indicative of how I learned my Spanish. They would go down the long list of things and I had a secretary there and she would be writing it all down and we had to make sure we got it right, how many of this and how much of that. This Mexican veterinarian was on the other end and he said 3 cajas de bujias. And I said como? He said 3 cajos de bujias. And I said no entiendo. He repeated it a couple of times, then he said, three boxes of sparkplugs, you goddamn gringo.

Q: You know, looking at it, how effective do you think the program was?

MORRIS: It was spectacularly effective. Do you know, in 19- You know, the Marshall Plan started in 1948. The aftosa program had started in 1947.

Q: How do you spell that, by the way?

MORRIS: A-F-T-O-S-A. Aftosa. I guess it is Latin; I do not know what it is. But anyway, the aftosa program started in 1947. The Marshall Plan started in 1948. When I started to work with aftosa we were spending two million dollars a month and at that time we were spending more money than the Marshall Plan was spending; they were just getting warmed up, you know, they really had not gotten going yet. But nevertheless we used to compare ourselves with the Marshall Plan; we were spending two million dollars a month and they were spending less. In those days that was an awful lot of money.

The program started off wrong because there had been one or two outbreaks in earlier times in the United States and the way that they took care of it was slaughter; they slaughtered all of the cattle and they buried them and covered them with lime and then covered the holes. They tried that in Mexico, that was the way they started in Mexico and they succeeded in spreading the disease across Mexico because the people immediately started to move their cattle. So then the whole southern half of Mexico became infected. The U.S. Department of Agriculture then realized that that was a losing proposition. They had already been working on a vaccine; well, they had developed the vaccine and so they decided that they would have a vaccination program for cattle. So they did that. And then they had sanitary zones; during those years you could not get into Mexico either by bus or by train or by plane without having to step into some kind of a solution that was in sand, there was a box and even in airports you had to step into this to make sure that you were not carrying the disease - evidently it was a disinfectant of some kind. And there were roadblocks for cars driving in; not at the borders but further south where they had drawn a line indicating the disease had not gone further north than that line. And it was at that line on all roads. There were stops where the cars had to be disinfected and the people had to be disinfected. But it worked; it worked. And Mexico to this day is free of aftosa.

Q: Well then, did you get any feel for Mexican administration? You know, per se or not?

MORRIS: Well yes, you cannot live in Mexico. You know, le nordida, la nordida. That is the bite a bribe. You know, and it's just a part of Mexican culture.

Q: You might explain what it is.

MORRIS: Yes well, you know, it is a bribe. You cannot do anything at any level. At all levels if you wanted to get something done you had to bribe somebody. And that, of course, was a turnoff for most Americans but it was just a fact of life. And of course I had a fairly good sized budget and I had to buy hay for the horses and I was offered bribes all the time and I never, ever accepted them. If anybody offered me a bribe that was the end of the discussion. I just would let them know that this was the U.S. Government and we were not going to do business with them. I am afraid that this is still one of Mexico's real problems.

ROY R. RUBOTTOM
Director of Mexican Affairs, Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC (1949-1951)

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

Q: What was your job when you went back to Washington? This is in 1949.

RUBOTTOM: I was assigned first to be Consul in Monterrey, Mexico and I came in for the usual debriefing after home leave. I was called into the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary and I was told that they were recommending that my orders be changed and that I was going to be Director of Mexican Affairs. I said, "I appreciate the recognition but I've never even served in the Embassy in Mexico." "Yes," they said, "But you lived in Manzanillo for two years as Naval Liaison Officer and we think that might be even better experience than living in the Embassy in Mexico City." So I said, I will be very pleased to take the assignment. In many many ways I guess it was the most fortuitous assignment that anybody could have had, certainly that I could have had at that juncture in my career. Because I had not gotten very good fitness reports while I was in Bogota. I was absorbing the Foreign Service way of doing things but my fitness reports had me way down in the lowest part of my class. By the time I got to Washington, in January of 1950, I had learned enough about the ways and mores, so to speak, of the Foreign Service that I could handle myself. I knew the lingo, so to speak. Then, I think the fact that I had done so many other things; that I'd been in the Navy, that I'd been in higher education, that I'd been a banker for awhile, all those things came to the forefront and I was able to carve out a useful place for myself in the Washington scene. I could write. I could write short, directly to the point letters. On the Mexican desk like so many desks, but particularly on the Mexican desk, you spend an awful lot of time either writing or supervising those who do write answers to hundreds of letters that go to the Congress. Senators and Congressmen. They send over the letters they receive, asking you to

draft a reply. You draft a reply which goes back to them which they can use or not use depending on how they feel.

Q: What type of letters mainly would these be?

RUBOTTOM: Everything in the world - having to do with immigration, having to do with problems with shrimp fishing boats out of Brownsville and Corpus Christi, having to do with the fact that somebody's relative had an oil interest that was nationalized in 1938 during the Cárdenas regime, having to do with bridges across the Rio Grande, pollution of the water - you name it. It's an incredible array of correspondence covering many, many subjects. At that time, of course, the Chamizal question was hovering in the background. It was only five years after the Water Treaty had been negotiated.

Q: Could you explain the Chamizal business?

RUBOTTOM: Chamizal was a dispute that went all the way back to the late 19th century over the riparian boundaries of the Rio Grande River right near or almost in the center of the city of El Paso, Texas which is right across from Ciudad Juárez. The dispute arose as to whether there was a sudden change in the river boundary or whether it was gradual. Under riparian law, international law, if you have a gradual change, the boundary stays with the river. But if you have a sudden change, the boundary stays where it was. Nothing was done to settle this dispute for all these years and then suddenly in the early 1900s it erupted to a boiling point and the United States and the Mexicans called in the Canadians to be the mediators. The Canadians listened to the two sides and decided the Mexicans were in the right, and awarded the boundary to Mexico back where it was. This meant that some of the U.S. occupied land was in Mexican territory. The United States refused to accept the decision, so this boil continued to be a problem. It was not settled until 1963-64 after President Johnson came in. Many people think it wouldn't have been settled then if there hadn't been a native Texan who was willing to knock heads together in El Paso, because the El Pasoites didn't want it settled. But it was settled on a realistic basis. The interesting thing is that it could have been settled ten years before. When I was on the Mexican desk, in 1952-53, Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Mann, came around to my office one day and said, "Dick, let's talk about something." We went in and closed the door, pulled out a big map of that area, and we worked on that map for thirty minutes or an hour, showing how certain territory could be exchanged that would satisfy probably both sides. We agreed it was worth trying. So we called in the Minister Counselor, not the Ambassador, the Minister Counselor of the Mexican Embassy, and went over it with him, and he wasn't too offended by it. He thought it might have some merit. But he never did come back with any kind of favorable answer, or any answer, as a matter of fact. The truth of the matter is, that up until that time, the Mexicans found it convenient to have that issue. They could always bring it up, any time they wanted to, to apply a little leverage on us. Finally in 1963-64, I think they found they'd wrung out all the advantages they could, so they decided it was time to settle. They settled the Chamizal then.

Q: I read a book recently about Mexican-American relations in which it was said that traditionally the Mexican Foreign Ministry has always been loaded with people who were not violently, but had an anti-American bias, whereas some of the other Ministries such as Defense

and Interior and all, had much better relations with the United States on their own. This was always a problem. Did you see any indication of this?

RUBOTTOM: Yes, to some extent I would agree with that. I think you can't generalize completely on it. I had very, very close friends in the Mexican Government. The friends that I met then when I was on the Mexican desk, in the early 1950s, were still in important positions, or even more important positions a few years later when I became Assistant Secretary and I was dealing with them. In fact, during the time I was on the Mexican desk, I completed two rather important and successful negotiations with Mexico. One was on the settlement of the railroad retirement fund problem which took care of their demand that all the money paid into the railroad retirement fund by the tens of thousands of Mexican railroad workers who came up and worked on our railroads during World War II, were able to at least get some credit for the Mexican government even though the individuals didn't get credit. That was a tough agreement to negotiate. Then I was also able to settle a problem - the 1951 Immigration Agreement. I was the principle negotiator on that. Both of those agreements, along with the trade agreements with Venezuela were cited in 1952 when I received the Superior Service Award. I found negotiation to be the ultimate test of the diplomat. And they were my ultimate test. Some people are successful of course, and some are not. I'm not sure that I know what the answer is. I think some of my colleagues tended to give up too quickly. I think you have to have an extraordinary capacity to state and restate in various ways whatever the rationale is for the position you take when you're trying to negotiate an agreement. Besides the intellectual, the legal, and the political process of determining your position, discussing it with the other side and ultimately coming to whatever compromises you need, to reach agreement in so many words, you're probably not going to be able to do that unless you have some rapport with the person with whom you're negotiating. I can tell you a story if you're interested.

Q: Going back to Mexican side where you negotiated this I'm interested in the - looking at the period - how you found the Mexican Foreign Ministry officials that you dealt with. Both their competence and also their attitudes towards the United States.

RUBOTTOM: Well, to begin with, I found that Mexicans were extremely competent. And I found that they knew the United States in general much better than we knew Mexico. In those days one was dealing with quite a number of Mexicans who had lived in the United States in exile as children. This happened during the most terrible part of the Mexican modern revolution, which began about 1911. There was fighting, crisscrossing north and south and east and west, across the country which lasted up till 1919 and 1920. Certainly until the constitution of 1917. That would have been a period of six to eight or nine years. Many Mexicans who could afford it left Mexico and lived in Brooklyn. I know of two families who lived in Brooklyn. Anywhere to get out of Mexico during those violent years. So these people who were my opposite numbers had gone to American schools and some of them spoke English very well. Not all of them. Fortunately, I had learned my Spanish, my practical Spanish, after the book learning, in Manzanillo. So, later on, when I was in Spain I remember Ambassador Lodge, John Davis Lodge, who was fluent in French would use my help as interpreter. He quickly became fluent in

Spanish. But he would introduce me, as Mr. Rubottom, "a Texan who speaks Spanish with a Mexican accent."

Let me finish up a little bit more on Mexico. I think we were on that subject as I recall. Anyone who knows the history of U.S.-Mexico relations has to understand at the very outset why every Mexican has some feeling of resentment towards the United States of America. They lost almost half of their territory in the so-called U.S.-Mexico War. Then came the "Porfiriato," the 35-yr. regime of Porfirio Díaz, which lasted until 1910. Americans owned ranches of large acreage which were expropriated. The American oil companies were expropriated in 1938. The United States and Mexico might have had another major incident if it hadn't been for the fact that we were on the verge of World War II. I think that Roosevelt found it in his interest to negotiate a settlement in 1941 of the expropriation or nationalization of oil. But then I'm skipping over the fact that during the Woodrow Wilson period in 1914-15, we landed Marines in Tampico and Veracruz. Here you had one of the most idealistic of our Presidents who nevertheless rationalized completely the sending of Marines right at the height of the Mexican Revolution. So anyway, they feel first and foremost that they've got to make any American understand that they want to be respected, they want to be dealt with as equals. They tend to hold on as long as they can to defend whatever the Mexican position is. I always found that Mexicans after pushing and feinting in whatever the negotiation was, knew where to stop, knew where to draw the line short of going so far that it would be adverse to their interest. I think they were not really trying to achieve any quote victories in negotiations. I think they were satisfied, as I think we Americans should be with what is a "fair deal." So that both sides get something out of an agreement, a negotiation that they can feel is beneficial, and supportive of their interest. I don't need to tell you that when an agreement results in quote victory for one side or the other you're simply laying the groundwork for problems to come up later. Because the loser never forgives or forgets.

Q: Two things I learned in early diplomacy. One, there's no such thing as a diplomatic victory because, as you say, the problem doesn't go away. And the other thing is that you don't lie.

RUBOTTOM: Right.

Q: How did you find our Embassy at the time? Again, there have often been complaints that our Embassy in Mexico City has problems that are sometimes of its own making or not, or they're not as finely tuned in or they get too many problems. Did you find that at the time or not or did you feel that we had a strong Embassy in Mexico City?

RUBOTTOM: Well, interestingly enough, just before I took over the Mexican desk, in January, I had been up here in December and they wanted me to get on the job as quickly as possible so they worked out an arrangement with the Embassy for me to go to Mexico City to be briefed by the Ambassador and the head of the political section, as well as some of the other people there because obviously they needed to know me, and I needed to know them. I went, I guess, between Christmas and New Year's and spent all that week. Walter Thurston was then the Ambassador. He was a very highly regarded career ambassador, a bachelor, a man of certainly - how would I describe him - good personality but not the least bit aggressive. On the contrary he was polite, punctiliously polite, proper, but I was to work with him for the next year, at least, and I found

him to be an outstanding representative. Chuck Burrows, Ambassador Charles Burrows, later, was then the head of the political section. Shortly after that he was promoted to Class I. I think that at that time he was the youngest Class I Foreign Service Officer in the Service. So I had a lot of respect for him. I was still Class IV, trying to work out of the low category I found myself in after first coming in the Service. The Embassy at that time didn't have the place they are in now, which they've already outgrown long since. In fact it was the negotiation for the settlement of the Lend-Lease Agreement that I did in 1951 that led to that present structure and the residence that they're now in. What we did was to, in effect, get possession of enough pesos, to do that, because they said they wanted the money paid back from the railroad retirement debt which was somewhere in the neighborhood of 16 million dollars. We said they owed us around 23 million dollars on Lend-Lease for the airplanes they used in the Philippines at the tail end of the war. I think they were P-40 airplanes. We were getting absolutely nowhere in either one of these negotiations and suddenly I had the idea, that the difference was seven million dollars. I said, why don't we take the seven million dollars in pesos and build a new Embassy and a new residence down there and keep on negotiating and if we don't ever reach a settlement then we'll just consider those two items canceled out. The United States will have this and Mexico will have the benefit of our having a proper place to work and live. And that was the way it was settled.

Q: Well, I take it you thought we had a strong Embassy at that time.

RUBOTTOM: Yes, we did.

EDMUND MURPHY
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1949-1952)

Edmund Murphy was born in Massachusetts in 1913. He received both bachelor's and master's degree from the University of California and joined the State Department in 1946. His positions overseas included Mexico, Haiti, France, Argentina, Colombia, and Finland. Mr. Murphy was interviewed on January 30th 1900 by Allen Hansen.

Q: In July of 1949 you received your first overseas assignment as assistant cultural affairs officer in Mexico City. Would you tell us about that?

MURPHY: That was an interesting time to be in Mexico. Miguel Alemán was the President of Mexico at that time, and Lázaro Cárdenas, who had formerly been President, was still around as the "grand old man" of Mexican politics. The U.S. cultural staff, under Phillip Raine, had excellent contacts with the universities and the principal cultural institutions, such as the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, as well as with the writers, philosophers, painters, scientists and other intellectuals. The painters Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros were internationally known and they were in demand in the United States.

Our Ambassador at that time was Walter Thurston, who was a career officer, and he was succeeded after a little, by William O'Dwyer who -

Q: You mean the former Mayor of New York City?

MURPHY: Yes, he had been the Mayor of New York City. His political appointment came as something of a surprise to Mr. Thurston who had not been informed that he was being replaced. Mr. O'Dwyer still had some obligations to return to New York from time to time in connection with certain allegations pending against his administration. But he was a very colorful ambassador, splendid at public relations, as are most people who reach such important elective offices. His wife, a New York fashion model, made a lovely hostess who graced all Embassy functions with her charm and wit.

Q: What were your principal duties as assistant cultural attaché?

MURPHY: I acted as liaison with the binational center (Instituto Mexicano- Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales) and I served on its board of directors as Embassy representative. There was a very large exchange of persons programs, and I did some interviewing of candidates for both private and government exchange programs. That was not my principal responsibility however, because Dorothy Jester, another assistant CAO was primarily responsible for that aspect of our program. I worked with student groups, teacher groups, some music, art and literary groups, and with assistance to American sponsored schools in Mexico. For an interim period, I was the Acting Cultural Attaché, and during that period my duties were greatly expanded and encompassed the book translation program, programming of lecturers, concert artists and other "cultural presentations" sent from the U.S. by our State Department. I also had some supervisory duties with respect to the Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City.

Q: Are that Center and Library still going strong today?

MURPHY: Yes, they are. Both are still highly respected institutions in Mexico. As I've mentioned, this was one of the few overseas libraries in Latin America operated by our government because most American libraries in that area were administered by the Bi-national Centers. The Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin is still the showpiece it was in 1949 when it was headed by Miss Bertha Harris, one of the library's most distinguished employees.

R. SMITH SIMPSON
Labor Attaché
Mexico City (1949-1952)

R. Smith Simpson was born in the Washington, DC area. He attended the University of Virginia and received a law degree from Cornell University. Mr. Simpson joined the State Department in 1944 and served in Belgium, Greece,

Mexico, India, Mozambique, and Washington, DC. Mr. Simpson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: After two years there, you moved to Mexico City as first secretary.

SIMPSON: That's right. Yes, and I left Greece thoroughly worn out.

Q: Were you a labor attaché there as well?

SIMPSON: Yes. As a reward for Greece, I was offered a choice of Mexico City, Rio, Ottawa, and Stockholm, which was a nice choice to have. I chose Mexico, because I felt I'd always had the American point of view about the Mexican - American War, but I'd never heard the Mexican view. And I got it very quickly. There were plenty there who rejoiced to find a *norteamericano* who was interested in hearing their side of that conflict.

Yes, I was the labor officer there, this time in the political section. This was the usual kind of a labor attaché operation.

Q: Was the ambassador William O'Dwyer during this time?

SIMPSON: He came during the latter part of my tour. The ambassador when I arrived was a career man, Walter Thurston. He had been born in Mexico. I think his father had been an engineer in Mexico, so the ambassador really should have known the Mexican psychology. He, again, was not too sure what a labor attaché was and whether he was really reliable. Like all the old timers, he really didn't like this kind of intrusion. But the more I traveled around and the more information I picked up as to what was going on, the more he began to realize that here was somebody who was useful. The Communists were then carrying on an intensive peace propaganda, with the dove of peace and all this kind of thing, and this led to an amusing experience.

Q: This was the worldwide Communist propaganda campaign.

SIMPSON: Yes. Thurston got more and more annoyed by it feeling more and more that the Mexico City press was falling for it.

So one day at our staff meeting he said, "I'm thinking of calling in the editors of these newspapers in Mexico City and telling them I think they are making a great mistake: they're falling for Communist propaganda. What do you think of the idea?"

He began on his left, with Carl Strom, who was then the counselor for consular affairs, and went around the table. I was over near his right hand. Everybody around the table said they thought this was a great idea; I thought it was awful. I had to figure out a way to voice my dissent so as not to appear to stick up like a sore thumb. I wanted to make converts. This is what we've had to do in the labor attaché program all along, to win friends, make converts.

So I thought, "How am I going to express my dissent?" A thought occurred to me, so when it came my turn I said, "Mr. Ambassador, let's reverse the situation. Suppose this is the Mexican Embassy in Washington, and the embassy (I didn't say the Mexican ambassador, I said the Mexican Embassy) felt that our press was misguided on some matter. So the Mexican ambassador called in the editors of the Washington newspapers and told them this. What would their reaction be?"

There was complete silence. You could have heard a pin drop. To make my point clear, I said, "Well, I think that their reaction would be that the Mexican Embassy was interfering with their freedom of speech."

Complete silence again.

I indicated that was all I had to say, and the ambassador passed on to the next officer.

He did call in the editors. And the next day were banner headlines: "U.S. AMBASSADOR INTERVENES IN MEXICAN AFFAIRS."

I could never understand how a man who not only had served before in Latin America, but had been born and reared in Mexico, could have made a mistake like that, completely misjudging Mexican psychology.

Nobody in the staff meeting but a labor attaché - a humble labor attaché - would say he thought this was a dreadful idea. But in these days the political advice of a labor attaché did not count for much with the Old Timers.

Conformism, conformism. This was something the labor attachés were up against from the very beginning. They were something new, their advice was different, therefore they challenged conformism from the start.

Q: They had a different perspective.

SIMPSON: They had a different perspective. They had different sources of information. They mixed with different kinds of people, people that the old career boys would rather be dead than be seen with.

Q: In those days, did you know Serafino Romualdi?

SIMPSON: Very well.

Q: Of course, his big bête noire in Mexico was Lombardo Toledano, wasn't it?

SIMPSON: That's right. Which didn't make it any easier for me, because I had to see Lombardo Toledano. I had to keep in touch with what was going on throughout the Mexican labor movement.

Q: Who were these two people, what were their positions?: Serafino Romualdi was the inter-American representative of the AFL, and then, after the merger, of the AFL/CIO. Lombardo Toledano was the Mexican who was head of a hemispheric labor confederation, CITAL, wasn't it?

SIMPSON: I think so. It was Communist.

Q: And so there was rivalry and strong enmity between these two people.

SIMPSON: That's right.

Q: So you had to see Lombardo sometimes?

SIMPSON: Oh, yes. Just as in Belgium, I had to keep in touch with the Communist labor leaders there. They were very leery of me, of course, but they received me and we would talk. I would make no bones about what our position was. I never found them very informative, I must say. I had to develop other sources of information as to what they were up to.

Q: In Belgium, in my time, there were still a few Communists left in the miners' union. And that's where they were when you were there?

SIMPSON: Yes, they were there. In my time they were active in a number of unions and on a number of fronts throughout the country, including the political. You have to remember that was a transitional period in Belgium and things were very fluid.

Q: Were you in Mexico when ORIT was founded, the regional organization of workers?

SIMPSON: Yes. One of the best American labor representatives that I worked with was Ernst Schwartz. Do you remember him?

Q: From the AFL/CIO?

SIMPSON: CIO. He was from the butchers union in Chicago.

Q: I've heard the name, I don't know him.

SIMPSON: He was good, very good. He was not pompous, as the Mexicans viewed Serafino. He did not lecture to them. He was much better than Serafin Otram the Mexican, and we worked together very well.

Then I uncovered a chap who you probably will recall. He was a pharmacist in Texas, on the border, very much interested in labor and in Mexicans. He later replaced Serafino Romualdi. His name doesn't come to me.

Q: Andrew McClellan.

SIMPSON: Andrew McClellan, that's it. I spotted him, and the instant I met him and saw how he was with Mexicans and how interested he was in helping Mexican *braceros* defend their rights and interests, I encouraged him. Eventually, I encouraged him to give up his pharmacy and give this full time, if he could work out a way to get an income. It was gradually worked out.

Q: When I knew him first he was the inter-American representative for the food and drink people. Then he went to work for Romualdi, and then he replaced Romualdi as the inter-American...

SIMPSON: He was very good. He was one of those rare Texans who really understood Mexicans. He got along beautifully with them, and he was sincere in his desire to work with them and help them. He was a problem solver.

Q: Did you ever get involved in immigration problems while you were there?

SIMPSON: No.

Q: The bracero program or anything?

SIMPSON: No, that was handled in Washington. When Washington wanted any discussions of it in Mexico, they sent a man down from Washington. Usually it was Roy Rubottom, who was assistant or deputy secretary of state for inter- American affairs at that time. Roy, like Tom Mann, was a Texan, and the Texans, including LBJ in the Senate, wanted the *bracero* problem handled by Texans, to safeguard their interests.

Q: And the old-timer in the PRI unions I think is still alive there, Fidel Velásquez.

SIMPSON: Fidel was then secretary general of the official labor organization. We talked from time to time. He, again, was a little leery because we had not had a labor attaché in the American Embassy before, and he wasn't sure as to what this portended, as to whether this was some form of subtle *norteamericano* imperialism.

I worked a lot with the oil workers' union, for it was a hot-bed of Communist influence and generated a lot of anti- U.S. feeling which I wanted to counter-act. As a matter of fact, one of the few Point Four projects that we had in Mexico was mine, to send a petroleum workers' delegation to the United States to visit refineries, etc., to pick up what they could in the way of technological processes, to meet friendly Americans and thereby serve as a good will mission and a source of pro-American feeling in the union.

Q: So how did you feel about your work that you did in Mexico as contrasted with what you had been doing in Europe?

SIMPSON: It was less exciting, but nevertheless necessary and genuinely interesting, because I

learned a lot. It was my first experience in a Latin American country, and since I traveled a lot through the country, it was quite an education for me and I developed a good deal of intelligence information. In order to get a good feel for people in communities, and elicit as much information as possible, I would take USIA films with me and show them in villages. This would attract the whole community, and after the show was over, I would stand around and talk and have coffee with some of them in a *café*, which would give me a broad cross-section of opinion in the community. So I used USIA films and USIA operators extensively. I found it was a very good drawing card to get a community out so that I could talk to a good cross-section and find out much of what was going on.

Q: I used to do a lot of that myself, and I was dismayed to find recently that the USIA has abolished all of its film program and has destroyed most of the film that it ever had. It has gone totally to video. I was quite surprised that technology has seemed to have overtaken the old films.

SIMPSON: One of the films that I used effectively in Belgium was one produced and directed by John Ford on the Tennessee Valley Authority project.

Q: Yes, I know that one.

SIMPSON: You know that one? It's a beautiful film. It showed how a government can, if it's so motivated, use a public works program to educate people and improve their standard of living. This film had a terrific impact on Socialist workers in Belgium. I can remember showing it one time at my house to the leaders of the FGTB, and seeing tears in the eyes of some of the young Socialists from Liege- -because this was something of social improvement that a capitalist society would do. It had never occurred to them that capitalism could be that social minded. My educational effort in the labor movement there had an effect not only for the embassy and the United States, but for capitalism itself and the West. We have to remember that European labor movements came out of the underground fed up with war. And how had this war come about? Through fascism and nazism, and these had developed in capitalist societies, so in their view there was something wrong and rotten about capitalism. In order to orient this emerging underground towards the West, we had to take on this issue of capitalism and show that capitalism could do good things, things that were directed to the elevation of living and labor standards.

Q: William O'Dwyer was former mayor of New York City. I sort of had the impression that he was in Mexico as ambassador in order to avoid prosecution in the United States.

SIMPSON: Well, we won't say that on the tape, but that was the contemporary explanation, to get him out of the country in a sufficiently official position so that nobody would try to subpoena him.

Q: Well, how was he as ambassador?

SIMPSON: A very good one, from my standpoint.

Q: Really, how come?

SIMPSON: Well, he was Irish. I guess you are, too, aren't you?

Q: Well, partly. More Scottish.

SIMPSON: He was Irish and this means he was friendly, outgoing, and he was very gregarious with the Mexicans. The Mexicans didn't feel there was anything wrong about sending an ambassador there who was under a cloud - many of their politicians were under clouds, so it made no difference to them that our ambassador was. As I say, he was friendly, outgoing, unpretentious. This is what they liked. So many *norteamericanos* come down there with a superior air, and this grates on them no end. O'Dwyer didn't. He seemed to be one of them.

I can remember one thing that happened just before I got there. Crown Cork wanted to establish a plant in Mexico, so they sent a representative down to negotiate it. And he grated on them. But they didn't let on. They gave him everything he wanted: permission to establish the plant, permission to construct it, permission to do this and do that. Crown Cork got the plant all set up but it couldn't get permission to operate the plant, and never got it. Its great investment went down the drain because it sent someone down there who offended the Mexicans. Pretentious, you know, like a lot of Texans. There's bad blood between Texans and Mexicans. Texans never understand why this is so. I didn't know about it, much less understand it, until I went down there and saw the way some of them came into Mexico, as if they viewed it as an appendage of Texas.

Q: Did you find in Mexico that you were dealing with what would be in Europe called the intelligentsia, the academic types and all that? Did you have much dealings in labor matters with the academic world, the writers and all this?

SIMPSON: No, not much.

FERNANDO E. RONDÓN
Childhood Years
Mexico City (1949-1955)

Fernando E. Rondón was born and raised in California until his family moved to Mexico in 1949. After graduating from high school, he went to the University of California at Berkeley and joined the Foreign Service in 1961. His overseas assignments included positions in Iran, Morocco, Algeria, Madagascar, Peru, Honduras, and Ecuador. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

RONDON: When I was 13 the family moved to Mexico City, where I went to a Jesuit high school - which no longer exists - *Instituto Patria*, which was later sold because the Jesuits wanted to concentrate on social work. It is there that I learned my Spanish. The school had a

student population of three American boys and almost 2,000 Mexican boys. I lived in Mexico for approximately six years. I went to college in the US.

I never considered myself as Mexican. When I went there I was just thirteen and was just starting to date. I had my heart set on going to Loyola High School in LA, but that was obviously not to be. I really didn't want to go to Mexico City and spent my first year fighting my being there. I was determined to return to the US as soon as possible, even if I had to join the Army at 18. Over time I accepted being in Mexico and did very well in school, even though I never stopped yearning to return to the US - above all to California.

I have only had two "black eyes" in my life, both obtained in school in Mexico. I was a member of the debating club at school. One day we debated the status of Eva Perón: saint or sinner. I took the position that she was a whore, which was somewhat an exaggeration. The person who was defending her sainthood, who later became a Jesuit priest, punched me in the eye. We soon made up and he became one of my best friends.

I later got into a fight over the Mexican-American War. I maintained that the Mexicans had provoked the war because they thought they could beat the United States and thereby teach us a lesson. The Mexican government at the time did not realize how strong the US really was - and perhaps the US itself did not recognize its strength. My position again generated a fight. There is a lot of strong passion in Mexico on that war, but I must say that growing up in Mexico, I did not experience any personal anti-Americanism. When the Pan-American games took place in Mexico in the 1950s, I rooted for the US. I felt very lonely because I must have been the only - or at least one of very few - spectators that rooted for the US. The Mexicans always rooted for their fellow Latins.

SIDNEY WEINTRAUB
Visa and Political Officer
Mexico City (1951-1954)

Sidney Weintraub was born in New York City. He graduated from the University of Missouri and later from Yale University. In 1949, Mr. Weintraub entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Madagascar, Mexico, Japan, Thailand, and Chile. Mr. Weintraub was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996 and 1997.

Q: You were there from '49 to '51. Then where were you assigned?

WEINTRAUB: Mexico City. I was assigned first to the political section. It was a rotating kind of assignment. I had never studied Spanish. By then, I knew French and German fluently, so they assigned me to a Spanish-speaking place. Spanish is now my best language. Mexico City was a lovely assignment.

Q: You were there from when to when?

WEINTRAUB: '51 through '54.

Q: Can you describe a bit about the embassy at that time? Who was the Ambassador?

WEINTRAUB: It was a relatively small embassy. There were three junior officers and a political counselor. That's all for the political section. The political counselor, I won't give you his name, but he was an ass. I can give you some examples.

Q: I'd like to hear some examples of how, you might say, the system doesn't work.

WEINTRAUB: He almost convinced me to quit, that if I had to live with people like that for the rest of my life, I decided I didn't want to. I'll give you two examples. He once asked me to write what were then called "dispatches." Mexico at the time was approaching a presidential election and I wrote about some of the political currents. He said he liked it very much and then added, "But fill it out with the ever-present menace of Communism."

Q: This was McCarthy times, wasn't it?

WEINTRAUB: Well, there wasn't an ever-present menace of Communism in Mexico in the electoral contest. Anyhow, telling me to do that just bothered me. He would often give me and others in the section assignments and not give us all the information about what was requested. I remember one such case where I wrote something and he said, "But you didn't answer the questions that they asked you to answer" I said, "What questions?" and he then gave me the incoming message to which we were asked to respond. He did that frequently. I could give you more examples, but I don't want to. He was a shallow person and he reached a high level in the State Department. That always troubled me because there was absolutely no substance to the man.

Q: Was it lack of substance or was he playing games? Sometimes people play games by always leaving things out, or want to make sure that they seem superior.

WEINTRAUB: It was a combination of all of that. In any event, I only stayed about a year and a half in the political section. The DCM at the time was a man named Paul Culbertson, who was very good. When I was rated by the political counselor, the DCM wrote a review saying to pay no attention to the rating. The ambassador who was there during almost all the time I was there, was Bill O'Dwyer, the former Mayor of New York. Actually, I learned a lot from Bill O'Dwyer.

Q: He was almost in exile there, wasn't he? I mean, wasn't one of the things he was there for was that there were indictments or the equivalent?

WEINTRAUB: He wanted to be out of New York, but there were no indictments against him as I recall. His wife, Sloan Simpson O'Dwyer, was a very attractive young woman. I knew him, and never had any problems with her. The reason I remember him well is that he was a politician. I

remember, I was working on some problem. I can't even remember what the problem was, but I couldn't resolve it. It was of some importance, and I just couldn't get it done. It never occurred to me to go to the political counselor because he wouldn't have done anything. So, I went to the DCM and said, "Here's the problem I have, and I don't know what to do. Here's what I've done and I don't know how to take it further." He listened and said, "Why don't we go speak to Bill and see what we can do." I went in and I explained it to O'Dwyer. He listened. While I was there, he got on the telephone with the President of Mexico, who was then Miguel Alemán. O'Dwyer didn't speak any Spanish. He got on the telephone "Hello, Mike." I couldn't hear the other side of the conversation, but there was some discussion back and forth. O'Dwyer explained the problem, thanked him very much, and hung up. He said, "It's taken care of." Well, it was. It was a lesson that was important to me at the time, of how important the personal relationship could be in dealing with things, particularly in a place like Mexico.

Q: What was the general feeling among the Political Officers you were with about the Institutional Revolutionary Party of Mexico, which was then and still is running things?

WEINTRAUB: I was in the political section for only half the tour. Everybody knew that the PRI would win the election. As a matter of fact, I still remember, several of us wrote a joint dispatch about that time, just before the election. There were five candidates in that particular election. The man who succeeded Alemán was named Ruíz Cortines and he was the PRI candidate. The principal opponent was an ex-general named Henríquez Guzmán. Henríquez was probably to the left of the PRI candidate and was quite a popular person with a strong personality. One of the other candidates was a man named Vicente Lombardo who once had been the head of the CTM, Mexico's main labor confederation. He was well to the left of the PRI. Two of us in the political section consulted and asked ourselves, "If we were running this election, what would we want the popular vote to be for each candidate? What would be the right amounts." We actually sent in a message. I think we were within one or two percentage points for all five candidates. In other words, we had no illusions about who ran the country and how. By then, the political section was down to two or three.

Q: Was there much of an effort at that time, of the Embassy to get you out into the field? Or did one rely pretty much on the Consulates, of which we had a multitude?

WEINTRAUB: We didn't get out into the field too much, unless we did it on our own, and many of us did. The last half of my tour in Mexico was in the visa section. In a way, that was a lot more interesting than the political section. For one, it helped me with my Spanish because I had to use it. Shortly after I got into the visa section, I was assigned the job, I don't know why, of interviewing people on whom there was some adverse information - belonging to the Communists Party or to a Communist front organization. My responsibility was to decide whether to deny the visa or write a report to Washington asking for an advisory opinion. That was an interesting experience. It was quite clear in some cases that the information we had was wrong. We were getting it from a controlled American source, or CAS as it was called. That became evident in some cases as one observed patterns of reported information. In one case, I actually sent in a long message, saying, "Here's a group of people who are being accused" - it was a whole group of people who, theoretically, belonged to a certain Communist front group. I asked

them to please get the controlled American sources checked because I thought they were wrong on about 150 people. They later admitted to me that they were wrong.

In other cases, the stuff was trivial. I remember once having to interview Dolores del Río, a movie actress, quite a beautiful woman, very pleasant. She had belonged to some of the front organizations, but she had lent her name to many things. I concluded once I started to speak with her that she didn't have the slightest idea of what she belonged to, nor did she care, nor did it matter. She was going off to make a film in Hollywood. My opinion was, in that case, "Don't create a big fuss over nothing." The Department agreed.

Q: There was, particularly at that time, a rather strong movement on the Left in the art community.

WEINTRAUB: Yes, there was. Most of the CAS reports were accurate, and the law was that visas should then be denied and that's what I did.

BEN S. STEPHANSKY
Labor Attaché
Mexico City (1952)

Ambassador Ben S. Stephansky was born in Russia in 1913. He received a B.A., an M.A., and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin and joined the Labor Department in 1950. In addition to serving in Mexico, Ambassador Stephansky served in the Latin American Bureau and was ambassador to Bolivia. He was interviewed by James Shea in 1992.

STEPHANSKY: So it just happened then that Mexico opened up. I didn't want to go to Mexico and Ruth Hughes, who was, I think, sort of a long time Mexican Desk Officer in the State Department... I think that she shared that from a different point of view. I don't think that she wanted me to go to Mexico. Mexico was a rather preferred post, I learned later, and neither she nor someone else who was the next above her wanted me to go, because they had somebody else in mind. Well, finally, whatever it was was tipped in my favor of going to Mexico. I drove down there and learned a little Spanish on the way down. I didn't speak a word of Spanish until I got to Mexico. I am happy to say that within about a year, largely because I traveled around the first year almost exclusively with labor leaders, I learned a lot of Spanish. I had a teacher - in those years we had to pay for our own language lessons - but I finagled a half hour early in the morning from the Embassy, and I paid for the other half hour. That went on for about a year. I had a wonderful teacher. I will never forget her suggestion to me to make sure that I listened carefully on these trips I was taking with the labor leaders. She by the way was the mother-in-law of the Secretary-General of the Musicians Union in Mexico. Her daughter was a fine pianist. She had taught a good deal of Spanish and English at Mexico City College and for a period of time in California, and she had little tricks as to how to learn the language. One was to listen very hard to conversations and be sure to pick up words that are of interest. Anyway, I listened a great deal

and I picked up a lot of vocabulary. I got to learn later what she called, "*palabrotas*." That was colorful "labor speak." I remember coming back and telling her, "Here I've got some new words for you" and I would repeat them and she would blush red and she would say, "Oh, those aren't nice words." But I learned a lot of Spanish and within a year or so I was making speeches in Spanish and by the time I left in five years I was scoring bilingual. I loved the language. That was the process by which I got into Latin America. Do you have any questions?

Q: Ben, could you tell us a little something about the C.T.M., the Mexican Trade Union Confederation?

STEPHANSKY: It was then, as it is now, with a lot of differences of course, the predominate sector of the labor movement. It was almost the exclusive one. I mean there were a number of smaller labor centers and I think partly Mexican politics seemed to dictate that you just didn't want to have one large labor center without some semblance of competition that they could utilize to sort of keep the C.T.M. moderate. The C.T.M. actually was formed, as I remember my history, in 1934 by Lázaro Cárdenas as the labor sector of the P.R.I. Before that it was the CROM, which was the big labor movement. The CROM was the so-called regional labor movement of Mexico and the term "regional" is very interesting. It really had anarchistic, anarcho-syndicalist antecedents and there were several [similar] movements in Latin America, the Argentine movement and the Chilean movement particularly - these were the two larger ones. The Chilean was the Chilean regional labor movement and the Argentine was the Argentine regional [labor movement] and the Mexican was the Mexican regional [labor movement]. This was part of the ideological expression that at some given dramatic moment there would come the revolution, the anarchistic revolution, when world labor would take over, striking at the same time. It was the great "general strike" that would eventually come to rule the world. I don't think that anybody particularly believed it at that time, but certainly the whole notion of a kind of an international brotherhood was reflected in that terminology.

The leader of the CROM was Luis Morones, a wonderful and interesting guy, who met his fate because he had a strong movement (and as a matter of fact he had very close relations with Samuel Gompers of the AFL) and it was the movement that joined the Revolution in 1913. The Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910. The CROM organized what were known as the Red Battalions that participated in the Revolution and really became the predominant labor and political movement for the next decade and a half. Then it fell into bad times. Morones became too ambitious and I think he was done away with by those who were emerging as new political leaders like Calles and Obregón. During the 1920s there was a period of continued instability following the Revolution. Carranza was assassinated. He was the President under whom Mexico's constitution was adopted in 1919. Obregón was assassinated and Morones was suspected and that began the decline of the CROM. It is a long and interesting story but I shouldn't go into it other than the fact that this was a period when CROM disappeared and disappeared partly or maybe largely because Morones had presidential ambitions and they didn't work out and the other political figures did away with him. I don't mean physically, but he became a minor figure.

The important "second revolution" in a sense that occurred in Mexico was with Lázaro Cárdenas, the great President who is still revered as one of the great popular figures in Mexican history. He

wanted to get rid of the remnants of the CROM for a new era of stability. Furthermore, he was quite worried about Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who was a Marxist, Communist... I don't know if he was a Communist in the traditional or orthodox sense, but he was the man who was reaching for power with a labor base. Lázaro Cárdenas then virtually handpicked five leaders; they were called the "five little wolves," *los cinco lobitos*, of whom Fidel Velázquez was one. Two others were the Sánchez-Madariaga brothers. That made three. There were a fourth and a fifth. The fifth died fairly soon afterwards, but all together these five with Fidel Velázquez - the three main ones were the Sánchez-Madariaga brothers and Fidel - they formed the C.T.M. The C.T.M. in its earliest structure was immediately incorporated as the labor sector of the new political party that Lázaro Cárdenas established. The new political party was the Mexican Revolutionary Party. It was *Partido Revolucionario de México* at that time. Later on it was changed to PRI, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, but that didn't change the relationship. The C.T.M. became in a formalistic sense the labor sector of the major political party, which also had a peasant sector, *sector campesino*; there was a *sector popular*, which was sort of middle-class, intelligentsia, and businessmen of various kinds who felt that they wanted to affiliate to that *sector popular*. The federal government workers formed their own *Federación de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado*. It did not affiliate with the C.T.M., but it was a brother movement and very close to it. They both together mainly constituted the labor sector at that time.

There were three very important national unions at that time, the Miners, the Textile Workers and the Railroad Workers. The Textile Workers and the Miners came in with the C.T.M. as part of a very powerful federation. The Textile Workers stayed with the C.T.M. They were one of the pioneer movements by the way. There were many strikes prior to the Revolution of 1910. The most important ones were the Textile Workers' strikes and the Miners Union's strikes and they sort of signaled the oncoming Revolution. This was in the early 1900s between 1906 and 1907 and 1910. Subsequently the Miners and the Railroad Workers were made independent unions. Again, I think it was partly that these were two very powerful unions. Better separate them so that the C.T.M. doesn't become the full monopoly of labor power. There was very much that kind of play in the picture at all times. The C.T.M. therefore was born essentially out of the "second revolution" - you can put that in quotes - whereas the CROM, its predecessor, was born out of the "first revolution." Both labor centrals, the CROM as the first one and the C.T.M. as the second central, formed the stream of Mexico's modern labor history. It was important to get to know this history, and I found I could catch up. There's a good deal of literature on it. They were both really creatures of what was called the Mexican Revolution, which one had to come to understand.

The Mexican Revolution for many, many years was Mexico's nationalism in the modern era. This was throwing off the feudal past and in a rather disorderly way at times installing basic reforms. During the 1920s there were the Cristero movements in which the Church was badly punished. It was the great landholder and while the 1910 Revolution really dispossessed the Church of all of its landholdings, it really took Lázaro Cárdenas to nail down a program of land reform by restoring an ancient indigenous communal institution, which was the *ejido*. The *ejido* was the great peasant movement of the Revolution, *ejido* being a kind of cooperative. The land belonged to the Government. Peasants who needed land would acquire what they needed. They lived and operated as a cooperative. Much of the life of these cooperatives was dictated by the kinds of products that were being produced, grains in the middle of the [country] and corn, of course.

Mexico used to be self-sufficient in grains and corn and other similar products in the heartland of Mexico. Then there was the grand *ejido* of Yucatan, where what was produced were the henequen plants and the rope fiber. It was Cárdenas' prize *ejido*.

These *ejidos* were very close to the labor movement. One of the other land reforms that Cárdenas advanced was what were called the *pequeños propietarios*. They broke up the big *haciendas*, the large land holdings of the church, and a good deal of the land was given not only to the peasants through the *ejidos* but also in the form of associations of *pequeños propietarios*, relatively small but still consequential parcels of land that the *asociaciones* ran and managed. They became a very important part of the agricultural changes that were taking place in Mexico. The C.T.M. therefore was the blue collar sector of workers, the basic industrial workers, the more "revolutionary" if you please, because as industries were expropriated in mining, and in railroads, where there had been foreign ownership and therefore a good deal of nationalism came into the picture. The petroleum industry was expropriated in 1937 and as more oil was discovered the Oil Workers Union became a very powerful one. The main unions in the C.T.M. were as time went on in all industries, petroleum, textiles, transportation, and over the road transportation.

I remember the story of how the over the road transportation came into being. It was a fascinating story. There is extensive road transportation in Mexico. Mexico, by the way - one has to be impressed with it, if you have been in other countries, especially as I served later in Bolivia - was a great road builder, which means they had a lot of highway transportation besides the railroads. It is an integrated country basically by highways. Later on of course the railroads north and south on the West Coast and the East were part of the network, but the roads are about the best I have seen any place in Latin America. This network of roads meant that there was an over the road transport union. Its headquarters were in Guadalajara. It started out essentially as a center for the treatment of venereal disease. Truck drivers moving around in Mexico encountered venereal disease and recognized the importance of treatment and hygiene. The union pioneered in educating workers about venereal disease. It became a very important union and made a basic contribution. I remember that in all the travels that I did there was always respect for the *transportistas*. Is there anything else I should tell you about? I'm going on too long, aren't I? I won't do so much history next.

Q: Ben, to conclude the historical part, can you tell us a little bit about Lombardo Toledano?

STEPHANSKY: He is an interesting example of the way in which the major predominant political party of Mexico dealt with its potential enemies or its potential competitors. In some cases the PRI confronted them directly, like the PAN in the more conservative north. There was in 1952 when I first arrived the aftermath of a very heated election earlier in 1951. The Federation of Popular Parties, *Federación de Partidos Populares*, had almost won in the Federal District. One of the interesting observations I made on the first trips that I took was that the C.T.M. had a group of people going out to help disarm the country. They called it, "*depistolazar al país*." There had been a good deal of violence.

The strategy was different for Lombardo Toledano, whose left wing ideology appealed to people who wanted to be more revolutionary than the Mexican Revolutionary Party, which, the more it

established itself, began to develop the more conservative character of a stable institution. Well, the way they handled Lombardo Toledano was essentially to co-opt him. They let him organize a party which he called the *Partido Popular* and he published a newspaper. Both of those were subsidized by the Government. Lombardo Toledano, the great radical, was subsidized and, as it were, domesticated. For Mexico, during the time I was there and I think for some time before, Lombardo was not a real competitor to the Mexican Revolution. Perhaps with the way in which they co-opted him, he was sort of a lightning rod. Every once in a while he would seem to be voicing some vigorous opposition, but I think that he often held back, particularly in the newspaper that he ran, and the varying tones of that newspaper essentially represented the degree to which he was being played and was willing to play. He wanted of course always to appear to be an independent revolutionary.

When he was perhaps most active was during World War II. He moved up and down the hemisphere and because the Soviet Union and the U.S. were allies, he was going to country after country and using the alliance as a way in which to attract for the future a following that was more radical than what liberals would have liked that following to be. As a matter of fact Serafino Romualdi was doing a good deal of debating with him in the hemisphere at that time. Serafino, as you know, later became the representative of the AFL in Latin America. Lombardo Toledano was policed by Serafino effectively. Of course you couldn't find a more vigorous, harder, tougher articulate anti-Communist than Serafino. So he went after Lombardo and they never formed a relationship. I think he could have had a relationship. I think that Lombardo was always looking to have some kind of relationship, but Serafino wouldn't have it. So Lombardo was not a factor in the labor field or in the political field during the time that I was there, and I think that was the time that saw the decline of Lombardo and what he represented, which was to graft a Marxist ideology on an indigenous, populist potential for revolution, not only in Mexico but in other places.

Q: Thank you, Ben. Could you tell us a little bit about the ambiente at the Embassy when you got there. Who was the Ambassador, the D.C.M., and the Political Counselor? What kind of a briefing did you get? Did you consider it to be adequate?

STEPHANSKY: There may never be such a thing as an adequate briefing. The character of the Embassy was pretty much in part dictated by the times. We were in the Cold War. And dictated in part by the vagaries of U.S. politics. When I first got there, the Ambassador was a former well known mayor of New York.

Q: I believe his name was Bill O'Dwyer.

STEPHANSKY: Yes, and Bill was a lovable guy, but I got there in the summer of 1952, which was the year that Eisenhower was elected and therefore Bill had to leave. In the relatively short time we had together, we spent a good deal of time chatting, having coffee out in the streets here and there, and he, of course, was simply waiting to be succeeded. He was succeeded by Ambassador Francis White. Francis White, may he rest in peace, was a very conservative man. He came out of Baltimore, the Baltimore Hunt Club, and during the 1920s he was, if my recollection is correct, the top man for Latin American Affairs in the State Department. After the

election of F.D.R., he left and he became a leader in the Foreign Bondholders Association with obvious interest in U.S. investment in Latin America. Francis White came back with Dwight Eisenhower and was made Ambassador to Mexico. He brought with him a man, Jack Cates, who was a lawyer, and what he wanted Jack to do - it drove him to desperation virtually - was to reopen any number of cases which he felt had not been properly settled during the period of the Revolution. There were still claims going back to 1910-20 involving property rights and other unsettled claims by American business, which he became aware of from his activity in the Bondholders Association. Well, Jack Cates eventually did not get to be used as he wanted largely because Jack, I think, persuaded him that it was not really the wise thing to do in Mexico at that particular stage. This was after all the Mexico in which nationalization of petroleum and other industries had taken place, which had been supported by a number of important American spokesmen, notably Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening. Mexico was very nationalistic and any suggestion that you were going to open up thirty year old cases was an anathema to them. So Jack Cates' job sort of diminished. He later headed a Rockefeller Latin American institute in New York.

Francis White was of the old school. When he presented his credentials, he wore a brown corduroy suit and yellow spats. I remember Bill Culbertson, who was the D.C.M. at that time and had wanted very much to be the Ambassador and who retired shortly after Francis White was appointed. Bill, the man from Maryland, I remember him coming back from the credentials ceremony and kind of shaking his head. He said, "Gee, that uniform! He's put diplomacy back about 50 years."

Francis White had some other rather less likable attributes. The Canadians had at the time that he came a Chargé, who - I won't mention his name - according to protocol, had come to make his call on our new ambassador. After that he [the Canadian Charge] came to see me briefly. We had become fairly close friends. And I remember him looking quite shaken. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "Well, I've got to tell you something," and he closed the doors. He said, "You know, I came to pay my respects and we began to talk the usual small talk. Where have you been? What have you done?" The Canadian had said, "I served in New York with the United Nations and also in Washington. And he remarked, 'So you have been in New York and Mexico! Well, he said to me,'" according to the Canadian, Francis White said to him, "You know, I'm from Baltimore, halfway between the niggers and the Jews."

Now that's the kind of climate that emanated from our leadership at that particular time. Francis White became a very unloved man at that time, not so much because of that sort of thing. He was a difficult person. He had a great deal of difficulty with his wife, who, I think, had some emotional difficulties, which were quite severe. He served about three years.

One of the first things he did when he came to Mexico was to take down Bill O'Dyer's photo. At the U.S. Embassy in Mexico there had been the custom that former ambassadors' pictures are strung up where you could walk along and see what array of ambassadorial talent had served in the past. Well, he took down Bill O'Dwyer's picture and said something about corruption. That got everybody annoyed. I remember when Francis White's successor, Bobby Hill, was appointed. Bobby Hill was collared by Lyndon Johnson before he left Washington, who said, "I know what

happened down there with that picture and the first thing I want you do" - and Bobby Hill did it - "is to put that picture right back up."

It didn't bother Bill [O'Dwyer]. He was having other troubles. He was being divorced then by his young wife and was wondering what he was going to do next. We were sitting outside having coffee. I had been walking down the street, and he grabbed me. He said, "You know that in a few days I'm going to be leaving. Come on, have a cup of coffee." So I sat down with him and he said, "I'm waiting to meet a friend." Well, in about 15 minutes a priest came by. He had come down from New York and wanted to talk to Bill. Bill made it clear that I would not be part of that conversation. I was getting up to go when the priest, looking hard at Bill, said, "Bill, are you a good Catholic?" Well, Bill just reared back and roared. After a minute or two of heavy laughter, he said, "Father, hell no, I'm not a good Catholic. The rules are too tough." That was Bill. A great guy. I can understand, by the way, that a big city mayor, who understands minority groups and who has lived in an ambience of different cultures and different groups, can often make a good ambassador, as Bill made during the time that he was in Mexico. I think a big city mayor of that kind is a source of talent. Keep that in mind when you become President.

Q: I followed O'Dwyer's career with great interest. I'm originally from Connecticut and I also spent many years in Latin America. I know that he started off studying to be a priest in Salamanca, Spain, and he left that and then when he went from Ireland to New York and worked in the subways, he did speak fluent Spanish. How did...

STEPHANSKY: Let me just break in to say that later on Dick Rubottom was Assistant Secretary [of State] and he asked me if I saw Bill. I said, "Well, I saw him initially. I didn't see him afterwards, and he said, "Well, if you do, tell Bill that I was in Grenada, where he and I were together, and I was just thinking about him." I thought that was a very sweet thing for Rubottom to have me tell Bill O'Dwyer when and if I saw him. I never got to pass that message along to him.

Q: How did Ambassador Francis White look on you as the Labor Attaché?

STEPHANSKY: Well, that's a good question. I remember asking Ed Vallon whom I had known years before, "Ed, what is it like when you work in an embassy?" I'd had no experience whatever getting into an embassy. He said, "Well, it's like any other office, Ben, except that in the labor field, you're always going to be looked upon as a little bit queer, especially by the conventional side of the Foreign Service, which had not then as yet been very familiar with the labor function." I'm talking now about 1952. There had been maybe one or two labor attachés. The first one was in Chile, as I remember - Horowitz. Was that right?

Q: In Chile Dan Horowitz was first assigned there in 1943 and at the same time John Fishburn was in Buenos Aires.

STEPHANSKY: We didn't have much experience.

Q: We certainly didn't. Then of course we had Sam Berger in London in 1945.

STEPHANSKY: Sammy was not a Labor Attaché so much. (Sammy was my teacher at Wisconsin by the way.) Sammy was Averell Harriman's Labor Advisor, but for all intents and purposes he was what a Labor Attaché would be. As it turned out when the Labor Government won right after the War and Churchill lost the election, there was only one man who knew that labor movement and that was Sammy. He knew it well and he knew it intimately because of the work he was doing. Some of his work was to try to persuade the Brits not to be very sensitive about the fact that an American private in the Army was making five times what a high level civil servant was making. These are the types of problems that Sammy used to tell me about. So, to come back to the point, it was a relatively new field after all and Ed Vallon was reflecting that. He was saying, "You know, in my experience, Ben, you're going to be looked upon just a little bit as the kind of guy who is playing on the wrong side of the street. You are going to be regarded as a little odd, so don't do the kinds of things that will make you look even worse. In other words, be aware of the fact that you are in an ambience where misunderstandings can very readily arise about what it is you are doing and who you are and what your function is.

I recall that when Francis White went to present his credentials with all that array of diplomatic attire that I described a minute or so ago, he was picking out the people who should accompany him. I was really in some respects a senior officer, because I was a grade three even though I was Reserve. In the old classification that begins to be the senior class. It depends of course a great deal on whom the ambassador really wants to take along. He put together quite a retinue.

Q: Please continue with your activities. How did your fellow officers receive you?

STEPHANSKY: On the other side [of the tape] I was saying that the Ambassador when he went to present his credentials told the I.C.A. Administrator, I.C.A. stood for International Cooperation Agency at that time, Denny Moore... What a wonderful man, a very bright and interesting guy with long experience and an excellent agricultural economist, one of the most brilliant men we had in the Embassy. Well, he told Denny Moore and he told me and maybe one or two others, "I can't take you along for my presentation of credentials because you are not 'Foreign Service.'" So that is where we were placed in the scheme of things during his administration. I might say what saved me very substantially and what saved the Embassy for him was the new Deputy Chief of Mission, Bill Snow. Bill died just last year, I think. Bill was Ambassador later to Burma and Paraguay and I think to Sweden. I think Gene Martinson, one of our Labor Attachés, served with Bill. Bill was sophisticated. He was solid and Bill was the one that stood as a buffer between Ambassador White and those of us who had our work to do and Bill understood how important it was to give us the protection that we got from him.

Now, how did I relate to other people in the Embassy? That was what you were asking essentially. It is very interesting. That in part, you see, is also a function of what Mexico is like. In the Mexican political system the labor movement is right in the heart of it. The PRI, which used to be the Revolutionary Party of Mexico (PRM) and was changed to the Institutional Revolutionary Party, was highly politicized. I got to know practically every important political figure in Mexico and remembering very well the lesson I had been taught by Ed Vallon, and which I was learning from other sources as well, I found that what I could do was not only take

care of my own immediate labor function, my contacts, my labor programs, my reporting about labor and labor's vicissitudes in the history of that particular time, but I could also be a political asset to the Political Section. I am worked with our political attachés. I could hang around Los Pinos, for example, which is like hanging around the White House, because the Secretary of Labor, with whom I became very close friends, López Mateos, took me there often. There I met many senators and I met every cabinet member. You can imagine that I found that I could be of service to our Political Section and as it turned out on several occasions I really was.

The economic side, since I am an economist, I found was manageable directly. Certainly I was interested in the labor force and in employment and unemployment, and I participated in two of the negotiations involving the migratory labor relations to the United States, the *Bracero* Program. I wasn't formally but I asked to become informally, and later it was formalized [that I would] be a part of the negotiating team on the two *Bracero* agreements: the one I found when I got there [and] four years later there was another one. That's the kind of thing that became quite an important attribute of my work.

One complex area of my work, which I shared with other labor attachés, was the relationship to the U.S. labor movement and its relations in turn with the international labor movement. One of the important things that happened shortly after I arrived, and I had something to do with it, involved the headquarters of the inter-American regional organization of the I.C.F.T.U., which was called the ORIT, after it was transferred from Cuba to Mexico. When the ORIT, was first organized in Latin America, there was a real donnybrook, all the details of which maybe others can tell you about who were closer to it. It was about in 1949 or 1950 or thereabouts that there was discussion of how to set up the ORIT. The ORIT's headquarters were set up in Cuba, and atypically the Cuban labor leadership also became the leadership of the ORIT. And the rest of Latin American labor, particularly Mexico, felt betrayed, because they felt they had had a commitment that at least the headquarters if not the secretary general's spot was going to be Mexican. That didn't take place. And for about two or three years thereafter Serafino Romualdi was persona non grata in Mexico because they felt that Serafino had double crossed them. I don't know that that was the case, but that's the way they felt.

The CIO unions had a representative there, Dr. Ernest Schwartz, and he was on very good terms with Mexico, and he helped fill a void because that gave us a kind of direct purchase between Mexican labor and U.S. labor. When Batista overthrew the then parliamentary government in 1952 in Cuba, it was untenable for ORIT to retain its headquarters there. They had to move and so this is how I got involved. The details are rather intricate except that it was Serafino who pushed very hard for me to say the right things to the Mexicans to soften them up, that indeed the United States' labor movement really wanted to give Mexico the headquarters, and when I first broached that, I got a lot of skepticism in Mexico. In part what Serafino was worried about was that he did not want anybody else to be telling the Mexicans, certainly not Ernest Schwartz. There was a lot of competition between Ernest Schwartz on the CIO side [and Serafino Romualdi]. So in 1953 the headquarters was transferred to Mexico City. What that did was to give me a box seat on the labor movement of the entire hemisphere. Mexico became a vital center of the Latin American labor movement.

Q: At that time were the principal officers of ORIT Cuban?

STEPHANSKY: No, what happened at the time that the headquarters were shifted to Mexico was that the leadership also changed from Cuban to another nationality and it was a Costa Rican who became the Secretary General. That was Luis Alberto Monge, who later was President of Costa Rica. Luis came as a young man from Geneva and the I.L.O. [He was] very bright and he took over with a good deal of flair. I must say he could never have succeeded if Fidel Velázquez had not given him all the tutelage that he really very gracefully and very graciously received from Fidel, avoiding all the kinds of booby traps that you might fall into, certainly in Mexico and rather good advice about the rest of Latin America. The number two man during that time was an Aprista from Peru named Arturo Jaurequi. Arturo, I think, came directly from the Aprista labor movement. I got to know the Aprista labor movement. I got to know the Venezuelan labor movement, because its top leaders were using ORIT as exiles at that time. Pérez Jiménez was the dictator in Venezuela at the time. And a number of the other movements similarly were in the picture. The Peronista movement was, by the way, born in Mexico. During the time that Mexico was on the outs with the AFL, they played host to the Peronista international, ATLAS. It was formed and organized in Mexico and with Mexico playing the gracious host to a new competitor labor movement, whom they later had to watch because they were really quite aggressive.

Well, I guess what I am saying, and I will cut this part short, what comes into the picture is a whole hemispheric perspective. There, the Peronistas are working to find a place for themselves, a lot of the smaller labor movements found that it was very useful for them to come to Mexico and find their relationships with ORIT, and with the other labor leaders. The board meetings between ORIT and the U.S. were always very fruitful in the sense that the U.S. leaders would come down and get to know something of the rest of Latin America. For a long time, Bill Schnitzler, who I think came from the Bakers Union, was the representative of the AFL-CIO.

Q: Ben, could you tell us a little bit about Don Fidel Velázquez?

STEPHANSKY: I can tell you a lot about Don Fidel. During my five years there, we became very close. Their labor movement was highly centralized, which is of course following the pattern of the politics in Mexico itself. At the same time Fidel was a fascinating person who loved two things: to travel and he loved his country. He was a virtual encyclopedia of information. He himself started as a very young man. He was a milk driver, a *lechero*, as they were called. Interestingly enough one of the first stories he told me was the way in which they would take the milk from the pasteurization plant and find the various places where it was reasonably safe to dilute the milk with water so that they could get twice as much for a liter, among other little tricks they had to pull to make the grade and make a living. Fidel didn't drink. He smoked cigars. He loved Cuban cigars. When I went a couple of times to Cuba, I bought him boxes of *El Nacional* cigars, a very good cigar. I never liked cigars but he loved cigars and that was really his great vice. The taste for cigars was something that was almost inbred. His wife was a Cubana, Nora. A wonderful woman by the way. She and my wife became good friends.

Fidel was a long-suffering guy. In Mexico the labor leadership had to serve two masters. One is the party and one is its own membership. And how to balance those vital interests required a

great deal of grace and a great deal of skill and Fidel over the years became the great master of mediating the interests of labor without selling out. There were those who believed that he was a sell out. I don't think so at all. I think that he really had to recognize the central importance of the PRI, of Mexican politics and its place as the predominant Mexican political party. I don't think that Mexico could have worked in those years if it didn't have that kind of party which was essentially set up to "bargain collectively" with the United States. We were the overwhelming power then and you needed to have total solidarity of the Mexican political leadership and Mexico's labor leadership felt that it needed to have the solidarity of labor on the one hand but in order to serve it well you had to understand where the real political power lay. Fidel knew that, knows that, I think, to this day. He's what? 95 years old now.

I saw him about two years ago. We had a nice long chat, reminisced. He's very sharp still. It was with Fidel's knowledge that I got to know most of the other labor leaders as well. He encouraged it. He never asked me anything that would suggest that I should spy for him or gossip about anybody. The other labor leaders respected him. They were quite suspicious of each other. I would say they were quite reluctant to have a close relationship with each other. I remarked, I remember, to the Miners' leader at one point, I said, "*Cómo es que?* How is it that in that meeting we attended I didn't see you guys getting together very much? You all looked toward Fidel. You all looked towards Fidel's group." He said, "Ben, *es que nosotros somos muy desconfiados.*" They knew where the power was and they weren't about to rock the boat and they didn't have that degree of confidence in each other, because all of them sort of had a piece of Fidel and Fidel, I think, had the job of keeping them all relatively happy.

There were the beginnings of collective bargaining in Mexico. The labor legislation set basic standards, but I remember the Secretary of Labor at one point, López Mateos, who later was elected President, was explaining to visitors who were coming through and they all had managed somehow to brief themselves on Mexican labor legislation, the famous labor provision in the Mexican Constitution, Section 123, which set forth in great length all the rights of labor. It was a great Magna Charta. Of course it will take years and years and years for everything to be realized. This was of course an example of the Latin American method. You legislate the world and then little by little, if you stay alive, you make your gains within the structure of those ideals. The Secretary of Labor, I remember on one occasion saying, "You are now telling me of course and I agree with you what a great charter we have in Section 123 of the Constitution, but let me tell you that increasingly the relationship between Mexican labor and employers is more and more a matter that is taking place between the two. It is not exclusively that, but if you want to know what the law says, that's one side of it, but what it does is also to facilitate and permit that there be a greater area of understanding between labor and the employers." Now that was already beginning to happen at the time that I was there. Fidel wanted that to happen because in many respects it made his job a lot more sensible.

What always amazed me about Fidel was what an extraordinary amount of knowledge he had. He was great fun to drive with. He knew so much. Every place we went there was always an anecdote. There was always a background. There was always an interesting story to tell. The very first day, the very first trip I made with him, we got to the Capitol of the State of Mexico and he said, "You know, you are going to learn a lot about this country but what is most important about

this particular place is that with the onset of the Revolution, this is the place where we no longer killed each other. We just knocked each other unconscious." What else would you like to know?

Q: Was Fidel a relatively clean fellow, because we all hear about the rampant corruption in Mexico, the mordida?

STEPHANSKY: Oh, the corruption is rampant all right, but I must confess I never was able to establish any involving Fidel. He lived a pretty good middle class life, nothing luxurious. I don't know, I could never grasp the picture from all the labor leaders. There were some that were notably quite wealthy and had big cars and *casas chicas* and made a big show of it and so on. Fidel never toyed around with any woman in the five years I knew him and I have never heard of any since. He was a calm man; he was about your size by the way, a great sense of humor. A man who, I say, didn't drink, loved cigars, did not womanize and I make that point because many of the other leaders, as so many of the other Mexicans, were great womanizers. To him it was no show of prestige to have any other woman on the string, not at all. He was very intelligent and while he had no formal education, nevertheless, he was quite well read and particularly in Mexican history and with a good and interesting curiosity about U.S. history. I gave him quite a few books as was the case with the Secretary of Labor, who was of course a well trained and educated man academically speaking, but both of them really were ready to learn, wanted to understand and in that sense it was for me a Godsend to have people who didn't have any strong prejudice. They let me know when they didn't like what we were doing. When, for example, in 1954 the Castillo Armas takeover of Guatemala [occurred], and it was so transparent from where we were, they let me have it. And as a matter of fact this was a very critical point in the history of ORIT- I'll come back to that - but they just didn't like it at all and let me know. This was not a matter of any preconceived prejudice. The notion that we were going to just go in and knock off the country's government because it didn't suit us, was unacceptable.

Q: That was Arbenz, wasn't it?

STEPHANSKY: That was Arbenz. That was around the time I got to know Lázaro Cárdenas. One of the first things he talked to me about was, "Hey," he says, "Why can't you" - meaning you, your government - "why can't the United States live with these small struggling places that are trying to find themselves and always fit them into some context..." - they didn't call it the Cold War - " ...of conflict with the Soviet Union? It just doesn't become a powerful nation to be on the lookout and to just stamp on a small country like Guatemala, which presents no danger to anybody, and, more importantly, even if it was for a moment, we were 'dangerous' at the time of the Mexican Revolution." He says, " What I am worried about is this attitude that I see the United States expressing. I worry in retrospect that had this damned situation of the U.S.-Soviet [conflict] been around during the time of the Mexican Revolution, we would have been invaded. We would have been constantly tampered with and hassled." That's the kind of reaction you would get from Mexican labor and I felt rather privileged to be able to listen to their most candid reactions.

Q: Well, thank you very much, Ben. I hope that we will be able to continue with this in the very near future.

STEPHANSKY: Okay, there's quite a bit more but we will see and you let me know when we can and I'll see how we can fit it in. There are two or three more important episodes to cover. Let me simply say, by the way, that not only the ORIT, not only Latin American labor itself coming into view with ORIT and Atlas gave me an interesting view also of the reactions to the Peronistas, what I was witness to in Mexico was the onset of the Alliance for Progress, which I take up in my own oral history. Milton Eisenhower and I had several long talks during that particular time and the onset of the Alliance for Progress, which I saw at that particular point, I lived through it in Bolivia and, as a matter of fact, lived through the earlier part of it also when I was Labor Advisor. That was when the hemisphere was catching fire. I was on that famous trip with Nixon when he was mobbed in Venezuela and so on, so that it is interesting how the labor function could draw you in to what constitutes the vital texture of the history of a country and of the region.

WILLIAM BELTON
Desk Officer, Mexican Desk
Washington, DC (1952-1954)

William Belton was born in 1914 in Portland, Oregon. He received a bachelor's degree in political science from Stanford University. Mr. Belton entered the Foreign Service in 1938 and served in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Canada, Brazil, Chile, Australia, and Washington, DC. Mr. Belton was interviewed in 1992 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Today is August 6th, 1993; this is the second interview with William Belton. In our last interview we finished your time from '48 to '52 in Ciudad Trujillo and now we come to '52 to '54 at the Mexican desk. This is sort of in the Jurassic period - we are talking about the '50s. What did the Mexican desk officer do at that time and where did he fit into the scheme of things?

BELTON: The Mexican desk officer was responsible to the director of the Office of Middle American Affairs, who at that time was Dick Rubottom. His deputy was Jack Neal. I was directly responsible to them and they in turn were responsible to the Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs.

Q: But you pretty much had Mexico, is that right?

BELTON: Oh, yes, definitely Mexico.

Q: Today these things are split up.

BELTON: I had a deputy whose name was Ruth Hughes. A fellow by the name of T. R. Martin - he didn't have any other names; his parents had argued as to whether he should or should not be called Theodore Roosevelt Martin and he ended up with T. R. - was in charge of boundary and

water affairs; the US-Mexican Boundary and Water Commission sits in El Paso, Texas, at least the US section of it. He was directly working with and for them but liaising with us. My authority regarding his work was not very clear, but nevertheless we all worked in harmony together.

Q: In the 1952, 1954 period Eisenhower had just come in or was about to come in. What were the issues that particularly concerned you?

BELTON: The two headline issues in those days were the wetback situation, illegal immigration of temporary workers - who were not always temporary, and prevention of the spread to the United States of hoof-and-mouth disease that had broken out in Mexico. American cattle interests were dead set against letting it get as far as the United States. Those were two very large problems that kept us quite busy all the time.

Q: Dealing with the illegal immigrants, what could you do?

BELTON: I am a little hazy on all the details now, but according to our laws and regulations and the agreements that had been worked out between Mexico and the United States, migrant workers were supposed to go to a Mexican center where they would be processed and brought to the United States. The Mexican Government was not working very hard at seeing to it that that's what the workers did.

Q: We are talking now about part-time laborers?

BELTON: Part-time laborers who came over for seasonal work in agriculture. For many of them it was too much of a nuisance to go through this process, and some of them would be prevented from coming as a result of whatever bureaucratic procedures there were, so thousands and thousands just waded across the river. That was the major problem we were having. We were constantly talking with the Mexican authorities to try to get them to meet what we felt were their responsibilities on this. We told them if they didn't we were going to pass additional legislation which would force it. I don't remember at this stage what the details of that legislation were. The Mexicans did not meet our demands so we had the legislation introduced into Congress and got it passed. It is of interest, incidentally, that the Congressman of those days who was particularly interested in this and with whom we worked was Lloyd Bentsen.

Q: Now Secretary of the Treasury, who had been the Senator from Texas for many years.

BELTON: Another item of interest, the very day this legislation was up for passage in the House, I and a couple of others from the State Department went up to the gallery of the House to see the proceedings. That turned out to be the hour that the Puerto Rican nationalists shot up the House of Representatives. I don't remember what date that was but it was a dramatic event.

Q: What was your feeling toward the Mexican authorities that you were dealing with?

BELTON: With the ones we were dealing here in Washington we didn't have any problems at all. It is hard for us to know exactly what they might have been telling their people in Mexico, but we

got along fine. However, this legislation created an enormous lot of publicity in Mexico adverse to the United States. The day the legislation passed newspaper headlines came out saying that this was the worst crisis in Mexican relations since the time the oil fields were nationalized many years before. We recognized this was going to cause some dissension, but we felt this was a point on which we had to stand firm. I personally took courage on this issue because one of the Mexicans with whom we were dealing up here told me on the side one day, when we were in a taxi returning from a meeting, that he thought we were right.

Q: There has always been this thing going on in relations between Mexico and the United States, it still continues; the Mexicans say, "that's your problem," as far as people coming in, but as soon as we try to deal with it they dump on us and say we are being anti-Mexican. I understand, there are political pressures within their country.

BELTON: This gave rise to a great deal of dissension and, incidentally, it made our Ambassador very unhappy.

Q: Your ambassador at that time was who?

BELTON: Francis White. He was unhappy, unhappy enough that he got me fired from the Mexican desk, which in the long run I was very happy about but...

Q: Had he gone "local," you might say?

BELTON: No, no, but he was looking at it from the point of view of our overall relations with Mexico and we up here were much more able to recognize the domestic problems all of this was creating and the pressures on the State Department to get the situation corrected. So there was a natural and understandable dichotomy of attitudes that reflected itself in differences between the fellow out in the field and those of us in Washington.

Q: Yes, its the classic case. But why would he pick on you?

BELTON: I was the guy in charge of Mexican affairs. I was the messenger. I was taking the heat. He used to go to the Mexican Foreign Office - while we were in the midst of these negotiations it seemed to me he was there every day - so then he would come home - there was a time difference between Mexico and Washington - and every night about nine o'clock when I was getting tired enough to go to bed, he would get on the phone and bend my ear for an hour or an hour and a half telling me all that had happened there. And I, of course, told him what was happening on our side, but he didn't always understand why things were going that way, so that was part of it. I was the fellow with whom he had the most direct contact and I was the one who was responsible for transmitting to him the Washington point of view.

Q: How do you know that he worked to get rid of you?

BELTON: It was made perfectly clear; I was told that he wanted me moved. So that was that.

Q: Before we leave the desk, how were you finding the problems of Mexicans in the United States; was the Mexican Embassy complaining that Mexicans who visited the United States were not being treated well - the ones that got in trouble?

BELTON: No, I don't think there was too much of that. There weren't the dimensions that there are today in that sort of thing. The largest proportion of these people, in fact the vast majority, were coming over for temporary work. A large element in the United States was happy to encourage this because people coming illegally had no recourse to any legal protection and therefore were paid way below the minimum wage. They had no benefits of any kind, I don't know how many benefits there were in those days, but many were given the most horrible living conditions. They were real slave labor, you might say; serfs, as it were, treated terribly. If they began to raise the devil the employer would report them to the immigration service and they would be shipped back home again.

Q: How did that group, basically the growers lobby, impact on you?

BELTON: There were two points of view, those who wanted the thing legal and those who liked things as they were. We knew that there were a lot of people encouraging illegal entry. We assumed probably they were having some influence on the Mexicans who were not complying with the rules on the other side of the border. Most of the pressure from our point of view, that I noticed at any rate, came from people who wanted the situation legalized and straightened out - the flow restricted and channelized.

Q: What about Americans who got in trouble in Mexico?

BELTON: Right at the moment I have no memory of any particular case. Part of the consular section of the embassy was devoted to that. Because there were so many thousands of Americans in Mexico, it was obvious there was always going to be somebody in trouble. But I don't have any memory of its having impinged on relations between the two countries in any major way. When some acute problem would come up, or when somebody well known got into trouble it might reflect on our work but it was not a major feature, in any sense, of my problems.

Q: On the water side - this was a time of great agitation on both sides about who was using the water, desalinization, everything else - was this pretty much in hands of experts?

BELTON: Yes, this was a problem of the International Boundary and Water Commission. Our section of the Commission handled this problem pretty much on its own, with T.R. Martin working the Washington end and keeping me informed when necessary. During the time I was in Mexican affairs one of the big projects was construction of Falcon Dam, one of the big dams that provides irrigation water, flood control, and so forth for the lower Rio Grande valley. We were also engaged in another interesting negotiation for exchange of pieces of land cut off by meanders of the river. The river is the border. Little peninsulas on the Mexican side would be cut off by floods and end up on the US side, and vice versa. A long standing negotiation to correct that situation by exchanging land on one side for land on the other was going on actively at the time that I was there, from 1952 to 1954, but the negotiation was not completed until the

presidency of Lyndon Johnson.

Q: We are talking about 1963 to...

BELTON: The reason I remember is because medallions were struck to celebrate this event, with Lyndon Johnson's profile prominently displayed. I was sent one of these medallions because I had been working on the problem about twelve years before.

Q: The two major problems that you were dealing with were the problems of wetbacks and the water.

BELTON: No, hoof-and-mouth disease was the other, along with wetbacks.

Q: Now how did hoof-and-mouth disease concern you? I would have thought this would be in the hands of veterinarians or something.

BELTON: Well it was, except that the way to control hoof-and-mouth disease was, according to US policy at the time, to kill cattle. To go down to Mexico and tell some Mexican peon with twelve head of cattle out on a few hectares of land that he has inherited from his ancestors that he has to kill all his cattle even though they may not seem to be sick to him, and maybe aren't sick at all, is a pretty delicate matter. And when you tell Mexicans all along the border and well into Mexico that that is what you have to do, it becomes a national problem. That is really what it was. We ended up buying these cattle for - well I don't remember the figure now. I am tempted to say two billion dollars but I think I am dealing in modern terms.

Q: Well, anyway, big bucks.

BELTON: Yes, big bucks in those days. So that was the nature of that problem. I recall this as a big issue and big thing that we were constantly worrying about but nothing that caused any major blips.

Q: It was a problem and you worked on it.

BELTON: It was a problem we worked on and was eventually solved. As you say, it was handled primarily by experts, cattle experts and disease experts.

Q: This is a thing that so often happens both with American-Mexican and American- Canadian relations. There are so many of these things, with our boundaries and all, that end up in the hands of experts because these things are so very complicated. They are not the normal relations.

BELTON: They are really part of the domestic, everyday activity of these agencies. The sources of the problems and the solutions to the problems are often across the border from where they are working, but they have to be treated in the same sense that you treat the problems on this side. It takes a lot of close cooperation between the two sides. It inevitably gets down to the expert level.

JOHN L. DEORNELLAS
Consular Officer
Mexico (1953-1956)

John L. DeOrnellas was born in Alabama in 1921. He received his bachelor's degree from Spring Hill College. His career included positions in Mexico, Paraguay, Ceylon, Honduras, and Dominican Republic. Mr. DeOrnellas was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 2002.

Q: You were in Mexico City from what, '51?

DEORNELLAS: '53 to '56. We stayed a little longer, I think, than a first assignee might ordinarily because we had two children there, and I guess the second child was born at about the time that we might have ordinarily finished a two-year assignment, so we stayed a little bit longer, but we were there about three years.

Q: And what were you doing in Mexico City?

DEORNELLAS: Strictly consular work, and very limited. I got no experience at all in citizenship, notariats, whatnot. Even when I went out on substitute duty at the Consulates, the Consulates where I went didn't issue passports and I think I may have done one notarial over in Merida, or something like that. But in any event, I did brief duty in Merida and also longer relief duty at Matamoros up on the border. In any event, I really didn't get any citizenship work. I started out in Protection and Welfare and I was considered, understandably, a little deficient there because my language was not as fluent as it might be. I didn't really know the situation in Mexico nearly as well as the man that I replaced. Mexico, at the time, and I think in common with some other embassies, particularly Europe, had a lot of Americans employed there who really never expected to serve in any other country than the one where they had signed on, and they were not Foreign Service Officers, so to speak, but at any rate, they were American citizens. The guy that was in the assistant job at Protection and Welfare, under a veteran man who had been born and brought up in Mexico, an American citizen, interesting name of Rockefeller. He was dropped in the big reduction in force that did occur under Eisenhower. He was supposedly dropped because he said he didn't want to serve any place else in Mexico. So in any event, he had been a mainstay in Protection and Welfare work, he knew the place backwards and forwards. And I'm stuck in to replace him which I just didn't fill those shoes, in a way. But in any event, I did it for about 9 months and then they switched me to Visa unit, where I did non-immigrant visas for about a year and then immigrant visas for about a year.

Q: What about Protection and Welfare work? What sort of things were you doing?

DEORNELLAS: Well, a lot of it was simply dealing with relatively simple things like tourists

who tried to leave by plane at the airport without showing their tourist card. Almost nobody, I guess, Americans who were traveling there on passports, but they were getting tourist cards from Mexican consulates and whatnot. And I think a lot of them knew they were - well, a lot knew they were supposed to show them on the way in - I think a lot of them didn't realize they were supposed to show them on the way out. In any event, they used to get held up typically because they didn't have to show, maybe, their consulate card. That was about the simplest thing, you know, that we did. We'd go over to *Immigracion* and sort of explain it and in fact identify them as Americans who weren't up to anything nefarious as far as we knew. The ones that I disliked particularly were the death cases. I never liked dealing with the death cases and very early in the game I realized you could get complaints when the relatives figured that something the deceased had owned that was not shipped back, so I got to search the corpse before it was turned over to anybody else and that part I didn't go for at all, which is one reason I tried to get out of consular work. Then there's the guy that you, the old boy you maybe save his life by getting an ambulance to take him to the American/British hospital and he claims he doesn't have the money to pay the bill. [laughs] But it had its frustrating aspects, it really did.

Q: Yes, you were saying one night -

DEORNELLAS: One night I was there after work by myself and the Marine guard said he had these two women there that supposedly had broken [something] and had to replace it and could I see them and whatnot. So I had them come up. I knew one was older than the other, but it never occurred to me that the other one was actually legally a minor, she didn't seem that young to me. In any event, they had been wandering around and they were broke and so forth. Fortunately, there was in Mexico City an outfit known as the American Benevolent Society, supported mostly by the local American community. And there was an old lady, Mrs. Crump, who was very helpful. She was our resort for getting second-class bus tickets to the border to ship them out. Sometimes she'd pay for a funeral if there was no way to do anything with the corpse. We usually managed to ship those to relatives, but in any event, she was going to be around tonight, so I took these two women to a not-very-expensive hotel and actually put up the money to put them up overnight. I was very late getting home to dinner with my wife who wasn't very happy about any of it, and I wasn't either, particularly [laughs.] The next day they came in, we arranged to ship them out but the next day they brought in there their pet iguana, which got out of the cage and made a mess all over the floor, I still remember. But in any event, so we shipped them out and so forth. About 2 weeks later, we got a letter from somebody, probably telling the truth, I don't know. Supposedly, the parent of the young woman, who wanted to know if we knew anything about them or whatnot, supposedly the young woman was a minor, who was - had been enthralled, or whatever, by a homosexual woman. And could we do anything about saving them, or whatnot. I must admit I was so naive, I suppose, that relationship situation had not even occurred to me, not quite sure what I would have done about it, in any event. Then there was the day that I got motivated to run out somewhere about an American woman who was supposedly threatening to kill herself and I walked in there and I began to suspect, despite being a bit naive too on that, where I was, apparently, I was in a whorehouse, actually. She was in a whorehouse. I had my own car parked outside because the Embassy didn't have any cars for us and I deliberately took my car rather than try to take a taxi.

Q: Well, I realize you were at the bottom of the totem pole at the Embassy, but from your experience, how were relations with the Mexican authorities?

DEORNELLAS: Well, I'd say this *immigracion* situation was pretty decent. I didn't have any great trouble with the authorities, if I'd been more fluent and more aware, I guess, it would have been easier, but I didn't have any great trouble. When I was doing the substitute work up at Matamoros, I was very impressed with really the excellent relationships, as far as I could see, I was up there about two-and-a-half months, between the Mexican and American sides of the river. It's a great tribute to the consular officer who was there, had been there for some years. He was a great guy. In any event, that I do remember as a particularly good situation there.

Q: In the Embassy, as a consular officer, did you feel sort of off to one side?

DEORNELLAS: Oh, yes, yes, absolutely, and I was really betwixt and between because it was a period when they did have this reduction in force going on and they were zeroing in on sort of who they could get rid of, in a way. And they were making a to-do about the Americans who were there who didn't really want to go anyplace else. And some would agree to go, but you know, they were unhappy about it. And others wouldn't, and they'd get dropped. There was a great deal of sensitivity between those of us who were labeled FSOs [Foreign Service Officers] by that time, and those who were labeled FSS [Foreign Service Staff], and so forth. Actually, I went as an FSR [Foreign Service Reserve], I went through an interesting bunch of transformations, none of which would have applied except for that second security check thing. I went originally on the payroll as FSS, then to go abroad on a diplomatic passport, they arranged to give us FSR status, and only later, when everything got sort of cleared up and the name went to the Senate to become FSOs. So the result was that part of the time, I was not on the diplomatic list in Mexico. I was versus these FSS people that felt that they were kind of being discriminated against. Because, you see, it was the period when the Western immigration program was coming up. Everybody was kind of unhappy about it. The guy that I was working for in Protection and Welfare in Mexico, an old gentleman that had been born and brought up in Mexico, when he found out particularly that I had a law degree, somehow he got very apprehensive that I had been sent down to replace him. And so, that made him unhappy about me, too. So it was kind of an uncomfortable situation all around, and because I was not on the diplomatic list, and there was a political appointee ambassador that we never said "boo" to, but the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] on duty when I got there was a bachelor and he taught me that since I wasn't on the diplomatic list, there wasn't any point in my wife calling on people. So she didn't, and that was resented by some people who didn't realize why she wasn't doing it. Later on, we had some people that were quite decent all around. The man in charge of the Visa unit, Warren Stewart, an old FSS or whatnot from way back, consular, specialist. A great guy, really, when I got to know him. That was good, and we had a supervising consul general for a while that was a good man all around, helpful.

PETER M. CODY
Office of Technical Assistance Program Officer [USAID]

Mexico City (1954-1957)

Peter M. Cody was born in France in 1925. He received a B.A., an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Yale University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1954, serving in Mexico, El Salvador, Cambodia, Laos, Paraguay, Ecuador, the Philippines, Lebanon, and Washington, DC. Mr. Cody was interviewed by Melbourne Spector in 1991.

Q: This was in December of 1954.

CODY: December of 1954. I arrived there, found Mexico a very pleasurable place to be, so pleasurable that in the course of my almost three years there, I met and married my wife, whose name is Rosa María Alatorre. She worked at the embassy where USAID was located, or where the AID mission was located, and that's how I met her.

The AID mission in Mexico was called the Office of Technical Assistance. In most other places it was called the operations mission. But Mexicans wouldn't have that. "Only we Mexicans operate in Mexico."

This was an interesting experience. I was the economist in the sense that I wrote the economic sections of various papers that we had to produce. To a large extent, I was the program officer, because I think you, Mel, had the title of program officer, but you really functioned as the deputy director.

Q: And I later became the deputy director.

CODY: You became the deputy director. Then after I left, you became the acting director for a long period of time. So I functioned as the program officer. We had a varied program. It wasn't very large. I remember one of the assignments that I had was to write a little brochure. I remember being impressed, looking at the brochure, since we had programs in agriculture, health, industry, labor, public administration, a variety of things; it looked as if with a million and a half dollars we were solving all of Mexico's problems. We had a number of individual projects, some of them quite good, some of them weren't, but even if they had all been good, we were no more than a drop in the bucket. This was true though some of the projects and what came after them, are still there and still functioning, a rehabilitation center for the handicapped, for instance and I think maybe a school for training of operators of trucks and heavy equipment. In and of themselves, they were good projects. Though they had minimum effect on the total economic social and economic development situation.

Q: I believe the productivity activities are still going on, too.

CODY: Looking back I still believe some of the projects were quite good. The education and agricultural projects, less so. I think the Industrial Research Center that The Armour Institute was running is still going on. In fact, there were a couple of projects there which were really the prototypes of what projects ought to be.

Q: *That's interesting.*

CODY: That Research Center is one, if I recall. It started out as being run under a contract from Armour, (Illinois Tech), but it was really The Armour Institute, in which the director was an American from the technical institute. Then subsequently you had a shift where he became the co-director along with his Mexican counterpart, who had been his understudy. Deschamps, I think his name was. Then they became co-directors. Then Deschamps became the director, and head of the Armour group, a two-man group, became his advisor but still there on a permanent basis. Then I think the permanent US advisor returned to the US and there were just occasional visits from US technicians. One of the things the Institute did was to discover a patent that they sold to Quaker Oats related to making tortilla flour. So they had some income which helped. Anyway, they moved from being a U.S. creation to being a 100 percent Mexican creation, and they came to it in various stages. They still, with their own money, I believe occasionally hire an technician from Armour or elsewhere, a food industry specialist to come down and help them.

The other project which was a prototype was the physical vocational rehabilitation project, again, a project that was started by an American technician, a fellow named David Amato, eventually turned into a project which is 100 percent Mexican. Again, it was a fortuitous circumstance. The owner of the largest newspaper and a number of other interests in Mexico, Offarrel, was in an automobile accident and lost a leg. The U.S. technician helped him go to the Oakland Naval Rehabilitation Center and be fitted for an artificial leg. He was very pleased and he supported this institution. So in both cases there were sources of finance which continued the operation and helped to make it successful. These were two prototypes of projects that worked very well. The rehabilitation effort also had the advantage that this is the kind of project which pulled heartstrings and makes getting money a little easier. David Amato was quite good at pulling heartstrings, and the heartstrings he usually started with were those of the First Lady in whatever country he was working. He came to El Salvador one time and did the same thing.

Q: *In Mexico we had servicios, and I believe the productivity program was a type of servicio. I think it was a trust agreement. Would you speak a little bit about the servicio and the different forms it took in Mexico? Tell us what you think about the whole servicio concept.*

CODY: The *servicio* concept in Mexico didn't quite have the major effect that it did in certain other Latin American countries. The intention was to set up an organization which would be independent, to a degree, of the bureaucracy of both countries. Both countries would put a sum of money into this organization - generally the U.S. put more - and then the people who ran the *servicio* would have more leeway as to how to spend the money and less bureaucratic hindrance in spending. They still had to be accountable for the funds. It wasn't a way of having a slush fund. They still had to show what they did with it and explain what they did with it, but the procedures were considerably lessened.

In the case of Mexico, when I was there, the only *servicio* was the health *servicio*. It was really the Division of Experimental Studies in the Health Ministry of Mexico. Therefore, it gave that department the latitude to do things which an old-line government ministry wouldn't be allowed

to do. That's why it was called experimental. I don't know that it really lived up to this potential. There were some good people there. It did some interesting things in melding anthropological studies and public health services, discovering, for example, that [part of the] resistance to malaria programs was that [DDT] brought out the scorpions, and people didn't really know that. So that was one of the reasons why people in the countryside did not like you spraying DDT around. It would kill the mosquito, but it just made the scorpions mad. It gave a dimension that a regular established ministry wouldn't have. Eventually they asked the *servicio* be closed down. They still felt a U.S. presence was too much involved in an internal operation of the government. So the *servicio* was closed down and the US technical assistance and financial support [were] withdrawn. I don't know what happened to the Division and its program after that.

The productivity program, I don't remember the details as much. It was, again, a device to try and get a little bit more independence and - we didn't use the word in those days - I guess "privatize" the effort a little bit more than otherwise would have been the case. I've worked in other productivity centers like that. We didn't call them *servicios*.

Now, *servicios* in some other countries had a broader role. They were really the forerunners of the ministry. The Ministry of Health in Brazil, the Ministry of Agriculture in Paraguay followed the *servicio*, eventually took over and expanded upon it, perhaps extensively modified this *servicio*, but the concept is what started those ministries, which were needed. The problem was, for a while sometimes the *servicios* were bigger and more important than the ministries, and put the ministries in a shadow and didn't allow them to do their thing until they took it over. The last formal *servicio* in Latin America - and I had the dubious honor of closing it - was in Paraguay, in agriculture, and it must have been about 1968 or '69 that we officially closed that *servicio*. At that point the sub- secretary of agriculture and our chief of agriculture were co-directors of the *servicio*. There was a Ministry of Agriculture, in addition. What had been in the *servicio* just folded into the Ministry of Agriculture.

Q: *The servicio was kind of a threat to the regular bureaucracy, in a way, wasn't it?*

CODY: It was a threat in the sense that they were doing things that people responded to more favorably, but most of the people in the *servicio* tended to be employees of the local government. Sometimes, as I mentioned in Paraguay, they were both. The co-director of the *servicio* was the Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

Q: *Wasn't it true that in some servicios the local employees got paid higher salaries than the regular ministries?*

CODY: They often were paid higher salaries and were paid on time. In general, their employment conditions were much better. This was, on occasion, part of the resistance to closing them down because the staff lost these kinds of advantages. But I think the *servicio* was a good starting technique for a number of things. In looking back, you can realize some of the threats it posed, some of the problems. On various occasions since then, people have talked about, "What we really need is to go back to the *servicio*," and maybe on one or two occasions they have put together something like that. But to my knowledge, they haven't really gone back and done that,

though it has been thought of.

These *servicios* started being formed in 1941. Before 1952, in Latin America, anyway, we didn't have one AID program per se. We tended to have three. We had an ag group, we had a health group, and, to a lesser extent, we had an education group. They were three separate missions. These were the ones where the *servicios* were formed, particularly in health and agriculture. I'm not sure there were any education *servicios*, but there may have been one or two.

Then in 1952, when it was decided to bring these together, they chose the heads of one of these three groups and made them the mission director. With a few exceptions, they tended to be the person who was the head of agriculture. The fellow who was the director in Mexico, Ross Moore, had come out of that same system and was a very well-trained agriculturalist, I assume an agronomist or something like that, and had considerable experience in the Point Four, or whatever you want to call that program.

Q: Institute of Inter-American Affairs.

CODY: Yes, which still existed until, I think, July 1, 1955. That's when it formally went out of existence. When I came in December of '54, there still was the IIAA. I think it went out of business along with Child Harold.

Q: Yes. This was the idea of former Governor Harold Stassen to combine all the agencies into one called the Foreign Operations Administration.

That was your first experience, of course, working in an AID program. Of course, in every country the AID program has to work somehow with the embassy. Do you want to say something about the relations you perceived, or the AID mission and the embassy?

CODY: In Mexico despite the fact that we were located physically within the embassy, I professionally had little to do with embassy people. There was a fellow in the Econ Section I dealt with, Jim Green, who was quite good, who was at the second or third level in the economic section who was a trained economist from Princeton, if I recall, one of those smaller schools. But in general, I didn't have much to do with the embassy. I had more to do in embassies where I was physically considerably further away, but we were still a part of it the US Mission.

Q: When you were further away, you had more to do with the embassy?

CODY: Yes. It worked out that way. It also was a function of the position I held, too. Ross Moore was a very bright and dynamic person, but he was also a very independent man. We had a very conservative ambassador when I first arrived. To say the least, they didn't hit it off. The ambassador, for example, I think, didn't think clothing should be any more colorful than navy blue. Ross Moore, on purpose - "Dinty" Moore, we called him - would show up with a checkered or plaid vest every day.

Q: And it shouldn't be forgotten that the ambassador wore a high, stiff collar.

CODY: Yes. That's a longer story, but he was out of a different era. Certainly I don't think he appreciated, he just put up with AID. It was something you couldn't throw out. So he certainly didn't consider the AID program, to my observation, as anything to do with foreign policy. It was something he was stuck with and had people he generally either ignored or didn't like. He was replaced by an ambassador who was much more of a political relations person, not a man I admired very much, because I thought his career came ahead of everything else, Robert Hill. But on the other hand, he did take more of an interest and he did realize that the AID program had something to offer. I appreciated that fact.

The other thing I did at AID in Mexico, which is the only place I did it until I retired as a consultant, was to be directly responsible for a project. In Mexico - I don't know if it's still true, but it certainly was true then - one of the real engines of progress was the Bank of Mexico. Our Industrial Research Program was with the institution of the Bank of Mexico. I think the education program had an involvement with the Bank of Mexico, as did several other projects. One of the things that the Bank of Mexico was doing on its own was running a regional - by regional, I mean Latin American - program for Central Bank employees, upgrading their skills.

Q: What was that called?

CODY: CEMLA, Centro de Estudios Monetarios Latino Americanos. Most of the Central Banks in Latin America, three fourths or better of them, were members of CEMLA. CEMLA held a general training course once a year and also specialized technical programs. They asked us to help them develop some of their specialized programs. One of the ones I remember we worked on was a program for national income accounts, and we brought a woman from the Department of Commerce to help us. Initially we contacted several people to help us decide what we should be doing with CEMLA. We had Robert Triffin, a very well-known financial economist who subsequently taught at Yale University. Also he had set up central banks in several Latin American countries.

Q: And who had helped set up the European Payments Union.

CODY: Yes. A Belgian by origin and he grew up in Belgium. Then we had a fellow named Frank Tamana, who had been at the Federal Reserve Board and left to be chairman of a department at American University, he died recently. They helped us outline a plan. Then from that we did specific programs like this one on national income accounts. But in that case I was the project technician, in addition to my duties as economist and program officer within the mission. I found it a very rewarding effort and I enjoyed the people I met there. I met interesting, thoughtful, serious people.

Q: What do you think about an institution like the Bank of Mexico in other countries? Should there be something like that?

CODY: You would normally expect it to be the planning minister, who, in turn, would push other ministries. My experience in Latin America is that planning ministries don't have much

clout. They're often not ministries. There was no planning ministry in Mexico. In Paraguay, when I was there, it was a small office attached to the president's office and didn't have clout. The same thing was true in Ecuador. When I was initially in El Salvador, there was not a planning ministry, although there is now. But you need someone, however you organize the government to do that job. It just so happened that there were a couple of very dynamic people in the number-one and number-two spots in the Bank of Mexico who took this on. There's no reason that Central Bank should carry out these kinds of functions. Our own Central Bank has done a few things that might have been done in other agencies, but not to that degree by a long shot.

Q: Our own Central Bank being the Federal Reserve Board. Bank board?

CODY: There is a board that governs twelve banks. The board is in Washington.

Q: So, in a way, it had a planning function, but being involved in a monetary part of Mexico, it had some clout?

CODY: Yes. It had clout, in general. I don't think any of the clout would specifically apply to any of these projects, but it was an institution well respected in the Mexican government, perhaps as well as any. There are big institutions like PEMEX, but the allegations were it was just crooked from top to bottom, whereas I never heard those kinds of allegations, at least in the days that I lived in Mexico, about the Bank of Mexico. I was trying to remember the names of the two men who headed it, but I can't. One of them was Carlos something. I never heard a breath of a scandal.

Q: Gómez was president of the bank, I believe.

CODY: No, I don't think so.

Q: No?

CODY: The second man we sent off on a trip to the States and we sent him to Princeton. He audited all the courses he could and was very well appreciated by the staff there.

Q: And later became president of the bank and later became president of one of the private banks in Mexico. Speaking still about the bank for a minute, tell us a little bit about their training program of people going through the bank and being trained in other countries, then coming back.

CODY: I was not very much involved in that. I know they sent people abroad, but the specifics of the program I don't remember.

One thing I remember about the bank that I thought was rather amusing, and maybe you could say clever, was that the Bank, particularly in the Mexican context, was pretty much pro-U.S. But when we had to negotiate with them, they always looked for the most left-wing senior person they could find, on the grounds that he'd be tougher. The staff who liked the U.S. wouldn't be that tough. They had a man named Manuel Bravo, who was relatively senior at the second level of the

bank, and he was the person we always ran into when we had to negotiate, because he was a dyed-in-the-wool anti-U.S., if not a dyed-in-the-wool pro-Soviet. He was a tough negotiator. I found this at the time an occasionally difficult but amusing situation that they would do that. If they'd done it in some of the other institutions like petroleum organization, which came into existence by expropriating U.S. interests, I would have expected it, but not so much in the bank.

Q: One of the interesting things about the bank was that many people from the bank went out to serve in other parts of the Mexican government.

CODY: But Central Bank, if I'm not mistaken, has branches in other parts of the country. Our Central Bank has branches, in a sense. There are twelve banks, regional banks around the country, and a board in Washington.

The AID program in Mexico was about a million and a half dollars per year, which was not large even for those years. However, we had five university contracts, Michigan State, Texas A & M, the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia Teachers College and the Illinois institute of Technology. In addition we had people on loan from the US Public Health Service, the US Bureau of Mines and the US Geological Survey. So with a relatively small amount of money we were involved in a number of fields of activity.

CHESTER H. OPAL
Public Affairs Officer and Attaché, USIS
Mexico City (1954-1957)

Chester H. Opal was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1918. He received a graduate degree from the University of Chicago in 1945 and joined the Foreign Service in 1946. Mr. Opal served in Poland, Italy, Austria, Vietnam, Mexico, Lebanon, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1989.

OPAL: I left Vienna in '54 because a similar position had been cooked up for me by Bill Clark, area director for ARA, and Andy Anderson, Country PAO in Mexico. This was the job of regional public affairs officer, of which there has never been another. This, again, was a special job description written in terms of me and my assumed usefulness.

I had the briefest of home leaves in '54, and got to Mexico and worked immediately out of Mexico City, where my objective was a simple one. I framed it to myself as trying to isolate the Arbenz government, which was left-leaning, and which had been found to be importing arms from Czechoslovakia, to isolate that government morally from the rest of the Americas, so that in the event a revolt occurred, and an attempt to take over his government followed, Arbenz would not be able to call upon the rest of the countries in the Americas for help. This occurred in May and June of '54, and that is precisely what happened. Castillo Armas went in from a neighboring country and brought him down. No plane came to help Arbenz and he went into exile. This was how my role was envisaged.

In order to accomplish this sort of thing, it meant working with the facilities available in Mexico. I had the seven PAOs to Panama, working and weaving a kind of network around Guatemala. Later it became entirely different after the revolt took place and the government fell. The purpose then was to shore up the government that was there, and to work against the spread of leftist influences.

Q: In creating this sort of moral isolation of the Arbenz Government in Guatemala, were the other countries of Central America aware of what you were trying to do, or was this completely under cover?

OPAL: Part of it, of course, had to be under cover. Since I didn't work directly, I worked through all these PAOs, I had these seven PAOs and their resources, but mainly, for example, for regional radio work, for regional publications, we used the resources that were available only in Mexico. The governments themselves weren't aware of this. There were governments that objected to this, but they weren't aware that the U.S. Government had any kind of program.

For example, I visited the United Fruit plantations. I wanted to find out how much truth there was to the leftist charges of what United Fruit was allegedly doing. This was quite a revelation to me. I discovered - and I give it to you for what it's worth - I found the United Fruit plantations were frowned upon in the countries where they were located, because the native fruit growers didn't like the enlightened policies of the Americans. The Americans had scholarships to the States, they had schools, they had high salaries and so on, and by example, they were forcing these native growers, who were big plantation owners, to set up scholarships to send people to the State too, to compete with them. The Americans were disliked. A lot of the propaganda which was fed by the leftists was fed by the banana-raising competitors of United Fruit. This was a revelation to me!

Q: It's a revelation to me now, because you always heard that United Fruit was riding roughshod over the desires of everybody in the country where they were operating, and they were contemptuous of the local citizenry and the local government, and riding like kings.

OPAL: Yes. I tended to believe there was some truth in this. It's possible, and this I will grant. I think early on they were playing along and bribing local politicians, there was a good bit of this. But when I came there in '54, these were enlightened people who were running these plantations. The natives who worked for them were happy to be working for them. The contrast between their working conditions and any working conditions in the rest of the country were scandalous.

Q: They were more enlightened and so far ahead of the rest of the operators that they were providing an example for the rest, which the rest didn't want to live up to.

OPAL: They didn't want to live up to - that's right. Eventually, increasingly they probably did. I think as revolts and democratization and so on advanced in these countries, the more imitation of that development is something we'll find. How the United Fruit people adapted these policies vis à vis their employees and local country, I don't know, except that I'm sure there was some

resistance to their being there. But I think they felt that in the long run, this was the most enlightened thing they could do - to stay there, to help these countries, and to establish a base for acceptability in later years. This is precisely what they were doing. It was a revelation to me. I'd fooled around in these jungles, you know, and God, I thought, "What am I getting into?" It was absolutely refreshing. Absolutely refreshing! It's something. You have to hand it to the American managers, who were not so numerous. They used natives all the time. I mean, to live in these conditions was terrible. I was very, very much emboldened by the whole thing, I must say.

I did that sort of thing, and then I talked to the United Fruit people to get more of this out, "Don't keep this to yourself, and don't just tell the people that you're hiring. Get this message out! You've got perfect examples here to compete with the communists you're talking about."

Q: Did you in any way attempt to use the United Fruit people and what they were doing as part of your effort to isolate the Arbenz Government in Guatemala?

OPAL: Let me put it this way. You're talking about using other Americans on the scene as instruments of our own policy.

Q: Yes.

OPAL: I think the best thing for me to say is no, and to enter a proviso that what I did was to encourage them - not only I, but other American officers - to look upon what was happening around them and to do certain things. This meant we made available to them - and this was part of our private enterprise cooperation - a good bit of material that went back. For example, I talked to you about the memo I typed myself that I didn't send via my own secretary. But a lot of these went back to Washington to work with the private enterprise people to get the home offices of American companies to filtrate materials back to their own people in the field. There was a good bit of that that came out of Washington. So I wasn't working only directly.

The local people didn't quite see this. They weren't of the level of political sophistication that would have accepted this and done something about it. First of all, they probably didn't have the means to do it. With the home office behind them, supplying material, and we supplying material, they were able to do this. But this had to be a real end-around play, because I was not going to dictate, and none of us was. But to make them aware of the problem that they were facing. They tended to be insular. Guatemala was this; Costa Rica was this. These people thought in terms of the local societies. This is understandable, too, because this is where they worked, these were the governments that they worked with, and so on. So they tended not to see beyond this. This was my function, to make them see this was a regional problem and this was important.

So I served that intangible kind of function as much as anything I did from within the embassy. From that point of view, it probably was helpful.

Then the Guatemalan revolution was over, and Henry Loomis, who was in charge of intelligence analysis and research back in Washington, asked me whether I'd come back to Washington as his deputy. I declined but agreed to start a research program down in my region, along with my other

duties.

Among these regional responsibilities, I started up - this was the inspiration of Andy Anderson and Ben Stephansky, our labor attaché and later ambassador to Bolivia - a local Spanish language labor publication which appeared weekly for distribution in the area. It was produced in Mexico because the facilities for printing and also the writers were available in Mexico City - and Ben's guidance was essential. Much of the material came from the labor materials that were supplied by IPS. IPS would supply an awful lot of stuff from the trade union movement output of what was happening in American labor, but also what was happening in labor elsewhere. I got the local PAOs to report to me so that I could cross-report in this labor publication.

Ben was an old labor man out of my own university, Chicago, and he had taught at Wisconsin. He knew a lot of people in labor circles and was close to the Mexican government. He put me in touch with a man who was most useful to me, and that was Luis Alberto Monge, who was later president of Costa Rica. This was in the fifties. Monge was very active in the ORIT, the regional organization of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, ICFTU, which in turn was the free trade union movement that was formed after the pull-out from the WFTU, which the communists had taken over. I had a lot of APRISTAs, too; these activists from Peru who formed a liberal haven throughout the area.

Again, this was a time when we were able to meet with these people, supply them with materials that they could use with their own materials, not necessarily where we had to use a 1,000-pamphlet distribution, but where they had means of getting this focused, pointed material out. So having a man on the scene - in this case, myself - made this possible, whereas I think the standard USIS procedure might not if you didn't have somebody who was specifically interested in just that. We had the regional responsibility, because unfortunately, our country USIS people have to think in terms of their own assigned country. In this case, I had seven countries. This was one of the devices.

I might say, and this has a remote relationship to Panama, when I was in Mexico, we had a visit from Richard Nixon, then vice president. Bill Snow, put me in charge of preparing a briefing book for him. And later also reported on reactions to the visit in the post's WEEKA. I devised a WEEKA style that became a model for some or all our posts abroad. The WEEKA, as you know, is the weekly summary of press and public reactions to events of interest to the U.S. The report I turned out on Richard Nixon had no references to media sources at all. What I wrote instead was a distillation of reactions from public and media, without singling out any particular example. I got a request back: "How do you justify all this?" I had all the supporting material, so I sent it in. They said, "This is the way it should always be written. If it's an honest reporter and an honest officer, and he's reporting true, as things are, why do we need all these cluttering references to the press? And how better to get what opinion leaders are saying?"

This was partly done, one, because I felt I could do it, the prospect excited me, and Bill Snow accepted it. He said, "I'm going to have my people do this now. It's the easiest thing for my people to do in terms of writing. I don't have to defend every statement that they make."

Q: Was Bill Snow the DCM in Mexico?

OPAL: Yes.

Q: He later was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America, where I had a lot of dealings with him.

OPAL: Yes. He was a wonderful guy. How could I not say so?

Q: This trip that Nixon made to Mexico, as VP, was not the same trip he later made to South and Central America and ran into all this anti-Americanism?

OPAL: The autonomous universities and so on?

Q: This was not the same?

OPAL: No, no, that was later.

Q: This was an earlier trip.

OPAL: Yes. This was the most artful man I ever saw. He would go to a meeting, let's say, of union people. We would have these questions for him, and he would brief himself before he went in. But he was marvelous. He could improvise. He never used a phrase that he found in his briefing book or anything else. He was before groups that were inimical to what he stood for, what he stood for in the States, what the policy of the government was. He handled them beautifully. He took whatever they had, gave it back, but very subtly. He wasn't argumentative or anything. He showed a superb intelligence. I was amazed at the guy.

Q: I'm glad to hear you say that, because for all the derogatory things that are said about Nixon, I also felt this man was a great absorber of information, and then he could analyze it, put it together, and he would regurgitate it in a way that was really a very remarkable performance.

OPAL: One other thing. I don't know whether this belongs in the record. I came away convinced, admiring this man, but the fact that he could adjust to any situation and still accommodate the interests of those people and say to them what they wanted to hear - and there were many diverse groups which I won't enumerate - suggested to me that he had no moral center, that this was a man without a moral center.

I had the same sort of experience with Adlai Stevenson in Vienna. He came there. This man was himself all the time. You always felt he was improvising from a strong central moral principle. Richard Nixon was not. He had all the intelligence to make him melt into the landscape, to emerge from the landscape, to adjust to everything that was going on, but he himself stood for nothing. All the people said, afterwards, that they were charmed by him. "Oh, we misjudged this man. We misjudged this man." Well, when everybody from every point of the compass says he's misjudged this man, you wonder what kind of man was in the room! This is what I mean. It's a

kind of image. I don't know how sound it was that there was no moral center; I suppose I shouldn't talk that way, but there was no center from which he was extemporizing, it seemed to me.

There was with Stevenson always some central point that you know that you could go to, and from which he was speaking, and he would never suggest a belief that he was expressing to you that he felt you wanted to hear him express. There was a difference. He was always himself in a way. He was also a politician, I realize that, and part of this may be a bit of a deception, but he existed. When you were in a room with Adlai Stevenson, he existed. Nixon, unless he was in a position of power, did not. As an intelligence, as a feeling medium, he did not exist. This may have been his strength, too, because he could use all the things around him.

Q: From what you say, he did exert a favorable impression upon the people.

OPAL: Yes, that's what I say. This is the point. People from all parts of the spectrum, right, left, however you wanted to define it, from labor, from management, or the commercial community or academia, and so on, all of these people, you would think, would have taken a different view of him. They didn't! They said they had all misjudged him, that he was a great man. What he said with them was such as to convince him that this was so. A man cannot convince that many different people. He's got to alienate somebody if he believed something. He didn't alienate anybody. He was a master.

This point that you made earlier about his absorbing materials, these materials were fresh to him in many cases. This was new stuff. He absorbed it beautifully, he converted it into his own machinery, and brought it forth as Richard Nixon. But who was Richard Nixon? This is what I used to wonder about.

One of the things that got me into a little hot water was a project relating to the Family of Man Exhibit in Mexico City. It was a study of reactions before and after the visit to the exhibit. This exhibit, unknown to me, was a darling of Abbott Washburn, deputy director of USIA. I wrote a terrible report of criticism of this whole thing, and asked what this had to do with the agency, what it had to do with our policy. I questioned its usefulness. This was at a time when we were trying to introduce tactical atomic weapons into Western Europe, and here's this Family of Man exhibit showing the ultimate destruction of the world, with the great nuclear mushroom cloud as a blown-up photo at the piece de resistance at the far end of the show. What were we doing spreading this around the world - it was going to India next - when we were trying to make tactical nuclears acceptable.

It was a very forcefully but very condensely written document that I sent to Washington. It's the only document that Washington officially criticized. That is, Abbott Washburn wrote a letter to the post criticizing this critique, explaining why the exhibit was done, and how this was a generous, humanitarian gesture, showing what the Americans were made of. I thought, "Well, I'm in hot water with Washington." But it amused me to find out that old Mark May, who was chairman of the Advisory Commission on U.S. Information, came down to Latin America on an

inspection tour, and he took me into a side room in the Mexico City embassy, and said to me, "I think I should show you this. When I left Washington, they told me there were two documents I should take with me when I go into the area, and this is one of them." It was all the budget breakdowns for the posts. "Here is the other one." And here was my dispatch on the Family of Man. (Laughs) Who had forced this on him, I don't know. No comment or anything. "These are the two documents I was told I should have."

Then I had a quarrel with Ted Streibert. Ted Streibert was the first director of the independent Agency, you remember, and he came down to Mexico and was touring the area. We got into an argument. It was fairly noisy, because Andy's office was right next to mine, and he shut his door. Eventually he went out. Most of the secretaries and so on, including my special secretary, went away. We had raised our voices, either I or Streibert, and I don't remember what we were discussing anymore, but Streibert was furious. He was just furious! I thought, "Well, this is it. I've had it." But I didn't care. I stated my positions. I thought, "Well, this is the end of me."

Q: Did anything ever come of it?

OPAL: He never forget it. He never really forgot it. He's dead now, bless him. He probably remembers up there. This was a quarrel, and probably a very unpleasant thing in his experience. In the fall of 1956, he sent me to a military school - no doubt for disciplinary training, like a naughty son. He sent me to the National War College. Abbott Washburn is one of my great friends in Washington. I've never understood this. He apparently was challenging me on the Family of Man thing. Maybe Streibert was challenging me and just wanted to bring out more. He was satisfied at the end of it.

Q: I don't know whether Streibert sent you there as a disciplinary move.

OPAL: I just said that as a joke. No, it was not.

Q: That was considered a rather honorable tour.

OPAL: I'd like to go back to Mexico. There were a couple of things there that probably bear mentioning. You will remember in the late 1960s, Jim Moceris proposed a kind of living memory, which is really what you are doing now, where ex-officers or active officers would have a chance to recall past events - this kind of oral or written memory. This was also an outgrowth of a dispatch mechanism which I set up in Mexico. I proposed that USIS would report interesting techniques of operation, either in the way we contacted people, the way we used our media, and so on. These would be reported to a central office in Washington, which would then select from our and other posts, if they would do the same sort of reporting, for worldwide distribution of these techniques. This was an ongoing kind of reporting function which really had nothing to do with the evaluation of the post operations as such, but which would provide a useful cross-fertilization of ideas. This was implemented for a time by USIA.

The second thing I want to say about Mexico is that this is where the People's Capitalism

program, which was originally conceived, I think, by the American Advertising Council, was started. Andy Anderson, who was the PAO, came down once from the ambassador's office, and he said, "I had an idea. Ambassador Francis White was going to be talking to a dinner meeting of lawyers and businessmen in Mexico City, and he wanted to talk about American law. I said, 'No, why don't we talk about something else instead. Why don't we use this as an opportunity for promoting something that we're really interested in?'"

He and Bill Snow, the deputy chief of mission, decided on this idea of People's Capitalism which Washington was pressing upon us. Andy came down and asked me, "Do you think you could write a speech overnight?" I said, "Well, the only materials I have other than what's in my head is the extensive stuff that we've been supplied by IPS and by the exhibit service." So I distilled all this stuff, sat down one morning, and wrote this speech, which ran to an hour's length. Well, Andy was excited. He showed it to Snow, Snow showed it to the ambassador, and they agreed it was fine. The ambassador then delivered it before the Business Council in Spanish, because he spoke Spanish fairly well. This was the first actual promotion of the theme. I don't know, this is so ancient in our Agency history in some senses, and I don't think we've ever revised it except in one of its aspects or another, but this was the ownership by 7 million Americans of stock in American corporations and the trade union investment in pension funds, which was also enormous and involved capitalistic enterprise, as well. At any rate, this was done, and we later were commended for it by Barry Bishop, who had gone back to Washington as the IPS Latin American chief.

MELBOURNE L. SPECTOR
Deputy Director, USAID
Mexico City (1954-1959)

Born in Pueblo, Colorado in 1918, Melbourne L. Spector obtained his B.A. from the University of New Mexico in 1940 and joined the Foreign Service five years later. He served in France and Mexico. Mr. Spector was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1996.

Q: When did you get there?

SPECTOR: I got there about March of 1954. We drove from Washington all the way to Mexico City.

Q: How big a program? What dollar value roughly?

SPECTOR: I'd say it was about \$1.7 million. We had some PL480 much later, but it was all technical assistance. It sets the tone for what happened in Mexico. This should go into some kind of a Mexico archives. In the early days of the Eisenhower Administration, the idea was that there would be no loans to Latin America. Period. Where this came from I don't know. But this was under Secretary Humphrey of Treasury, Assistant Secretary Holland in Inter American Affairs,

and Deputy Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr. It was called the "3H Program." What had happened was the Mexicans wanted to eliminate malaria in Mexico. Now, this was a pretty good idea in our own U.S. interests, to eliminate malaria because the malaria mosquito doesn't know that there's a border there. It can go right over that border. The Mexicans had worked out this elaborate program of getting money from WHO, FOA and they wanted a loan from the United States. The top man in Mexico, the Minister of Finance, came up to Washington to try to negotiate a four million dollar loan. Of course, he was laughed at, but he still went to see Stassen. Stassen was a very bright guy, no matter what else you can say about him, and he said, "Well, can you use local currency?" because Stassen had it coming out of his ears. So, the man said, "What do you have?" And he said, "Well, I've got Danish kroner, Italian lira, and Japanese yen." In those days, those were all soft currencies. Well, this man said, "Fine." And Stassen said, "But you'll have to repay it in dollars." Here we were going to get rid of our local currency, which we just didn't know what to do with, get it repaid in dollars, eliminate malaria in Mexico, which was a threat to the United States, and the Mexicans accepted it. They wanted it in lira for some reason. They took the lira. Stassen was overruled by the State Department and Treasury. So, the Mexicans, you know, said "What the Hell's going on here?"

Q: Why were they overruled?

SPECTOR: Because of no loans to Mexico.

Q: Even in local currency?

SPECTOR: Even in local currency. That's how stupid it was, Haven. You can imagine the kind of atmosphere when I went to Mexico. More than that, we had an Ambassador named Francis White. Francis White had been a career Foreign Service Officer. He'd been trained in the Diplomatic School in Madrid in the early 20s, became a career Foreign Service Officer. At the time that Franklin D. Roosevelt became President, he was the equivalent to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs, but then it was an Office Director - the Office of American Republic Affairs, ARA, an out-of-date acronym which we've never gotten rid of. He resigned his commission because he so disagreed with the Good Neighbor Policy. And he became the head of something called the Foreign Bond Holders Association. These were all the people that held bonds in all of the expropriated properties like oil wells and railroads in Mexico, and railroads in Brazil. His lawyer, the man that worked for him, was John Foster Dulles. I think you get the picture now.

In the interim years, the Ambassador - as a civilian, of course - had been the head of the Republican Finance Committee many times. So, he was a staunch Republican and he reported to President Eisenhower - not to Vice President Nixon, not to the Secretary of State Dulles. He reported to Eisenhower. When he came to Washington on visits, he would go in to see the President and then he'd tell Dulles and the Office Director for Mexico what he and the President had decided. He hated the Mexicans. He looked down on them. This was just a very bad man. He did not believe in foreign assistance. He did not believe in USIA. He just tolerated them because he had to.

One of the programs we had was with the United States Geological Survey. Now, they'd been there for many years. The USGS had worked very well with the Mexicans. The Mexicans wanted a *Mexican* Geological Survey. The USGS party head was first rate. He'd worked out this very good program where they'd send men up to the United States to be trained in college and then go on and work in the USGS offices. We were creating an institution: the Mexican Geological Survey. Now, this was a big program and there was a lot of strategic interest in it back here in the United States because we wanted to know ourselves what was in Mexico, what kind of mineral resources, oil resources, and so on. We would have been way ahead of the curve on their oil discovery if this had gone through. My particular job was to negotiate that note. As you know, you sit down and you do drafts to check with Washington. You go back and forth. Then I sent the note up to Washington, where it was being cleared by State, FOA and the Department of the Interior. And, of course, it was being cleared by the Mexican government. Finally, the two governments were completely agreed. And this was agreed to at the highest levels of Washington because of all these strategic interests. In case of war, we had strategic materials that we could get either directly up through by land route or across the Caribbean, the Gulf of Texas very easily from Yucatan to New Orleans. I got the final draft, and showed it to my Mexican counterpart, who was the Number two man in the Foreign Office. He put it in final form. I put mine in final form. I gave it to the DCM. I couldn't deal with the Ambassador. He wouldn't deal with me because I was FOA. I'd never been to his house and he wouldn't deal with me, because I was AID. Week after week went on and the note never came back from the Ambassador. It was getting very embarrassing with the Mexican Foreign Office. Finally, one day, the DCM called me up to his office and handed me the note. It hadn't been signed. I said, "Bill, what's wrong?" He said, "The Ambassador won't sign it." I said, "But this has been approved by the very highest levels." I knew it had to be. And he said, "It doesn't matter to him. Mel, he doesn't believe in the USGS at home, so he feels 'Why should we be sponsoring one abroad?'" Well, that was the atmosphere in which we worked.

Q: What happened to that?

SPECTOR: It just dropped. It was killed and that was it. And this was in the U.S. interest. We had a health *servicio* and I want to talk a minute about *servicios*. A *servicio* was a concept that was, I think, invented mostly by the Institute of Inter American Affairs and we used them throughout Latin America. They were a joint institution between the U.S. and the host government. They were jointly run. They were jointly financed with money from the local government and money from the U.S. But when the money went into that *Servicio*, it no longer became U.S. funds, so it was not subject to audit by the U.S. Government.

Q: They weren't host government funds either, were they?

SPECTOR: No. We did encourage the host government to audit. I'd like to quote from a very good book here, by Phil Glick, who was the General Counsel of TCA, one of the best men they ever had. He says, "The creators of the *servicio* believed that they could effectively teach and demonstrate only by working with their hosts daily, over a long period of time, in the same organization on tasks they could share." That was the whole idea.

Q: What book is this?

SPECTOR: This is a wonderful book. It's called The Administration of Technical Assistance: Growth in the Americas by Phillip Glick, which, if I am assured that there is going to be a permanent library at the Association of Diplomatic Studies, I'll be glad to turn over to them, but only when I'm assured there's going to be a place for it. It's a wonderful book. It's about the whole history of technical assistance, from the beginning up through Stassen. The *servicio* could be overdone. The *servicio* was a wonderful institution in a country that had weak institutions, or where you wanted to try something new and you had bloated bureaucracies that you couldn't deal with. When I got to Mexico, we had a health *servicio* with about 12 American technicians. It was being run by the American who was a United States Public Health Officer. We, the Mission Director and I, felt strongly that *servicios* should be turned over more and more to the local governments. It took a lot of arm twisting to get it first jointly run by the Mexicans and the U.S. and then finally run by the Mexican, who was a very able man. I felt that, in certain situations, *servicios* were an excellent way to help a country to create an institution, or by example, show what could be done with modern administration and technology. One of our great *servicio* men in Lima - I forget his name - he felt that a *servicio* was like a hothouse. You would put a plant in it and get it up to a certain point so that it was strong enough to grow on its own and then you took it out and put it out in its natural environment. Another simile: it is like a train. You put a *servicio* on the train, and then you take them off. But I like the greenhouse thing better.

They had problems. One of the problems was that we tried to pay higher salaries. So, we'd have people in *servicios* maybe getting a higher salary than their counterparts in other parts of the same Ministry. This was a problem, but we said, "Again, this shows you what it really ought to be." When AID was set up and the Alliance for Progress came into being, the *servicios* were abolished. This was largely due to one guy: Rueben Sternfeld, a first rate man, one of my closest friends. He and I have disagreed on it ever since. He was very close to Ted Moscoso.

Q: Why did he want to terminate them?

SPECTOR: Because he believed they were wrong, that the U.S. Government had no control. He'd come from the Bureau of the Budget: you ought to be able to control this, audit it, and see that all that U.S. money is used correctly right to the last penny.

Q: Didn't we have pretty much the primary say in how the money was spent?

SPECTOR: Yes, sure we did. But it couldn't be audited by the Controller in Washington or by anyone else. By the way, Sternfeld really ought to be interviewed. I'm going to come to him later. He played a key role in setting up AID. He's a first rate man. He and I happened to disagree on this, but I have the highest regard for Ray. To this day, I'd say right now, that we ought to have *servicios* in Haiti. That's a perfect candidate for *servicios*. So is Africa.

Q: So, really, it's a situation where there is a very weak government agency or bureaucracy that can't do the job?

SPECTOR: Right.

Q: Do you see that as a temporary phenomenon?

SPECTOR: Yes, the thing ought to be temporary.

Q: How did it then become folded into the government structure?

SPECTOR: They would take it over. I remember that the *servicio* in Mexico just became a regular part of the Ministry of Health. And it wasn't experimental. They did different things there. But the *servicio* was finally abolished by the Ambassador because he got into a quid pro quo with the Mexican government. I forget all the things he wanted. And he refused to sign the agreement. Another version of the *servicio* is a trust fund, which is like a *servicio* in that the money again became not U.S. funds once it went in there, but it would go to the Administrator. We set up a joint trust fund to run the Productivity Center, which we had set up in Mexico to help the Mexicans improve their industrial and commercial productivity. We had two men working with him. In this case, the organization was headed by a Mexican from the very beginning. We had a Board of Directors that we worked with, about the equivalent of the Mexican Association of Manufacturers. The American did not run it. He was an advisor. And he had an assistant. They were both advisors. The only control we had was in the general program agreement that we began with, the contract. Contracts are very important, written contracts. And signing of the checks. Either I or the man there would sign the checks. So, that one worked very well. I think the product of these centers is still going on. It had a lot to do with Mexico's growth.

Q: Were there other joint servicios in Mexico?

SPECTOR: No, just that one at that point. There may have been some before I got there. There were lots of them around Latin America, of course.

Q: What was the program in health? What were they trying to do through the servicio?

SPECTOR: They worked on potable water. They worked on all kinds of things. I can't remember all the details. One of the big programs they had, which was the best, was on vocational rehabilitation, which is a beautiful example of technical assistance. The man that ran it was David Amato, who himself was handicapped. Using the *servicio* as his base, they first set up within the Mexican Ministry a Bureau or Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. But David did not stop there. He went out and got them to help set up the equivalent of the Goodwill Industries. He went on into the private sector. He got them to help set up courses in vocational rehabilitation in universities and technical schools. He got them to set up a professional association. He was really making technical assistance take when you go through the entire society and all the parts of it that can make some kind of thing like that take. Dave was wonderful.

The Productivity Center - I want to give you an example of the kind of thing it did. The Mexican government wanted to protect its own commerce and industries. The big department stores in Mexico were apprehensive of things like Sears, which was already there, and having other

companies come in that could compete with local stores. They wanted to make it very difficult for more companies to come in to Mexico. Our Productivity Center people said to them, "No, don't do that. Teach your own companies to compete." So, we brought down people to help them learn how to set up their own modern department stores with credit systems. The Productivity Center made a contract with the American Management Association. They used people who were at the very top of the heap. They got a man down there named Armand Erpf, from a Wall Street banking firm, on the banking side, the whole financial side. They brought down Peter Drucker, the famous management expert. They brought down other people. This was the way, I think, you helped Mexico and you helped American business, too.

Q: You found the Productivity Center to be very successful?

SPECTOR: Oh, yes.

Q: And does it still exist as far as you know?

SPECTOR: As far as I know, it is still there. We had a couple of others - we had university contracts. These were pretty new in those days. Stassen loved university contracts. He had been President of the University of Pennsylvania before he came to Washington. We were going to do things with university contracts. We had a university contract with the University of Michigan to help set up a training center for the operators of heavy road building equipment. We had sent the man who was going to head the university up to the States for a year or two of training. But the problem we had in those days with the university contracts, Haven, was that we had no say about who was coming down. They'd say, "We'll take care of it in Washington." And they'd just go to the University of Michigan and say, "Give us a man to go down there and help the center." What they did at the University was they didn't use one of their own people. They'd go out and hire some guy out of the Detroit school system who was teaching shop. That's exactly whom they sent. A man to help build an institution who knew nothing about institution building! He knew how to train kids to repair an engine or turn a lathe, but not how to train trainers. The first man they sent down was a Mormon and he tried to proselytize everybody. We said, "Look, you're in a Catholic country. Whether there's official religion or not, you don't proselytize." He tried to do it and we got him out within 48 hours. They sent down another man, who was also a Mormon and didn't try to proselytize. However, he also was not up to the job. We had sent a Mexican to the States - I think he had gone to Yale - to be trained. He came back to Mexico, and he was late to one of the classes our man was conducting. The Mexican was late, 10 minutes late. So, our man made him go up to the blackboard and write "I'm sorry I was late" 100 times. We got him out in eight hours, too. We had terrible trouble with our contracts, on the quality of people that they would send down. We had a contract with Columbia Teacher's College. They were sending us all their retirees; none of their young people. This comes up later if we want to discuss it, about what they did in England with the Ministry of Development.

Our programs were harassed and fought by Communists, and I say that openly: c-o-m-m-u-n-i-s-t-s. We had a contract between Texas A&M and Saltillo College of Agriculture in Saltillo, Mexico, a beautiful contract worked out by my boss, Dinty Moore. This was to be to build an agricultural school in Saltillo. The usual thing that you know all about: the exchange of

professors, the exchange of students. Really build an institution with everything. That means people and so on. Well, there was a student strike. They didn't want this Americanization of their university. The CIA people, whom I was very close to in Mexico, showed us: they had dossiers on some of these so-called students who were in their thirties. Some of them had been trained in Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European countries. We had this Columbia Teacher's College contract with the Instituto Tecnológico, which was a technological institute. And there was another strike and big banners: "Do not Columbiaize the Institute." And they went on strike for several weeks. Even went into the Rector's office, knocked him down, took down his pants, painted his scrotum blue. Again, we had pictures of these people that were Communist provocateurs. Our people left in the dead of night. They got in their cars and went home. So, they killed the program in Saltillo. They killed the program with the Instituto.

When we had programs with strong Mexican leaders, we were okay. We had a training program for the operators and maintainers of heavy road building equipment with one of the biggest men in Mexico. His name was Rómulo O'Farrell. Wonderful man. He was the head of the Inter American Highway Commission for many years. Well, he had a lot of clout with the government, so they couldn't touch us. Even when the Ambassador tried to kill that program, he was able to keep it going because of the clout O'Farrell had with the Mexican government. But we finally got rid of the Ambassador - well, not we, but Richard Nixon did. Richard Nixon came down as Vice President to visit Mexico. Conditions were so bad between Mexico and the U.S. that U.S. businessmen got to Nixon and said, "You've got to get him out" and Nixon got him out.

Q: What was the foreign policy interest in having a program in Mexico?

SPECTOR: I think the foreign policy interests in having one in Mexico is the interest we have today. It's probably the country most important to us in the world, with a 2,000 mile border. To put it crudely - to "keep them down on the farm." A developing Mexico is a good neighbor. Even then, we had the problem of "wetback," immigration, illegal immigration. So, to have a prosperous, growing, developing Mexico was in our interest then in our small way. We should have kept it going. I think we had and have a lot of interest there.

I want to discuss one other thing about Mexico. We set up there something called a Regional Technical Aid Center, RTAC. What we did was we had a center for preparing technical material in Spanish: textbooks, technical manuals, training films, radio because that's all we had in those days. The reason it was set up in Mexico was they speak the second best Spanish in all of Latin America, in Mexico City. The best is spoken in Bogota, Colombia, according to the people that know. I'm not one of them, but this had been studied by Washington. It was a Washington idea, but it was located in Mexico. It was a wonderful idea. I think it's something where AID has not done enough over the years.

I was down about eight or nine years ago in a project in Costa Rica, where we were trying to build a Personnel Office in an agricultural research and training center there. Before I went down, I tried to find some books in Spanish - textbooks for human resources management or personnel management. There were two, only two I could find. One was from Madrid, the other was Italian translated into Spanish. There is a great need in Latin America for textbooks that are in Spanish, technical materials in Spanish. We can say today, "Yes, they ought to be learning English," but

they don't. When I was dealing with these people in this training center, very few of them spoke English or read English. RTAC was kept going for many years. I think we had one in Northern Africa somewhere also. Much, much, much later, Haven, when I was-

Q: I think it actually ended up in Beirut.

SPECTOR: Much later, when I was in Paris doing a consulting job with the Embassy in 1981, I was dealing with USIA then. They had a program, as you must know better than I, of preparing Francophone material to go out to all of the Francophone countries: inserts in weekly magazines, subsidizing American books. The request from all over Africa was "Don't give us translations of Hemingway and Fitzgerald. Give us translations of textbooks." I would bet it is still needed.

Q: I'm sure. It is.

SPECTOR: Another thing about Mexico. We had a cultural anthropologist on our staff. This is a leftover from what I told you about earlier, probably from the days of the Smithsonian. She was a wonderful woman named Isabel Kelly. I believe that, in certain countries at a certain stage of development, every AID Mission should have a cultural anthropologist to deal with the culture, to be sensitive to and deal with the culture. She worked with the health people, especially on such things as training. One of the programs of the *servicio* was training young Mexican public health officials. Many of these officials we had sent to the States to be trained at Harvard Public Health School. But these were young men and women who'd come from the big cities: from Monterrey or from Guadalajara or from Mexico City and they were going to go out to the villages. Well, they didn't know any more how to deal with those villagers, how to get them to accept new technical terms or new ideas than the man on the moon. But Isabel would train them on how to use- For instance, they would try to bring in potable water. So they would put in a spigot that was an ordinary spigot like you have on the side of a house. Well, that little spigot has no way to hand a bucket. And Isabel had to say, "Look, these people have been getting their water out of wells with a big spigot where they could hang their bucket. Learn what they do. Put in a spigot on which they can hang their bucket. Then they can use potable water." I was very impressed with Isabel. I was also very lucky when I was there.

I told you, when I was in Paris I tried to begin some psychotherapy. I also continued in Washington taking courses at the Washington School of Psychiatry in both psychiatry and in cultural anthropology. But when I got to Mexico I understood that Eric Fromm was there, the very famous psychoanalyst writer. I said, "This is great. Here I'm in Mexico." Through a friend of mine who knew Eric, I approached him and he said, no, he didn't take lay people. He was only training doctors from the University of Mexico Medical School. Fromm himself was not a physician. But he gave me a reading program and for many years I read under Eric. He gave me Freud, his own books, books by Karen Horney. About once every six months, I'd go down to Cuernavaca, which was about 45 miles from Mexico City and as close to Heaven on earth as you can get. I don't know if you've ever been there, but it's just-

Q: Yes, I've been there.

SPECTOR: Eternal spring. And he had this gorgeous house that overlooked the valley and the two volcanoes. I read under Eric and it was very, very good- At least, I learned an awful lot.

Q: What did you do with that learning? Were you trying to use it in your-

SPECTOR: Yes, it was a side interest. It was helping me be more at peace with myself, feeling that I had some insight into how you deal with other people. Also, it was good for me personally. I tried to use it, I guess, intuitively. I always backed sensitivity training because I felt that that was an offshoot of that. I learned in Mexico that- this was '54 to '59, Haven, that the most important thing was the creation of human resources. That was before Ted Schultz had gotten his Nobel or whatever at the University of Chicago. Building institutions, strengthening institutions, and building human resources. And Mexico had a lot of that. Mexico had been sending their young men and women up here and to London for years to be trained. There was a man in the Bureau of the Budget named Mickey Rosen. That's all he did was take care of young people that came in and spent a year at the Bureau. This was, I think, a Donald Stone idea. I'm pretty sure it was Don's idea. These were the people who would then come back to Mexico and fan out into the government. They'd become sub ministers and ministers around town.

I should mention that we had a program with the Bank of Mexico. The Bank of Mexico is an extremely important institution. Every country should have something like it. It not only was the equivalent of the Federal Reserve Bank, but it was a training institution. Also, it was a research institution and we had a joint program with them. And we had a research establishment. We had a contract with the Armor Institute out of Chicago and the Stanford Research Institute to give them help. They were developing, as an example, chick peas, garbanzos. They were used as a good crop for Mexico to export because the Spanish love garbanzos - in Spain and other parts of Latin America. And what could you do with garbanzos? They were making pancakes out of garbanzo flour and they even found that the basic molecule of the garbanzo was one of the best molecules to be used in plastics.

In addition to this research program with the Bank of Mexico, we had a monetary studies program set up by Peter Cody. The Bank of Mexico set up the Center for Latin American Monetary Studies. We brought down people like Triffin from Yale and other people who worked with him and gave them a certain amount of money, but not an awful lot. We helped bring people there from all over Latin America to be trained in central banking, like the Federal Reserve. Our own central Federal Reserve never participated for some reason or other. But the Federal Reserve Bank of New York always sent someone down once a year for a whole year to work with them.

Another program that I can't take all the credit for - my training officer should, but I certainly backed him - was to use Mexico for third country training. You could use Mexican institutions and save money because in the United States it cost a lot more for a participant than to send him to Mexico. We would not only use things like the Center at the Bank, but we would use the Monterrey Institute of Technology in Monterrey and so on. There I had a wonderful relationship because I got to know the Rector who later became the Federal Minister of Education. We'd have lunch every week.

What I learned in Mexico I've never lost: you've got to have a great respect for the people that you work with, their country, their mores and so on. To quote Hippocrates, "Try to help and, in all events, do no harm." After five years-

Q: You were in Mexico for five years?

SPECTOR: Five years.

Q: How big a staff was there?

SPECTOR: I think, by the time I left, we had about no more than 15 or 16 Americans and maybe twice that in locals. I became a Deputy Director down there after about a year. My good relations with Mrs. Shipley helped me: I got my diplomatic passport in a week. You were entitled to a diplomatic passport if you were Deputy Director. After Dinty Moore left, they sent in another excellent ex-institute man named Vance Rodgers, a wonderful man. One of the best I've ever know. Then he left. I then became Acting Director for about a year. The idea was to phase Mexico out. You know, this country was already developed. What did you need foreign assistance for?

I feel that we've made a big mistake in that, when we cut off programs with a country, we cut off everything. AID builds up wonderful relations with a country on the technical level, on the technological level, on the institutional level, with government, private, and academic. And then you cut them off. And you've lost a wonderful resource of relationships. I think we should never cut them off completely. In fact, at one time, Haven, back about 1975 or '76, a friend of mine was Assistant Secretary of State for Scientific Affairs. I recommended to him that what we should have abroad are science and technology attachés instead of just science attachés. The technology attaché would pick up from AID those technological relationships. At the very end, I guess you want to ask me about my feelings about development. I think development's a two way street.

Q: Did they terminate here, when you were there?

SPECTOR: No, they were going to. They kept saying that's why- Dennis FitzGerald told me that he could make me the Director. But later, when the Alliance for Progress came in, we expanded the program. We were trying to taper it off. The word from Washington was "Cut it down, cut it out." Mike Mansfield, whom I got to know in Mexico, kept pushing for cutting out Missions.

Q: Why was he of that view?

SPECTOR: I don't know. Mansfield just always had the idea that aid should be temporary. Although he and I became pretty good friends- I should say that I finally got to get into the Ambassador's house because Mansfield used to come to Mexico for visits. He just loved Mexico. And he spoke Spanish. They assigned me to him because they thought I was the only Democrat on the staff. I never said I was a Democrat, but they always thought I was. So they assigned me to him and I got to know him. Later, this helped us get AID and the Foreign Service some very good legislation just because I knew him. Like anyone would. I'm not saying Mel Spector -

anyone that knows a man like that could have done what I did. After five years, I was offered the job-

Q: Before we go on, was there anything more that you thought about the impact of our assistance at that time? What kind of changes you think have been sustained? You talked about the Productivity Center.

SPECTOR: I think that must have been, of the program we had, Haven, probably the most important contribution we made. You're dealing with a very large country. It was then 37, 38 million people. Now it's almost three times that or more, 92 million. I think one of the good things we did, just generally, was our third country training program. I think the Vocational Rehabilitation Program was an excellent one and could have been a model for many other things that they could do in Mexico. This man I mentioned, Rómulo O'Farrell, had been in a terrible automobile accident and they had to amputate his leg. He was so important to the U.S. that the Navy sent down a plane to pick him up, took him to San Diego, amputated his leg, then took him to Oakland, where they fitted him with an artificial limb. He came in to see me and he said, "You know, Mr. Spector, I never realized the problem of the disabled, but now I do. I want to do something." Well, David Amato, this wonderful man I told you about, who was our Vocational Rehabilitation advisor. Finally, he'd done everything you could do to get vocational rehabilitation going in Mexico, so we were terminating it. He was about to leave and I introduced him to Don Rómulo, and it was like putting the two parts of the atomic bomb together. It was a magnificent explosion. They went off and they really did a marvelous job in the private sector of helping the disabled. They got an old monastery and equipped it. This was everything: people that were blind, people that were deaf, people that needed new limbs. They taught them skills. They set up making car radios - because Rómulo assembled Volkswagens and later he assembled Jeeps. So the radios for all those cars were made by the disabled people that helped support this venture. So you didn't need any government funds, except the payment of Dave Amato. So, we made some impact.

Q: Were there any in agriculture?

SPECTOR: No.

Q: Anything in rural areas at all?

SPECTOR: No. The only thing we did for rural areas was our helping on the road building equipment. Of course, Mexico has marvelous roads. As you know better than I, roads are so important to the development-

Q: You were providing technical assistance in road construction, too?

SPECTOR: No.

Q: Just equipment?

SPECTOR: Just the training of operators and mechanics. Not the equipment. The USGS program would have been of marvelous assistance to Mexico, as eliminating malaria would have been- Well, we did help in malaria later. We obtained a specialist for the health *servicio* who was one of the best men in the world on mosquitoes and we lent him to the malaria elimination project.

We had one PL480 program that was interesting. An American railroad had been planned many years before in the early 1900s to go from Kansas City down through Texas and across the Northwestern part of Mexico to the Pacific. It was called the Kansas City-Pacific Railroad. During the 1917 revolution the Mexican government expropriated it. It had only been surveyed before and since 1917 nothing had been done to complete it. So, about my last year in Mexico, the Mexicans wanted to finish that railroad (which is now finished; they say it's one of the great sights of the world, the wonderful canyons and so on), and they'd gotten a loan from the World Bank to help do it. They also wanted to use the local currency from a PL480 loan to complement the World Bank loan. It was a fairly good-sized loan. It was up there - 15 or 16 million dollars. But, as you know, I had to get the concurrence of the Agricultural Attaché. He was a staunch Republican who believed that, "God dammit, these Mexicans took our railroad away from us and we're not going to help them build it." He was a good friend of mine, and I liked him very much, but I couldn't change his mind. So, finally, I sat down with some people out of the Mexican Office of the Presidency and they said, "Well, it's no problem. What would you like to use your PL480 money for?" So, I went to my friend and I said, "What would you like to use it for?" He said, "Well, grain storage." So we used the money for grain storage and they used the money they were going to use for grain storage to help build their railroad. So, the whole thing worked out.

In 1959 we'd just about exhausted Mexico. I mean, exhausted our own stay there. I was at the point either I was going to spend the rest of my life in Mexico or get out because I really loved the country, loved the people and still do.

Early in 1953, I was sitting home one Saturday morning and I got a call from Senator Mansfield. He said, "How would you like to go to Mexico?" I didn't know what he was talking about. He was then the majority leader of the Senate. Johnson, of course, had become Vice President. What he meant was that he wanted me to go with him on a trip. This was the first Inter-Parliamentary meeting between the two Parliaments - us and Mexico. He was heading a group of twelve Senators and twelve Congressmen. He wanted me as his aide and he said, "You're representing me, not State, not ICA. Me. I don't want you to have anything to do with the Embassy, anything to do with the Department." Well, you know, he got me. He made a call and boom. That afternoon, I was on my way to Mexico for two weeks as his aide, to help him in any way I could. We spent a week in Guadalajara and a week in Mexico City. I sat in on some meetings. I helped him with some translation. I got to know him pretty well - liked him very much. Still like him very much.

Q: What kind of person was he?

SPECTOR: He was very dour, but believed very strongly in a strong foreign policy. In those

days, he was more an isolationist than he is now - I mean, than he became when he was in Japan as Ambassador. I have to tell you a story. When he first came to Mexico and I was assigned to be his assistant or bag carrier, we didn't know what he looked like. He wasn't that famous. He was the Senate majority Whip. We didn't have the little Congressional books, where you have pictures. So, the Ambassador, whom I'd never really met before, and the DCM and I all went out to the airport to meet him. We were standing at the bottom of the plane. And everyone came off the plane and no one identified himself to the Ambassador, which really ticked the Ambassador off. You know, here he was, the Ambassador. This was Francis White. We all went into the VIP lounge and the Ambassador sent me into the main lounge and we said over the microphone, "Would Senator Mansfield identify himself?" Nobody identified himself. Finally, I went up to the pilot and I said, "Wasn't Senator Mansfield on the plane?" He said, "Yes." And I said, "Can you point him out to me?" And he said, "Yes" and there he was standing over there. I walked up to him and I said, "Are you Senator Mansfield?" He pulled his pipe out and he said, "Yes..." I said, "Well, Senator, the Ambassador is waiting for you in the VIP room." So, I escorted him to the VIP room. This was typical of Mansfield. The first thing he asked the Ambassador, who was more Republican than the Republican Party, was "How's my old friend Bill O'Dwyer?" Well, Bill O'Dwyer was a rambunctious Democrat, a former Mayor of New York, who had been the Ambassador to Mexico. The Ambassador just couldn't stand him! Of course, Mansfield knew that. To set the picture: the tradition in the Ambassador's office was to have pictures of all the previous U.S. ministers and ambassadors hung around the office. In fact, there was a tradition in Mexico that all of the former ministers, because that's what they were before, pictures were in the office of the Ambassadors. They were all on the wall from the very first one. When White took over the job, his secretary started to put up O'Dwyer's picture, but White said, "I don't want it. I can't stand the man." And he would not let him in the embassy. Mansfield knew that. Later, when I got to know Mansfield better, I said, "Senator, when you came to Mexico, didn't you know that White couldn't stand O'Dwyer?" And he smiled. But it was helpful to me later, knowing Mansfield, when we were passing the Foreign Assistance Act. So I went with him to Mexico and came back.

One thing I learned when I served in Mexico from Dave Amato was this: you need long term commitments of technicians stationed there, that stay with the program or project, who know the people, who know the political, economic, and social aspects of the country and can really do a job and can follow a project all the way through. What I found in AID was that one contractor would design a project and another would actually get the contract and implement it. You had no continuity. And I think that's awful. I think, sure, contracting is good and I think contracting ought to be continued, but there should be many more career people to supervise those contracts in the missions and in Washington and that contractors carry through projects from beginning to end.

HORACE Y. EDWARDS
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS

Mexico City (1955-1966)

Horace Y. Edwards (Tex) was born in Texas in 1915. He completed graduate work at the University of Colorado and at the University of Pennsylvania before serving in the U.S. Army for three years. Mr. Edwards worked in North American Aviation defense and joined OMGUS [Office of Military Government, U.S.] after World War II. He joined USIS in 1962 and served in Germany, Mexico, Uruguay, and Spain. This interview was conducted by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1989.

EDWARDS: I always put down Mexico. For years I put down Mexico, Mexico, Mexico. I just thought I'll never get to Mexico but I'll just keep putting it down anyway. Then I got notice I was transferred to Mexico.

Q: Directly from Germany?

EDWARDS: From Germany. Well, we came to the States for home leave only and then went to Mexico.

Q: So that's where I first met you down there. Was Jack McDermott the PAO?

EDWARDS: Jack McDermott was the PAO? No, he wasn't the PAO when I got there. It was Andy Anderson.

Q: Oh, yes.

EDWARDS: You remember him?

Q: I know Andy. I knew him.

EDWARDS: Fine, fine person. He was wonderful.

Q: And he was replaced by McDermott.

EDWARDS: By McDermott, right.

Q: And Earl Wilson was the Deputy.

EDWARDS: Right, that's right.

Q: And you were what, the Cultural Attaché?

EDWARDS: I was the Deputy Cultural Attaché. We had five Cultural Officers.

Q: Jake Canter?

EDWARDS: No, Allen Hayden was Cultural Attaché when I went there, then Jake Canter. But then we had five Cultural Affairs Officers in Mexico City including Mauda Sandvig, Director of the large Benjamin Franklin Library, an excellent library.

Q: Yes, I know. They had one of the largest in the world.

EDWARDS: Yes, and at exam time the university students, Mexican university students, couldn't all find chairs, so they sat all over the floor. You had to walk carefully and step over bodies, but literally. I would go in there in the evening during university exam times and you had to step over bodies all through the library. The desire to work seemed contagious. I think they enjoyed it.

Q: The students were using your library as a cram course.

EDWARDS: The library, yes, they were.

Q: How about their command of English? Were most of your books by that time in Spanish? Or were there large numbers in English?

EDWARDS: No, most of them were in English.

Q: They had enough English so they could make use of them.

EDWARDS: At least they could read them, yes.

Q: What would you think was your single greatest success in the cultural field in Mexico? Was there any highlight of your tour there that you think is particularly outstanding?

EDWARDS: I got to be very close to a lot of the people in the art world and in the education world in Mexico. And in the education world I'd like to say I placed particular emphasis on archeology because there it is so important. Archeology and anthropology were so important in Mexico then and are perhaps even more so today.

Q: Yes, perhaps even more so now.

EDWARDS: Yes, and Mexico certainly has the best archeological museum that I have ever seen.

Q: That was pretty badly damaged, I understand, during the quake in '85.

EDWARDS: Not so badly.

Q: Someone told me it was quite badly damaged.

EDWARDS: No, I just saw it about three weeks ago.

Q: Oh, I heard it's been well restored.

EDWARDS: Yes, it has and additions have been added since the last time I saw it which was about six years ago, but I still have contacts after all these years. We left Mexico at the end of 1960 and I still have contacts in the education and art world in Mexico today, and those two fields are more important to the average Mexican citizen than they are to the average American, much more important to them.

Q: What did you sense among the Mexicans about their attitude toward the United States? I think in later times it's become rather - I won't say vitriolic, but it's at least acrid on occasion.

EDWARDS: It was on occasion then also, but I think not so much as it is now. But they have a contradictory view about the United States actually. I would say it's almost a love/hate relationship. They admire the United States in so many ways and yet they feel that the United States has always looked down upon them, that it has never treated Mexico as an equal as it has so many other nations in the world. Mexico is an extremely proud nation. They are overly proud sometimes.

Q: And they're overly sensitive, too.

EDWARDS: Yes, they're very, very sensitive about Mexico, extremely sensitive about Mexico and are very much aware of some of the uncomplimentary jokes or sayings in the United States about their country.

Q: There is of course a terrible divergence between the highly wealthy and the poor in Mexico.

EDWARDS: Extremely.

Q: How do you feel to the extent the Mexicans had a middle class at the time you were there and the extent to which - well, let me rephrase my question. This is a triple headed question. Did the middle class really have a great deal to say in the higher reaches of the art and archeological world, the educational world and the business and governmental world? And what was the relationship between the very poor, the middle class and the extremely wealthy in Mexico? Was it just a complete separation, any mix at all, standoff?

EDWARDS: No, there's a complete separation between the very poor and the wealthy, even between the upper middle class and the very poor. The latter were used as the servant class, never even considered to be those with whom they would have social intercourse. A great deal of that is true today. The middle class had a lot of influence in the field of education and a lot of influence in the cultural field. I would say the middle class was very important in the field of anthropology and archeology.

Q: How about the arts and the performing arts?

EDWARDS: And very important in the arts and the performing arts, very important in that field.

They did not have the same influence in government.

Q: I suppose from what you say then that it was quite possible for perhaps not the extremely poverty stricken people but nevertheless the lower middle class to be upwardly mobile and in those fields in which the upper middle class was rather prominent it was possible to come from lower levels and achieve a degree of fame.

EDWARDS: Yes, there was a possibility there for upward mobility, but more limited than it is in the United States.

Q: Was there any noticeable effort by those who had it made already to put a few obstacles in the way of those who were upwardly mobile?

EDWARDS: Well, I would say perhaps no more so than here.

Q: Always looking out for your own.

EDWARDS: Yes, looking out for your own interests first. Yes, very much so. In Mexico, though, the upper class and the upper middle class fed on the humor of the lower class. It's the lower class of Mexico that has the most delightful and fantastic, imaginative sense of humor that I've ever encountered, and it always comes from the bottom up. It percolates to the top. The upper classes feed upon it.

Q: Was there any possibility at all that the lower classes would ascend to higher levels in Mexico? Did any of them make it? Or was that a very rare occasion?

EDWARDS: No, some of them make it. After all, you had some presidents who came from the lower class in Mexico.

Q: And then became the upper class.

EDWARDS: Right, and then became the upper class. Oh, the possibility is definitely there, but I'd say it's not as common a theme as it is in the United States. Your class divisions are sharper there than they are here.

Q: Was it possible to - I guess what I'm asking is were your efforts in Mexico designed primarily to present the United States in a favorable way and to exchange people with the United States so as to add to the Mexican experience in that area? Or did you have other thematic informational approaches which would not necessarily have been your bailiwick but another element of USIA?

EDWARDS: Well, we soft peddled what was important to us and tried to do it without being blatant about it. Mexico has not been really a democratic nation. It has been a more or less authoritarian democracy.

Q: Democratic authoritarian.

EDWARDS: Or democratic authoritarian because of the National Revolutionary Party. The PRI, as it's called, has always been and is still the party that decides who's going to be president of Mexico.

Q: It may be changing.

EDWARDS: The last election seems to have changed that considerably, but they always spoke of who's going to be the next president as a "tapado," the one who's covered up. So you always knew who was going to be the next president of Mexico as soon as the PRI mentioned his name, you knew he was going to be the next president. That, I think, is no longer true and I would say by the time Salinas has finished his term, I believe the PRI will not be able to say decidedly who is going to be the next president of Mexico before the votes come in.

Q: Was there a substantial left wing political element in Mexico in your time?

EDWARDS: I think their force, their power, was greater than their numbers. I don't think the numbers were great, but they had a noticeable voice in all of things.

Q: In this last election I note that the left wing candidate, whose name escapes me at the moment, polled a very high percentage in the vote.

EDWARDS: Yes, those are not, however, real communists. You may be talking about Cuatehmoc. Those who are leftists I think we should keep in mind they are not necessarily communists. Many of them are not communists at all. So we can't equate leftism in Mexico with communism.

Q: There's been too much attempt to do that in the United States.

EDWARDS: Yes, of course. Yes, yes.

Q: Well, how long were you in Mexico then?

EDWARDS: Six years.

Q: Six years?

EDWARDS: Yes, going around with the ambassador helping him sing "Cielito Lindo."

Q: One of your ambassadors while you were there was Bob Hill.

EDWARDS: Yes, he is the one who loved "Cielito Lindo."

Q: He was always running for Congress while he was Ambassador to Mexico.

EDWARDS: Right. He entered the bull ring also while he was in Mexico.

Q: He what?

EDWARDS: He entered the bull ring.

Q: He did?

EDWARDS: Yes.

Q: He got into skin diving when he was ambassador to one of the Central American countries. I've forgotten which one. Either El Salvador or Costa Rica.

EDWARDS: Costa Rica I believe. Yes, I believe it was Costa Rica. I heard about that.

Q: So, do you have anything else you want to say about Mexico now before we go on?

EDWARDS: Nothing except that I thoroughly enjoyed my six years in Mexico. We enjoyed it. My wife and my children all got into just everything, you know. We got into the life of the country. I loved the variety of civilizations that you have in Mexico and I thoroughly loved my tour there. Mexico City has changed completely. I used to go to the office every morning. The first thing I did was go and look out the window and I could see those two lovely mountains, Papocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl.

Q: Now you can't see the buildings across the street.

EDWARDS: Now you can't see very much and they say it's been years since they've been able to see the mountains. While I was in Mexico just recently it came out in one of the principal newspapers that Mexico City is now the most polluted city in the world.

Q: That's what I understand. It's supposed to have about 18 million people.

EDWARDS: The closest they can come is between 18 and 20 million.

Q: Which I guess makes it the largest city in the world.

EDWARDS: I don't know of any city that's larger, no.

Q: People tell me, I haven't been there since 1972, and I understand the smog is just terrible.

EDWARDS: It has grown unbelievably. A friend of mine and I wanted to see a beautiful church out in the little village of Tepotzotlán to the northwest of Mexico City. The church is a superb example of Churrigueresque architecture and has the most beautiful chapel that I probably have ever seen. This used to be a nice drive out through the country. Now you drive out of Mexico City on the super highways and as far as you can see up the hillsides on either side of the

highway all the trees have been cut down and for miles and miles all one can see are little houses, little shacks right up against each other with no space, nothing, just shack after shack after shack.

Q: No running water and no sanitary facilities.

EDWARDS: It's very sad. Pollution is also in the rivers and none of the streams are safe, not only not for drinking, they're not even safe to bathe in or to wade in. That's very sad. It was such a lovely place.

ALLEN C. HANSEN
Publications and Distributions Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1956-1957)

Allen C. Hansen was born in 1924 in New Jersey. He attended Syracuse University and received a masters from the University of Pennsylvania. After serving with the U.S. Navy, Mr. Hansen joined USIS in 1954. His career included positions in Venezuela, Mexico, British Guyana, Spain, Uruguay, and Bolivia. Mr. Hansen was interviewed in 1988 by Dorothy Robins-Mowry.

HANSEN: I went to Mexico as publications and distribution officer. We were doing a lot of printing for Central American USIS posts in those days. The USIS Mexico publication and distribution unit, which I was in charge of, had about 25 employees at the time. Much later this unit became the agency's Regional Service Center for Latin America and was completely detached from USIS Mexico, but at that time it was an integral part of USIS. While in Mexico I was asked at various times to fill in as the Executive Officer when that individual went on leave; as Radio and TV Officer; and as Motion Picture Officer. Thus in the year and a half that I was in Mexico I received some well-rounded experience.

Q: When you moved on to Mexico, you obviously were doing all information-type work. What about Mexico in 1956-57? What about Mexico City? Did you travel around? Tell us a little about Mexico.

HANSEN: Mexico, certainly in those days, also was in the underdeveloped category, very much so, but Mexico City was then, as it is now, one of the largest cities in the world. So there were sections of the city much more developed than what one would find in Caracas. But the city problems of pollution and overpopulation and slums and poverty and so forth were as prevalent there as they were in Caracas, although more so.

I remember we moved about five miles away from the center of the city after living in Mexico City about six months in a downtown apartment, and after we had moved, as I drove every morning to the Embassy, you could see this black cloud in the center of the city. It was the handwriting in the sky, if you wish - a warning of what was going to happen to Mexico City as time went on. The pollution could only get worse, as it did. But because they had so many other

problems, they couldn't handle this one. They gave no priority to the pollution problem. But they have suffered for it ever since.

Q: Was the traffic very serious at that point as it has become subsequently?

HANSEN: Well, in a way, it was more serious, because they have these large "glorietas" (traffic circles) in Mexico City. You took your life in your hands whenever you had to cross the street, so much so that at the time one of the leading newspapers used to publish, on the front page, the names of people killed in traffic accidents the day before. That usually numbered maybe 50 or 75.

Q: What kind of stories were you carrying in your various roles as radio and TV? What were the subjects of most interest at that time? What was USIA's area of policy concerns?

HANSEN: Actually, I was not directly involved with press operations. On the motion picture side, we emphasized the cultural and education aspects of U. S. society. In my role as publications and distribution officer, we also were doing a lot in the cultural and educational fields, but also in explaining U. S. policies. In that 18 months that I was in Mexico City I was not directly involved with the day-to-day information activities and crises of the day. Even our TV activities tended to be of the documentary type.

Q: Did you travel around at all, or were you always primarily in Mexico City?

HANSEN: We traveled a little, but I did not travel extensively.

Q: For USIA?

HANSEN: Yes, most of the time.

MYLES GREENE
Consular Officer
Mexico (1956-1958)

Myles Greene was born in Georgia in 1925. After serving in the US Army from 1943-1946, Mr. Green received his bachelor's degree from Yale University and his master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Mexico, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey. Mr. Greene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2002.

Q: Ciudad Juarez, you were there?

GREENE: From the summer of '56 to the summer of '58 and amazingly enough it was a very positive experience. Most people, now I don't know if that's true, a lot of people have good

memories of their first posts. This is a very unusual place. It was not really as an old time FSO who was there said, this isn't really the Foreign Service. There was no other consulate there. There was across the border in El Paso, a Mexican consulate general and we were an American consulate general on our side. There were a couple of negative aspects, mainly the two bosses I had one of whom was an old line FSO on his last assignment, named Brown.

Q: Sure, sure.

GREENE: To put it mildly, Brown drank too much. He would go home for lunch and could hardly focus during the afternoon. Then he retired and my second year there was the days of McCarthy. The new CG was a right wing McCarthyist who had been in the State Department security and felt very strongly about protecting the State Department from communism and all that sort of thing. I'll never forget once the ambassador to Mexico, his name I don't remember, visited the consulate and we had a reception. This guy Drury, our boss, the consul general, said, "I want to look around this room and see everyone of you with a glass of tomato juice in your hand, nothing hard to drink during this reception. Behave yourselves." That was really bad. Anyway, that's the negative part. But, we set all that aside, namely with two bosses. We had a great time there. When we first arrived we joined three other Americans living on the Mexican side. By the time those three left, we were the only ones from the consulate living on the Mexican side. We had a marvelous house, \$96 a month, two maids, we had another baby while we were there and I lived a block and a half from the consulate. We got to know a lot of people, but we didn't travel much because of these babies. I was invited to join the local rotary club, which was an interesting experience. Our landlord was the mayor of Juarez and our next door neighbor was a major merchant. So, we had a lot of fun, we really enjoyed it. The other positive element was, despite what I said about these two bosses, I was given the opportunity to rotate among jobs in the Consulate. I don't know if that was an official policy in those days for a new FSO, but was it?

Q: I don't think it was as structured as it is now, that came a little later.

GREENE: I did spend roughly six months each on immigrant and non-immigrant visas. I spent another six months on American protection, passports and that sort of thing. I had the jail run every morning. That was quite an experience. Another four or five months during miscellaneous things. I did some commercial reporting. It so happened there was a presidential election while I was there, a Mexican presidential election, which of course was meaningless at that time because the same party always won. But the opposition candidate was from our consular district and so I dug around about him and wrote a long sort of biographic report about him. It was a lot of fun. I really feel very positive about those two years. So, does my wife. She enjoyed it, too.

Q: Let's talk first about the visitor, visitor visa, immigrant visa. What was the situation vis-à-vis on Mexicans on the border and going to the United States at that time?

GREENE: Well, I take a little credit for what was going on in that consulate. The guy I replaced, an old line FSO, was just plain mean to most applicants. I'm talking about immigrant visas. I tried to be much more understanding, but there was lots of divided families, lots of economic

reasons for considering immigrant visas and I'm sure in the end I was more generous than others. Non-immigrant visas were a bit confused because just a couple of miles down the road the immigration service at the border which had these so-called border crossing cards which they used at that time, so there was confusion as to what we were giving non-immigrant visas for. This was mostly for people who were going somewhere beyond El Paso and it was pretty cut and dry. There would be this mob of people there every morning, a line waiting outside the door of the consulate from 6:00 AM to try to get in. The non-immigrant visa room would be jammed. People would get numbers and you'd call the numbers and just check a little bit about their background, why, where were they going and this sort of thing. Almost always we said okay. We did not have much of a watch list such as consular officers are supposed to be using now. We had a little bit of that, but not a great deal.

Q: They're called a lookout book, which was printed, but really didn't have.

GREENE: Yes.

Q: What about Juarez as being one of those places where Americans who live in Texas and all go to whoop it up and so I mean what about protection and welfare there?

GREENE: Let me just say first of all, this was long before the current situation which involves more than a million people and assembly plants for many American products. At that time, yes, the main street in Juarez was filled with bars, brothels, various things like that. Almost every night somebody would either be picked up by the police or else pushed back across the border. So, one of the most important duties of somebody in the consulate, for a while it was me, was to know the chief of police and be known when you walked into as the guy from the American consulate. I'll never forget this man. He was really friendly. I enjoyed him. He would sit behind a desk with three or four people standing in front of him, each for three or four different reasons, and he would speak and turn to one after the other or sometimes jump back and forth. I would tell him how I understood that Joe Smith was in there and he'd say, "Okay, just a minute" and then he'd go talk about somebody else to somebody else. The conditions in the jail were just miserable, really bad, but it was our duty to not only to see these people, usually it was just drunkenness or something like that, but if they had something more serious, we'd try to contact a family member to tell them about lawyers. I hate to say it was fun, but it was. I would never have wanted to be in that place as a prisoner I must say.

Q: What about in the jails for example, drugs weren't a big deal in those days?

GREENE: No, drinking was though, and whoring as they call it.

Q: Well, those things are usually taken care of by you know a night in the jail and send them on their way.

GREENE: Yes, well, there were a few people who were drinking and had stolen something from a store. There were tourist shops selling Mexican products of various sorts. I'm trying to remember if I, I don't recall any really serious crime while I was there like murder. I know there

was one case in our consular district in a much smaller town down on the border where an American got in trouble for robbery, a more serious crime and the number two person in the consulate and I went there to see. This is about a 50-mile drive or so. A couple of times I went to Chihuahua which was the state capital to see Americans there, too.

Q: How did you find the justice system?

GREENE: I think most of what I would call justice was, to put it personally, was my connection with the police chief. He thought I was there to just see what was going on with Joe Smith. He would say, "Well, he's sobering up, give him another day or so" something like this, that was justice. But occasionally there would be something a little more and I don't remember any egregious problems with the justice system. This is all very small-scale stuff you know?

Q: Were they having any problems on the other side of the border, which reflected on your operation?

GREENE: Yes and no. There was something called the Mexican American Border Commission, which had headquarters in El Paso. The Chairman was a presidential appointee and he always thought he outranked the consul general and everybody else around there. This was during the Eisenhower administration. He happened to have been in the army with Eisenhower and thus had his connections. That was a problem and of course there was this very large Mexican American community in El Paso. The mayor of El Paso was the first Mexican American to be elected to that position. I can't say as a vice consul I saw him often, but I would see him. He understood the problems.

Q: How did your wife find this?

GREENE: Oh, my wife loved it. As I say, we had our second child there. We had good friends and I would say of our various Foreign Service posts that was her favorite, believe it or not. We always had one maid and when the second child was born for a brief period, we had two maids and it looked like a slave system. We had a little room up in the roof of the house where this maid lived. My wife participated in various things, the women's side of the rotary club and things like that. She didn't know as much Spanish as I did, but she knew quite a bit and it was a very positive experience for us, really.

HARDY: Yes, a lot of them looked good.

There hasn't been a Mexican president who hasn't gone out with a fistful of money, unless it was Zedillo, the one who went out just before Vincente Fox.

Q: Well, I have a good impression of him.

HARDY: Salinas? You had a good impression of Salinas?

Q: This, and the next guy, too.

HARDY: Yes, well the next guy seems good. I've only known the latest guy through press reports and so on.

Q: Yes, that's all I know.

HARDY: The whole Salinas family... I met the President and his brother and his father, who was a senator at the time. They were all part of the system, a corrupt, undemocratic system. We tend to assign the blame to individuals and I suppose you should, but it's often hard to look for morality in an immoral system. Sometimes even if you want to be moral, it's difficult.

DAVID E. SIMCOX
Third Secretary and Consular Officer
Mexico City (1957-1960)

David E. Simcox was born in 1932 in Kentucky. He graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1956 and joined the Foreign Service in 1957. His career included assignments in Mexico, Panama, Ghana, Spain, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic. Mr. Simcox was interviewed by Kirstin Hamblin in 1993.

Q: Well, after the Foreign Service Institute, you were then assigned to Mexico from 1957 to 1960 as a consular officer and a Third Secretary [of Embassy] and in the office of the labor attaché. What were your duties in each of these capacities and how did they differ from one another?

SIMCOX: As a consular officer I did visa work - principally starting off with immigrant visas. In those days there was a large number, just as now, of Mexican immigrants going off to work on farms. The immigration law was very liberal then. There was no quota for Mexico. So we probably sent 40 to 50,000 people to the U.S. as permanent residents per year. Then I switched over to the non-immigrant visa line. This was a real madhouse. We had to issue 900 to 1,000 visas a day, which meant, in my case, about 200-250 interviews. You can imagine that quality control wasn't all of that good on all of those interviews. I just had a minute or two to make a decision. Then I did citizenship and passport work. And, of course, all of us had to take our turns on the weekend on the so-called protection service, aiding and assisting Americans who got into difficulty in Mexico. They would call the Consulate. They were out of money, were in trouble with the Police, or someone would call the Consulate to say that they had died. There weren't too many ground rules as to how you helped them, nor was there much money that you could give them. So it was really a creative process, figuring out what you could do for them.

Q: And what about...

SIMCOX: Well, I was lucky. After a year and a half in the consular section, the Embassy began a process of rotating junior officers through the various sections. I had helped out the labor attaché, who didn't speak Spanish, by going to some meetings with him where I acted as an interpreter. I

look back on that period and shudder when I realize how poor my Spanish was then. I think of how many mistaken ideas and wrong impressions I may have given by my inadequate knowledge of Spanish. However, bad as my Spanish was, it was better than that of my supervisor [the labor attaché]. So when a position opened up in his office, he asked that I be transferred to it as his assistant. I spent the remaining year and a half of my time in Mexico City, working on Mexico's labor situation. I got to know the trade unions, following and reporting on industrial relations in Mexico and the trade union movement, as well as the "bracero" [laborer] agreement. That was one of the more interesting aspects.

At that time the United States and Mexico had a migrant labor agreement. This really went back to 1942-43. By the time 1957-58 rolled around, the program was in a lot of political disfavor in the United States. There was a lot of exploitation of the workers, and there were a lot of opportunities for international misunderstanding because many American farmers mistreated the Mexican "braceros" when they went to the United States. When they were mistreated, they would complain to the Mexican Consuls, who would then complain to us and to the [Mexican] Foreign Ministry, which would call us in for meetings to investigate this or that case of discrimination or mistreatment. The "bracero" program was principally run by the [U. S.] Labor Department. The Labor Department didn't have any representative in the Embassy in Mexico to handle these matters, so we became the intermediaries, taking all of the guff for the Labor Department and trying to keep up to date on what the Labor Department's thinking was on these issues.

That was interesting to me because I had worked on the immigrant visa and subsequently on the "bracero" program. It gave me an interest in Mexico's whole population question - demography, manpower, and immigration - which is still very much a live issue in our foreign relations now. Illegal immigration was high then, and it's higher than ever now. The possibility of serious, international controversy over the mistreatment of Mexican nationals in the United States is very much with us.

Q: After you served in Brazil, you returned to Washington as the Director of the Office of Mexican Affairs. How did your assignments to Mexico and to Latin American countries prepare you for this job and were you actually helping to formulate policy? Is that what your job actually involved?

SIMCOX: Mexico's relations with the United States are unique, in terms of the way they're handled in Washington. Literally, every agency of major importance - and most of the minor ones, too - has an interest in Mexico. They have developed their own channels of communication and have their own interests and their own counterparts in Mexico. They support each other. So when you talk about making policy toward Mexico, it's an extremely untidy process. Most of it takes place outside the Department of State - indeed, outside the cognizance of the Department of State. Just monitoring what was going on in our overall relationship with Mexico became a major effort on the Mexican desk. It was a major project just to find out what the Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service were planning to spring on the Mexicans. So it would be presumptuous to think that this was a major policy-making job. The Mexican desk

didn't make policy. On most issues the Department of State didn't make policy.

Mexico became more and more important during the two years I was in that job because of its production of oil. Each month it seemed that there was a new oil discovery, an increase in Mexico's reserves, and Mexico's production rose very rapidly. At the same time we were having trouble getting stable oil prices out of OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries]. Mexico was seen as something like salvation by a lot of people. Its oil would somehow save us from high prices, future boycotts, and that sort of thing.

Also, when it came to producing a piece of legislation to control illegal immigration, to set up a system of sanctions against employers [of illegal immigrants], this aroused the Mexicans furiously. The Carter administration never got much support in Congress. So all this kind of legislation did was to make people mad, and then it died in Congress. After such legislation, in effect, died a polite death, the face-saving way out was for the Carter administration and Congress was to set up a special commission to study immigration. Such a special commission came into being in 1978 and lasted until 1981.

Trade with Mexico was a big issue at that time, because Mexico was becoming more and more productive. The "maquiladoras" [assembly plants] in Mexico near the U. S. border were a constant issue because we had all sorts of interest groups in Washington, like the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations), the largest union organization in the United States, as well as other trade unions and industrial organizations, which were pushing for curbs on the ability of American producers to move their plants to Mexico, producing at a lower cost, and then re-exporting their products back to the United States without incurring any significant tariff charges. So trade was a constant problem.

So the major issues with Mexico involved immigration, trade, oil, human rights to some extent - although never to the extent they were a problem with Brazil. The Mexicans were much more pragmatic about this. One thing I noticed about Mexico at that time was the sense in Washington that things were getting out of control in Mexico. Corruption, economic stagnation, and rapid population growth were seen as leading to - well no one seemed sure what. There was a feeling that the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party, the government party in office for many years] system might not be able to continue and that chaos would come back to Mexico, with enormous consequences for the United States. I think that this was a feeling in the White House and was shared by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Yet no one quite knew what to do about it. The best thing they could do was to call for a special presidential review on Mexico, where all agencies and all departments having an interest in the country would review the whole situation in Mexico and our current policy. We went through that exercise, and all of the attendant paper writing and meetings at increasingly higher levels. What came out of it was not much of a guide. It was basically more of the same - just to coordinate our relations better and try to bolster Mexico financially. The Treasury Department did that. There was some thought given to a special, \$3.0 billion loan guarantee to Mexico to help it get its financial house in order and get people back to work. Unemployment is terrible down there.

The level of unemployment was beginning to show up in steadily rising levels of illegal

immigration to the United States. The Mexican-American border was becoming a very disorderly place and still is a disorderly place, with rock throwings, shootings, juvenile vandalism, and all of that. But the Mexican administration at the time, controlled by the PRI, continued to the end of its term. It was replaced by President Miguel De la Madrid, who provided six years of indifferent leadership. Then President Salinas De Gortari came to power, some four and a half years ago. Mexico finally got some leadership and began really to change things. Mexico apparently has more inherent stability and an ability to absorb shocks than I may have thought.

Q: Since you have a special interest in immigration and negative population growth, how did you see that change, or what sort of things did you notice, since you were directly concerned with Mexican affairs? That was in the late 1970s. Your first tour in Mexico was in the 1950s.

SIMCOX: There was a sharp contrast with the time when I went to Mexico in 1957. Mexico was then a nation of 35 million people. The capital city - Mexico City, where the Embassy was - had a population of 5.0 million. Now here we are in 1993. The country has 90 million people, and Mexico City has grown four-fold. Mexico City and its suburbs are now the world's largest city, according to the UN, with a population of 20 million people. The thing that struck me, when I was on the Mexican desk, was that the Mexicans themselves, since 1973, have suddenly become aware of the seriousness of the population problem and are beginning to put a lot of effort into turning the situation around. They welcomed international assistance for family planning and they invested a growing share of their own resources in family planning in all of its forms. In 1973 they even rewrote their own constitution to make family planning a "right." What they began to do then is beginning to bear fruit now. The Mexican population growth rate has fallen remarkably. Unfortunately, there's so much momentum there, with so many young people of childbearing ages, that it will be a long time before we see any appreciable slowing in population growth.

Q: So what were your greatest frustrations?

SIMCOX: Well, there are a lot of things I would not do over again. I made a lot of mistakes which I would have avoided now. While I was the Director of Mexican Affairs, I somehow alienated the Foreign Minister of Mexico, so much so that he personally asked me to stay away from him. It was quite a setback for someone who, as country director, was responsible for relations with a particular country, to be told by that country's foreign minister that he would have nothing more to do with him.

Q: Was this purely a personal thing?

SIMCOX: I think it was partly personal and partly the nature of the Foreign Minister. I guess I have to admit that it was partly due to my own style of operating. He told me that he wanted nothing further to do with me, not once, but twice. He denounced me to my superiors and said that he couldn't work with me.

Q: *Did you feel that way about him?*

SIMCOX: No, I didn't. I felt that I could work with him, but the fact is that he was a confused man. He had had no previous, diplomatic experience himself when the President of Mexico appointed him Foreign Minister. He did not come out of the Mexican career diplomatic service. He didn't last very long before the President came to realize that this man just didn't have the experience and did things "on the fly" without prior consultation. The President relieved him as Foreign Minister after about a year and a half, replacing him with a professional, career-oriented official. So, in some ways, I guess I survived him. Still, the fact is that you've got to be able to get along with all kinds of people. I've always regretted what happened. If I had it to do all over again, I would certainly change the way I acted.

EARL WILSON
Information Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1957-1960)

Earl Wilson was born in 1917 and raised in Washington, DC. He attended the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and George Washington University. Mr. Wilson joined the IICA (USIS) in 1947, serving in China, the Philippines, France, Thailand, Mexico, Hong Kong, Spain, Malaysia, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1988.

WILSON: In 1957, we headed for Mexico City, my fifth post. Jack McDermott was the Public Affairs Officer. I was to be Chief Information Officer, later Deputy PAO. Again, there was no time for language study. I was delighted to go to Mexico. When I got there, I found the post had its own soap operas, radio, and their own unattributed newsreel. They had a Labor Information Officer, something fairly new, working closely with the labor attache, who later became the ambassador to Korea. USIS was putting out newsletters, had mobile film units going around the country, had an unattributed weekly newspaper, news bulletins, many pamphlets and media products.

Soon after I arrived, it happened to be time for the annual update of the USIS country plan. I was asked to rewrite it. In this document, as in many that I had read in Washington, it had the usual anti-Communist and pro-democracy objectives. I noticed the post had singled out Mexican secondary schoolteachers as a key target audience, a group the Communists were actively courting. They were influential, as they reached millions of Mexican school kids. The post, earlier, had started a magazine called *Saber* - "to know," for the teachers. It specialized in articles on the American educational system relevant to Mexico. It was well established, and through surveys they learned it had a very excellent reputation among educators. So I saw this as a golden opportunity for this Citizenship Education Project.

I wrote a memo to Jack McDermott, suggesting how I thought we could write this project into the country plan. I thought we ought to do it in two phases. The first phase would be the basic outline

of the American premises of liberty, with a cross-relationship between that and what we could find in the Mexican Constitution, following the same path as the Guatemalan experiment. We would develop a Mexican equivalent with laboratory practices based on the free individual, free government, free economy, and free world for Mexico. It seemed to me that this would be a way to go. We'd write these things first as pamphlets, distribute them as a supplement to our magazine. We could also run some articles in the magazine about the American experience.

Phase two, as I saw it, was from these pamphlets, if favorable, under our exchange of persons program to bring down some experts from Teachers College to have a workshop on the technique, as they did in Guatemala, and work with the Mexican educators. And from that, to use the pamphlets as a base for developing a textbook based on this whole thing for use in the school system down there. I thought, also, in my own mind that if we were successful in Mexico, we could influence Washington and through Washington, the rest of the world. But I was aware that it was a very sensitive project and would have to be completely unclassified because I had to have local staff working with it. I also knew that if anywhere down the line any Mexicans of any influence objected, we'd have to stop it.

Anyhow, although I don't think Jack, frankly, understood the idea at all, he okayed it, nor do I think Ambassador Robert C. Hill understood it or cared about it. But they all signed off on it, and the country plan went to Washington.

The editor of the magazine *Saber* was a former Mexican schoolteacher, a woman called Luz Zea, highly intelligent, well informed. When I explained the whole thing to her, she at first was very nationalistically suspicious. But then as she began to learn more about it, she became enthusiastic.

First CEP Pamphlet

So we started moving ahead, just the two of us, Luz and myself, working to develop the pamphlets, one at a time. I would write some, she'd write some, I'd edit, she'd edit, and finally, our first pamphlet on the theme of the free individual based on premises from the Mexican Constitution, etc., came out, called *Senderos de Libertad*, meaning "paths of liberty." We sent that out to all of these schoolteachers as an accompaniment to our magazine, then sat back to wait reaction. The feedback was very, very interesting. In the past I had sent out thousands and thousands of things around Asia with a certain amount of feedback. This time there was a difference. Here we were dealing with ideas on the Mexican level, and they could do something about some of these ideas right in their classroom. To my astonishment, we received a ton of letters. It really was something, all addressed to the editor of the magazine *Saber*, praising the pamphlet, asking for additional copies, and we didn't get a single one that objected, which I had been afraid of.

I reported this success to Bill Vincent at Teachers College, unofficially. His response was enthusiastic. He recommended two important things should be done. Of course, he wasn't a bureaucrat. Here's what he said: "First, this program should be brought forcefully to the attention of top government officials concerned with education as an instrument of foreign policy. You

should be called to Washington to report to the proper board or committee to strengthen top levels of support for efforts of this kind.

Second, you should meet with information officers in ICA and education division chiefs throughout Latin America to explain the step-by-step process you went through in developing the Mexican program. The report on the Guatemalan experiment, your Mexican materials, plus your story should constitute a very strong argument in favor of careful investigation of the possibility of similar programs in all Latin American countries." And he asked me to let him know if he could help. I was never called to Washington to discuss any of this, nor was I sent anywhere in Latin American to try to do anything about it.

Development of RSC/Mexico

In 1958, there was a hell of an earthquake in Mexico City. We were living out in the San Angel region, which wasn't affected. We went downtown because I understood the embassy was badly damaged. Mexico City is built on a lake. In an earthquake, some places get it worse than others. When we got down there, the elevators were bent out of order. My wife and I walked up 16 stories to my office. There was a piece of wall out behind my desk you could drive a car through. It had fallen on my desk. But with all, the quake had happened early in the morning hours, and not many people were hurt. We got everything organized pretty quickly.

But one of the main things in a little building next door to the embassy, where we had the USIS printing section, the ceiling fell in. That gave me an opportunity to get that little print shop converted to a regional production center for all Latin America.

I got hold of my old friend Ken Sayre from Manila days at RSC. He knew where there was a new uncrated Harris offset press left over, surplus, from the Air Force's Korean PSYWAR operations. The Agency had, in fact, looked at development of an RSC for the area twice, had carefully studied the possibility of setting up such an operation in Panama on the Manila model. The sticking point had been geography, the long distances for shipping down the east and west coasts of Latin America. I suggested they reopen the subject and pursue it a different way.

I said we didn't have to ship finished printed material to these posts. We could air mail lithographic negatives or aluminum plates complete with typeset text, art, and photos for contract printing, at a post from stockpile paper, which we would provide in advance. Unlike the Far East, the Middle East, Latin America, except for Brazil, was blessed with a common language. The Agency bought the idea, we got the press, got better space. It was called at first the Graphics Servicing Center, and it became the RSC for Latin America.

We had a Mexican creative genius, I think, Dan Nuñez, there, and in the first ten months, a million and a half pamphlets and periodicals were shipped to other Latin American posts, and the numbers began to climb. We refined it to allow four large posts, Caracas, Lima, B.A., and Montevideo, act as sub-centers, print copies from plates supplied by us for smaller adjoining USIS posts. That RSC in Mexico is still going strong today in 1988.

In 1957, I was transferred to Mexico City as Information Officer. Ambassador Robert Hill was there at that time. He ran the embassy as though he were running for office in the United States.

One thing that happened in Mexico right away, I got involved with diving for old Spanish ships in the Caribbean, because American gold hunters were coming down and the Mexican Government was afraid they would steal their national treasures. Out of that, we got an organization together called CEDAM, which enabled Mexicans and Americans to work together. That goes on to this very day, and they have now quite a connection with a variety of museums. They have three to four expeditions a year. I wrote a little book about it, gave a copy to the Agency library. It's called *The Mexican Caribbean: Twenty Years of Underwater Exploration*.

Teaching English by TV

The USIS program in Mexico was the largest in the Western hemisphere. Our Benjamin Franklin Library was the largest in Latin America. The Binational Institute was the largest. English teaching was a very important activity.

TV was just coming into use in a very small, very experimental way within the Agency. I noticed in the fall of 1957 - I'd been promoted to Deputy PAO - that the Binational Center English classes in Mexico City, without any advertising, had lines of applicants formed around the block. They signed up 5,000 and turned away another 5,000. About this time, the Agency contacted us about trying to develop TV programs. They didn't have very clear ideas, and such as they had, I didn't personally think were very applicable. So I had a thought. Why not try to do English language teaching over TV with the materials we used in the Binational Center, and just take it from there? As usual, everybody said it wouldn't work.

Fortunately, a man, Don Amelio Azcarraga, was "Mr. TV" of Mexico. He was the head of Televiscentro. Ambassador Hill knew him and introduced me. I became a great fan of his. He was pro-American, born in Texas, he loved to tease the *gringos*. He and I became friends. Years afterwards when he would come to Spain when I was there, we'd get together. He had one of the biggest offices I'd ever seen at the time. He didn't have a very high opinion of American TV. He said in a hospital bed in New York, when he had minor surgery, he had watched TV and counted the murders, which came to some large number over a one-day period. Anyhow, he helped us, and assigned one of his top directors. I was fortunate that I had some very bright young officers. One was Allen Hansen, who has written a book about the Agency's activities recently (which is now in process of being updated), and later Dan García. I had them work with me on this project.

We also developed a book to go with the program, and various control methods to try to test it. For the actual program, we had an English teacher provided by the Institute, and we had a class of 15 selected students. These textbooks had to be purchased by the viewers. The program didn't require a textbook, but it was useful. So we were ready to go, and we needed money. Our budget for three one-hour experimental programs for three months was \$6,688. We were not able to find a sponsor. The trouble was, companies didn't want to be too closely identified with the *gringos*, even though they liked the idea.

So I proposed to the Agency that they approach the People to People foundation or some other foundation to get us some money. On January 30, 1958, the Agency came back and said, "No Agency funds available. Possibility of other support from other sources negligible. Suggest you determine priority project in relation other activities and reprogram within present resources if importance justifies curtailment elsewhere." We tried going through the back door to the Agency, to get enough money to experiment with, and eventually we were able to get a little bit.

Our first program went on the air on September 1, 1958, Monday evening, prime time, 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. We had decided on three one-half-hour live programs for 12 weeks. An early indicator of success was we sold 4,000 textbooks even before the program started. We didn't have enough money to make a kinescope to send to other posts. We informed the Agency that these prints would cost \$16 each, and we had to wring that money out of the Agency.

Then we got a report, after we had been operating a bit, that the program had received the highest rating for its time slot in Mexican TV history. Tests had convinced the skeptics of the program's pedagogical worth. We were over the hump. Other posts in Latin American began to line up. The Agency made similar programs in other languages a major project, and TV ratings began to soar for this type of thing. One of the very top places was in Japan.

Based on my time in Manila and the development of the RPC out there and general performance of various things, including a cartoon feature called "You Should Know," - drawn somewhat like the old Ripley thing - with an anti-Communist slant, as well as other interesting facts, for a time became the most widely read cartoon in the world. So I was nominated for a Superior Service

Award, just as the award system was eliminated. But later, on the basis of this, I was awarded a Meritorious Service Award which also included the Mexican adaptation of the CEP and the English language TV program.

Promotion Panel

Lew, here's a little thing that you've probably forgotten. In 1959, I was called to Washington to be on a promotion panel. I was very much impressed with the whole procedure, the quality of our offices and so on. When it was over, I wrote an article on this subject in which I noted the difference between our organization and State. At that time we did not have a legal authority for selection out. The State's public members were not allowed a vote, whereas ours were, and other things of that nature.

I submitted this article for clearance and I got a stinging turn-down from the Agency's assistant director of personnel. He questioned my motives, my writing ability, my accuracy, in what I regarded as insulting language. Lew Schmidt, who is sitting here now, was then acting Latin American director. I wrote a letter to Lew, told him what I thought of these remarks, and suggested he read the article and deep-six it in the trash after he had finished. I just wanted him to be aware of this thing.

Lew sent the article, he wrote me, to the Agency Assistant Director for Policy, Bill Weathersby,

for review. Bill later sent me a reply that he had written back to Lew, in which he said he wasn't eager to push publicity on the panel procedures. He said the "transition had required us to put the geese, ducks, and turkeys in the same barnyard, and he didn't want to make a noise about it except when required officially, and therefore why not follow Earl's suggestion and deep-six the article." Lew, that's what was done. (Laughs)

CEP Survey

Back to the Citizenship Education Project. The Mexican employee magazine editor, Luz, and myself, just the two of us were quietly developing these pamphlets. We got many favorable letters, but I wanted an independent judgment, and arranged a nationwide survey in Mexico, which was conducted by International Research Associates. They sampled 598 teachers throughout Mexico. We were gratified. The overwhelming majority did not question our motives, which had me a little nervous. Response was favorable: practical value in their work, high level of interest, etc.

In the Agency, Oren Stephens was responsible for the Office of Research and Analysis. He was a friend of mine. I sent him this survey. He wrote back he was personally impressed, and that it was his intention to bring up this CEP adaptation at the Directors' Senior Staff meeting the coming week. He planned to review the whole thing, the history in the Agency, my frustration, and "taking the bull by the horns" with the opportunity to institute it in Mexico. He said he was going to try to get across that this whole business should be taken much more seriously. However, he warned that at these Monday morning meetings, staff minds were never as alert as they might be. I guess he was right because I never heard anything back from that.

I wrote a long memo on this subject, including the survey results, and sent it to the other Latin American posts, but I never heard anything back from them. Our Ambassador Hill sent around the embassy a memo calling attention to an article by Roscoe Drummond, *New York Herald Tribune*, about the efforts of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to develop new ideas toward a world at peace founded on freedom and justice. I think I was the only one in the embassy to respond. I cited our work with CEP, the need to broaden an understanding of democratic concepts and human rights. I sent a copy of this memo to Latin America Assistant Director John McKnight in Washington. He fired back a cable ordering me to kill my memo. It would prove "most embarrassing" to the Agency to have the contents disclosed to newspaper columnists. The ambassador turned my memo over with a cover note from a political officer, who later became an ambassador. This political officer wrote, "Frankly, I doubt this is the type of material the Carnegie Endowment is seeking. However, it is innocuous, in my judgment. Let him send it to Mr. Drummond." The memo was never sent.

The whole business about the CEP development, I had written into the country plan when I first arrived in '57. I had a phase one, the development of the materials, and phase two, trying to move them forward in a different way. So in March of 1960, as we had planned, under the exchange program we brought to Mexico two CEP specialists from Teachers College, Columbia University, Dr. Winfield T. Nibloe and Dr. John W. Polley. The Mexican Academy of Education agreed to sponsor a series of three conferences at which these two professors would explain and

discuss CEP in the U.S.

Prior to this, we arranged for them to personally meet with a number of key Mexican educational officials. The conferences went well. They were attended by 65 leading Mexican educators, many concerned with the teaching of civics, and it was about three times the participation of past conferences. When it was over, the Chief of Secondary Education and the Minister of Education asked for 200 copies of our CEP pamphlets for distribution to civics teachers.

As required, Nibloe and Polley wrote a report on these conferences and their conversations to the Chief of the American Specialist Branch of the International Exchange Service. They said that the present situation regarding citizenship education in Mexico would seem to have a significance for all Latin America and that Mexican educators, after 30 years of effort, realized that memorizing civics textbooks have little relationship to democratic behavior, and that Teachers College had consistently taken a position that we should assist other countries in the field of democratic citizenship education, and therefore they recommended that a citizenship education center should be located in Latin America, created and funded to pursue this type of work. It would render specific assistance in the form of materials and consultant services and then, based on this, we would get similar centers in other parts of the world. Finally, they said, "If constitutional democracy, as opposed to Communism, is to emerge at the close of this century as the dominant ideology governing the political affairs of mankind, it is imperative that the United States Government take positive and extensive action in assisting the developing countries to educate for democratic citizenship." Well, these were ringing words, but nothing was done.

Before leaving Mexico, which I did in 1960, I had one last CEP experiment. Luz introduced me to a brilliant young Mexican honors graduate from the law school at the University of Mexico School of Law. That's where they were having more trouble with Marxists and Communists than any of the other places. So all I could scrape up was \$300 for a grant. He became fascinated with this idea, and I was fortunate to have a young JOT, Joe Smith, who had a law degree, who was equally fascinated. These two guys spent many hours late at night and on weekends, researching actual Mexican cases to illustrate the points in this pamphlet. The small scholarly text called *The Principles of the Constitution of 1917: Individual Rights and Guarantees* was eventually used as a text at the law school.

Meantime, we had gotten the four pamphlets together and we put them into a textbook called *Senderos de Libertad*, "Pathways of Liberty." To get money for that - I happened to be in charge because Jack McDermott, the PAO, was in Washington in the hospital - I had to cancel a book translation, *The Joy of Music*, in order to do this *Senderos*.

Just before I left Mexico in June 1960, we had a USIA Inspector, Jim Meader, my old friend. When later I read his report in Washington, I was interested to see he had advised the post immediately to drop the CEP experiment. That obviously was taking place.

The textbook had been printed and it was being used by the National Teachers Training Institute and others. Before the year was out, the book supplies were exhausted. Even though one of the senior people said they could use 15,000 copies of the book each term, they didn't have them.

That was it.

Q: What was the rationale, if any, that Jim Meader gave for recommending the termination of the project?

WILSON: Not much. Meader, who previously had never been interested in informational-type programs, in his role as inspector, it seemed to me, had suddenly become very interested. Some of this came from his time in Bangkok that we talked about earlier. Now he wanted to push posts to have a multi-media approach to some single topic. He just didn't go for CEP at all. He didn't give any real reason, as I recall.

Q: I have two comments about that. I find this very interesting for a man who was a college president and whose whole bent up to that point had apparently been cultural. I would think that he would consider this a part of a very active cultural program. The other comment I have is that unfortunately, apparently this coincided with the time when the Agency was devoted to single themes, and this multi-media approach was all the rage back in Washington. I suppose that was part of the reason that motivated his recommendation for his termination.

WILSON: Right. In any event, the project slowly was fading away in Mexico for want of financial sustenance and policy guidance. Just one last point on that. I was in Washington follow Mexico, as a student at the National War College. I got a call from John McKnight, still Director for Latin America. He showed me a letter he had from McDermott. Jack, I had earlier noticed, had a paranoia, because when I was Acting PAO down there several times at intervals for months and months over several years, when he was in the hospital in Washington, he would write a very accusatory letter, things that, good God, I hadn't even thought of doing. However, this particular letter was accusing me of sabotaging the book translations program. Very stiff language, absolutely untrue!

I was so indignant, I told McKnight that if he thought that I was going to sit there and take that kind of stuff, he was seriously mistaken, and I was willing to go to the mat! I took time off from my studies at the War College and went back through the budgets, assembled some stuff I gave to McKnight. I said, "Now, what are you going to do about this?" He didn't do anything about it, and therefore that matter died. Sometimes you have to fight for your rights.

Just one quick thing. As at other posts, I painted when I could find time. I had my first one-man show in Mexico City at the Binational Center. They were about to celebrate the Mexican independence anniversary, 1810-1860. A fellow named Bernard Davis came down to sit on a board with me. A stamp had been designed by the U.S. to be issued jointly with Mexico in honor of this anniversary. Davis was a philatelist, very wealthy. He had founded a Museum of Modern Art in Miami. To make a long story short, he saw some of my paintings and offered me to have a one-man show in Miami at his museum. It was on the 15th of September, Mexican independence day, opened by the Mexican ambassador, part of this important celebration. I couldn't get down to it because I was still up there, a student in the National War College.

The last couple of developments on this whole thing was that Dan Moore, he had been the USIA Director for East Asia, was now a student at the Senior Seminar of the Department of State. He decided to write his individual study paper on the CEP adaptation in Guatemala and Mexico. He asked me for some contacts down there. He did go and talk with them in Mexico. He wrote in his report that, "Certain strategically placed Mexican educators have been positively influenced by the CEP exposition." However, he said, "There is little identifiable to CEP which remains." Of course, the post had pretty much dropped that. But it was clear to me that the CEP seeds that had been planted there had continued to flower.

SERBAN VALLIMARESCU
Information Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1958-1962)

Serban Vallimarescu was born in Romania in 1922. He immigrated to the United States in 1940 and became a naturalized citizen in 1943. Mr. Vallimarescu worked at Voice of America before entering USIA in 1956. His career included positions in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, France, Spain, and Argentina. He was interviewed by Cliff Groce in 1989.

VALLIMARESCU: Well, I was paneled, I was accepted, and I was lucky enough as my first assignment to be sent to Mexico City as information officer.

Q: That was quite an auspicious beginning.

VALLIMARESCU: Yes, it was an auspicious beginning. I was very lucky. I had about two or three months of training and then we took off for Mexico City. We had our two children - one was born in '53 and the other in '56, so one was two and one was five. We drove to Mexico City. It was a long drive, but we finally arrived at the border. I left the kids in the car with Alice. I was very proud, because I had an American diplomatic passport, my first. And Alice and the children were on Alice's diplomatic passport. So I take the passports and go into the Mexican immigration office. They asked me to sit down and I showed them the passports. An official looks at the them and sees that I was born in Bucharest and Alice was born in Bucharest, Romania. He looks very puzzled. He says to me in Spanish, "You were born in Romania?" I said, "Yes." "Well, you were born in the American Embassy." "No." "Well, your father was American-born." "No. We're both naturalized citizens." "You're naturalized citizens? And you are a first secretary of embassy of the United States?" "Yes." So then he says, "Pepe! Juan!" He calls three or four of his colleagues. "Come over here! Come over here! Do you see these passports? This American diplomat is going as a first secretary of embassy to Mexico, the American embassy in Mexico, and they're not born in the United States. He's a naturalized American. Now do you want to know why I want to emigrate to the United States?!" (Laughter) I was delighted.

Extra Curricular Activities Assigned by Ambassador Hill

Anyway, we arrive in Mexico City - which was our first post and to this day, probably, I look back upon it as the most fun post, the most exciting post - maybe because it was the first one, and we were young, and Mexico City was not polluted at the time, and I had an ambassador who was Robert C. Hill, a Republican appointee, who took a liking to me. I even had to accompany him to the dentist sometimes because he felt lonely and he didn't speak Spanish. He never learned Spanish. He did me no favor, because he was not very popular with the State Department career types, and he didn't like them either; he considered them stuffed shirts.

He did something absolutely unprecedented: he appointed me protocol officer for the embassy, which traditionally is the job of someone in the political section of the embassy. The job is a pain in the derriere because it means you have to do seating plans for luncheons and dinners; you have to collect a group of minions for any big reception, you have to find vice consuls, young officers - five or six - to arrive at the embassy residence about half an hour or an hour before the party started, to make sure that everybody was being greeted, and that everybody met everybody who was important, who the guest of honor was. Then Bob Hill would give the word: Val, it's time for these damned people to leave. So then we had to go around saying goodbye to each other and to other members of the embassy, making quite a show of saying goodbye, giving the idea they should leave. Anyway it was not a very pleasant job, and it meant a lot of work that I didn't really feel was mine to do.

Q: It must have interfered with your regular work as IO.

VALLIMARESCU: It interfered a lot with my work as IO and my PAO was upset. What was amusing is that about a month after this designation, the political counselor, who was a good friend, Ray Led, came down to my office and said, "Val, I hope you won't mind, but I'm going to go to the ambassador to lodge a formal protest against your appointment as protocol officer because this is the prerogative of the political section." I said, "Ray, please do it. And I hope you succeed." He was a very smart man, but not smart enough to know that that was exactly the sort of thing that Bob Hill would enjoy. He wanted the State Department people to have their noses out of joint. Ray went, lodged his complaint and the ambassador said that it was acknowledged but that Val will remain as protocol officer for as long as he was ambassador to Mexico. So I was protocol officer.

Presidential Visits And CODELS

Mexico City was, as I said, a fun place for me, for us. We were young and enjoyed the work very much, and enjoyed the people. In Mexico I was responsible for all the press operations for three presidential visits. First, Eisenhower to Acapulco - because Eisenhower's doctor wouldn't let him go to Mexico City because of the altitude. So Eisenhower came to Acapulco. That's when I first met Gen. Vernon Walters, who was not a general then, I think he was a major. He was the interpreter for the meeting between López Mateos and Eisenhower. I still remember at the airport Eisenhower and Mateos on a platform and next to Eisenhower, at attention, very stiff, was Maj. Vernon Walters. Flawless Spanish. He has flawless French, he has flawless German, he has flawless Italian. And you know, Eisenhower - God rest his soul - was not a great orator.

Sometimes he made grammatical errors, too. I'll never forget how impressed I was by the fact that Eisenhower would say a sentence or two and Walters would translate and the sentence or paragraph in English sounded a little awkward, but when it came out in Spanish it was beautiful language.

Of course a couple of weeks before that we had had to case the joint. I went out there with a number of people from USIS and from security, and I remember that we went to see the mayor. I was there, and the head of security for the embassy, and some of the advance party from Washington. The mayor, among other things, said very proudly that he'd cleaned up the city; that all the houses of prostitution had been closed and all the ladies sent away. And at that point I said, "Oh, no, no, don't do that, because we're going to have about 200 American newspapermen, and one of the first things they ask is, 'Where is the action'? And by 'Where is the action,' that's what they mean." So I convinced the mayor that he should leave at least one or two houses open. And he said, "All right, I'll leave one, but it's an elegant one. I'll take you there so you can see what it's like."

The press attaché and I, accompanied by one of the mayor's minions, went up on a hill to a beautiful house, all pink, with a lovely terrace and swimming pool - the best house of prostitution in Acapulco. We looked around. It was in the daytime, by the way; the ladies were not around. One thing I remember that impressed me very much was that over the bar was a sign: American Express Cards Accepted. You could do your thing and pay with American Express. And lo and behold, of course, when the journalists came - a couple of them were good friends of mine - they figured that the USIS guy assigned to them should know where the action is, and we were able to tell them where it was, and many of them used their American Express cards. (Laughter)

The second presidential visit was again Eisenhower, but this time at the border, up north. It was a couple of years later. And then the big presidential visit, for which I was again fully responsible in terms of press arrangements, was the Kennedy visit. Kennedy and Jackie came to Mexico City in 1961, and that was a roaring success. It was magnificent. Her little bit of Spanish - I remember at the luncheon she spoke in Spanish, haltingly, but she wowed them. The press operation was so perfect that Pierre Salinger had almost nothing to do, really. He was gallivanting around and we were fully in charge, and USIS got kudos, and I got something that I cherish, in addition to an autographed picture of Kennedy. By that time the ambassador was Thomas Mann, who was a career diplomat.

The day the Kennedys were leaving, we were at the airport - several people from USIS, you know, all the people who were responsible for a visit like this. I was out there with my staff an hour and a half or two hours ahead of time, to make sure that the press was going to be well taken care of. Pierre Salinger arrived about forty-five minutes or an hour before departure time, and I said, "Pierre, could you give me the text of the message that President Kennedy will be sending to President Mateos as his plane crosses over the border?" "What message?" I said, "Well, Pierre, this is traditional." "Oh, my goodness, where's the ambassador?" Well, Mann was there, too. "Mr. Ambassador, Val is asking..." "Oh," says Tom Mann, "This is terrible, I forgot all about it. Val, sit down here and draft something." So I sat down on a suitcase and drafted a message which was the message that, with some minor changes, Kennedy sent to Mateos. Lo and

behold, about a month and a half later, I get - framed - a photocopy of my message, in my handwriting, with President Kennedy's changes, and with an inscription saying, "Text of Message Drafted by Serban Vallimarescu, Information Officer, etc." It's one of my most cherished memories. It was very nice of Pierre to think of doing that.

Q: It certainly was.

VALLIMARESCU: Then we had, while I was still in Mexico, a lot of CODELs - Congressional delegations - as you can imagine, one after the other. And we had Adlai Stevenson. That was shortly after I had arrived and I was pretty naive at the time. I didn't know how the Mexican press functioned. I was out at the airport to meet Ambassador Stevenson. I called him Governor. He had said that he didn't want a press conference, that he would have sort of a boiler-plate type of arrival statement. Well, of course, the place was filled with journalists. I greet the ambassador, and we go into the VIP room. I said, "There's no press conference, Mr. Ambassador, as per your request. But there are a lot of people out there so why don't you read your arrival statement," which he did. Then we started walking out and a more aggressive journalist from *Excelsior* - which was the leading morning daily - grabbed him and asked him some questions. Stevenson was very gracious. He stops and takes me aside and says, "Do these people understand what 'Off the Record' means or 'On Background'?" I said, "Of course Mr. Ambassador, of course they do. This is *Excelsior*." So he answered the question saying, "This is not for direct attribution. It's really off the record." The next morning the headline said, "In an off-the-record statement, Ambassador Stevenson said..." (Laughter) Well, I learned my lesson. Thank God, he was smarter than I was. What he had said was really innocuous, so it didn't rock any boats. But that night we had a reception, and I was there and I was very embarrassed. When he greeted me, Stevenson saw that I was embarrassed, cringing almost, and he said, "Well, I guess, Val, off the record doesn't translate into Spanish very well, does it?" Well, ever since then, when dealing with Latin American journalists there is no such thing as "Off the Record" or "On Background" unless I know them very, very well.

Issues (And Some Answers) With The Mexicans During Vallimarescu's Mexican Tour

Q: What were some of the substantive issues between the United States and Mexico that you had to deal with during that period?

VALLIMARESCU: There were quite a number of them. One of the most substantive issues that we had to deal with was Mexico's attitude toward Cuba, because Mexico, as you know, had this Estrada doctrine of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. They had good relations with Castro, and when we were trying to get Cuba expelled from the OAS, Mexico would not play ball. On the contrary, Mexico would be opposing us and lobbying against us.

And then we had the traditional issue of wetbacks, we had the issue of that little island in the Rio Grande, the Chamizal, that they claimed was theirs and that was eventually given back to them. That was a very important issue for them. It's really in the middle of the river, and it was sort of part of El Paso, Texas, and they wanted it back. They finally got it back and that will be another story.

Other issues: drugs were at that time not prominent at all. Economic assistance. Cooperation on international issues was one issue in which Mexico was always dragging their feet because they didn't want to appear to be always responsive to what we wanted. I remember one of the things I was proudest of was when we were trying to get Mexico to go along with expelling Cuba from the OAS and in denouncing Cuba for violations of human rights. I had established very good relations with the editor-in-chief of a daily newspaper that was really the semi-official paper, and was pretty anti-American. I had become quite close to him, had luncheons with him, and had discussed this issue with him. They published an editorial very supportive of our position, almost as if I had written it myself. I was very proud of that particular operation.

And of course, during this whole Cuban thing there were a lot of anti-American demonstrations in the streets. One day I'm sitting in my office and my secretary says, "Mr. Vallimarescu there's a gentleman out there who says it's urgent for him to see you." "Does he have an appointment?" "No." But I have this open door policy and he comes in, closes the door, and says, "Mr. Vallimarescu many of us Mexicans are very disturbed by all these anti-American demonstrations. I think we have to do something to show that not all Mexicans are anti-American and pro-Soviet." I said, "Well, I think that's a great idea. What are you going to do?" "Well, we could organize a different kind of demonstration, an anti-Soviet, pro-American demonstration." "Oh? You could do that? Whom do you represent?" "Well, I, uh, I work with students and political leaders." I could see it coming. He says, "Of course that will cost a little money." "Oh, how much?" "Well, it all depends. For a student the fee is" - and he gave me a figure. "Now if you want a labor leader, it's a little more. If you want some university professors, they come pretty high." I let him talk. "We could have a good mix, so it wouldn't be too expensive." It turned out that for the sum of about five or six thousand dollars I could have a demonstration of about 100 people in front of the Soviet embassy. Well, needless to say, I threw him out. Not literally, but I said, "We don't do this sort of thing. Thank you very much for your friendship."

Q: What about the Alliance for Progress?

VALLIMARESCU: The Alliance for Progress had an impact largely because Kennedy and Jackie had an impact in Mexico, as they did in all of Latin America and it was his plan, but they were skeptical as to how it was going to really work out. They were enthusiastic about it because it was Kennedy's plan. The reception that the Kennedys got in the streets of Mexico City was absolutely phenomenal. Good looking, both of them; Catholic; and young. I mean, you can't go wrong. So, to answer your question: the Alliance for Progress was great because it was his idea.

We had the Bay of Pigs during my stay there. Mexico was not very happy with that operation. But I remember having lunch - one of those typical long, four to five hour luncheons - with a gentleman who was President Mateos's private secretary and a rather influential man. His name was Romero. After scotch-and sodas, red wine, white wine, cognac, he was quite talkative. So was I, as a matter of fact. Anyway, the lunch started about 2:30 and it was about six o'clock when I popped the question. I said, "Umberto, now tell me, what would have been President Mateos's reaction if President Kennedy had decided when he saw that the Bay of Pigs operation was faltering to go all the way and send in the Marines and the Air Force and get it over with?" He

said, "Valli, I'll tell you what my president would have said. My president would have called a special session of the Mexican congress and would have denounced, in no uncertain terms, this flagrant intervention in the internal affairs of a sister country. And after making his speech and returning home he would have said to me, 'Thank God that those Yankees had the balls to get the son of a bitch out of Cuba! As God is my witness.'"

And that, my friend Cliff, is the story of Latin America. They denounce us but when you take an action like this...they will never publicly support you in something like this, but I am convinced that had we somehow or other managed to get rid of Ortega, we would have had all these denunciations and many of the leaders in Latin America would be very relieved that this is no longer a problem that they have to cope with.

So - issues. Relations were not very, very good at the time. But with Mexico we've always had a sort of a love-hate type of relationship. But the key issue was at that time Cuba, during most of my stay and our trying to get Mexico to take a stronger stand and their resisting it. Basically this was the principal issue we were coping with.

My stay in Mexico was interrupted briefly because the Agency asked me to be escort officer for the Glenn capsule. We were going to show it in Bogota, Lima, Santiago, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Rio, and end up in Mexico City. I traveled with the capsule - not in the capsule - and was interviewed on television and was sort of the official guide. That was great fun. It was a huge success. I remember in Rio, particularly, the Russians happened to have a space exhibit showing models of capsules. But we had the real McCoy, so that was one-upmanship.

Another story involving Mexico which I think is fun. I had an office in Mexico City with two doors. One door led to my secretary's office and the other one was in back so I could sneak out when there was somebody outside waiting for me that I didn't want to see. It used to drive my secretary crazy. She was Millie Xiarhos, now married to Ambassador Jorden. One day the phone rings and it's an American voice that says, "I'd like to speak to the information officer." "Oh, you mean Mr. Vallimarescu." "I guess so if he's the information officer." She buzzes me. I'm not in, I had snuck out. She said, "I'm sorry, he's not here, but maybe one of his assistants can help you - Mr. Zischke." "Who?" "Mr. Zischke." "Well, I'll see if he can help me." So she tries to find Zischke and can't find him. So Millie is really embarrassed because she wants to be helpful. She says to this gentleman, "I'm embarrassed, because Mr. Zischke is not here either. Maybe I can help you." So the guy thinks for a while and says, "What's your name?" "My name is Xiarhos." (Laughter) "Is this the American Embassy," he asked? And Millie, who is very outspoken, says, "Of course it is, that's what America is all about!" (Laughter)

Q: So you went from...

VALLIMARESCU: From Mexico to the Dominican Republic. We had three weeks in Mexico City of *despedidas*...farewells...breakfasts, luncheons, cocktails and dinners. Breakfasts were usually stag and so were luncheons. One thing I don't particularly like - I admit it publicly now - is hot Mexican food. I was not a great fan of hot Mexican food. And of course at all these breakfasts they would give me these *heuvos rancheros*, which are eggs with a lot of chili, and I

had to eat every bit of it. And during the speeches, they'd say, "Valli likes Mexico and everything Mexican." Well, we arrived in the Dominican Republic...it was a direct transfer...and I was sick for a week. (Laughter)

The Return Of The Island Of Chamizal In The Rio Grande To Mexico-Mexican and U.S. Presidents Meet In Middle Of Bridge Connecting Two Countries-The Ordeal Of The Two Chairs

It was while I was public affairs adviser in ARA that we returned the Chamizal to Mexico. I told you it was just a small island in the Rio Grande, but very important to the Mexicans. A big ceremony was planned in El Paso. President Johnson was going down for it and President Mateos was coming up. I was sent down again to help with press arrangements. The two presidents were meeting in the middle of the bridge and then Johnson would escort Mateos onto the U.S. side where the waiting press and dignitaries were seated. I arrived at the site and there was a stage and rows of chairs in front of it. On the stage was a huge armchair, very tall which looked like a throne. Next to it was a small folding chair. In the front rows of the audience were the Mexican press, many of whom recognized me. They got up and came to me screaming, saying, "This is terrible, this is terrible! You might as well keep your damn Chamizal!" I said, "What's terrible?" "That throne for Johnson and the little folding chair for our president." They said, "This is an insult. This is terrible. You should have two chairs of the same size. Valli, you must do something."

I could see their point right away. I tried to find somebody and saw someone from the Secret Service with the little pin in his lapel. I said, "We've got to change the chairs." "What do you mean? This is the President's chair." "I can't explain. Who's in charge?" "Ambassador Biddle." "Where's Ambassador Biddle?" "He's on the bridge." "Get him for me." "Well, we'll try. You really feel it's important?" "I tell you it's essential." So he gets on his walkie-talkie and finds Biddle finally on the bridge waiting for the two presidents. I said, "Tony, we've got a real problem." "What's the problem?" "The chair. You've got a throne for the president and a little folding chair for Mateos, who's shorter anyway. And this, I tell you, my friend, this will be a major public relations political disaster." "You say so, Val?" "I say so." "Okay, get me the Secret Service guy on the phone." The guy gets on the phone. "Remove the throne! Put two chairs of the same size." So finally they removed the throne and they find two chairs - not folding ones - and I get a standing ovation from the Mexican reporters. And the ceremony takes place.

I didn't have a return ticket for Washington that day, it was full, so I had to stay a day and a half in El Paso. My Mexican friends told me, "Hey, why don't you fly with us in the press plane to Mexico City and stay there a day and a half or two days?" I had a friend there, Simone Racotta, and said that that makes sense. Why should I stay in El Paso? So I called Alice and said, "Look, this is the problem." "Oh, great, you go there and stay there with Simone. You give her my love." So I get into the press plane with them and fall asleep. All of a sudden I hear music. I wake up and in the aisle, all bunched up, were these journalists singing *Las Mañanitas*, which is a song they sing on birthdays. They had cut out of cardboard a chair and had found a ribbon and were decorating me with the Order of the Chair - la Orden de la Silla.

When all hell broke loose in the Dominican Republic, I participated once in a meeting, 24 hours after this happened, with Tom Mann, President Johnson and a few other people. Tom Mann turned to me and said, "Val, would you send the Marines if you were President of the United States?" I said, "Yes, Mr. Secretary, by all means I would. But we should have OAS participation." Well, this was the consensus.

DIEGO C. ASECIO
Protection and Welfare Officer,
Mexico City (1959-1961)

Assistant Secretary, Consular Affairs
Washington, DC (1980-1983)

Diego C. Asencio was born in Spain in 1931. He graduated from Georgetown University before serving in the U.S. Army for two years. In 1957, he joined the Foreign Service and served in Mexico, Panama, Portugal, Brazil, and Washington, DC. Mr. Asencio was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1986.

Q: In your first assignments, did you have the lot of the normal Foreign Service and have any visa assignments?

ASENCIO: No. As a matter of fact, I had a curious and peculiar career, in the sense that my first tour was in Washington, and I worked for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Then I was sent to Mexico, where, presumably, that was to be my destiny. I was part of a program called the World Language Training Replacement Officer Program. There was a Spanish language school in Mexico, and I was supposed to be replacing the consular officers as they came off line, to take Spanish.

Q: You were sort of a repo-depo, as they say?

ASENCIO: Exactly. However, when I arrived in Mexico City, the consular section had somewhat of a crisis in the protection and welfare unit, in the sense that they had just lost an experienced old-timer, who had held the place together for about 16 years, and were in the midst of a peak season and were badly in need of Spanish language officers. So I stayed in that particular job for practically three and a half years, and never did get near the visa line.

Q: What were the foreign policy considerations that you felt?

ASENCIO: The one that was most obvious to me was, you had a situation where one of our

neighbors, in fact, was providing the bulk of the clandestine immigration, and this was a situation presumably - I'm referring to Mexico, of course. Obviously, some people had theories about the so-called escape valve, that having this opportunity was a benefit to everybody concerned, because otherwise, the excess population would accumulate in Mexico way beyond any capacity they may have to create new jobs, and that you were then, if you shut this off, you would, in fact, be creating a sort of proto-revolutionary situation there, and you would have substantial instability in a society very, very close to the United States, that would have to impact on us automatically.

Q: You were talking at that time, when the Mexican economy was probably at its best, weren't you?

ASENCIO: It was the period when they first discovered the oil, when they first determined that they had substantial reserves, but it was not yet the period when the revenues had really begun to flow. It was a period of some expectation.

Q: More expectation than actual...

ASENCIO: Yes.

Q: How did the commission resolve, satisfactorily or not, in regard to the almost overwhelming problem of the illegal migration coming from both Mexico and the Caribbean?

ASENCIO: Essentially, the commission decided, I would say, after much debate, that we were not in a position, first of all, to locate the clandestine immigrants that were here in our sort of legal system, that we were not equipped bureaucratically to find these clandestine immigrants, that this would be both onerous and expensive, and probably a task that would be politically unacceptable in our society. So then you had a couple of different issues: one, what would you do with the people that were already here? There was the other aspect, and that is: how would you set up a system? Again, no one really believed that it would be possible to hermetically seal the border. First of all, we're talking - I forget what - 3,000 miles or 2,700 miles? Even if you use all of the law enforcement capability available in the area, there was one theory, even if you used all of the armed forces, you still would not be able to adequately patrol the border. That was begging the question, because if, in fact, you did have that capability, the economic and social impact on the area would be so overwhelming and so irresistible, that it would be impossible to engage in an exercise that, in effect, closed the border for any length of time. The legal movements of people would be affected; the legal movements of goods; the economic movements in the area would also be impacted and would have repercussions, both political, economic, and social, that would be unbearable for any government in any society.

So we looked for some other way, some way that, in fact, would not be repressive, would not require the applications of force, would be relatively simple, and we focused on the Texas Proviso and the possibility of repealing this, and of, in fact, developing a system of sanctions to

enforce the repeal of the Proviso. What I'm talking about, of course, is the idea of making it illegal to hire an illegal alien, not really a startling concept, it would seem to me. As I say, it would have been the elimination of, in fact, an anachronism, something that many of us considered a political obscenity that had outlived any possible and potential usefulness. The development of the system whereby the employers would be charged with determining whether the people that they were hiring were entitled to be hired, whether they were, in fact, residents or American citizens, and there were various schemes discussed as to how one did this. Then, of course, there was a system of fines developed for those who would persist in violating the law. However, the backdrop of consideration on the part of the group was that we still are a society of laws, and the very fact that the Texas Proviso would be repealed would be sufficient to ensure that there would be substantial compliance with the law, and that the enforcement aspect would necessarily be limited to perhaps that 3-4% that would persist, regardless of the law, and that this was felt to be a tolerable limit and one that could be managed relatively easily.

Q: It was felt, then, that it was the pull of jobs, rather than just getting into the United States as the main determiner?

ASENCIO: That's correct. Yes, it was felt that the possibility of employment in the United States was, in fact, the magnet that was attracting the large-scale clandestine immigration.

Q: Both the U.S. Civil Service Commission report, Arthur Fleming's, and the Select Commission's, talk about developing better bilateral international relations with other countries, but specifically, naturally, Mexico. You developed some contacts with Mexican authorities on this. Could you talk about those a bit?

ASENCIO: Essentially, I was of the opinion that it would be necessary to have the cooperation of the Mexican government in order to really bring this sort of problem under any semblance of control at all, that, in fact, since our consular establishments in Mexico amounted to something like a fourth of our overall consular budget, it behooved us to pay particular attention to modernizing the consular facility in Mexico, because the resources applied were enormous. One only has to go to our embassy in Mexico City any morning and look at the line-up of people who have come to apply for a visa, and those are the legals, those are those who presumably have some possibility of the acquisition of a legal visa. If one also goes up to the Rio Grande and sits there in the middle of the night, you'll see the illegals streaming across. So this is, I think, a magnum problem for both societies.

So, therefore, I approached the Mexican government, first of all, with the idea in mind of the possibility of developing a modernized, cooperative consular system between the two societies and, second of all, enlisting their support for whatever measures we could take to control immigration along the borders.

Q: What was the Mexican response to this?

ASENCIO: Essentially, their response was that it was our problem on the question of control of the border. It was our problem, and they saw no particular need in any number of arguments against their becoming involved in it. They really saw absolutely no advantage from their standpoint in any sort of arrangement where they would wind up having to control their own people and be blamed by us for not being able to attain any particular given standard. So they were very chary about anything that would get them involved and put them in such a posture. They, of course, reserved the right to criticize any of the segments of the law that were up for consideration, and they did on many occasions. We also engaged in a number of both private and public debates with Mexican officials and Mexican scholars on the subject of movements of people. But we, in fact, had set up within the mechanism that existed for bilateral consultation between the Mexican government and the U.S. government, which was through the channel of the foreign ministry and the Department of State. We set up a special group to consider consular matters, and we met essentially once a year during my tenure as assistant secretary to discuss these subjects.

Q: Was this helpful?

ASENCIO: Well, we didn't achieve any of our objectives, so, in that sense, one would have to consider it a failure. However, I think we attenuated some of the problems, and we obviously did have a cooperative mechanism going. We, I think, perhaps contributed to a sense of cooperation between the two governments of the two societies.

TERRENCE GEORGE LEONHARDY

**Consular Officer
Mexico (1959-1961)**

**Consul General
Mexico (1962)**

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

Q: In this basically '59 to '62, can you describe a bit about Nogales. What were the dynamics of the city, and what the consulate was doing, and sort of what you were doing?

LEONHARDY: Well, it was an interesting... It was mostly consular work, of course. We had some political things happening up there - elections and all that stuff you reported on. And I had two States in my consular district, Sonora and Sinaloa, and I made a real effort to become friendly with the governors and the top officials. I also worked with the Governor of Arizona. We got a thing going called the Arizona-Sonora Commission which would meet - because they had a

lot of mutual problems - and they'd meet every year. Now it's called the Arizona-Mexico Commission but it's still operating. I got a nice, big plaque - one side in Spanish, one in English - from the respective governors. But anyway, a lot of the problems were purely citizen's protection problems, some of them were pretty difficult. I didn't get involved in issuing visas, but we had a pretty big visa operation there because we had no consulate anywhere west of Tijuana and east of El Paso or... I even had a CIA guy in my office who was there maybe just half of my tour of duty.

Q: What would he be interested in there?

LEONHARDY: Well, he used to cover that whole northwest territory and he had a plane and he... I still see the guy, he's retired in Tucson - nice guy. Anyway, we did the usual political reporting but, as I say, there wasn't... You had the, what they call the, "politics of the finger." The President would say, "You're the next governor" and that's the way it went; the governor would say, "You're the next mayor." But anyway, the main problem we had was protection and having good relations with the governors and the police, and so forth.

Another aspect, we had teenagers coming down there and getting married and lying about their age and all that stuff. I got - the governor at the time was Obregon, who was the son of the former president - and Obregon was very helpful to us in these things. I told him about this and right away he gets the local judge or whoever's doing these things and throws him out and we had very good cooperation. Then we started getting Americans in jail on drugs and in Mexico it's a non-bailable offense, just the use or possession. You could have three marijuana cigarettes and if they catch you with them, and you stay in jail. Once accused the consulate got seventy-two hours to keep them from throwing American lads in jail and you're not there most of the time. After they get in jail, they're in there for a long time. And they're probably a little ex-Boy Scout from Keokuk, Iowa, but, you know, he'd never done anything wrong in his life, and you ask him why he came down there and get marijuana, and he says, "Well, the quality is better." But we had a lot of incidents like that. And we had a big fort on the border - two of them - we had Davis Mountain Air Force Base in Tucson and then we had Fort Wachuca...

Q: Which is a communication training place.

LEONHARDY: Exactly. You know, the Mexicans had no idea what those people did so I started arranging for the commanders to invite top Mexican officials up - the Governor and all of his mayors in the area, and so forth. I think it helped.

Q: I'm sure it did because otherwise they'd see those as sort of a menacing fort when actually, like Wachuca was certainly just a place we trained people in the signal corps.

LEONHARDY: Well, I got the Governor up there one time. He was a real womanizer and he flew up, I remember, and after we got there, we had this demonstration of these electronic gadgets and all this stuff and then the Commanding Officer had a dinner party and there was a bottle of whiskey or two in every room and all this stuff. After the dinner, which was early, the Governor said to me, he says, "Let's go down to Naco which is the nearest place on the border where they had all these houses of prostitution. I'd been down there, in fact, I went in to the

police office one time and the guy showed me pictures of all the registered prostitutes; there were a hundred and sixty-two, I think, and where they were born and all the particulars. Anyway, he said, "Let's go down to Naco," and I said, "Well, if you want to go to Naco, let's go." Then he said, "Well, I guess I can hold out until tomorrow." He says, "When I leave here, I'm not going back to the capital, Hermosillo, I'm going up to Tucson; I've got a date with a blonde."

Another area that we had commercial things with was all this winter vegetable area down in Sinaloa which was a big supplier of winter vegetables to the U.S. and it got bigger and bigger and bigger. I got to know most of those people down there and I made an effort, as I say, to get to know the local officials, and so forth, and any Americans that were old-time residents, I tried to curry up to them too. So when we got somebody in jail down there, lots of time you'd starve to death in these regional Mexican jails in these small towns, and so forth. They'd pick up Americans sometimes on the road that didn't have any visas or any documents at all, that were hitch-hiking, you know, and they'd sock them into jail. I'd had two guys at the place called Los Mochis down in Sinaloa one time and I heard they were in jail and I had a Mexican friend down there and he says, "I have an arrangement with the police here. Anytime they get an American in jail, I go over and feed them because they're going to starve to death or they'll die because the local people they get in jail, they've got family." Anyway, I remember, I went in to talk to these two guys who were in jail and I said, "Either one of you guys have a prison record?" And they started confessing right away - armed robbery or this or that - and they'd gotten out on parole out of the State of Michigan prison and had gotten down that far. So then you have to call the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and they have to arrange for...

I think the worst incident we had when we were down there that could have caused a real problem was: we had these soldiers from Fort Wachuca that used to come down and go to what they called Canal Street which is where all the houses of prostitution and bars were. The city was broke and they used to almost live off of fines they imposed on Americans that would come out of that place. They wait for them down at the bottom of this canyon and then they'd grab them for drunken driving. If they couldn't come up with fifty dollar fine, they'd throw them in the tank and then they'd give them the wherewithal to get somebody to come down and give them the money and get them out. One night we had two black WACs and three white sergeants came down there for a night on the town and it was cold, it was in January or February, and they were up there and they got royally drunk and they came down to this little river and they grabbed them and they threw the guys in jail but they didn't throw the girls in. Well, the girls started getting cold, they were out in the car, and they kept rapping on the jail door and making a nuisance out of themselves so finally they put them in jail too. They put them up in a women's quarters which was not very well heated and they complained - the liquor started wearing off and they started complaining about the cold. So they have long-term federal prisoners in some of these jails that are in for a long time and they have all kinds of cooking facilities and heaters and the whole business, you know. So they introduced them into a cell with some of these prisoners and the inevitable happened, of course.

We'd make daily jail calls over there and the vice consul called over and they said, "Well, we got two women in here." So we said, "Put them on the phone." So they put them on the phone and this one girl said, "I've been raped." This could have caused the Pentagon to shake and

everything else. Now the newspaper guy on the other side - the American side - *Nogales Herald*, was a good friend of mine, a guy named Ray Hanson Sisk, and Sisk never printed anything in his paper that made the border look bad. But he also was an AP (Associate Press) stringer so one of his reporters called me and says, "I hear there's some big news from over there." I said, "Get the old man on the phone." So we got Sisk on the phone and I told him, I said, "Ray, we're going to give it to you straight. Here's what happened." So he says, "Unless AP asks me for it, I'm just going to sit on it," which he did and it didn't get out. Then the Pentagon, of course, was calling for these people to be charged with rape and sentenced. They had a trial and anyway, under our consular agreement with Mexico we have a right to have an American vice consul present for a trial of any American. So we sent our boy over there and the female judge was sleeping with the public defender who was defending these guys and she would throw our vice consul out. She says, "The trial won't start until you get out." And he'd protest and she'd stop the proceedings and then I'd call down to Hermosillo and, I remember, I got hold of the attorney general and I told him what was happening and he says, "Hold on the phone. I'm going to call the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. She's under him. Tell him what's happening. You have a perfect right to have that man there." So anyway, she got orders to let our vice consul be in to the postponed trial and then she still exonerated these guys at the end of the trial so then they appealed it. Meanwhile the Pentagon, the Judge Advocate at Fort Wachuca was after me all the time, "When are we going to get this..." I remember, these girls had to come down right after this happened and identify these people. So they had two chairs on one side of this aisle in the jail and then a "hot seat" over here and they brought every prisoner that was in the jail had to sit on that "hot seat" and they had had to say was he one of them or not. And they identified the proper people but, I was over there when they were doing part of this, and they'd be in that "hot seat" and when they'd say "no," then they'd go "aah." But anyway, that was one of the big incidents.

And then of course, another thing we had a problem with is Americans dying down there. Say a couple comes down, they go to the... or the beach, or Mazatlan, and then you've got to have all these Mexican health certificates, and death certificates to get the body out and regulate possessions. So we had a funeral director on the Nogales, Arizona, side and he used to make out a death certificate that said, "Dead on arrival at the border." And what they'd do is they told them, "If your husband or somebody dies in the family when you're down here, don't let them die and don't stop, just keep going until you get to the border. And so they'd get to the border and then they'd report to Customs, and so forth, "My dead husband's in the back," you know, "We've got the dog." And then they'd take care of it from then on. But it was just one of the things that happened down there. Then, of course, we were having the beginning of the drug problem, of course. That was especially down in Sinaloa where most of these drugs came from.

Q: *What was this called?*

LEONHARDY: The State of Sinaloa which is where Mazatlan is, the capital is Culiacan. And they were raising a lot of that stuff down there, mostly poppies, you know, and marijuana. There was no cocaine or anything like that, but it was beginning to start coming across the border. And then, of course, you had the problem of visas, letting people in or not, and so forth, and screening out people which was always a problem. Then we had one other problem down there which is rather interesting. They had what they called the "gold bar hoax." They would pull this hoax

about once every six months or so and they'd get some guy with a little money, meet him in a bar in Las Vegas or something, and say, "You know, there's all these gold bars down in Mexico in a cave not too far south of the border. And they were smuggled out of the settlements by the Indians many years ago when the Spaniards came in. And they hid them in these caves and we don't dare report it to the government because they'll take them away from us. But they're real gold, no problem with that and we're anxious to get rid of them for a price." You know and all that stuff, so they'd sucker some guy to come down there all bug-eyed, you know, the type that would be gambling in Las Vegas anyway. Then they'd get up to Customs with these gold bars and they'd turn out they were brass. One guy came in one time and he had an American passport but he'd been in Switzerland. He told me, he says, "They can't fool me because I'm going to have an assayer with me." So he goes down there and everything's going fine and the assayer tests the stuff and "Oh, it's all gold." They used to have one brick, I guess, that was gold or something. But anyway, every time they'd go down there with their money to pay off, there was a guy named Pico de Oro they called him, he had all gold teeth. He would hold them up and take the money away from them and they'd come back to the border and they'd be fleeced, you know. This guy had the same thing happen to him. "Oh," he said, "I can't get into Mexico because I told them I was going down on business and they wanted to give me a business visa. What can I do?" I said, "Well, go to the other border entrance and just tell them you're a tourist," which he did and the next thing I know he's back in her office and I said, "Bring some charges. The Mexican Government would like to prosecute these people but you've got to do something." They don't want to, they're embarrassed. But this happened I don't know how many times...

Q: Then in '62, was it, you moved down to Mexico City, and you became what, Consul General in charge of the entire consular operation which was a huge job.

LEONHARDY: I think we had nine states, even down in Chiapas, that were in our consular district at the time.

Q: You were there from when to when I always like to...?

LEONHARDY: Well, I was there from July '62 to '64 and Tom Mann was our ambassador most of that time. Then he was brought up here as Assistant Secretary of State and I was supposed to be going on home leave; the next thing I knew I was being transferred up to Washington as Director of Mexican Affairs.

Q: Well, let's talk about the time, you were Consul General. In the first place, what did this job of Consul General mean?

LEONHARDY: Well, I became Consul General a couple of months after I arrived. We had one of the biggest visa operations in the world. Then we had a big protection and welfare portfolios. We had an awful lot of Americans that came down there to visit, you know, and you had a lot of them that would expire when they were down there, of course, but then a lot of them would get in trouble. We had two or three officers that just did nothing but deal with authorities on getting these people out. Then we had... My job, as I saw it, was somewhat similar to what I started up on the border except I had to do it now in nine states. I did a lot of traveling and making friends

with all the top officials, not only in the capitals of the state - governor on down - but also the principal cities. One of the things that I preached to these people, and it worked quite well, was, "If you get some young, punk American down here and you pick him up, and he's got some dope on him, he becomes a problem for you because you've got to feed him and put him in jail and you've got all kinds of static coming from his parents and etc., and I get it too. We're in the same boat. I get Congressmen writing me about this young kid that went down there and got in trouble, etc." I said, "The best thing to do is to turn these people over to Immigration and throw them out as undesirables." And they said, "Good idea." We had very few people. I did the same thing when I got to Guadalajara; there were very few people in jail that were... Now I'm not talking about people that are traffickers. Of course, if you get somebody who's, you know, dealing in the stuff, you know, give them the works. It worked pretty well.

Q: It's one of the trade secrets to consular work that essentially it's a matter of personal contact with officials, and making the case that both of you've got this problem and how do we get rid of it. The main way is get it the hell out of your district.

LEONHARDY: That's right. In both cases, I succeeded people that really hadn't done much of a job of getting around in the district and it really pays; your whole operation improves. When I was in Nogales, for instance, I go to the Chamber of Commerce people and I go to the Rotary Club and all these people and I said, "Now, when any of your members wants a visa, he doesn't have to come up and stand in line in the Embassy. Just send the passports up with a messenger, with a note, we'll stamp them and send them back. They liked that, of course. What we're trying to cull out are people that are trying to sneak in and stay. And these were businessmen, they all belong to the Chamber, they all belong to the establishment. We didn't want to hold them up, so that's what we did and it worked real well and it brought me a lot of good friends in Mexico. As I say, I got to know these people. And then we had this Arizona-Sonora Commission I was telling you about. They had two trips; they went to the World's Fair in Seattle and both governors said, "You've got to come." And I went to the World's Fair. Then after I left there and I was down in Mexico City, "We're all going to the World's Fair in New York and you've got to come," and so I went to that one.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the visa side of this. One always hears about the tremendous visa workload at least sort of post and the associated management problem of keeping usually young officers, often on their first tour, interested so you don't lose them to the Foreign Service. How did you deal with this problem?

LEONHARDY: Well, when I first went into the Foreign Service, as I told you, I was out issuing visas down here in Barranquilla, Colombia, and it was good training - language training - you don't always get the most educated level of the language, but I thought it was useful and most of these young officers realize - they want to get into Political or want to get into Economic - but they don't mind a stint for about a year on the visa operation.

We had a very able gal who lives here in the Washington area, Margaret Fagin and she was in charge of the visa operation in Mexico City. She's a very competent gal. One of the problems, of course, we always had was people trying to bribe people in the visa office - the underlings - to try

to get around our security operation. We did find out that one of the locals one time was getting paid off by people who knew they couldn't get in... Our procedure at the time was to maintain a card file with notation. I think they attached a little green thing to the card if the applicant was ineligible or if there was something wrong, you know, and this local employee put in a different card and we had to finally... Margaret didn't like the idea but we did frame him and we caught him. So the visa problem was a big problem in the sense that...

But I think one of the most amusing stories involving visas was... well, we had in our new embassy in Mexico City... we had a big fountain in the main foyer and that's where the visa lines formed out in the street, on the Reforma, but by this fountain. This woman from out in the country somewhere was trying to get up the States. She had all her baggage of dirty clothes with her in a sack or something and she saw this fountain and she said, "Well, while I'm standing here, I might as well start washing clothes" which she did. But I remember, the head of USIA (U.S. Information Agency) there, Zack Bradford, a good friend of mine, said, "My God," he says, "I didn't hear about that until afterwards; we should have had pictures." But the other thing that I didn't mention, well, I'll get to it on Mexican Affairs, was on the Braceros Agreement and to the problems surrounding it.

Q: Was there much of a gap between the consular operation and the rest of the Embassy? I mean, did you find that the consular officers were kept off to one side or not?

LEONHARDY: No I didn't notice that. Tom Mann... I was always included in on the staff meetings and he treated me and that's why he brought me up, I think he respected me. We had a supervising consul general. Well, they elevated it to Counselor for Consular Affairs and he was the guy that brought me down to Mexico City and he covered the whole waterfront.

Q: Who was that, when you were there?

LEONHARDY: Leon Cowles. I remember once, for a number of days, he wasn't feeling too well, and he was going down to the coast - of course, we were in the altitude and that exaggerates whatever might be wrong with you, but he went down to the coast, he was going down to Veracruz, I think, or over in the Merida, I think it was. Anyway, he offered to drive me home that day in a chauffeured car and I took a look at him and I said, "Boy, you don't look good." I said, "I think you better get to a doctor." He said, "No, no..." So I called his wife before he got home and I told her, I said, "Leon doesn't look good to me. He's complaining of some breathing problems, and so forth, and chest pains. So she canceled the trip and got him to the doctor and he was having real problems so they eventually... he was examined and they said, "Well, you can take your trip to the coast, that might do you... But he went down there and he made an appointment to go up to one of our bases up in Texas to get a complete exam...

Q: The base was probably Brooks Field, or something like that.

LEONHARDY: Yes. By God, they discovered there, when he got over they put him in one of these simulated altitude chambers and when he got over three thousand feet he was in trouble. His blood tended to coagulate. So they wouldn't let him go back. So he operated for a while out

of Monterrey but I had to do a lot of his visiting for him at different consular posts. Then we had a hiatus period there for a while where we had no consul general or counselor for consular affairs until a guy named Joe Henderson came in there. Anyway, as I said, I was out on the road a lot in this job because I felt that was the way to get things done.

Q: You know, later it became rather crucial that there were... as more and more of the sons of the well-to-do and all started ending up in jail - many of them trafficking, the Embassy and the State Department came under a lot of fire from the public and Congress arguing we weren't doing "enough," I'm putting quotations around "enough." I mean, was that a problem yet when you were there?

LEONHARDY: Oh, yes. Much more even so after I was up here for about four years. Guadalajara was even worse down there.

Q: Well let's talk about the time you were there in Mexico City.

LEONHARDY: Yes, it was the beginning. Another problem we had, which I should have mentioned, was these damn, phony divorces. We had a small state south of Mexico City called Taxcala. And there were some officials down there involved in this divorce racket and they were grinding out these divorce documents and the recipients would bring them up to us to be authenticated - the signatures to be authenticated. Well, that's all we're doing is saying "that's the guy's signature," but that was misconstrued. You put your seal on it and everything else and people up in the States say, "Well, it's got the seal of the Embassy on it, it must be okay." Well, we knew that, in most of these cases that they were phony and we had ways of finding out so we put a caveat on the end of it. "This does not mean this document is legal or anything. All we're authenticating is the signature." Well, some time later, I was up in the border in Tijuana. That was when we had a hiatus and I was visiting other consular offices outside of our district. I was up there with a vice consul who later became Ambassador to different countries and who died here about a year ago, Harry Bergold's his name and his wife was my secretary in Mexico City, Honduran extraction. Anyway, we were right on the border of Tijuana and there was this neon sign; it was at night. The neon sign was flashing, "Marriage-divorce, marriage-divorce, marriage-divorce." So I said, "Let's go in and see what we can find out here." So I pretended I was an irate husband that wanted to get rid of my wife. This guy ushered us into his office very nicely appointed, nice furniture, and so forth, well-dressed guy and I told him, I said, "Look, I've had my last fight. I want out of this thing." I said, "But I want, I understand I can get a divorce in Mexico but I said, 'I want this thing to hold water. I don't want it ever to be challenged in the U.S. courts or anything.'" I just kept pressing that and the guy at first said, "Well, we can get you a divorce in Plascala." But where in the hell is Plascala? And he said, "Well, it's a state down in... It'd be a good, solid divorce." I think the fee was four hundred dollars, or something like that, you know. He had all these papers I was supposed to fill out and then I kept haranguing him about the fact that I didn't want any problems with this. I said, "I hear sometimes you have problems and I just don't want..." He says, "Maybe it's better if you get your divorce over in Chihuahua." He says, "That's going to cost you two hundred dollars more." But I couldn't get him to give me the papers to take home with me or back to the hotel, you know. He wouldn't give me anything. But at least I thought I'd see about what happened on the other end, you know. But we'd get these

things by the basket full, you know, out of this Plascala, which is a little tiny provincial capital, so that was a problem for us. I can't think of anything else right now. I think of these things when I get home sometimes.

Q: Well, if anything comes to you... We'll stop at this point. If anything comes to you about time in Mexico. We've talked about the divorce problem, we've talked about the arrest cases. We might talk a little more about what would you do for the American prisoners who really did end up in jail. I mean that you couldn't get to move on.

LEONHARDY: Well, if we had American prisoners in jails around Mexico City, we'd get the American community involved and try to provide food and stuff for these people. I think they even had a visitor arrangement, and so forth. But if you were out in the hinterland somewhere, it wasn't quite that easy, but I'd try... as I did up on the coast... I'd try to get people in the locality that would be helpful to us.

I remember, there used to be, south of the border in the state of Sonora, you have to go through an Indian reservation, the Yaqui Indian Reservation, for about thirty miles, and there was an American religious guy down there and he was, I forget, fundamentalist, I think, but he was translating the bible into Yaqui and he lived in one of these little adobe huts just like the rest of the people, these Indians down there, and he had a telephone and that reservation is very much like I was born and raised between two reservations out in the West. It was important to stay friends with him because people on the Reservation would let their horses run all over the damn road and hills. We warned all tourists when I was on the West Coast, "Please don't drive at night." But they'd do it - got to get to Mazatlan at dawn and all that. Anyway, then they'd hit a horse or something. And under Mexican law, which is something very interesting - under Mexican law, if you have an accident on the road, and somebody, even though you're not injured, if somebody in your car is injured, they have a, not only a criminal liability law that says you're accused of injuring that person if you hit a road sign or something and somebody's injured, but also a civil liability law. People could get insurance at the border to cover their cars and their damage and all this stuff, but it doesn't cover the civil liability. Most people didn't understand this dual liability under Mexican law and they travel the midriff of Mexico, and they have this accident and the next thing they know they're in jail because of a civil charge against them. Well, what they used to do is the local Mexican court made the bond real high and then they'd let the tourists out. The tourists, of course, would say that all they want to do is get the hell out of Mexico, so they would leave the money. I would go to the Governor, for instance of Sonora, and I said, "Look, this is highway robbery." And I said, "These people... It's going to ruin your tourism and everything else." And they finally got these judges to assign smaller bond fees. That was another issue that we had problems with.

Q: Were the Yaqui Indians, would the missionary to the Yaqui Indians, would he be the man to telephone?

LEONHARDY: Yes, he would call us if anybody reported an accident in this thirty kilometer stretch which was a real danger zone - a very helpful guy. And then you'd get all kinds of little, tiny problems when you get Americans living in these far away places. There's a famous village

or town in Sonora called Alamos which is an old silver mining town and they used to have a mint there and everything. They've got these beautiful, big, old houses. Some enterprising American went in there and developed this area; you can't change anything, the house got to stay the same but you put windows in it and you fix it all up and then you sell it to some American. So we had a town full of Americans there and, once in a while, they'd have some problem. I remember this one lady who was from Montana who I befriended. The neighbors were Mexicans and they claimed that her septic tank was contaminating their well. And I had to go to the Governor about that and he sent me over to his Minister of Health and what he did was, he said, "We'll work something out." And I got what I call a "Mexican Solution." He had this woman put down a little thing down in her septic tank which she had to stir a couple times a week and then he wrote the people who were complaining that, as far as he was concerned, this resolved the matter. But you had a lot of little things like that.

Down in Vallarta, which we'll get to later when I was in Guadalajara, we had a movie actor. He was a bit of an actor, but well-known in the movie crowd, a guy named Phil Ober. He used to be very helpful to us and later, I pushed before I left to get him to be made consular agent, which they did. Anyway, he lived right, flat next door to Liz Taylor and Richard Burton. They were never there when I was there but he had access to her swimming pool so I used to go over there and swim and he took us through her house one time and he says, "There's one room I can't take you into, that's the bedroom."

Q: Well then, did you get involved, I mean, a good number of movies were made in Mexico - American movies - did that cause any consular problems?

LEONHARDY: No. *The Night of the Iguana* was filmed down in Vallarta, there was never any problems; and I can tell you about another - when I get on Guadalajara - I can tell you a few incidents over in that area. No, the film thing... There's one story that came out about Liz Taylor and Burton. He had to go off very early every morning, before the sun got up, out to an island or something there where they did a lot of filming. They say that Elizabeth used to get up a couple hours later and go out on the balcony and she'd stretch her arms out like this and looking at the sun coming up and say, "I feel like a new man today." The one true story that Phil Ober told me one time was that there was a little, tiny bridge that goes from one part of her property across the street to another part. She was sunning herself out there on this bridge; it had an old-fashioned wall up on the side and some tourists came along and they were pointing at her residence, you know, "This belongs to Liz Taylor." Then they started telling a bunch of superfluous - not only superfluous, just made-up stuff about her. She jumped up and shouted, "That's not true."

Q: Well, we'll pick this up, but first could you tell me a little about Thomas Mann, because Thomas Mann was a major figure in Mexican policy. Could you tell me a little about how you observed him when he was Ambassador to Mexico?

LEONHARDY: I had a lot of respect for him, a lot of respect, and I think it was mutual. Because of the respect, that's why I got pulled up to Washington but I think he ran a very good shop and he knew how to use his personnel very well. He'd get invitations, for instance, from the Governor of Texas, one time they were going to have a meeting of people from the border area and the

Texans up in Austin, and he liked to have an Embassy representative. He pushed the button and I'd go. So there was a lot of that. Then we had a terrible, terrible case which I should have gotten into, I guess, when I was in Monterrey. It was called the Dyke Simmons case. We got into it sort of on the periphery, we weren't in the middle of it. It was about a family that was murdered on the road from Laredo down to Monterrey. This guy was down in Mexico and the local authorities picked him up and charged him with the crime.

Q: You say, the guy - another American?

LEONHARDY: Another American, Dyke Simmons, they threw him in jail and accused him of murder and all these different organizations in the States, these do-gooder operations got into the act eventually. It was in the *Saturday Evening Post* and it was written up, "This poor innocent man was being charged with murder and he couldn't have been there." But a lot of the circumstantial evidence did indicate that he was involved. Mann didn't send me up, but he sent one of his political officers up to the border to investigate behind the Mexicans to see what he could find out, come back with some kind of a flavor for this thing. Amnesty International got involved. Anyway, the evidence was pretty strong but maybe it was sort of like O.J. Simpson case, you know, you didn't know conclusively. Anyway no trial by jury, of course, or anything. Simmons eventually, with a lot of pressure from the States and all these organizations get off. The Mexican authorities finally decided, I think, that it was better having him back in the States than having him down there generating all this flack. So they let him go and the guy got to California and got in all kinds of trouble. What I remember are the volumes of files we had on the Simmons case. I remember, they pulled the file; we'd think the file was closed and they'd pulled it into Tom Mann's office, I think, when he got back. He followed it when he got up here. They came in with a dolly and all these files - the Simmons case.

Q: Okay. Well, the next time then we'll pick this up when you went back to work on Mexican Affairs. You were there from when to when?

LEONHARDY: I was there from October 1964 to the end of 1967.

Q: Okay, good. We'll pick it up then.

This is the fourteenth of March, 1996. Terry, you said you wanted to add something else prior to getting off to Mexican Affairs.

LEONHARDY: What I'd like to do, I keep thinking of all these things, and I've never listed them all down, but what I'd like to do is after I get through with the regular interview, and maybe not today, but I'd like to list all these things down and come down and just in an hour maybe we could get it all done.

Q: Very good. Sure that would be fine. All right, well then, so we're starting with 1964 to '67, you have Mexican Affairs which is always been probably our most contentious relationship -

always. What was the situation as you saw it when you came back? What were the things that seemed most pressing, difficult, urgent, what have you, regarding American-Mexican relations, that you would be concerned with?

LEONHARDY: From the Washington prospective, a lot of our problem areas with Mexico concerned trade problems and we had a number of problems in the border area. We had this salinity problem on the lower Colorado River, and then, of course, we were beginning to have the drug problem, and then, of course, we had another thing was the vexing problem were all the Americans that were in jail down there on drugs and that was connected with the drug problem.

We had this age-old border problem where we - this famous Shamisowl problem. They had an agreement back in about 1912 with three negotiators created this commission to study this change in the border on the Rio Grande around El Paso because the river, over a number of years, had changed its course and the Mexicans claimed that their border should be in such-and-such a place, we claimed it further south into what they thought was Mexico, and that happened to be about where part of downtown El Paso was, and the immediate area there. And it was "Shamisowl" in Indian Spanish, I think, means thorn patch and it was a thorn in our side and the Mexicans were constantly bringing this up and wanting to get it settled. Well, what happened, going back to, I think it was, 1912 when this commission voted two to one to change the border in favor of Mexico and we did not accept that and that was what really was the crux of the whole thing because we had agreed that we were going to do that and did not. So finally, under the Johnson Administration and maybe previous, I'm not sure, we decided to cede to Mexico around four hundred acres of land in the urban area - this wasn't skyscraper buildings or anything but it included, I think, about two hundred houses, it included a University of Texas cotton field and a cotton gin, and included a high school football field. So, when I first got up to Mexican Affairs, one of the first things that came up was Johnson was going down to the border to meet the Mexican President to symbolize the agreement that we made to cede them this acreage and they it all set up so that both Presidents talked and they were really on the new border when this happened on the high school football field, I think it was. And Johnson, I must say, had a love affair with Mexico...

Q: Yes, I mean, from Texas and all that.

LEONHARDY: And he had taught Mexican kids in school as a young man and it wasn't until years later that I learned that he even had an interest in a ranch down there but anytime that there was some kind of a pretext to do something with Mexico, why he was ready to go. These visits, if you've ever been involved in Presidential visits, their preparation takes an awful lot of work. You have the two elements of the Presidential group that you have to deal with. One is the public relations types and they want all sort of public exposures. They had a guy named Marty Underwood that I had to deal with over the years. The second type was the Secret Service that wanted to put him in a cage and not let him out. And so you have that constant battle going on with the Foreign Service in the middle.

Shortly after I got on the job, a presidential visit to El Paso was scheduled. It was then I learned a lot of things about Johnson. They didn't allow any photographs to be taken from his left side, I

think it was. It was either right or left, anyway. He insisted on that. Then I'd been dealing with a lot of these problems when I had been stationed down there, of course, so a lot of them were nothing new to me except the elements kept changing a bit. In the Mexican Affairs office, I had a political officer and an economic-commercial officer.

We had also in our office in Mexico, they had a civil servant who was a representative of the boundary and water commission. He was quite famous because he'd been there for years and he'd stayed on that job and he knew all the border problems that the boundary and water commission had to deal with like the back of his hand and he didn't have any first name. His name was T.R. Martin. But anyway, I would get involved in those things once in a while, we'd have to go up on the Hill and testify with respect to some of the boundary and water commission matters.

One of the most vexing problems was the salinity... Mexico, under agreement, was allowed 1.4 million acre feet of water out of the lower Colorado River. They had an intake right just near the border, near Yuma there, for their irrigation which they have a big irrigated area around Mexicali which is right up against the border. The Mexicans were claiming, and with a degree of right, that we were putting contaminants in the water which increased the salinity of the water.

Q: This was because of our agricultural process which - not because of malevolence or something like that?

LEONHARDY: No, no. The problem area on the U.S. side was the Wellton-Mohawk irrigation project near Yuma which was around twenty thousand acres, I guess, and they were pumping water. They would irrigate and then they'd pump this water out or let it go out into the river and after the irrigation process it would collect a certain amount of salts in the soil and carry those into the river. I believe the figure was something like fourteen hundred parts per million, if it got over that then you had problems with using the water. The Mexicans were not the best as far as their irrigation practices. They could have used water with higher salt content if they had proper drainage and all that, which they did not have. But anyway, their crops (they grew a lot of wheat around there), their crops started turning brown and that was a big area of complaint from the Mexicans and they said, "You've got to do something about it." We were afraid, I should say, that they were going to take us to the World Court because the treaty did not define water quality. It just said 1.4 million acre feet of water. But we were afraid that if they ever took us to the World Court then it would define the water quality and so we did everything we could to accommodate the Mexicans without changing our Wellton-Mohawk drainage. So what we did was we built a channel where the water could be diverted around the Mexican intake so that in times when the water was high and they didn't have a problem, they could say, "Put it through our intake." And when it wasn't, we'd flush it down the other channel. That was not a highly costly venture but it costs money to do that and it still didn't do the job and every time we had these inter-parliamentary commissions, as you probably are familiar with.

Q: Between Mexico and the United States.

LEONHARDY: They had just begun then and every time Mike Mansfield, of course he was sort of a saint as far as Mexico's concerned, would go down there, they'd hit him up with this. They'd

meet down there one year and up here the next. When I left the job it was still not resolved. It finally got resolved some years later when we made a special ambassador out of a former attorney-general, and sent him down to Mexico to negotiate on this and we finally ended up putting a de-salting plant, very costly operation, down near Yuma, on the river, to take this water in and clean it up before the Mexicans took it in. That was one of our major problems, of course. We had many others but that was a vexing one. On trade matters, of course, Mexico was not a member of GATT so they were always putting up barriers on our imports into the country in the middle of the night. So we were constantly having to negotiate with them or talk to them about these nasty things they were doing on the trade. It was still a very difficult country to trade with because not only did we have the import duties, but they put quotas and everything else on all kinds of non-tariff barriers to trade. Now, of course, they're in NAFTA and that doesn't exist anymore but...

Q: Who was the President of Mexico during this time?

LEONHARDY: The President, when I first got on the desk, was Lopez Mateos. They used to call him Lopez Potseos because he was always traveling worldwide. The Mexicans have a lot of funny stories about their President. He was succeeded by Diaz Ordaz and Diaz Ordaz had been in the cabinet and that was usually where their presidents come from. He was Minister of what they call *Gobernacion*, we call it Minister of Interior but it's really not a direct translation. They are in charge of all the national police and all of the electoral process, and so forth. He (I might get into this now because I didn't get into it in Sonora) started the first experiment, democratic experiment, in Mexico in 1961 when I was in Nogales. He decided that they should have a democratic process in deciding who was going to be the gubernatorial candidate in the state of Sonora. He figured Sonora was close enough to the U.S. and they thought they might be able to do it there when they couldn't do it in other states in the country. They had three candidates for governor, one was an army general who was stationed over in Chihuahua, and another one was a sub-cabinet minister in Mexico City, and the other one was the rector of the state university. That was a major political thing while I was in Nogales because they had headquarters in every city - each one of these candidates - and they were revving it up, you know. It was almost like what we're going through now in the primaries. But then they started getting nasty. They started burning down each other's headquarters and doing nasty things. The major newspaper in the State was coming out and saying, "Two of these guys aren't eligible under Sonoran law." The general hadn't lived in Sonora for, I don't know, how many years; the same with the guy in Mexico City. Finally, everybody was waiting for the signal from Mexico City, which one of these guys did the President really want, you know. They looked for all kinds of signals. They never came through because usually when you come out with a full page ad from the labor unions saying we support this guy, that means that Mexico City wants him. They tried to guess. Someone would follow this guy, saying, "He must be the guy." Well, they got so nasty that they finally decided, "We got to get out of this some way." So they hit on this idea of the fact that they didn't fulfill the residency requirements. So that took two of them out and left it to the rector of the university, who would probably not have made it otherwise. But anyway, I went down to Hermosillo a couple of days ahead of time, before the big PRI convention where they were going to go through the election. The wheels were all greased but nevertheless they had to go through this process. And they had it in a big theater right across from one of the main downtown squares. I took a young vice consul

with me that had never been in the interior of Mexico before and I sort of broke him in. We got down there and I talked to Paul Kennedy the *New York Times* correspondent in Mexico City a couple of days before, and he asked me if I thought there would be any fireworks and I said, "There probably could be." Because what happened was that the general Topete didn't bow out. The guy from Mexico City did but this guy... So he had all of these Yaqui Indians behind him plus a lot of leftists and they weren't going to be denied. So they came into Hermosillo and they had roadblocks. When I drove down from the north, I had to go through two police roadblocks and from the south there were even more because that's mainly where the general's supporters were. But they got in somehow. They got in on railroad cars, or something, and they got up there and when I got down there I got hold of Kennedy and he said, "Boy, you ought to see what's happening downtown." That was the night before the convention. I went down to the square that night with the vice consul and all these people - the supporters of the general - have their tents pitched and were camped out there and were going to cause problems.

So the next day when we went down there, they had every policeman, I think, in the State of Sonora, lined up - no army but police people - with gas masks and tear gas canisters, and rifles, of course, ready for anything. I went down there with this vice consul a couple of hours before the convention started just to see what was going on and there was all kinds of maneuvering on the opposition people. They were gathering rocks and sticks and everything you could imagine - there were no armaments but... Anyway, the convention started and the guy who is going to be governor, the rector of the university and the head of the PRI from Mexico City that was sent up to observe this process - or the representative of the PRI - drove up in this big limousine and they got out. Just then, these people let loose over in this square and they started throwing rocks and big sticks and everything they could get their hands on. So then the police started firing tear gas at them and the wind was blowing our direction and the vice consul and I got caught in that stuff. I'd never been through it before but anyway we ran back about four or five blocks and got into a restaurant and washed our eyes out, and so forth. But I was worried because the consulate car was on the other side of this square so we went back there and there were two or three cars on fire and the military had come in then and drove these people out. The General was in a house about two blocks away which was easily visible from this hall because it had been an old railroad area and they'd cleaned it out and his followers were all out there, you know, they'd gathered. But my car was over near a restaurant where all these people were going to eat at after they got out of the hall and I was standing there and some Sonoran that knew me - I didn't know him - he came up and he says, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, I want to get to my car." In all this mass of fires and stuff and he said, "You're trying to create an international incident?" He says, "I'll get you in my car and we'll drive around," which we did and I picked up my car and I drove out to the motel on the edge of town and while I was out there I was told that the police were going to raid this house where Topete was, and I drove down there with the vice consul and the police came in there and we were right behind them and they were using mustard gas or some pretty tough stuff, you know. They almost killed the General and his son and the people in there. So I said to the vice consul, I said, "How would you like to go down to the beach and get away from this?" So we went down there and got out of the place. But anyway, that was the first democratic experiment in Mexico.

Q: How did we view, I mean, we're talking about the time you were on the desk, the two

presidents in Mexico? I mean as regards their attitude toward the United States?

LEONHARDY: Well, I think they were generally fairly disposed. Politically we had differences even Cuba. When I was down in the Embassy, and subsequently... One of the few outlets for people in Cuba to get out of Cuba was to go to Mexico and then come up to the States, you know, and they had to sit down there and wait for visas and stuff, but we had differences on that. Of course, Rusk was very friendly disposed toward the Ambassador. When I first came up here, their Ambassador was a fellow named Clio Flores. From here he went down as Foreign Minister within the first year I was here and he and Rusk were mutually admiring each other. When they dedicated the new Foreign Office down there which was in about 1966, I guess, Rusk was invited down and we went down on an official plane, of course, to Mexico City. Clio Flores pretty well understood the U.S. and how we felt about things because he had been ambassador up here for a number of years and sometimes, when we needed to get something done, why we could get it done through him, he was always quite understanding. He didn't get into trade stuff but we had a lot of other issues. For instance, we had a very high level officer in Pemex, the big petroleum monopoly, had fled to the U.S. a couple of years before I got on the desk and he was somehow a very close friend of the Senator from Oregon, Wayne Morse. How this developed, I don't know. Oh, I know one reason, Morse was a close friend of the head of Pemex at the time and there was a lot of scandal in Pemex - still is, I think - and this guy had been the ex-mayor of Juarez across from El Paso. The Mexicans were constantly pushing us to extradite this man back to Mexico because they were trying to claim that he was the culprit behind a lot of fraud. Whether he was or not, we'll never know. But anyway, if you know the extradition proceedings, the Secretary of State has to come out and say there is a good reason to believe that he'll be treated fairly if he goes back and all that stuff. There were indications that he would not be but anyway, I'll never forget, it was on a holiday, a federal holiday, I can't remember which one, it could have been Washington's Birthday or something, when Wayne Morse called up Rusk a day or so before and said he wanted to see him, so Rusk came into the office on the holiday so I had to be there to meet Morse and take him up to the Secretary's Office. Morse's plea was that this guy would not get a fair shake and he was innocent and all that stuff. So Rusk told him, he said, "Well, I have to make that judgment. But," he says, "I'll, you know, consider everything you're saying, etc." Then, the Foreign Ministry kept pushing us on this - not the Foreign Minister himself - but saying, "We want this guy extradited." So our Ambassador at the time down there was Tony Freeman and we told Tony about Wayne Morse coming in and the Secretary's feeling, and here was the head of Pemex telling Morse not to get this guy back and the Foreign Ministry was saying, "We want him." So Tony Freeman went in to the Foreign Minister and said, "Which of these do you want us to adhere to, your request to bring him back or the request from Pemex not to bring him back?" Clio Flores's response was, "You use your best judgment."

Q: Which meant don't bring him back.

LEONHARDY: "We'll understand." I think that was an interesting indication of the relationship we had with Clio Flores, he was very, very helpful and understanding. We had problems at the time with denying visas to some people down there that the Mexicans - I'm trying to think of the name of the famous writer, I'll think of it later, but he's on TV here a lot now - Carlos Fuentes, we denied him a visa, and I remember I was in Mexico City when that happened. The letter that I

helped to draft to him, which he demanded, was published later in the *Atlantic Monthly*. But we did have a few problems there.

Q: Yes, it was because he was a supporter of the left, wasn't it; he had been in the communist party or something like that.

LEONHARDY: Yes, well, I think, you know you had this clause in the immigration law, I forget what it was, article thirteen, or something, which says that anybody whose entry into the U.S. would be inimical to the best interests of the U.S. could be denied entry. He would go up and make - he was scheduled to go to universities and make speeches which were not the type of speech which we felt was good for our country. So on that basis, we would deny him a visa. Of course, he was a pretty renowned writer, you know, with a lot of friends in the U.S. so that made it a bit difficult for us. I'm trying to think of other problems we had down there. But, as you know, it's the longest border in the world separating two countries with completely different ways of living, language differences, and cultural difference and so out of that arises a lot of these terrible problems we have.

Oh, the other one I wanted to mention which was highlighted during my service here in Mexican Affairs was the end of the famous bracero movement. Under that agreement which we had with Mexico which worked just beautifully, during World War II, we brought up as many as a half a million Mexicans to work in the fields, mostly field workers but a lot of others too. I remember, Barry Goldwater got - it was under Johnson and Willard Wirtz who was Secretary of Labor - they tried to do away with this and were successful and they were being pushed by Chavez out in California and his workers...

Q: Cesar Chavez, a union leader in the agricultural workers union.

LEONHARDY: Exactly. So under the agreement, the Mexicans had people up here, official people, who went through the areas where these people were housed, inspected, and so forth, and worked with our people in doing it, and these braceros were very well treated, compared to how they were treated in their own country. Most of them come from way down in the interior of Mexico and every year, towards the end, we were bringing up maybe around a hundred thousand, more or less. But every year, they start out in front of one of the ministries in Mexico City, there's a big square there and they park there and, I figure the average bracero paid in bribes about a thousand dollars equivalent to get his papers done. Then he has to go up to a center up in Sonora in a place called Empalme near Guaymas where all of these... They all looked alike, I've been down there in the midst of this thing and they look like a herd of cattle in a way because they all have a straw hat on, they always have jeans and you can't tell one from another. They'd charge them about a dollar a night to hang their hammocks under a roof or something down there while they waited and there was the first big place where they had to go through all the process of getting in to the U.S. We had Department of Immigration people, I think, or Labor people down there - our own people - who worked with the Mexicans in processing these people. Then once they were processed there, they came up to the border and there were two places that they could go through, one was in California, El Centro, I think, and the other one was in Nogales, they had a big reception plant. Then they had to take health exams, chest x-rays - if they found any spots

on their lung or something, back you go. I've been in that place when these poor guys were just one step from heaven but had been told they had to go back. The system is just agonizing for these poor people. Well, anyway, they decided to knock this in the head, so under our regulations in this country, we had no minimum wage for agricultural workers. Willard Wirtz knew that but he said, instead of establishing a minimum wage, he says, "If you offer such-and-such a wage, and you can't get U.S. workers, then we will consider authorizing you to bring in foreigners." Well, what happened was that I had to go up and testify right after Willard Wirtz before the Senate Agriculture Committee which is headed up by Senator Ellender from Louisiana. The AFL-CIO was represented and the Arizona-California growers were the two big principals in this thing, each arguing their side of the... And Willard Wirtz got up and they said, "Aren't you setting a minimum wage?" He said, "No, they can pay any wage they want. But if they can't get workers and pay this wage, then they would be eligible to bring in foreign workers." Well, anyway, then our Department of Labor went out and started recruiting people through their employment offices, and so forth, and they were sending them West, recruiting them off the streets in Alabama and New York and sending them out there. And, of course, they were not field workers, they were not used to working on their knees in the hot sun picking crops, and so forth. But anyway, I was dealing with people in the Department of Labor on this thing and every time there would be somebody different.

But anyway, Ellender, I think, at the end of one session, the second session, said, (he had an accent from New Orleans which was something like a Brooklyn accent, you know and he said "woid" and "boid"), and he says, "I been sittin' here now two days, and it's the poipose of this committee to find out what's goin' on." He says, "I think, all I can say is somebody's lyin' somewhere and it's the poipose of this committee to find out." But anyway, they finally went through and the Mexicans couldn't believe it. The Mexican Government couldn't believe it and above all, the Mexican braceros who'd been coming up every year. Goldwater got up on the floor of the Senate and said that braceros were the best friends we got in Mexico. I was standing on a street corner in Mexico City one time - or sitting on a street corner getting my shoes shines when I was a consular officer coming down from Nogales and it was when we were having brinkmanship over in Germany on the Berlin Crisis. There was a big headline in the Mexican paper, you know, that war was imminent and I had three different ex-braceros come up to me on the street and asked me if I was American, I said, "Yes." They said, "You know, if you get in trouble, I was a bracero up there and I like your country and I'll fight for you." I remember that same night I got in a taxi and he was an ex-bracero but he says, "I used to work up in the State of Washington in the summer," he says, "They treated me so well." he says, "I got a good wage." But every one of these braceros, we figure, supported at least ten people in Mexico. I used to watch them cross the border when they were through for the season and they'd have a sewing machine under their arms or a small radio or a TV or something and everything else they were bringing they'd send back to their family.

Well, anyway, I think it was about this time of year, March, Tom Mann had been elevated to Deputy Undersecretary of State, and Willard Wirtz called him and said, "You know, we may need some Mexicans for the strawberry harvest (or some other harvest) in California." And he said, "I want to talk to you about it." He says, "I don't handle that," he says, "You call Terry Leonhardy." So Willard Wirtz called me, here a cabinet minister, and he asked me if I could

come over and see him the following week, with the Mexican Ambassador.

So we went over to see him and the Mexican Ambassador said, "What does he want?" The Mexican Ambassador at that time was a fellow named Hugo Marguide, a very nice guy. He said, "I don't know, it looks like he might need some people or something." He said, "Oh God, but we shut it off." and he said, "We can't turn it on again." I said, "Well, let's go see what he has to say." So we went over to see Willard and he said (he was an ex-professor of rhetoric, I think) and he could maneuver around in the language pretty well and he says, "Well, we're going to need some people for our strawberry harvest and for this and that and several tomato harvests." The Ambassador said, "Well, we want to be helpful," he says, "But if we turn on the spigot, you know, it's going to cause all kinds of problems because," he said, "Down in Mexico City, there are all these ex-braceros gathered to start getting their documentation together to come up to the States," and he said, "We had to go out there with tear gas, they just kept squatting. We had to get them out of there." One of the Mexican stories was that after they got them out of there, on the wall they had written, "Yankee go home and take me with you!" So the Ambassador says, "I have to know how many you're talking about." And he says, "Well, I can't give you a figure." He said, "Well, I have to have something." He says, "Well, you could tell your Government that you talked to me and you drew a conclusion that I was talking in terms of thirty thousand." Well, I had to work that with the Arizona-California growers. We worked up an agreement with the Mexicans which was quite similar to the bracero agreement which had to satisfy them. And then we still had Chavez and his group that didn't want these people in. So they got out the story that every Mexican that came across had venereal disease or had tuberculosis or something. And the Public Health didn't want to get back into the act. They'd done all the examining on the border before and they didn't want to get back in. So finally, they were pressured into getting back; so they went down there and the Mexicans recruited right near the border. They didn't want to go into the midriff of the county and cause all kinds of disturbances.

They got the necessary number, twenty-five-thirty thousand, I think, but we were in this negotiation. The negotiation on this agreement was between the growers and the Mexican Government. We weren't involved except we were trying to referee. I remember, I was at a dinner party this one night when the thing started coming unhitched over some clauses and I had to call the Ambassador to say, "If you'll give on this, these guys will give on this." I was the conciliator. Finally, we got the agreement and, I remember, they started coming across the border and Public Health was down there to take x-rays of them, lung x-rays and some other tests, and then they'd hang these up on a clothes line in the desert and off these guys would go to wherever they were going to work. Then the wind, I remember, came along and carried all these x-rays miles away because they didn't have their heart in it. They didn't want to be doing it and they went through just to satisfy the AFL-CIO. That was one of the big, big problems and, of course, they no more stopped this agreement the next year than they were coming up "wet." Nobody was asking any questions.

Q: You're talking about people coming up illegally across the border?

LEONHARDY: Exactly.

Q: Which has continued to this day.

LEONHARDY: Oh, yes. That was always some of our big problems with Mexico was all the illegal immigration. They weren't in a position really much to cooperate anyway but these people just... Of course, it was good for Mexico for them to come up here because we were providing them with work and foreign exchange. So that's been a perennial problem all the time to this day, of course. So the illegal immigration was a big one. The drug thing was just sort of getting going down there and we were putting pressure on the Mexicans to try to do something (which we're still trying to do).

But the other thing that was so endemic in Mexico was, and still is, the graft and corruption in government. One of the incidents when I was on Mexican Affairs involved this and we... The Mexicans decided about, oh, in November, that they were going to start enforcing their own customs laws on the border and no more *moneda* to pay off to get stuff in, or anything. So they decided they didn't have enough people trained to do it so they decided to start in the Laredo area between Laredo and Monterrey on the east side. So they put all their customs people up there and they had these stops - there were two of them - before you get to Monterrey. You've got to go through and theoretically, that's where they did the payoffs, you know, the bribes. Well, about Christmas time, two or three weeks before Christmas, these wealthy Mexicans from Monterrey who all had charge accounts in Laredo, Texas, stores would come up there with their kids and their big station wagons and start loading up with goods. And they'd get down to the first customs stop and they try to pay off and it didn't work and they say, "What have you got on board?" and they say, "Well, we've got all this." They say, "Well, we'll have to go through everything and assess duties on it, you know." "WHAT!!" So they would turn around and go back to Laredo and dump all the stuff back on the store. They all had these charge accounts and saying, "Give me credit." Well, the Congressman from that area, from Laredo, his brother was the lawyer for the department stores and this Congressman called us up and just started raising hell about what the Mexicans were doing by not letting these things in the country. I said, "Well, what can we do? We've been pushing them for years to stop all this bribery and corruption and now when they try to do it, we can't go to them and tell them not to." I said, "The best thing for you to do if you want to talk to somebody about it, don't talk to us, talk to the Mexican Ambassador." But anyway, it was indicative of how I ran into areas of corruption during my stay in Guadalajara and other areas and it was endemic in the system. I remember we had an American who was trying to get in some kind of seed into Mexico and you had to go through the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Agriculture was already being paid off by some American seed company and anything that conflicted - sorghum seed it was - didn't get in. This guy had connections in the White House here and he tried to push his way through and finally we put so much pressure on the Mexicans to allow this sorghum seed which was supposed to produce ten times as much sorghum as any other seed, you know, let some of it in the country. Mexico did finally let some in on an experimental basis and they said, "It's got to go to our experiment stations and then we got to try it out." But we were running up against this corruption all the time and at very high levels of the Mexican government.

Q: During this period, did the Viet Nam war play any role in Mexican-American relations or was it mainly Cuba?

LEONHARDY: Well, we had some demonstrations once in a while down in Mexico City which came out of the university system there but nothing very significant. It was not a real thorn in our side. The other thing, of course, we had, I wanted to get into, was these Presidential visits because... Kennedy had been down there in '62, that was before I was in Mexico City. Of course, he was assassinated while I was in Mexico City and the Mexicans had a real esteem for him, the whole populace. You'd go into even hovel houses and they'd have a picture of the Lord, maybe a picture of Los Ocardos and another one of Kennedy, you know. He was...

Q: I saw the same thing in Yugoslavia around that time. You'd see Kennedy and Tito in the smallest little huts.

LEONHARDY: When he went down to Mexico City in 1962, we could not put on his schedule that he was going to Guadalupe because of the strict separation of Church and State. But everybody knew it; everybody was on the road out. Well, anyway, you're familiar with the feeling between Johnson and Kennedy and his followers. So we had this first visit to the border and then we had... Lady Bird Johnson was supposed to go down in, I think about 1965-66, to dedicate a Lincoln statue. They had a Lincoln Park down there; they had this Lincoln statue and she was going to go down and dedicate it. Then Johnson decided he wanted to go, but it had to be kept top secret. There were only four people in the Department that knew about it: myself, the Assistant Secretary of State, the Deputy Assistant, and Secretary Dean Rusk. So we had to do all these extra preparations without anybody knowing it. I was involved in these meetings in the Department with the head of the public relations at the time, the Assistant Secretary, and it was decided that at four o'clock on such-and-such an afternoon it would be announced that Johnson would go. Well, I was at a meeting in his office at precisely that time, preparing for Lady Bird's visit and he gets a call on Johnson's going, and he came back into the room and said, "Did you know about this?" I said, "Sure, I knew about it." He said, "Well, why didn't you tell me?" I said, "I was sworn to secrecy." Johnson, as I say, had this love affair with Mexico but on that trip he sent Valenti and the other guy...

Q: Jack Valenti was a Hollywood publicist, I think.

LEONHARDY: Well, he was head of the Motion Picture Association...

Q: But he was...

LEONHARDY: He had Valenti and the other guy that's on Public TV a lot, I can't think of his name, went down ahead of time before Johnson made this decision and talked to our Ambassador and told him, they said, "Could you guarantee that there will be as big a crowd out for Johnson as there was for Kennedy?" And the Ambassador said, "How can I guarantee that?" he says, "All I can guarantee is that the Mexicans know how to get the crowds out and they'll do their best and there'll be a big crowd, but I can't tell you that it'll be bigger than the one Kennedy had." But that was indicative of that problem between the Kennedy people and the Johnson people. Then we had the final meeting...

After several years they re-routed the river and put three new bridges in El Paso. And Johnson was going to go down for the final act and it coincided with the Mexican President, Diaz Ordaz coming up to Washington first and then they were going to go down together to the border. So I was involved in planning, working with the Mexican Embassy on their President's visit up here and coordinating it with the White House and all this stuff and then I had to go down a day ahead of time to El Paso to help prepare for the itinerary down there. As I say, they had three bridges, they were going to have names on each bridge, one named for the U.S. person and one for a Mexican dignitary. The Mexicans had wanted Kennedy on one of the bridges and that didn't hit very well. Anyway, they thought they had one of the two names figured out ahead of time and they even had a brass plaque made for the one bridge and the other problem we had was that the Mexicans insisted that Johnson - they meet in the middle of this first bridge that had the plaque on it and they change cars and they get into the Mexican President's open car (which gave the Secret Service fits)...

Q: Particularly after Kennedy was assassinated in an open car.

LEONHARDY: But Johnson said, "We got to go ahead with it." So anyway, I went down a day or too ahead of time and we went through the whole drill, going into Juarez and around and back out the other new bridge and at the end of the thing, at the last bridge there was supposed to be a flag-raising ceremony on the new border. No water running through this yet but - it was still to be diverted. But anyway, we got to our flagpole with the flag and it stuck half-way up. This guy, Marty Underwood who was the public relations guy from the White House said, "If that happens..." he says, "We don't know whether the old man is going to raise the flag or not. He'll decide that at the last minute. But if he does and that thing sticks, it's going to be somebody's head." So anyway, the next morning, Joe Friedkin who was our Boundary and Water Commissioner went out there at five o'clock in the morning with a professional flag-raiser sergeant from Fort Bliss to work this thing up and down and make sure nothing would happen. Of course, Johnson did decide to raise the flag. But the headaches that went with all these preparations, getting crowds out and all that stuff, and dealing with the Governor of Texas, etc., it was a big operation.

So anyway, I try to think of other things that happened but this Presidential relationship was one. Another problem we had which was kind of amusing in retrospect was, some do-gooder Americans decided that - they heard from some priest that had been down with the Tarahumara Indians, which are in Chihuahua down in the mountains were starving and that they needed all kinds of things. And he came back to his Chamber of Commerce or his Rotary Club in Louisiana and made a talk about this and the next thing you knew (I'm trying to think of the name of the town down there - Lafayette, it was), he made a talk and he said, "These people need help." Well, some enterprising local citizen got up at the Rotary meeting and said, "We got to get help down to those people. Come on, we'll organize a committee, and so forth." They sent all this, they had fourteen train carloads full of stuff they sent down there, clothes - everything you could imagine they sent down there. Anyway, they got down to... No thought given about what happens when it gets to the border, see, so it gets down to El Paso and the Mexicans wouldn't let it across and it stood on the tracks for days and it became sort of a "cause celebre" and I had to go brief the Secretary on it, what's happening. Anyway, I was sitting in the office on a Saturday morning and

the Congressman from that area called me from Louisiana and he had this Cajun sort of accent and he told about these people pouring their hearts out and getting all this stuff on this train and then the Mexicans wouldn't let it through and our consul general down there kept calling me and saying, "They're in the hands of a bunch of vultures that are going to charge them a whole bunch of money to get this stuff across." So this Congressman says, "What should I do?" And I said, "Well, I tell you, Mr. Congressman, if I were you I'd call the Ambassador and explain what your problem is," which he did and they worked out what I call a "Mexican Solution." He went to the Foreign Minister, Clio Flores, and said, "Well, let's work out something on this, you know." So the *New York Times* had a reporter that was reporting this, this was on the front page of the *New York Times* and finally this guy got tired of going out there. They finally unloaded all this stuff into an empty warehouse down there and so nothing was happening in the press or anything and the Mexicans would send a little truck over periodically and move some of the stuff and they finally got it very surreptitiously into the country. We don't know whether it ever got to the Tarahumara Indians or not but anyway that was sort of indicative of some of the problems you had on the border area.

JOSEPH C. WALSH
Executive Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1959-1963)

Joseph C. Walsh graduated from college in 1933. He received an M.A. from the Fordham School of Social Service. In 1941, he was sworn in as an FBI Special Agent. One of his former FBI colleagues, Charles Noone, asked him to come work at the U.S. Information Agency. He accepted the offer, which began his 20-year association with USIA. Mr. Walsh was interviewed by Lew Schmidt in 1989.

Q: Well, Joe, if you think you've pretty well covered what you wanted to say about your security experiences, we'll go on to your overseas experience. I guess Mexico was your first overseas assignment.

WALSH: Yes, as I mentioned before, George Allen persisted in expressing his doctrine that the Agency's work lay abroad, that the Washington staff existed only to see that the overseas staffs were properly and adequately supported and, more personally, he recommended strongly that his own staff officers seek assignments overseas. I was not happy with my occupation in Security, made my feelings known to George Allen and he enthusiastically recommended me for a foreign service assignment. Mexico was it. After several weeks of Spanish-language classes in FSI in March '59, I became Exec. Officer there. Jack McDermott was PAO; throughout his tenure, according to several colleagues, he was convinced I was a CIA agent.

In passing, it may be of interest: when I was appointed Chief of the Office of Security Ted Streibert, then Agency Director, carefully instructed me that under no circumstances was the Agency to be used as a cover for any CIA personnel; he was convinced if such occurred its exposure would do irreparable damage to the mission of the Agency. To emphasize the gravity of

his instructions, he warned that should a CIA type, by whatever method, get into the Agency, he'd made certain that I'd be fired.

As you might expect, throughout my tenure in Security I was diligently careful making certain Streibert's directions were meticulously obeyed. Several years later, during my JUSPAO/Saigon tour, I was amazed and astounded to learn that at least one of my colleagues there was, in fact, a CIA operative working under the guise of a JUSPAO newsman.

RICHARD G. CUSHING
Deputy Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1960-1962)

Richard G. Cushing was born in New York in 1917. He graduated from San Francisco State College in 1947 and joined USIA two years later. In addition to serving in Mexico, Mr. Cushing served in Cuba, Chile, Venezuela, Kenya, and Washington DC. This is a self-interview from 1988.

CUSHING: In 1960, I was transferred to Mexico City as Deputy Public Affairs Officer, and there helped run a large program which enjoyed considerable success because of Mexican interest in its northern neighbor, based primarily on economics. But the USIS program there was routine, employing the same tried and true tactics used for years all over the world - press releases, radio and TV programs, pamphlet production, writing speeches for the ambassador, attending cultural events in the name of the US. It was a large Embassy, and when Tom Mann was Ambassador he commented more than once he'd met people in the elevator who were on his staff but had been around for months without his knowing of them.

As in other posts, I had the feeling that the higher level Mexicans received so much information about the United States from Hollywood movies and wire service stories in their own newspapers, US radio broadcasts, and the flood of US magazines at their disposal that they really didn't need anything USIS could offer. This information, of course, was both good and bad, and the Washington view was that we had to correct bad impressions about the US held abroad. But US - Mexican history works against us. As one Mexican editor once said to me, "Let's face it, you Americans took the part with all the good roads!"

My family and I enjoyed living in Mexico and mixing with Mexicans at various levels, but the work offered no great sense of accomplishment. We didn't feel we were changing Mexican attitudes about the US. An anti-US bias was built into their history books even at the elementary school level and that is still the case today. Relations are harmed by obnoxious tourists, rich Americans buying up property, problems with border crossings, and the treatment of illegals in the US, petroleum economics, foreign aid debts, and numerous other elements make for strained bilateral relations that no amount of USIS activity could hope to even dent.

Yet, I was there only two years - too short a tour of duty for Mexico.

CHARLES THOMAS
Consular Officer
Mexico (1960-1962)

Charles Thomas was born in New York in 1934. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University and then served in the US Navy from 1956-1959. His career included positions in Mexico, Bolivia, Honduras. Ambassador Thomas was interviewed by Thomas Stern in the beginning of June (year unknown).

Q: So September to May you were essentially at FSI being trained. Okay. And when you got down to Juarez... How big a post was it at the time?

THOMAS: At that time it had about six officers.

Q: And how many in the Consular Section?

THOMAS: The Consular Section had four.

Q: Four?

THOMAS: Three or four.

Q: Three or four?

THOMAS: Yes.

Q: And were you rotated in that or did you just start in on one...

THOMAS: You rotated between non immigrant visas and immigrant visas. That's all.

Q: No American protection. Just the visa side?

THOMAS: I didn't do any protection work except on the side. We had one officer who did that full time.

Q: So you rotated between immigrant and non-immigrant?

THOMAS: Yes.

Q: And was that a shock to you?

THOMAS: No. I mean, we'd all heard about that kind of work. We'd been through the consular

course. It was a surprise I think because we had a clientele which was fairly from the lower economic echelons. A lot of brides of GIs who were stationed at Fort Bliss, including a number of cases where GIs had married prostitutes and not realized that they were prostitutes and had faced the problem of getting waivers so they could come into the United States. It's a rather delicate question or problem to tell a guy that your wife can't come in because she's a prostitute.

Q: Was there an organized racket? Did you run into that? Mexican women marrying Americans just to get across the border?

THOMAS: No I don't recall any racket.

Q: The workload was quite heavy I assume?

THOMAS: Very, very. It was relentless. Yes.

Q: Did you feel...Were you under pressure to get the work out?

THOMAS: Well, you felt under pressure to clear out the waiting room every day. Especially in the visitor visa section and to make sure you didn't fall behind on immigration visas.

Q: In the NIV did you follow what happened to the people you issued NIV's to?

THOMAS: No. You would occasionally hear indirectly that INS had deported somebody but that was very rare.

Q: And that didn't bother you?

THOMAS: No.

Q: There were a lot of consulate officers that got very upset when non-immigrants started to be deported. You were not one of them?

THOMAS: No. I don't get upset because people who were aspiring immigrants were some of the best.

Q: Did you get a chance to wander around the city or early province at all?

THOMAS: Yes. I did political reporting.

Q: How did you get started on that? Do you recall?

THOMAS: Well my predecessor in the post had been Larry Pezzullo who had also done political reporting. We overlapped a little and I just sort of picked it up from him. So I did have a fair amount of chance to travel around the state of Chihuahua. We had, for example, a celebration of a battle between the black tenth cavalry and the Mexicans which had always been a big deal for them. We

got down to Chihuahua City where the governor resided and off to the Paracas del Cobre where the famous Indian tribe lives, plus the Mormon settlement where George Wolney was born, called the Colonial Wires which is still a large Mormon settlement down there.

Q: Now this was a time when there was still considerable unrest in the area.

THOMAS: Well, actually, there wasn't.

Q: There wasn't?

THOMAS: No.

Q: But the poor area of Mexico.

THOMAS: Yes. I mean, relatively speaking, it wasn't so poor. Juarez was a, comparatively speaking, middle class-not middle class- but it was a relatively prosperous city. It did have a ring of slums. They did pretty well in cross border traffic, and activities related to tourism and things like that.

Q: What did the political reporting consist of?

THOMAS: It was what was happening to the local administration in Juarez and what was happening to the governor of the state because the governors were rather important in the overall constellation of the Mexican political process. At that time, of course, they were all members of the ruling PRI party.

Q: Did you learn something about the reporting craft?

THOMAS: Yes. But not a great deal because there was nobody there who was... There weren't any other political officers there.

Q: And the CG or Consul General...?

THOMAS: I think it was a consulate at that time, not a CG.

Q: He wasn't very helpful in improving your skills?

THOMAS: No. It was a retirement post basically.

Q: And he was a consular officer primarily I presume?

THOMAS: No. He was a political appointee.

Q: Oh, okay. Do you have any recollections about the views of the local population towards the United States?

THOMAS: I think obviously I had some views but they weren't supported by any polling or facts.

Q: *I understand.*

THOMAS: The people we dealt with were I don't want to say pro-American, but friendly. A lot of them had kids in school in the States, particularly the upper echelon. A lot of them sent their kids to university in the States. Along the border a great number of people spoke English. There was a lot of back and forth. At that point you had the Bracero Program so lots of Mexicans were going to the States under that program. You had a special arrangement on the border where you could get a green card and still live in Mexico, go across every day and work in the States. Thinking back on that, I don't know how that happened but that was the case. So it was a tremendous amount. Of course, El Paso across the border had a hell of a lot of Mexicans and the mayor was of Mexican descent.

Q: *Did you come away with any views about the whole entrance process of the United States in a situation like Ciudad Juarez?*

THOMAS: Well, you worry a little bit that some fairly undesirable people are getting in. On the other hand you had a lot of people who were the best of the crop because they were the ones with the ambitions to go to the States. So sort of a natural selection process was taking place. You worry a little bit when an American GI inadvertently or unknowingly marries a prostitute. That does not bode well for the marriage. If you had been worried about immigration the way people are right now, you probably would have said, or could still say this, okay, let's reconstitute the Bracero Program, which actually worked very well. It gave regulated conditions for the workers in the United States and the workers were needed to do work that Americans wouldn't do, yet these people would go back to Mexico. They brought back a lot of money. They were able to build a house and so on. A lot could be said for the program. It got shot down on the grounds that it was sort of inhumane in some way when in fact I don't think it was. Because there was a fair amount of ... I'm not saying there wasn't problems but there was a fair amount of supervision. The Bracero living conditions and so on.

Q: *The accusation was that it was exploitative?*

THOMAS: Yes.

Q: *Just one last question on this score. Did you feel that you had some impact on regulating immigration into the United States?*

THOMAS: No. I mean it was small. I mean the Consular officer has great latitude in who he lets in so on a really mini micro scale, yes, but as far as any significant numbers, no.

Q: *Okay.*

THOMAS: You basically had maybe two or three minutes to talk to an applicant for a visitor visa, a high percentage of which never intended to come back to Mexico. There are certain pro forma presentation documents like a bank account, so forth, which meant really nothing.

DONALD PETTERSON
Visa and Welfare Officer
Mexico (1961-1962)

Donald Petterson was born in California in 1930. He received his bachelor's degree at the University of California at Santa Barbara and entered the Foreign Service in 1960. His career included positions in Zanzibar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and ambassadorships to Somalia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Sudan. Ambassador Petterson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 1996.

Anyway, there I was in Mexico. I'd been overseas when I was in the navy, but I'd never been immersed in the culture and the life, as I would be in Mexico, nor had I ever had the language, so I was quite happy as I drove down into Mexico. But I became terrified when I got into my first traffic circle. To me it was a wild scene. It seemed as if drivers were bent on suicide as they zoomed into the circle. I managed to get the car to the hotel, which was near the embassy, and park it. I didn't get back in the car, literally, for a week after that. Later, I learned to drive like a citizen of Mexico City and went charging into traffic circles like everyone else. The trick was to look straight ahead and not worry about what was on either side of you.

I reported in to the embassy, where I began working very soon afterward in the non-immigrant visa section. The embassy in those days was housed in the Sanborn Building. Sanborn's famous Mexican restaurant was on the ground floor, and some commercial offices occupied the next few floors. The consular section was on the fourth floor. The rest of the embassy didn't begin till the sixth floor, so we were physically separated from other embassy sections. As time went on, I realized that the consular officers felt more than physically separated from the rest of the embassy.

Q: [Laughter] I like to put at the beginning of each section. You served in Mexico from 1961 until when?

PETTERSON: From January of '61 until about September or October of '62. My Mexican assignment was cut short.

Q: So what type of work were you doing? Can you describe a little bit the atmosphere of the embassy?

PETTERSON: Yes. The caseload for the non-immigrant visa officer in Mexico was enormous. We had, literally, hundreds of applicants a day, as many as a thousand or more in the peak season. There were, I think, four or five of us. I can recall working with Bill Hallman, Carolyn Kingsley, Walt West, and there would have been another officer on the line, called the NIV line. Mexico City was well known in the Service as a "visa mill."

Q: Yes.

PETTERSON: We sat in cubicles separated from the applicants, who were in a waiting room right outside of our cubicles. They entered through swinging doors. Frosted glass in the doors assured our privacy and the privacy of anybody who came in for an interview. Behind us were windowed walls with openings through which the papers of the applicants came through, given to us by the Mexican visa clerks. We visa-issuing officers were in a row, large walls affording us a view of what was going on in each other's cubicle.

The work consisted of sifting out the many bona fide non-immigrant visa applicants from the possible or probable non bona fide non-immigrant visa applicants. The first step was to look at the application to see where the person lived, his or her profession, and so forth. In many cases, it was quite obvious that the applicant was from an upscale *colonia* or section of Mexico City, going on a business trip, or shopping, or to visit relatives - clearly eligible for a visa. In these cases we didn't interview the person. We just stamped the passport, signed the visa, and sent the papers back to the clerks.

If in reading an applicant's data card, you had doubts - let's say the applicant was a *campesino* who was going to visit his brother in Chicago, where thousands of Mexican illegal immigrants had gone for work, then you had to talk to him. The refusal rate was quite high, because many people knew that it was a long wait for an immigrant visa, and that they might not be able to qualify anyway. Consequently, they tried to get through by getting a non-immigrant visa. Again, the refusal rate in Mexico City was quite high. All kinds of people wanted to go to the States for different reasons. For example, there were what we called "the maid cases." A young woman would come in with an American couple, who said they were sponsoring her. They claimed they had befriended this young girl, who was uneducated, and wanted to take her to the United States to help her in her education and to acquaint her with American culture. Well, these were obvious falsehoods, but required polite refusals, because we knew the Americans would demand that we'd give the visa or demand to see our superiors. One learned tact.

Working in the visa section was a very good opportunity to begin a career, to use the foreign language that you had acquired and were still learning, and to meet Mexicans and, through them, learn more about Mexico.

It also afforded me a chance to meet a young lady. Just before I left Washington I had my final advice from my counselor. I don't recall much of what he told me, but I do vividly remember he said, "Young man, whatever you do, do not marry a foreigner. This will be bad for your career."

"Yes, sir."

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: I'd been on the visa line less than a week. If I approved a visa, I had to pass it over to Bill Hallman so he could sign it, because I didn't have a stamp yet with my name on it. One day about a week after I'd started working, an application form came to me. I looked at the picture and saw it was the face of a beautiful young woman. She had applied for a visa to go to Brownsville, Texas, with an aunt to go shopping. She was from a nice *colonia*. There was no reason to interview her, but I wanted to see her personally! [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: So I got on the loudspeaker system and called her in. She came in, and indeed she was a beautiful young lady. I asked her some pro forma questions. I didn't know what to say or do, other than conduct the interview. She was a little bit nonplused. She wondered why had she been called in. Most people that day had not been called in. But she answered the questions and went out. I turned over to Hallman and said, "Bill, what do I do? How can I meet this girl?" And he said, "Well, ask her for her phone number and tell her that you might want to call."

So I called her back in. By this time she's really [laughter] perplexed. "What's going on here?" Incidentally, she spoke no English. Somehow I got her phone number. She went back out and told her sister about this crazy gringo. But I guess she was intrigued to a certain extent.

As it turned out, the shopping trip was called off. I, thinking that she'd gone to Brownsville, waited ten days before I called her. She'd been waiting, wondering if this strange foreigner would call. When I did call, I'd been schooled in what to do by Bill Hallman, who spoke flawless Spanish with a Mexican accent and really knew Mexico. He and his wife Eileen, who were wonderful people, had Mexican friends and were well schooled in Mexican culture. So Bill was my advisor on this, and he said I should telephone and ask permission to go to the house to call on the young lady. I did that, and as Julie - her name is Julieta [Hoo-li-et-ta], and she was called "Zhu-lee" in her family - as she later told me, all the extensions on the phone line were picked up as soon as they knew it was the American. So I, in my not flawless Spanish, asked for permission to come over to call on her, and I was given the permission.

Bill had advised me that the next step was to go meet the family and ask for permission to take her out, if she was willing. I went to their house in Colonia Polanco and met the family. It wasn't an ordeal, but I was a bit nervous and saw this beautiful girl again. I chatted with her and then asked her for a date. She was agreeable. I asked her mother or father (I don't recall now), for parental approval, and got it. It was made clear that the date would have to be chaperoned. Our first date was at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, where Van Cliburn was giving a concert.

Q: He's a famous pianist?

PETTERSON: The famous pianist who in 1958 had won the Moscow prize. He was a

celebrity and a pianist of real note. It was agreed that Bill and Eileen Hallman, a married couple from the embassy, and thus respectable in the eyes of the Mexican family, would be the chaperones. I went to the house, and her father's driver drove us to Bellas Artes. We met Bill and Eileen there, attended the concert, and were driven back home, and that began the courtship.

I went to the house frequently. Julie's brother-in-law, Joaquin, advised me to come over every night. Why he did this, I'm not sure, but it was accepted by the family, although they later told me they wondered why I visited so often. I would drop in most evenings, and they'd feed me, [laughter] which helped me. It helped me survive. Julie and I would sit in the parlor under the watchful eye of an aunt who was in an adjoining room and could see us through a mirror. We would talk. We would go to movies, always with someone from the family. Chaperoned, we would take trips to places around Mexico City or to nearby towns, such as Cuernavaca. We got to know each other, and before long, two months or so I proposed. She accepted and we decided that we would get married in August.

I talked to Ann Claudius, who was the head of the consulate section. Ann was not enthusiastic about the idea, but when she realized I was determined, she gave me advice on what I needed to do, which was to send in a letter of resignation with another letter asking for permission to marry a foreigner, as you had to do in those days. There had been an executive order of the President written in 1939 that didn't prohibit marriages with foreigners but made them difficult. It made clear that marrying a foreigner was not the best thing for the American Foreign Service officer to do.

At any rate, the papers went in, and Julie and I continued our courtship, still under close scrutiny. [Laughter] She began studying English at the Binational Institute - the USIS (United States Information Service) Binational Institute in Mexico City. My Spanish kept getting better and better, since I used it not only at work, but also outside of work. The day of our wedding began to approach, without any word from Washington.

In the meantime, a security examination had been conducted. Julie was asked to come into the embassy to talk to a security officer. She came, and her mother came with her. The security officer told me later that it was the first time he had ever been cross-examined. When he started asking questions about Julie, her mother began to ask questions about me. "Has this man ever been married before?" that sort of thing. [Laughter]

Julie passed the security examination, and we had no reason to expect any problem, but no answer from Washington. I didn't know what to do. My parents were coming for the wedding. My mother had never been out of the United States. My father had been only to France and Germany right after World War I, when he was in the army. Coming to Mexico would be a big event for them. Invitations were ready for the August wedding.

Finally Ann sent a cable to Washington, to a friend in Personnel. The request had simply been lying in somebody's in basket. So my resignation was turned down, and permission was given to me to marry. On the 22nd of August, we had the civil ceremony, after which she went home, [laughter] I went to my apartment, and, if anything, the chaperoning was more

intense. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: We were married on the 26th in a chapel of a private school. We couldn't be married in the church as such, because I wasn't a Catholic. I had gone to a priest for instruction. Then we had to get approval by the Church authorities. One day Julie and I went to the Zocalo, the huge square in the old part of Mexico City where the government buildings and the National Cathedral were located. I was to be interviewed at the Cathedral. Julie's mother accompanied us, which was fortunate because the priest, who was to pass on whether or not this marriage should take place, had been their parish priest years before. He recognized her, she recognized him and remembered that at that time he had been living with a woman and their two children. So, if there had been any dispensation on his part to give us trouble, that evaporated immediately. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: With permission from the spiritual authorities and from the U.S. government in hand, we were married first by the authorities of the Distrito Federal de Mexico (Federal District of Mexico), and then by the Church, and we began our married life.

Q: Don, could you tell me a bit about how you found the embassy relations within the embassy and all from your vantage point?

PETTERSON: Well, as I said earlier, the consular section was separated from the rest of the embassy. We felt a little bit left out of things. We labored all day on visa matters and didn't have all that much to do with the rest of the embassy. In time, I got to know people from the upper reaches in our very large embassy. As can happen, and often is the case in the largest embassies, there was an institutional impersonality that came from the bigness. Leadership in the front office can help overcome this. We had a well-regarded ambassador, Thomas Mann, whom I was taken up to meet at one point and whom I did see once or twice at the residence. But really, I had very little contact with the ambassador.

I did my stint in NIVs (Non-immigrant Visas), and then went over to immigrant visas for a while. There was a different type of caseload, but the work was just as intense. In visa work we often seemed to be on the verge of exhaustion, struggling with a very high volume of work. Perhaps that situation contributed our sense of camaraderie. As busy as we were, some of us looked for opportunities for political reporting. Most of us junior officers were interested in the long haul in having a shot at political work. On at least a couple of occasions, I got some worthwhile information from a visa applicant. Once someone from El Salvador came through, I recall, and had something to say of some interest to the front office, to the political section, or to the ambassador's aide, who was a conduit for information that might come from consular officers. It was considered an accomplishment if you could get a squib into the Weekly, which was prepared by the embassy. The Weekly, as I think it was entitled, was a compilation of information of lesser importance. It was the kind of report that

didn't go out telegraphically but was supposedly of interest to some end users back in Washington. Not very exciting stuff. Still, if you got a little bit of something into the weekly report, you felt had accomplished something.

My last job in the embassy was in the protection and welfare section, working under Diego Asencio, who later became an ambassador, and who already possessed qualities of leadership, and a lot of pizzazz as well. Diego was an operator. For example, he had put together had a group of unpaid retainers, professional people from the Mexican community. We would draw on them when we needed expert advice or assistance to help Americans citizens get out of trouble. We had a psychiatrist, we had a funeral director, we had a liaison with the police, and so forth. I learned a lot from Diego.

My particular specialty was dealing with the Federal Registry of Automobiles. An American who drove his car into Mexico had to have certain kinds of papers, and if he didn't keep those papers, or didn't leave the country with his car when he was supposed to leave, he was in deep trouble. The Mexicans viewed any irregularities with cars with deep suspicion because there was a lot of black marketing going on in automobiles, and one could make big money bringing in an American car and selling it illegally. I spent a considerable amount of time at the Registry negotiating on behalf of Americans who had run afoul of it.

I did the other kind of work that officers do in protection and welfare - accident cases, hospitalizations, death cases, and people who were in jail for one reason or another. Because of its proximity to the United States, and also because, I was told by the psychiatrist we had on retainer, its culture was so different from that of the U.S., Mexico attracted a lot of mentally unstable Americans, some of whom had deep mental problems. A lot of them pitched up at the embassy, and we had to deal with them. It was sometimes colorful work.

Q: Yes. Did you have any particular case or something that you thought about?

PETTERSON: One case, not in protection and welfare, but in NIVs, comes to my mind. I think I handled it diplomatically. I saw the papers of a woman about 65 or 70 years of age who wanted to go to the States. She was from a good *colonia*, but I thought that maybe I should talk to her. So I called her name on the loudspeaker system, and I waited. Nothing happened. Then I saw through the frosted glass the palm of a hand moving in a circular direction feeling the glass. Then the hand moved across, and slight bit of pressure was put on the door. The cubicle had a swinging double door, which was quite high so that no one could see over it, and there was an open space of maybe a couple of feet at the bottom.

Q: Yes.

PETTERSON: Once again the hand appeared on the frosted glass. Then, before I could get up, I looked down, and saw this elderly lady crawling under that door.

Q: Oh, no. Oh, no.

PETTERSON: She had never seen a swinging door before.

Q: Swinging door before.

PETTERSON: So she-

Q: Crawled...

PETTERSON: And I stood there with my mouth open. She got up, and I invited her to sit down. I didn't know what to say. I didn't want to embarrass her. I talked to her, concluded that she merited getting a visa, and told her so. She got up, thanked me, and before I could say anything further, she got down on her hands and knees and crawled out under the door. Maybe when she came in, I should have said, "Madam, you shouldn't have crawled under that."

Q: Yes, yes.

PETTERSON: But I didn't want to embarrass her.

Q: Yes, yes, yes.

PETTERSON: She was such a sweet lady. So I didn't say anything. I...I, well, what you have done? I don't know whether what I did was right. But I didn't say anything, and she crawled out. [Laughter]

Q: Okay.

PETTERSON: Bill Hallman and Carolyn Kingsley on the two sides of me were cracking up. [Laughter] I suppose that's not a very good example of how one learns to become a diplomat or not, but...

Q: Well, now I think one does face these things. I mean really very sweet people, they're up against a foreign culture or something they're not used to, and they're not quite sure how to react. They're trying to do the thing, and you don't want to embarrass them. It's not awkward, but it's the sort of thing we have to learn.

PETTERSON: Yes. Well, after it was over, I didn't feel too bad, because there was no laughter. There was no hush outside. Nobody wanted to embarrass the lady, I guess. And anyway, and she got her visa.

Protection and welfare strange cases? There's too many of them for me to remember anything in particular. We had people who came in who said they were being followed by American agents, a man who had a radio implanted in his body and was being tracked, another who was under constant radar surveillance, a woman who said strange people were trying to poison her, that kind of thing.

Q: It was, you know, the Rockefellers were reading their minds?

PETTERSON: Yes, yes, things like that.

DAVIS EUGENE BOSTER
Political Officer
Mexico City (1961-1962)

Ambassador David Eugene Boster was born in 1920. He served during World War II on Harvard's Communications Training Center Staff. His Foreign Service career included positions in the Soviet Union, West Germany, Mexico, Poland, and ambassadorships to Bangladesh and Guatemala. Ambassador Boster was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: You went to the Senior Seminar during the 1961-62 period and then on to Mexico City. How did it occur that a Soviet specialist found himself in Latin America?

BOSTER: Everyone in the Senior Seminar had to write a paper. That was one of the major objectives of the course. I decided to write a paper on communism in Latin America. There was some encouragement to do something a little different from one's career. It was a subject that I knew something about - communism - but in a totally new geographic area. Also it gave me an opportunity to travel around Latin America, where I had never been. As a result of that paper, John McKesson, with whom I had served in Bonn and who was in Personnel at the time, asked me whether I would be interested in serving in Mexico City in a position responsible for coverage of the Left there. He may have thought that the Latin American reporting was not as good as it might be and he was trying to strengthen it. I was interested in Mexico City. So plans proceeded for that assignment. Another officer was slated to go to Moscow as Political Counselor; it was decided that he shouldn't go and I remember Herman Pollack, Executive Director of EUR, saying that I should go instead. Dick Davis called me and explained what had happened. This turn of events brought me to a juncture in my career and I may have made a mistake. I am not unhappy about what happened to me consequently; still, in retrospect, I might have been wiser to go to Moscow. Davis didn't insist and I proceeded to Mexico City.

It turned out that I stayed only for one year, but at any rate I had that one year and polished my Spanish. I enjoyed Mexico City more or less, although it was the least satisfying post of my career.

Q: Why didn't you care for it?

BOSTER: Here is a case where the clear fault lies with me that I didn't make a better go of it in Mexico City. I found it difficult to make the kind of contacts in the Mexican governmental establishment or perhaps society generally that I made in Germany and which I assumed one

would make in the Foreign Service. I never really felt that I had close friends in Mexico. Given the history of US-Mexico relations - starting with our possession of some of what used to be Mexico - I can understand why Mexicans might resent the Americans and might not wish to be overly friendly. I don't mean to characterize this in an extreme way, but I think it was a factor. Whatever the reason, I did not have the kind of satisfying experiences in Mexico City that I had elsewhere. I enjoyed it, but it was not the best.

Q: What were our interests in Mexico at the time you were there?

BOSTER: I remember the water problem. It was one of the top items on Ambassador Tom Mann's agenda. We had a very difficult situation created by the salinity of the Colorado waters which reached Mexico. That was a very large problem. Our overall objective was to develop closer relations with Mexico and greater cooperation on world problems. On a day-to-day basis, individual issues dominated the dialogue between the Embassy and the Government. Besides the water issue, we had a nasty case of an American - Dykes Simmons - who had been in jail for a long time who had allegedly killed some young members of a Mexican family on a highway in Mexico. There were allegations that he wasn't the killer at all; it was another American. This was a hot issue. Congressman Jim Wright of Texas was involved. In fact, Tom Mann took me off my regular work in the Political Section and I spent some time working on the case. I made a trip to one of the hospitals in Texas to interview the, reportedly the, "real" killer. It was a wild episode in my Foreign Service career. I had to act like an FBI agent.

Q: You mention Tom Mann. Can you describe his method of operations?

BOSTER: Tom Mann was a very effective Ambassador, very effective Assistant Secretary of State - hard working, highly intelligent, decent man. He had one idiosyncrasy: he worked best when he felt he was surrounded by people he knew and trusted. This is not an unusual trait but he carried it to a high level. While I was in Mexico, Kennedy was shot. Lyndon Johnson, upon succession, wanted his own man in the State Department - Johnson apparently had some of the same traits that Mann had. Johnson wanted someone he trusted and knew in State and is supposed to have asked Tom Mann, a fellow Texan and a friend, to come to Washington to be that man. He was given the job of Assistant Secretary for Latin America. Tom, in turn, looked around for people he trusted and friends to take to Washington with him. To my absolute astonishment, he called me - as you know, I was not a Latin American expert at all - and asked me to be his special assistant. I was taken aback. I was not anxious to do it, but I liked Tom and respected him, and figured that this was something I had to do. So I packed up and came back to Washington. He also asked Bill Pryce, who was in his office in Mexico City. He called two or three other people who had worked closely with him before Mexico. He assembled a crew from various Embassies and they all joined him in ARA. Before we were through, he had more people from our Embassy in Mexico City plus others that I had known. This is the trait that looms the largest in my mind of Tom Mann's method of operation. I am sure it worked for him.

Q: Did the US Ambassadors in Central America at the time communicate and exchange views?

BOSTER: Our dialogue was principally with Washington. There were annual Chiefs of Mission

conferences for all US Ambassadors to Latin America, not just Central.

Q: *Did Mexico loom as the big colossus to the North?*

BOSTER: Not in Guatemala, no.

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

Ambassador Robert F. Woodward was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He entered the Foreign Service in 1932. Ambassador Woodward's career included Deputy Chief of Mission positions in Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba, and Sweden, and ambassadorships to Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile, and Spain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1987.

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

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

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

Of course, one of the facts that always entered into...actually it was the primary factor in Paul Daniel's thinking was, that we have interests in each one of these countries, and that we have to try to be watching out for those interests. And if we don't have relations we're handicapped in carrying out the relations, and therefore we should get closer to the so-called Mexican policy

which is the Estrada Doctrine, which is that there is no lapse in relations, that there is automatically a continuity in relations. That is the Estrada Doctrine.

Q: Maybe Daniel was also reacting against what was the Wilsonian principle when we rejected the Huerta government in Mexico because we didn't approve of it. This came under a lot of criticism later on as being an unworkable situation, and the pragmatists were opposed to the ideologists, particularly in Latin America.

WOODWARD: Actually, you bring up a point there in my own thinking. You just mentioned the situation, and recognition or non-recognition, of the Huerta government in Mexico, and that reminds me. I think I'm a prime example of a great defect that exists in Americans in that they do not profit by a past history. I wish now, of course, that I had been a much better student in university, and in my own private life, so that I would have known everything that went on in that Wilsonian period in our relations with Mexico because there were undoubtedly many, many lessons to be learned. I think we're rather inclined to sort of reinvent the wheel.

THOMAS MANN
Ambassador
Mexico (1961-1963)

Ambassador Mann was born and raised in Texas and graduated from Baylor University with a Bachelors degree in Liberal Arts and a degree in Law. After practicing law in Laredo, Texas, he joined the Department of State in 1942, where he served in many senior capacities, dealing primarily with world trade, economics, and Latin American affairs. His senior assignments include: Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (1957-1960), and Inter-American Affairs (1965-1966) and Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (1965-1966). He also served as US Ambassador to El Salvador from 1955-1957 and Ambassador to Mexico from 1961 to 1963. Ambassador Mann was interviewed by Joe B. Franz in 1968.

Q: You were in Mexico at the time of the Bay of Pigs?

MANN: No, I was on my way to Mexico at the time of the Bay of Pigs, but I had served four years as Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs before the Nixon-Kennedy race. I think it was in September or October just before the elections in November of that year that I was brought in charge of Inter-American Affairs.

Now, when I came in there, I learned for the first time in about September-October that there was this force in being -- being trained to invade -- and I wasn't able to get a decision or a clear idea about whether the new Administration wanted to scrub it or to see it through. My personal opinion -- I left on April 1, and my personal opinion is that what happened was that we fell between the stools and we couldn't decide one way or the other. That's a long story.

Q: Things had almost gone too far to pull back, I gather?

MANN: They had never gone too far if the Administration had wanted to pull back. You could disband the force, and that would have been better than putting them on the beach and leaving them there, in my opinion. I think we did the worst thing. We fell between the stools. I would personally think that, having gone that far, we should have seen it through. I think that it wasn't a bad plan. If we had seen it through, it would have worked, but that might have required some U. S. support. We were not prepared to do that. We were not used on all kinds of definitions and questions of what was intervention, what was legal, did we have an inherent right of unilateral self-defense -- all these very technical questions. While these were being debated, we lost out.

Q: Do you think sometimes that we are over-solicitous of the feelings of our Latin American neighbors when a crisis arises and it hampers our acting intelligently for fear of criticism?

MANN: Yes, I do. I think that we would get respect and support if we did what was right, assuming always that we are acting in a reasonable way and in a lawful way. I think the worst thing we can do is to do what we did at the Bay of Pigs. I want to say parenthetically I don't think President Johnson had any control over this. I wasn't in the White House at that time, and I don't think this was anything that he was responsible for at all. I think it was indecision, largely due to the fact that there was a new team there. The President had just taken office.

Q: He had a situation and didn't know what to do with it.

MANN: That's right. I don't think he had time to really understand what all the issues were.

Q: Along that line, I spent our summer of '65 in Chile. Then the Dominican Crisis -- and I remember one Chilean professor said to me, "Of course I am denouncing you, but I think you're doing the right thing."

MANN: This was, I'm sure, the sentiment amongst many, many Latin Americans. I've never seen our prestige as low as it was after the Bay of Pigs, not because we helped put the men ashore, but because we failed. That's important.

WILLIAM T. PRYCE
Consular Officer/Staff Aide
Mexico City (1961-1963)

Born in California and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Pryce was educated at Wesleyan University and the Fletcher School of Tufts University. After service in the US Navy he worked briefly for the Department of Commerce before joining the Foreign Service in 1958. Though primarily a Latin America specialist, Mr. Pryce also served in Moscow. His Latin America assignments include Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Bolivia and Honduras, where he was Ambassador from

1992-1996. Ambassador Pryce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You went where?

PRYCE: I went to Mexico. No, this was in '61.

Q: Just to get the dates, you were in Mexico from '61 to when?

PRYCE: From the summer of '61 to the fall of '63.

Q: Was this a normal assignment or had Mann asked for you?

PRYCE: I determined later that it was not a normal assignment. I was going to Hong Kong and all of a sudden I was going to Mexico City. I didn't have a direct conversation but I can see that Mann had thought it would be a good idea. I went to Mexico as a consular officer but I ended up a year later as special assistant or private secretary to Mann in Mexico.

I think we may have discussed this briefly. Mann was called back; he was the first appointment that President Johnson made after President Kennedy's assassination. He was called back to Washington DC. He took a number of people from his... He was getting ready to retire and in fact he was planning to retire and might have retired a year earlier except the director general convinced him to stay on. In retrospect the director general may have had no authority to tell him to stay on but when he said, "Don't retire, we want you to stay," he did stay. He retired in I think the following year but he was called back by President Johnson to be assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs.

I guess there were four or five people in the embassy that he knew well and he said "You know I have been in the Foreign Service for 30 years," or however many it was. "I've taken people that were assigned to me, I've worked with them, trained them. This time, it's my last assignment I want people, it's a very difficult job and I want to take a certain number of people that I've worked with and that I know." He took the political counselor, the senior special assistant, me, and the administrative counselor. All of us sort of ended up in Washington at that time.

The interesting thing there that I think is worth recording is that Mann was not a close personal friend of President Johnson and didn't really know him very well. He knew him because he was from Texas and he always went to Johnson's Texas birthday parties. They became very close friends because Mann's appointment was attacked by some people in the Kennedy entourage who didn't want to attack Johnson directly so they attacked the appointment. Johnson had the attitude of you're attacking my people, you're attacking me, and so he had Mann over there and was talking with him and so they became friends. They would interact and Johnson talked with Mann not only about Latin America but also about Vietnam and other things. The bond that arose came after his appointment, not before.

Q: Let's go back to Mexico. You were doing what type of counselor work?

PRYCE: It was largely protection and welfare.

Q: Could you talk about sort of the state of protection and welfare in Mexico at that time and what you were doing?

PRYCE: As Mexico is one of the closest overseas posts to the United States, we had a lot of customers. It was rewarding in the sense that you got to help people. I can especially remember helping people in hospitals who had been hurt. You would go and visit them or get them into the hospitals. I was also helping people who had lost things.

It was rewarding in that sense but it was also difficult because you saw some of the other side of humanity and you learned how to do things in a practical way. I think the bus fare from Mexico City to Laredo was about \$19.00 and we had all kinds of people who thought they could solve their personal problems by going to a foreign country. They would end up in Mexico City and they'd end up in jail or they'd end up destitute. We had a repatriation system which didn't take very much. I think it was a total of something like \$35.00 which could get them bus fare, a little money for a ticket and send them back to the border.

I can remember time and again we were not allowed I think to lend people money but sometimes it would take time to get money from the States which we tried to do at first. I can remember times some of us having an unofficial hock shop at one point when somebody would say I really just need ten bucks to eat tonight and why don't I just leave my watch here. We'd say "You can't do that," but nevertheless sometimes we did lend them money out of our pocket. Sometimes you'd get it back and sometimes you didn't.

Some of the more difficult times, I'm just thinking, was when you're trying to get an important person out of jail. Often they had a few too many and they didn't understand that Mexican police often understood a certain amount of English; they certainly knew when they were being spoken about in derisive terms. There would be times when you were trying to get somebody out or you were trying to get them from being put in jail. The person is cursing and talking about these people that are no good, that they're corrupt, and that somebody asked him for a bribe and he told them to go fly a kite in much more obscene terms and that he'd be doggone if he was going to be involved. We'd try and tell him, "Look sir if you just be quiet we'll try and work this out and I think we'll be able to walk out of here without doing anything improper, without paying a bribe but we need to show respect." I can remember some difficult times but it was fun.

Q: Did you have to visit anybody in jail?

PRYCE: Yes, I visited people in jail. The conditions were often not very good but again if you had money you could buy your own food, you could buy a better situation.

Q: Drugs were not a problem then?

PRYCE: No, drugs were not a problem as I remember. Where drugs were a problem was where

individuals who would use drugs, drugs including alcohol, would get in trouble. At that point there was not a real drug problem in Mexico City.

Q: How would you deal with a problem of corruption? What is the term?

PRYCE: Mordida.

Q: We are under very strict instructions, we always have been. We can't support anybody paying a bribe and yet sometimes the system works in this. How did you deal with this?

PRYCE: Basically that was my first assignment and you just assumed that that was not done. I guess it was naiveté and sometimes you'd wait around a long time to get things done but you just to... I'll tell you a little story which was my first experience. We drove to Mexico City in an old car with my wife and two small children. When we got to the border at Laredo we went through and we were very proud because this was our first posts and we were diplomats.

Q: Diplomatic passports.

PRYCE: Diplomatic passport and actually they were very polite and we went through the whole procedure. Then the fellow from the custom service said, "Well sir, I didn't check your bags." I said, "Thank you very much I appreciate that. It was nice to see that diplomats were given the courtesy." As you know if you had diplomatic pouch you were impervious and you couldn't be searched but we did not insist on that for personal baggage so they have every right to check our bags if they were so inclined to do so. I said, "Thank you very much," and got ready to leave. He came around again and said, "Senor, buen [inaudible] (phrase in Spanish)." I said, "Yes, I understand that, thank you very much." I really almost didn't get the point. I didn't get the point but Joan got the point and she was sort of saying, "Well, I don't know." I ignored him and said "Thank you again very much," and drove off and this guy was saying "Este stupido [inaudible] (Spanish phrase)." Basically this dumb guy from the United States doesn't understand what the hell is going on and he's very upset that he didn't get a tip for not having gone through the bags. That was my very first experience and I just learned to live with it. As you said, we were enjoined from making bribes and we didn't. Sometimes it took a long time to do things.

Q: Were we making any effort to help people in jail? In other words if they didn't have money, what would you do?

PRYCE: Absolutely. We would visit them. We would bring books to them. The people in the embassy often give old books to the church. We had a protection and welfare unit that would collect the books and embassy officers would visit the jails. We had regular rounds to go and visit the various American prisoners in jail. We also tried to visit people in other cities. We would make a trip around and see how they were so they'd know that there was somebody that cared. We had a list of lawyers so if somebody was accused of a crime we knew who possibly would be a good defender.

I want to take just a moment here to give credit here to the head of the welfare and protection

unit, Diego Asencio, who later on became an ambassador and assistant secretary for Consular Affairs. When he headed the protection and welfare unit he had a very ingenious way of helping in terms of funeral homes. There was one very good funeral home that charged very high prices to ship bodies back to the States. When somebody has someone who is killed, it is a very sad time. That was one of the downers when you had to help people get their loved ones back to the States. If you shipped them by air it was expensive and the funeral home knew that they had a market and so they charged a lot of money.

Diego basically set up a competitor. He learned about this person, got to know him just because he was in business one way or another and he said, "I think there is room for another funeral home here and we could perhaps steer you some business if you had reasonable prices." This guy was useful to us because he was very knowledgeable on how to get the right death certificates and how to do all the things that needed to be done. How he did it we didn't ask. In terms of his business, he may have had contacts, he may have had a relationship where he paid bribes, I don't know. But he provided a competition and the price for U.S. funerals came way down. It was a symbiotic relationship and if prices came down it was something that helped U.S. citizens.

Q: During this period of '61 to '63 you were there (and we'll come to the time you were working as a special assistant to Thomas Mann) how would you describe from the perspective of the embassy and again from your perspective, the relations with Mexico?

PRYCE: I think the relations were very good largely because the Mexicans loved President Kennedy. He was a very admired figure. He was young and charismatic. He had a very attractive wife. He was Catholic. One of the biggest events of my service there was President Kennedy's visit to Mexico. It was a huge success and he made a very good impression. Jacqueline made a good impression. She spoke a little Spanish at one of the lunches that they had. President Kennedy visited widely while he was in Mexico City. It was certainly I would say one of the most successful presidential visits they had. Relations generally were good.

The major problem that was solved at that time with Assistant Secretary Mann's very active participation was the Chamizal, which is a border dispute between U.S. and Mexico. The Chamizal River had changed its course a number of times and the question was trying to delineate the border. We had worked out a system where we traded pieces of land, us and Mexico along the border, to come up with a definitive solution. There had been at one time the solution that we had taken to the World Court which we lost and we didn't accept the solution. There was a little bit of a hard feeling but we were able to come up with a successful resolution of that dispute, the Chamizal dispute. This was a major bilateral accomplishment of Ambassador Mann.

There was also the question of trying to solve the problem of salinity of the Rio Grande River; how much of the river which was basically polluted with salt from irrigation upstream and what the content of the river would be when it came to Mexico. In an unorthodox approach, Ambassador Mann would go into Texas or into Colorado and talk with people on the U.S. side who were involved to explain what we were trying to do. It was a little unorthodox but it worked.

Q: When you were with Thomas Mann, you were with him for almost two years?

PRYCE: Actually it turned out I was with him for almost five years. It was getting to the point when I left Mann and I took Russian and went to Moscow, the inspectors told me that even though obviously I got very good reports, I had been in a staff job about as long as one should be. That I had been involved with one person longer than one should be. I knew that but I felt it was worth it. I was doing very satisfying work and it was a high level person that I was with. I figured that if I miss a promotion or two, in terms of experience it was worth it. It sounds corny but in terms of dedication I was doing a job that I enjoyed doing.

Q: When you moved to his office, you were there what, about two years, a year-and-a-half?

PRYCE: Right.

Q: What was your impression of the embassy? It's I think our largest embassy and it probably was at that time too. How was it administered? How was the spirit there?

PRYCE: Of course it was smaller then by far than it is now but it was growing. I think we had about twelve consulates. I think we had very good officers. It functioned well. There was again a unique situation where there was a fairly large CIA station because the Soviets were there, so there was a lot of activity there. Again the relationship was somewhat unique. Because of his service in Washington Ambassador Mann knew Allan Dulles and so before he went to Mexico he went to Dulles and said "I know you have a very good station chief there who has been there a long time, and is well known and a lot of activity, I would hate to have to move him. On the other hand, I would want your personal assurance that there would be nothing that goes on there that I don't know about and that the station chief will keep me completely apprised of everything that they are doing and there would be no back channel." Dulles said, "That's right. I'll do that." When Mann got there the station chief came to him and said, "I guess you've talked with my boss." They had a relationship which was a very good one which ambassadors have not always had. There have been attempts at times for the Agency to hold back on things and sometimes not find out about things until there is trouble, but this was a positive relationship. There again I was fortunate that Mann insisted that his special assistant, my predecessor and me, be privy to the conversations that he had with the station chief so I learned a lot there in terms of how things operate. I was surprised by some of the things and not by others but that was one relationship that I think was well run.

Ambassador Mann at times had no compunction about asking the station chief to see some Mexican that it was not convenient for Mann, the U.S. ambassador, to be seen talking to. If you are going to be seeing Jose, the minister of whatever it was, let him know that I want to do this, that and that and that's it. He had the confidence that the message would be properly conveyed and when he'd see that person another time it would be clear that the message had been conveyed. It was a good relationship.

Q: I take it that in Mexico, the Mexicans one knew we had a large establishment and many of these people were, what it is, announced or declared I think the term is.

PRYCE: It was a cooperative relationship.

Q: That they weren't working within the Mexican business to play games inside Mexico but Mexico being a major capital, particularly a lot of Soviets, Cubans and others there, this is where their point of interest was.

PRYCE: That's right.

Q: From your point of view, from sort of the embassy's viewpoint, or Mann's at all, was their any concern at that time about the fact that you had a one party system in Mexico, the PRI? From our point of view or was it something we were comfortable with?

PRYCE: It was something that we had to live with. I mean it was a fact of life. I remember back then and when I went back to Mexico from '78 to '81 as political counselor, the embassy had contacts with all the parties.

Q: I never served in Mexico but my impression is at different times at least, the Foreign Ministry has a designated office that can thumb its nose at the gringos to the north and it is where kind of the leftists are put, and this is one place where Mexico likes to exercise its independent muscle.

PRYCE: I'm trying to think the two times that I was in Mexico, there were people in the Foreign Office who were usually knowledgeable, very professional. Sure there was a sense of resentment but there was also I think a willingness to cooperate, certainly the foreign ministers. Manuel Te Oseno was the foreign minister when I was there this first time. He was a grand gentleman and a person who felt that the relationship was important. There is a famous saying that poor Mexico, so far from God and so near to the United States. There is a history of course. There is the war, the Mexican American War when Mexico lost a third of its territory. It is sort of bittersweet. There is resentment but there also great admiration and the Foreign Office I think reflected the body politic as a whole. Yes, there were problems and yes, there was some resentment but there was also I think good personal camaraderie certainly with the ambassador and certainly with other people in the embassy.

Q: You were there at the time, or immediately thereafter, when the Bay of Pigs things fell apart. There has always been this affinity between Cuba and Castro and Mexico, how did that play out?

PRYCE: Well that was difficult. There was the special relationship that you are talking about. Because they were the only country I think that did not break relations with Castro. The way the Mexicans tried to play it to us was that you need a messenger, you need someone in the hemisphere that deals with Castro and we can send messages, we can be helpful. Of course we didn't see it that way and said we don't need any messages, we don't need this. But they wanted to be independent and this was one of the expressions of their independence that it was one nation that they did not break relations. That was a signal of their desire not to be publicly seen as being beholden to the colossus in the north.

Q: Did you find within the Mexican community with whom you were dealing a certain enjoyment over the fact that we were very discomforted about the Bay of Pigs failure?

PRYCE: No, well certainly you got opinions from across the gamut. There were people who said gee whiz, if you're going to do something like that why didn't you succeed? There were other people saying you should never do something like that and it's a good thing that you didn't succeed and it just shows the disrespect of the gringos for Latin America. There wasn't a solidified opinion. It depended upon the point of view of the individuals that you talked to.

Q: What was your impression at this time of sort of the ruling class of Mexico?

PRYCE: That's interesting because I remember you asked about the PRI earlier. Mexico during my first tour there was certainly one of the least democratic countries in the hemisphere. They had the trappings of democracy. They had a single party rule which was all powerful. The president selected his successor and the president was all powerful during his reign. You changed presidents every six years so you had an evolving strong government but it was certainly a one party dictatorial rule. The party had been in power longer than any other party except the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and then of course later on it became the party that had been in power longer than any party.

We were uncomfortable with that, certainly, and we certainly encouraged the opposition parties recognizing that they had little effect. There was a Mexican-U.S. parliamentary meeting and we always had people from the opposition. Of course we had Democrats and Republicans and we always made sure that the Mexicans had people from the PAN which was the principal opposition party but there were a number of opposition parties. This was true in '61 and it certainly was even more true in '78 to '81 when I was there as political counselor. There was an active opposition at that point. The PRI stole the elections and they made sure they won almost every time. That finally has changed. We were never comfortable. We always recognized that it was a one party system with all the bad side effects. Looking at it objectively, it did give Mexico a certain stability that it might not otherwise have had but the U.S. embassy's interest was always to encourage the opposition.

Q: Were we concerned at that point about Soviet/Communist penetration in Mexico?

PRYCE: Very, very much so. Absolutely. Well, no, not penetration of Mexico. The Soviets and the Mexicans had a deal that the Soviet embassy could be the focal point for their espionage and subversive activities throughout the hemisphere but they would leave Mexico alone, and they did. The Soviets were very careful never to try to subvert Mexico itself. It was sort of a live and let live and so they used their embassy as a base for operations all over the hemisphere but left Mexico alone.

Q: When did you go back?

PRYCE: I went back to Mexico in 1968 as political counselor.

Q: *No, when did you go back to Washington?*

PRYCE: I went to Washington when Mann went to Washington. He was called back to be assistant secretary in December of 1963.

Q: *It must have been one of the first appointments of the...*

PRYCE: He was the first appointment, the first international one anyway that President Johnson made. I remember we all had about ten days notice and we all went back to Washington.

Q: *How did the assassination of President Kennedy play out in Mexico?*

PRYCE: It was a deeply felt event. There was great sadness. President Kennedy was greatly loved and he made a tremendous impact during his visit. I think everyone, including everybody in the embassy, was deeply shocked and very much bothered by his death. I can remember that when news of his death came, I was in the Foreign Office delivering a note that the ambassador had sent over with the latest information we had. I was delivering it to the special assistant to the foreign minister giving him the latest update when I got a call from our embassy saying that he had died. I passed that message on and there was great consternation, great sadness. Kennedy was very much admired, I'd say loved, by the Mexicans.

Q: *There was some connection with Oswald...*

PRYCE: That's right. Oswald had visited Mexico and the Mexicans cooperated with us very much in the whole investigation of what Oswald was doing. He had visited the Cuban embassy and he had been to Cuba. There was a whole series of investigations which the Mexicans cooperated with, greatly I think.

KENNETH N. SKOUG
Consular Officer
Mexico (1961-1963)

Kenneth N. Skoug was born in North Dakota in 1931. He attended both Columbia College and George Washington University. His career included positions in Germany, Mexico, Prague, Moscow, and Venezuela. Mr. Skoug was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 2000.

SKOUG: I arrived in the outset of November in 1961, and I left at the end of August, 1963.

Q: *Okay. Had you had Spanish before?*

SKOUG: Yes, Spanish was my first foreign language, learned at Columbia and enhanced by contact with Latin American friends. It was about as good as my German. My Spanish and

German were always about the same, so I didn't get any language training.

Q: Where did you go in Mexico?

SKOUG: Guadalajara, the second biggest city.

Q: Could you explain what Guadalajara was like in 1961?

SKOUG: Yes, it was a really lovely Spanish colonial-style city with still the old-style architecture, the population was under a million, but it had growing pains. It had yet no reputation for being a drug center, which it later acquired. There was activity because there was a university there, a lot of radical activity, the students, but no sense of a terrorist threat. There were demonstrations, but the demonstrations could be kept under control. It was a place with lots of civic life. There was abundant night life, but it was the old-fashioned type where you would go and drink and dance, have dinner - extraordinarily pleasant life in that sense. But my job involved the seamier sides of life in Mexico, too. I was in charge of protection and welfare for American citizens, and I saw the other side of Mexico as well, including the other side of Guadalajara. It was very different from Munich. Nothing can quite catch up with Munich, nowhere I ever served was quite as pleasant as Munich. Guadalajara was very different. It's a stark sort of beauty. Instead of the Alps with the snow covers and the green trees, you have the Mexican mountains, which are largely bare. But there's a magnificent beauty about that dry air and the sunsets, the stillness of it all, the large space. We had four states in our district, including Jalisco, where Guadalajara is located, Aguascalientes, which is small, Zacatecas, a very large central state and Colima, a small coastal state. Jalisco, Aguascalientes and Zacatecas lay on the old Spanish silver trail. Zacatecas held the mines that produced some of the wealth which was always being intercepted by British corsairs on the Spanish Main and so forth. That trail ran through Aguascalientes and Guadalajara down to Mexico, and it was built in the 16th century. Zacatecas, the second highest city in Mexico, had over 100,000 inhabitants in the 16th century. When I was there 40 years ago, it was down to 30,000. Standing at 9,000 feet on the Bufo, a mountain 1,000 feet above Zacatecas, you could see the outline of the old big city and the much smaller present city. At that elevation, in the dry almost desert-like air, you could look up and see more stars above you than you thought the universe could contain.

Q: Who was consul general? How was the consulate general set up at that time?

SKOUG: Well, there were a number of consulates. I can't tell you precisely how many. In Mexico, Guadalajara was, along with Monterrey, the biggest. They were consulates general. I think the rest were consulates. We had a Protection and Welfare Section, of which I was in charge, and then there were a passport, visa. and administrative officers, a deputy principal officer and a principal officer, Adolf Horn. He was an American born in Cuba. He spoke Spanish fluently but looked completely like a *gringo*, so they were always baffled and amazed at a man who spoke Spanish better than English and yet looked, with his blond hair and reddish complexion, very much like their stereotype of a North American.

That's the way we were organized. We worked a strange shift of hours that Horn had imposed at the request of the Mexican employees. We worked from eight until three-thirty, supposedly - they did - but Horn let it be known that any officer worth his salt would not be going home at that time. Horn was a stickler about long hours. He asserted once that putting in many hours overtime-which was uncompensated, of course-did not justify being even two minutes late to work. And by the way, there was no lunch hour. You were supposed to eat your lunch while doing your job. Eight to three-thirty is only seven and a half hours. You could add the other half hour by working at the job. But really, the work went on from eight until as long as necessary. Horn once rebuked a staff member for suggesting a 60 minute lunch break. It could be stressful. After one eleven hour day in January 1962, I named the building "The Hornorium." Another colleague complained that he felt like an American employee in a Mexican consulate.

Q: Guadalajara now is known as a place with an awful lot of retirees on pension. I assume your job... Was that the situation at that time, and could you talk about dealing with the Americans there?

SKOUG: Oh, yes, there was a substantial American community, especially in Guadalajara itself and in the small towns of Ajijic and Chapala, on Lake Chapala, the biggest lake in Mexico, a beautiful place. Americans went down there even in those days in large numbers because the cost of living was cheap and the climate benign. The Mexicans were pleasant people. The authorities didn't make much trouble for Americans as long as they were willing to pay the necessary bribe from time to time to make ends meet, because a lot of times these Americans who lived there didn't qualify under Mexican law to be retired in Mexico. So they would have arrangements. Some of them would be married to Mexican nationals or would have some relationship with Mexican nationals so that they could actually "own" property, although legally they were not able to do so. Obviously it was a situation where the American could easily be swindled, and some were. As I say, I had protection and welfare, with a small staff of one other junior FSO, one American staff employee for whom we obtained a vice consul commission and a Mexican secretary. There were 23 deaths in my first two months on the job and exactly 100 in the year 1962. This was very hard work, emotionally draining, and furthermore many of the deaths came with complicated estate cases. About half of them were tourists and half residents. In the case of tourists it was sometimes more difficult because, although their effects were fewer, it was harder for people back home, the loved ones, to understand the realities of Mexican life.

Q. Could you cite any examples of what this entailed?

SKOUG: Yes. Shortly after I arrived a Mexican bus swerved into the lane of a car containing five Americans, four of whom died in the crash. I assisted the single survivor, who told of being robbed of his possessions by onlookers and who needed immediate hospitalization. I attended the funerals of the others. There was a couple who lived in a trailer park, and I had to make arrangements for the protection of their trailer for many weeks, until a relative in the United States could come to retrieve it. The fifth passenger, a tourist, had a few possessions, but they had to be collected and sent home to a next of kin, when established.

Shortly thereafter, on Christmas Day, 1961, a 79 year old lady and her equally aged husband were seriously injured when their vehicle struck a cow on the highway. She was the driver and because her husband soon died of his injuries, she not only had a broken neck to worry about, but also the Mexican authorities. In this deplorable situation I worked until 3 a.m. to get her out of detention to a hospital. We were obliged to pay a Mexican policeman to sit at the foot of her bed to ensure she did not run away. This situation continued for months until she was able to leave the hospital. With legal help, she got out of the country.

In early 1962 a lady from Des Moines was struck and killed by a taxi driver. Her distraught husband called me at home at 10 p.m. and screamed in fury because I could not tell him if a private plane could come for him the next day. The husband, a medical doctor, later wrote me a courteous thank you letter, but at the time I “shared his stress,” if not his pain. And these sad events took place at the rate of two per week, frequently at night or on weekends.

Sometimes these cases could have a humorous or ironic side. In August 1962, Horn sent me to the Hotel Fenix to deal with an American woman from the San Francisco area who was causing a disturbance. She was verbally abusive toward me and threatened me for two hours with a congressional investigation. The following day I received a telephone call from a different plush hotel that a female American had taken off all her clothes in the lobby and was scandalizing the place. My enthusiasm for this task was somewhat restrained by my foreknowledge that the lady in question was nearly seventy. This time the authorities had her restrained. I took charge of her personal effects and found that she had evidence of possessing at least \$111,000 in American savings banks, not an insignificant sum, especially forty years ago. We got her safely back to California, and the irate congressional scrutiny into my behavior which she had threatened fortunately did not materialize.

Sometimes it was cases of Americans doing in their own kin. I had to rally three doctors to get an American wife of a retired U.S. colonel out of a mental institution where he and his cohorts had succeeded in placing her. I had first to ascertain that the lady was at least as sane as I was. On another such case it was more difficult. A wife had closed a joint bank account with her husband and reopened it in her own name. We gave the poor fellow our lawyer’s list.

Another sad case was American wife of a Mexican doctor living in Zacatecas. She was in the house not only with her own children, but with the in-laws and lots of other folks. When she spoke to her husband about taking the children to the United States, he forbade it. She was obviously miserable, and the man she had met as a student in the United States was no longer the shining knight in her life. But she did not request consular intervention, and there was little we could do but express sympathy.

On one occasion, there was a long and patient effort to bring about the repatriation of a young American child who lacked any kin in Mexico but knew only a smattering of English. When Mexican immigration authorities finally consented to letting me put the lad on a plane for Chicago, we notified the Department and thought it a job well done. But in those days telegraphic communications went through the embassy in Mexico City, which did not pass

our action telegram to Washington. As a result the boy wandered the streets of Chicago for hours before someone there came to his aid.

I think this gives you a flavor of protection work in Guadalajara in the early 1960s.

Q: Was it difficult dealing in that particular period of time with Mexican authorities? The situation was essentially one that ran on money, wasn't it?

SKOUG: Yes, it was. A bribe would sometimes work. However, some authorities were less well disposed than others. There were lots of very, very nice Mexicans, and some of our allies in dealing with the Ministerio Público, or the prosecutor's office, would often be Mexican tourism officials, chamber of commerce officials. The Mexicans understood very clearly that they wanted and needed tourism. It was probably the greatest industry. Oil wasn't really that important at that time, and tourism was very important. And the average Mexican's attitude towards Americans was pretty favorable. They were not anti-American, although every Mexican is well aware that his country is a lot smaller because of wars with the United States. There are grievances, but they don't usually take them out on tourists. There is an underlying hostility among some persons, and it could be seen in the behavior of some public officials. We had pretty good relations at the top, but it didn't always filter down to these guys who did the actual work, so there were rough spots.

Q: Our regulations and ethos and everything else says "no bribes" and all that, but in a country where you have a responsibility for helping an American and a small amount of money to the right policeman or the person in authority might help make it a lot easier - really a lot easier - how did you deal with that at the time?

SKOUG: Well, with whiskey, during Christmas, you'd give presents to those Mexican officials and Mexican friends. A bottle of scotch, a nice card, sometimes a visit, or a phone call - that would open doors. Of course, we hosted representational lunches and dinners. We did not bribe the Mexicans. I never paid a nickel to them, nor did I ever encourage anybody to pay a nickel; but we'd take them to lunch and do things for them. And by the way, one of Horn's sayings was that if you do a Mexican a favor, he'll want to do six for you. I didn't see that at the beginning, but he was right. As time matured and my Spanish improved, I found that lots of Mexicans were anxious to be of assistance. So you have a climate where crimes did take place, but you also had a situation where it was possible to find a remedy.

For example, there was an American tourist whom I had visited in jail in Guadalajara. He had a drinking problem, but he was a very, very upright sort of citizen, the sort of guy you would invite into your home gladly. I could see he had a problem. I helped to get him out of jail. He went down to Puerto Vallarta, which in those days was a totally unknown place. Well, not totally unknown, but it was before they filmed Elizabeth Taylor in "*The Night of the Iguana*," so most people did not know what Puerto Vallarta was. This fellow went there and died, and his possessions seemed to have disappeared. Since he was a derelict, you might have thought that this would have been forgotten. Certainly the Mexicans who did him in or who took advantage of him probably thought that. But he had two parents who were divorced, both of

them vigorously interested in him. Both of them had their congressmen, and pretty soon we had a real issue going on. Where was this man's typewriter, for example? Where was this or that? And, well, they'd been confiscated illegally, and they should have been turned over to us, but they weren't. The long and short of it was that eventually the federal prosecutors were brought in, and I think the mayor of Puerto Vallarta had to leave office. He was involved in this thing. So there was a remedy if a problem reached a certain level.

Q: I'm an old consular hand, and often you wind up, particularly being close to the United States, with almost two sets of people. You've got your plain tourists, and then you've got the ones who come, essentially pensioners coming in, and then you have the other ones who are sort of drifters, almost remittance men or remittance women or something like that. Did you have a group of that, I mean either they're into drinking or drugs or just sort of living away from home?

SKOUG: It was innocent compared to the situation in recent years, but we did have people like that. It wasn't so much drugs. Drinking certainly existed in Mexico. It's a tolerant society. Problems with drinking were, in the case of the man I just mentioned, serious, but in most cases they were not. We certainly did have people, though, who abused the idea of repatriation funds, and I had been counseled before I went down there to put a stop to the reckless spending. It wasn't all that much anyway, but I did. I required these people instead of getting U.S. taxpayers' money, to make a collect call home, and if possible, have money sent to them at the telegraph office. So we did cut down on the funds which were used for that. Still, those people existed, but that was not one of the more serious problems. The problems were deaths, estates, arrests - that sort of thing.

Q: How about for elderly people? It was fine being in Mexico, your money goes a long way and all that, but all of a sudden you come up against medical problems. I would have thought that the hospitalization was not as good as it would be in a normal American city. Maybe I'm wrong.

SKOUG: No, you're quite right. The hospitalization was poor. There was an American-Mexican hospital, which was called the American Hospital, that was run by the Baptists, and that was probably the best, the only really good hospital in town, and it probably would not - I'm not an expert in comparing hospitals, but in terms of those days it was not up to the standards of American hospitals, certainly, but it was the best available. Speaking of hospitals-and doctors-some of the problem cases were those of veterans of the Second World War or Korea who had psychiatric disorders. Sometimes the Veterans Administration even encouraged such persons to go to Mexico. I remember one of those persons quite vividly. They say in protection and welfare work that it follows you home. One night in April 1962 as my wife and I were sitting down to dinner, there was a knock at the door. I had received advanced warning that a veteran with severe problems was headed our way. There he was, well over six feet tall, standing in our doorway. He explained his visit to my home by saying that he was subject to periods of violence and felt one coming on just then. I tried calling his father collect in the United States, but he refused to take the call. It was then that I asked help from Dr. Urrutia, our Mexican psychiatrist, who came quickly to our rescue and helped our

guest to relax. Of course, psychiatrists, too, like to be paid, but he could count on it in most cases because the VA would pick up the tab. So that was the way it worked. Sometimes you would have to cover the indigents who didn't have financial resources by getting a lawyer or a doctor to take a loss from time to time, handle a case for which there would be no benefit, because they knew they was getting some other benefits. For example, the lawyers list. You prepare a list of lawyers who are willing to help American citizens and able to help them. And some of the lawyers on the list were marginal. We tried though to keep the list confined to people who would actually do things, but even within that list I knew there were not many guys that I could rely on to go out to the *Penal* and work 12 or 15 hours.

Q: *The Penal being the -*

SKOUG: Penitentiary, the state penitentiary there. I have in mind a Mexican lawyer with whom I had a fine personal relationship too, but he was willing to do that. One time he came to my house mopping his brow after having spent 12 hours out there. You ask what we do for them. I gave him tequila and we chatted. There was no money in it. He knew he wasn't going to get any money from this guy, but in other cases, when people came down looking for investment advice, in discussing the lawyers list I could say, "I know senor X is a hard worker." Now I was not able to recommend any one lawyer, but if there was a case where I could do something, I would do it for people who were willing to help indigent Americans.

Q: *Could you talk a little, because this was your job, about the prison system and how we dealt with people in jail at that time and why they were there?*

SKOUG: Well, they were there for the same sort of reasons, I guess, that people get in jail anywhere, except that where there's a language barrier and a barrier of customs and possible animosities between nationalities, it is perhaps a little bit easier for an American to find his way into jail. It's surprising there weren't more than there were. In jail, it wasn't so bad. It was like being in jail here. You might be out in a day or two. If you got in the *Penal*, the penitentiary, you were likely to stay for a longer time. There were not many Americans in the penitentiary, fortunately. There were quite a few who were in jail from time to time. We had, by the way, on our staff in the consulate an official who was called the legal attaché. In Mexico, the legal attaché was a special arrangement that the FBI had with the Mexican authorities, so that man was looking for American prisoners for other reasons. He was looking for prisoners who were wanted in the United States and who had gone over the border to Mexico. And I worked closely with him. Although our purposes were not always the same, we had a community of interest. If there were dangerous criminals, and there were some, I saw that Ed Johnson was informed if he didn't already know. Sometimes he didn't. On the other hand he could be helpful to me in telling me that he was just down in the jail and he saw somebody who hadn't been aware that he could call the consul and get help.

By the way, not all American visitors were what they said they were. Speaking of the legal attaché, the FBI representative, two Americans giving the names O'Connor and Brill came to Guadalajara in December 1961 and said they were doing a story on the city for *Holiday* magazine. Martha and I attended a lavish reception some one put on them at a swank hotel.

Our FBI representative also entertained them and spoke highly of them. They were very debonair. Later, however, reports came from Mazatlan that they had committed murder there, with one of them posing as Ed Johnson. It turned out that they were escaped felons. I believe they were later apprehended in the United States.

So what we did was to try to insist that Americans get their legal rights. Now, occasionally people confused that with some special authority they thought we had, a nonexistent one, to interfere with the Mexican judicial process. We didn't. All we could do was to give them the lawyers list, make sure they understood their rights, and ask for the best possible treatment for them within the law..

Q: Did you find that you were having to in a way assist people particularly when they got into that penitentiary, because as I understand it, the system there, as in many other countries, people really require families to come and look out for you, more than just the minimum of food and all that, and some of these Americans wouldn't have that support system.

SKOUG: You're right. The Mexican system was like that. I do not recall that there were many Americans in the penitentiary, and when they got there it was tough for them. My predecessor had worked might and main to get one man out, and he did after a long period of time. The guy died the next day. My predecessor said he was proud. At least he died a free man - but he died. Yes, support of friends and family was important, and those who didn't have it had a difficult time. Nobody starved. There were the inevitable complaints of people who were in prison that things were not very good, but aside from putting them in contact with family in the United States who might be able to help them, we had no supplies for giving aid to them.

Q: How was some of the political system at that time?

SKOUG: Well, it was a situation where my second ambassador down there, Thomas Mann, stated that the Mexican president had more power than the president of Paraguay, and Senator Humphrey at the time rebuked him for comparing democratic Mexico with the right-wing strongman in Paraguay.

Q: This was Stroessner.

SKOUG: And he was absolutely right. The president of Mexico did have more power. He just exercised it under a form that we were willing to acquiesce in, and what did we have to say about it anyway? They had a one-party system which was nearly as tight as the Communist Party in Eastern Europe, but not so blatant, and with more interaction in the party ranks. I won't say there was democracy within the party, but there were certainly shades of opinion, and internal conflicts that existed - so it wasn't a monolith, but on the other hand it was pretty tight. It was run clearly by the government in Mexico City. The governors were all really responsible not so much to the state as they were to the party leader, although that varied. Some governors were more popular than others. Mayors the same thing. You might

have a popular mayor, however. It was a certain amount of democracy, but the PRI always won, the PRI being the Institutional Revolutionary Party.

Q: Was there someone reporting on political or economic things at the consulate general?

SKOUG: Well, we were given states at the beginning. You see, part of the rap on me when I went there, which the consul general had heard in Washington, was that I had only had a short consular period in Munich and got out of it and did political and economic work. So he thought perhaps that I would want to do that in Mexico, and at the same time he assigned me two states, Zacatecas and Aguascalientes on which to do political and economic reporting. He himself was doing Jalisco, the state where we were located. He began to press me to do some political and economic reporting in addition to the protection. Protection, believe me, was taking me - I don't know, I was working 90-hour weeks on protection and welfare. I had little time to do reporting, but I did do some reporting. And then pretty soon Horn retired after refusing a transfer and stayed on in Guadalajara, where he was quite a popular figure. But that left reporting up for grabs, because his successor, Thomas Linthicum, didn't speak Spanish and could not have done the political work as effectively as Horn. At about the same time there was an inspection of the post, and the inspectors recommended that a Political-Economic Section be established and that I be the political-economic officer, that I do full-time work on political and economic matters for the entire consular district. And that actually happened in the middle part of 1963, following the inspection. It was quite satisfactory to the post and to the embassy in Mexico City that I should do this, so I began reporting full-time. I was looking forward to a third year in Guadalajara in which I would do political and economic work. Of course we all did some visa work when necessary. You'd do the sort of things you had to at the consulate, but I was getting out of protection work and going into political and economic work. And at that point the Department assigned me to UN political affairs in Washington. I tried to get out of it. Again, it was a case of I wanted to stay longer, as in Munich I had wanted to go to Bonn, this time I wanted to stay in Guadalajara, and both times the Department said no.

Q: Well, just to get an idea, though, we're getting a taste of... Let's take political work first. In a one-party state, what were you looking at?

SKOUG: Well, there were factions within the PRI for one thing. There was a more moderate wing, and of course it was easier to establish good relationships with those people. They wanted to pull the PRI one way. For example, take the Missile Crisis in Cuba, which took place while we were there. I had just been visiting Zacatecas and had had a discussion with some Zacatecas politicians in which I pointed out that Cuba was a common danger to the Western Hemisphere, and they didn't agree. They couldn't see it that way. They sort of saw Cuba as Mexico had been a few years before. But I had laid the groundwork, and then when the Missile Crisis came along, I got some nice communications from those people saying, in effect, "Hey, *gringo*, you were right." That was the sort of thing you could do. Another thing that I did, I noticed that there was a newspaper in the state of Zacatecas which was following the Communist line very, very clearly both in its treatment of international affairs and on the domestic side. Certainly in all international affairs, it was against us, against the West

Germans, for the East Germans, Russia, and Cuba. This was the only paper in the state's second largest city, and it was really controlled by the state government. I finally managed to point that out to some of my friends in Zacatecas, and there were some changes. There were some changes of personnel. You sow the seed to a certain extent, and then there are others who will come along to harvest the crop. Unfortunately the better attitude did not last very long. I'd "plowed in the sea." I did a lot of biographic reporting, about figures in Jalisco and the other states. I talked with the governors and the mayors. We were reporting on the attitudes of people in probably the second most important Mexican state at the time, although Monterrey was important, too. We were trying to influence them to see it our way. Curiously, my good contacts with Mexican officials led them to urge upon me the credentials of President Adolfo Lopez Mateos to become Secretary General of the United Nations. I can think of few persons at that time who would have been less welcome as SYG from our point of view. He had, for example, visited West Berlin, but refused to look at the Wall when it was pointed out to him. He wanted to be "neutral in mind and deed," I guess. But the dean of the University of Guadalajara Law School, who had given me a guided tour of that supposedly anti-American institution, also took my wife and myself to a wonderful farewell dinner which he used to urge the qualifications of Lopez Mateos. Of course, I couldn't have been helpful to Lopez if I'd wanted to be.

Q: What about the economics of the area at that time?

SKOUG: Well, it's a prosperous area in Mexican terms. Certainly agriculturally they had substantial production - corn, cattle. The region had been the great mining center, although that had largely faded out. It was still a mining center. Zacatecas still has mines, but it doesn't produce anything like it used to. But aside from that there is of course a great deal of commerce, a lot of trade, a lot of small shops. The city of Guadalajara had a handsome look, nice stores, excellent salespeople. And of course the night life, the cultural life, was very good. Now not compared to Mexico City. Mexico being a Latin country, a lot is in the capital that isn't in the provinces. We had a pleasant life. There was poverty, of course, but not grinding poverty like Calcutta or anything like that. Strangely, an officer in the economic section of the embassy in Mexico City told me bluntly that it did not welcome any economic reporting at post. All could be handled by the embassy, I was told.

Q: How did you find Americans were received, American diplomats, the consular officers, at that time? I've always heard about this concern, the colossus to the north and all that.

SKOUG: Well, one thing, it helped to speak Spanish reasonably well, to know Spanish songs, to be able to enter into the life of the country and be interested in some of the things they were interested in. That would open a lot of doors. I found in Mexico, where I found Munich perhaps the most pleasant city or post I ever served in, in Guadalajara I made more personal friends than I ever had anywhere, even in the United States. That's the sort of people they would be. If you were friendly to them, if you respected them, they would respect you. We bowled, for example. The consulate had a bowling team in a league with seven other teams all of which were composed of Mexicans - doctors, lawyers, engineers, small businessmen. That was great. That was wonderful, because we shmoozed with them during

the game. There was always tequila and beer afterwards, and a lot of friendship was made there. I think that the personal relations, all in all, were better there than any I've ever known, really.

I should also mention relations with the Mexican trade union, the CTM. When I took up political and economic reporting responsibilities in June 1963, I at once called on various union leaders-railroads, cinema, and electricians were the first. This was an area that had been neglected. It was thought that trade unionists might be cool toward an official American representative. It was quite the contrary. They were delighted at our interest. Then two officers from the embassy came to Guadalajara to look at the labor scene. We called at CTM headquarters. Consul General Linthicum held a "stag" party for trade union leaders along lines we had used very successfully in Bavaria. It was a big success in Jalisco, too. The following day union leaders showed us industrial plants, union quarters, recreational areas for workers, etcetera. I wish I could say this led to lasting results. Since I was soon to leave post, I was unfortunately not able to give labor relations the personal attention it deserved. But before I left, I was able to make an impromptu speech at the "graduation" of some young men who had just completed training to be waiters. And three days before our departure the CTM leadership invited Martha and me to a wonderful farewell lunch at the Copa de Leche restaurant. So I left convinced anew that Horn was right-do a Mexican a favor, and he'll want to do six for you.

One example to illustrate this last point. On a trip through the Mexican countryside with my wife in 1963, I stopped to help a dog who had been hit crossing the highway. The dog, bewildered and in pain, bit me and then loped off. When I returned to Guadalajara, my Mexican friends insisted that I start the treatment for having possibly been exposed to rabies. My best friend, a small businessman named Fernando Ochoa whom I'd met bowling, took a day off from work to drive me to the rather distant area where the incident occurred. Once there he made inquiries about the dog. No one had seen such an animal. They wanted no trouble. But Fernando disappeared and in a few seconds reappeared with the little dog. He'd seen a boy's face indicate he knew something. "Chamacco, there's a good tip for you if you find him." So we took the dog to Guadalajara where I put him under observation of a veterinarian, another personal friend, who found him to be fine. Then I found a home for him with a local watchman. Forty years later those good friends are still in my heart.

Lastly, my most transcendent recollection of all was returning in our Volkswagen from a trip to Mexico City at dusk in spring 1963. As we descended a hill where the lights of the whole large city had just come on, an aguacero (cloudburst), struck. In an instant every light in the city went out. In five minutes we reached a main thoroughfare, the Calzada Independencia, to find it had become a raging torrent with water at the doors of our heavily-laden automobile. To abandon it meant losing the car and its possessions (at least). As we drove like a motorboat through the flood, the motor died several times, but came back to life. Once I felt the car lifted by the turbulent waters. By fortune we reached higher ground, arrived at our home, and rescued our black kitty from rising water within our pantry.

WILLIAM P. STEDMAN
Economic Officer
Mexico City (1961-1963)

Ambassador William P. Stedman, Jr. was born in Maryland in 1923. He went to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and to George Washington University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and Washington, DC. Ambassador Stedman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

STEDMAN: The Alliance for Progress, to me, was the golden age of U.S. foreign assistance, at least as I knew it. I was in Mexico after Guatemala, back in the embassy as the financial reporting officer in the economic section - a wonderful job, by the way - when the Alliance for Progress was announced. The field prospective in Mexico was interesting because Mexico's attitude before the Alliance for Progress was that they could not accept U.S. bilateral assistance, because that was for the smaller, less developed countries. They weren't able to associate themselves with such assistance, because that was not for them.

The Alliance for Progress provided an umbrella, a banner, by which we were able to work collaboratively with the Mexicans, and we did so in the housing field and also in some small industry support activities.

Q: I'd like to move on to when you were in Mexico from 1961 to 1963. Thomas Mann was the ambassador, one of the major figures in North American policy toward Latin America. Obviously you weren't working directly under him, but how did you see his style of operation and his effectiveness?

STEDMAN: Superb! Let me just say that by a curious quirk, I found myself working directly for him. Ambassador Mann arrived and soon felt that what he wanted was to have a small team working with him to analyze the economy of the country, to see where there might be some collaborative efforts. So an aid officer and the assistant agricultural attaché, and I, the three of us, worked daily with Ambassador Mann on making an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the economy. We devised a strategy where the U.S. might fit in, and then began an effort to try to make this work. He was careful, competent, I thought a brilliant analyst, very frank, very open.

I had fascinating experiences. He would have one of us with him when he would meet with Cabinet ministers, which is almost unheard of to have junior officers going in to meet with Mexican Cabinet ministers. We had breakfasts, lunches and dinners, because he wanted to get as much information from them as he could to fit into this economic analysis. He had one of us go along with him.

We, I think, were extremely effective in weaving Mexico into the Alliance for Progress, using Tom Mann's approach and strategy, and getting us involved in a way which I think Mexicans and Americans just couldn't believe possible. At the time he sensed that there was a need to resolve a

dispute over territory on the Rio Grande. I was not involved with this; (embassy officer) Frank Ortiz was. Ambassador Mann is centrally and directly responsible for having resolved one of these major border problems that existed.

So as an ambassador, conducting himself the way he did, I thought he was superb. I was assigned to the Department. He came up subsequently. I saw him several times and worked on two or three things directly with him when he was assistant secretary. Then he moved up to be Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, and his responsibilities there was much broader than the Western Hemisphere. Nonetheless, I used to see him from time to time then, too, particularly a couple of times when the intervention in the Dominican Republic was under way. I saw him a couple of times to talk about that. I think Tom Mann is one of the great figures in this period of our relations with Latin America.

Q: As the financial reporter on Mexico, how did you deal with the Mexican Government? What was their attitude towards us?

STEDMAN: The group of people that I dealt with, both public and private sector, in the banking and finance fields, were highly educated, many of them educated in the United States, with master's degrees, many of them quite competent in English, all of them confident of themselves and their position within the Mexican bureaucracy or in their business, such that they talked with a degree of openness, friendliness, and candor. Their attitudes were marked by understanding. They may have had somewhere deep inside them some traditional Mexican resentments of the United States, but as far as I found, these were cosmopolitan, world-class, sophisticated financial managers, with whom I was just absolutely fascinated, because we didn't spend time trying to sort out any hang-ups - psychological or sovereignty or anything else.

I must say, sadly, I think a lot of the kind of function that I was engaged in in recent years has been lost by the Department of State and sent over to the Treasury Department. We have now Treasury attachés performing functions like this in some of the major countries of the hemisphere. But I thought then that these were ideal tasks for the State Department to have a member of the economic section involved. These Mexicans all rose subsequently to become ministers and central bank presidents and Cabinet officers and so on.

One of the curious things - I'm probably digressing - is that amazing institution - the Central Bank of Mexico. It has trained many people in its own institution, and sent a lot off to graduate schools in the United States. It lends its people to various financial ministries and offices. The Central Bank was the spawning ground for a large network. These people know one another and shared professionally and personally their problems and their successes. So if you plug into this network, you're plugged into an amazing coordinating apparatus. At least it was at the time I was there. I suspect in recent years a lot of this has been disturbed mightily by some of the upheavals in the Mexican economic and financial picture. But at that time it was a remarkable experience dealing with these Mexicans.

ROBERT M. SAYRE

**Director of Mexican Affairs, Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC (1961-1964)**

Ambassador Robert M. Sayre became interested in the U.S. Foreign Service after serving in the U.S. Army for four years during World War II. He joined the State Department in 1949. His career included positions in Peru and Cuba, as well as ambassadorships to Uruguay, Panama, and Brazil. Ambassador Sayre was interviewed in 1995 by Thomas Dunnigan.

SAYRE: I was assigned to the Mexican desk in ARA in 1961. In addition to handling the daily issues on US/Mexican relations, I worked on two major problems. The first was the salinity problem on the lower Colorado River. Mexico protested strongly in 1961 the sudden increase in the salinity of the water it received under the 1942 Colorado River Water Treaty because it was destroying crops in the Mexicali Valley. It was determined that the salinity increased because the Wellton-Mohawk District in Arizona on the Gila River was pumping salt water out of the irrigation district. It was putting into the river four times the salt it received from the Colorado River, whereas rules on water use in the United States are that an irrigation district may not put into the drainage any more salt than it receives. I handled the negotiations for a settlement with help from the US Commissioner on the Boundary and Water Commission. We met frequently with the Seven Colorado River Basin States. I negotiated with the Mexican Foreign Minister, and coordinated with the Department of the Interior and the Congress. It took me four years, and I finally got it done when I was at the White House on the National Security Council Staff.

The other major issue was the settlement of the boundary dispute at El Paso, Texas known as the Chamizal. Ambassador Mann, then Ambassador to Mexico, was the principal negotiator. The dispute arose in 1867 over a change in the Rio Grande River at El Paso. Mexico claimed it was avulsion and the US insisted it was erosion. An arbitral commission in 1910 composed of the US, Mexico and Canada tried to resolve the issue, but was not successful. When President Kennedy visited Mexico in 1962, he agreed with President Adolfo López to seek a complete solution. Again, the US Boundary Commission was deeply involved. I handled issues in Washington, including regular consultation with the Senate on the proposed treaty and with the White House. Ambassador Mann was able to work out a treaty that essentially divided the land in dispute. The treaty was concluded in 1963 and ratified in 1964. A new channel, in concrete, was built at El Paso, also four new river bridges, and a new national park in El Paso on the land received by the US. President Johnson went to El Paso to dedicate the new boundary markers and the bridges with the Mexican President - then President Díaz Ordaz. The Treaty of Guadeloupe-Hidalgo on the boundary that had been signed in 1848 was finally fully implemented in 1969.

Q: May I editorialize to say I think things have changed a bit in that regard in recent years.

SAYRE: One of the things that I finished on the National Security Council staff that I had worked on before I got there wasn't really a part of my job on the National Security Council. I had been working for four years on straightening out the problem of the salinity of the Colorado

River where an irrigation district in Arizona was dumping four times as much salt into river as it had any right to do. It took me four years to get the Department of the Interior and the Senator from Arizona and the State of Arizona to agree that they shouldn't be doing that. We got an agreement with Mexico that we would dump the water from this district in the Gulf of California and not in the Colorado River. The Corps of Engineers dug a canal to accomplish that.

Let me say first that before I left a couple of things I did with President Johnson and that's the reason he continued to keep in contact with me. He had visits to Mexico, Adolfo López Mateos, when he was President. Also, we went down with President Johnson and put in a new boundary marker because we had reached an agreement with Mexico in the Chamizal settlement. President Johnson went down to dedicate the new boundary with the Mexican President, to dedicate the four new bridges and dedicate the new boundary marker and so on. We had other people, other presidents, coming up, so that's the reason I kept in contact with President Johnson.

We had an interesting incident which occurred when President Johnson went to El Paso to dedicate the new river channel. President Díaz Ordaz had come to Washington, and traveled with President Johnson to El Paso for the dedication. The Mexican President was concerned about the Chamizal Treaty because he thought Mexico should have received more land. We had already helped resolve that concern by building a concrete channel at El Paso instead of the normal dirt channel. The effect was to leave the northern edge of the channel where it was agreed but to move the rest north. This meant that Mexico had a little more useable land on the south side. But President Díaz Ordaz wanted it also clear that his predecessor had agreed to the new boundary, so he asked that one of the new bridges across the channel be named the John F. Kennedy Bridge on the US side, and the Adolfo López Mateos Bridge on the Mexican side. President Johnson would not accept the proposal because he said that he had already named more than 20 sites in the U.S. for President Kennedy. I proposed to President Johnson that we resolve the problem by naming the Mexican side of the channel, the Adolfo López Mateos Channel, and that we decide later what to name the U.S. side. On the way down to El Paso, President Johnson asked me to come back to his compartment in Air Force 1 and outline the proposal to the Mexican President. I did so and the Mexican President accepted it. So the bridge in question was named the Bridge of the Good Neighbor. Mexico has placed a large marker on its side of the Rio Grande naming it the Canal de Adolfo López Mateos. There is still no sign on the U.S. side.

President Johnson made one more trip to Mexico in 1968 to dedicate the statue of President Abraham Lincoln. A statue of the Mexican hero, Benito Juárez, had been dedicated in Washington on Virginia Avenue. Lincoln and Juárez had communicated with each other because of the French invasion of Mexico and the occupation of Mexico in 1863. Napoleon named Maximilian as emperor in Mexico. The United States opposed this, but could not help because of the Civil War in the United States. The United States did press France to leave after this War, and it did so in 1867. The statue of Lincoln in Mexico City was a reciprocal arrangement to recall these events. I went to Mexico City to arrange President Johnson's visit. For security reasons, it was scheduled as a visit of Mrs. Johnson. I worked out the overall details with the then Foreign Minister, Antonio Carrillo Flores, with whom I had worked closely on the salinity and Chamizal

issues when he had been Ambassador in Washington. Carrillo Flores was a unique and outstanding statesman for Mexico and Latin America in general. Some 300,000 Mexicans attended the dedication ceremony. When I arrived in Mexico to make the arrangements, the Foreign Minister met me at the airport. When we went to his car, he said that I should sit on the right. I replied that I could not do that because the ranking person always sits on the right. He replied that in Mexico, the place of honor is behind the chauffeur. To me, it was another example of how unusual and effective Antonio Carrillo Flores was in working with the United States and handling international relations for Mexico.

I should mention one other thing: in 1967 there was a meeting of Presidents of the Hemisphere. I and Jim Jones, Congressman Jones, were responsible for going down to Punta del Este in Uruguay and getting all the logistics in place. I was not responsible for the substance of the meeting. Lincoln Gordon did all of the substance of the meeting. But President Johnson went to the meeting.

Before he went to the meeting what we tried to do was get congressional approval to extend the Alliance for Progress for ten years. President Johnson wanted that done and to have the program increased to a billion and a half dollars as opposed to the billion a year for the first ten years. That effort by President Johnson was approved in the House of Representatives but it was killed in the Senate by the Senator from Arkansas who said he just didn't want to give President Johnson a blank check - another Tonkin Gulf resolution. So that President Johnson went to Punta del Este empty-handed.

RAYMOND A. IOANES
Executive Officer, Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
Washington, DC (1962-1964)

Raymond A. Ioanes was born in Ohio in 1918. He graduated from Kenyon College in 1940 and entered government service immediately thereafter. As an agricultural expert, he worked in the War Food Administration during World War II and then in the Office of Military Government, U.S. [OMGUS] and the Foreign Agricultural Service. Mr. Ioanes was interviewed by James O'Brian Howard in 1994.

IOANES: The one I remember best was a program we developed in the fifties in cooperation with the government of Mexico. Mexico had a very short feed crop and ran into problems with forage so their herds were reduced. It turned out at the time that there was great interest in the United States in exporting feeders because we were on the opposite side of the cycle. I was asked to help develop a program to try to move those feeder cattle to Mexico. We went over to the Export-Import Bank for help and we got approval to use that program to finance a loan to Mexico for cattle. The interesting thing about this was that the Assistant Secretary of State at the time was a man named Sam Waugh who came from Nebraska and had grown up in agriculture and had made loans to farmers in his state. He became an enthusiastic backer of our program. We

didn't always get such support from the State Department. And that was a very successful program. About 50,000 head of feeders moved to Mexico under the program.

Q: Ray, before you leave cattle, wasn't there a story about Mexico you told me about?

IOANES: Yes. We got heavy support in our program from LBJ. We were in a show, judging cattle, in Mexico, probably 1966, and we learned that the manager of the LBJ ranch in Texas was interested in showing cattle. Somehow or other with Bill Roadman's help the President, himself, got interested in the project and donated a prize bull to the show, which obviously lent a tremendous air of standing to the whole effort. I think that is one of the high points I can remember about this program which reached to the level of the Presidency for support.

Q: But then, did not President Johnson invite Bill Roadman over to the White House?

IOANES: Yes, he did. I assume he wanted to see the guy who, as Agricultural Attaché in Mexico, brought this about. All of us know that Bill Roadman was an exceptional, exceptional individual and one of our truly outstanding attachés.

CLINT A. LAUDERDALE
Visa and Administrative Officer
Mexico City (1962-1964)

Clinton A. Lauderdale was born in 1932 and raised in Texas. He joined the U.S. Army during the Korean War, serving in Germany. Upon returning to the U.S., Mr. Lauderdale received a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California at Berkeley. His Foreign Service career included positions in Mexico, Germany, Brazil, and Spain. Mr. Lauderdale was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1964.

Q: When you got to Mexico City, what were you doing?

LAUDERDALE: I was...they had started a rotational system and I was supposed to rotate. We all started in the Consular Section. In the doing I spent one year in the Consular Section and one year on the Administrative Section. I never rotated to Political and Econ. I was a visa officer. It was a real visa mill. We had four or five non-immigrant visa officers, all day every day in a little cubicle. I processed an average of 300 a day. You couldn't go for a cup of coffee, you couldn't go to the Men's room without knowing that there were 10-20 people standing in front of your window while you were gone. I used to even feel guilty about going to get a cup of coffee or to the Men's room or whatever. Just a real treadmill.

Q: What did this do?? Did this get to you? I mean this wasn't the fancy diplomatic life you

expected. How did you feel about it?

LAUDERDALE: It wasn't so much that it wasn't the fancy diplomatic life. That puts it in a negative, and I think the wrong, context. It was dealing with foreigners, interviewing. So I didn't object to that. What I objected to was, because I had worked before in other jobs, these were awful working conditions. It wasn't that the nature of the work was so onerous; it was the volume and the conditions under which you worked that were objectionable.

Q: Were you refusing a lot of visas at the time?

LAUDERDALE: Yes. The other aspect of it was, to some degree, the arbitrariness of it. It was a lot more what I considered arbitrary, because in so many cases it was a judgment - is this person likely to return? And often, under the circumstances I told you, where you do 300 a day, you can give each person one or two minutes, you don't have much data. If you could sit down and talk to each one for five minutes you'd have a much better sense. But we couldn't do that.

Q: How did you work it? I'm curious about the process. You're sitting there and somebody comes up to the counter, what do you look at? What were you...

LAUDERDALE: Kind of everything. Dress. You know, if a person comes in a coat and tie and he's a banker, we give him a visa. And if he comes in work clothes... So, dress, occupation, where does he live, why is he going, things like that. I said it was arbitrary, but there were a lot of clues. A person has a good job and is well dressed, he's a professional person - there's very little question. But many were just workers. A person is a carpenter, doesn't have a checking account, keeps his money in the cabinet at home, he's wearing work clothes. Is this person coming back or is he really going up to see his brother? You don't know.

Q: Then you moved over to the Administrative section. What were you doing there?

LAUDERDALE: Let me tell you something in between. The Economic Counselor at this post was an alcoholic and I didn't want to work for him. And the Political Counselor, I didn't like his personality. He was strange. So I didn't want to work for either of them. I didn't see a future in it. They weren't what I considered to be role models or what I would consider to be diplomats. So I'm under this rotational program, what am I going to do? I would like to serve in political work, I'd like to serve in economic work, but I don't want to work for either of these people. On the other hand, I had a great personal affinity for the Administrative Counselor. He was a kind of an exuberant, well-liked, popular fellow, competent. So he offered me to come and work for him and I said okay. And so I stayed in the consular section for about a year, first at visas and then I worked too at Protection and Welfare.

Q: Could you tell a little about that? Do you have any Protection and Welfare stories or problems that you dealt with?

LAUDERDALE: Yes. In Protection and Welfare, my first day we had a death. The death of an American. I didn't have much experience about that, but I learned. An American couple, husband

and wife in their 60s I suppose, had come down to Mexico City on a vacation, and he died of a heart attack. That was not that rare because of the altitude in Mexico City. People who have circulatory or heart problems are a little at risk. Also, drinking affects you. So I went over to the hotel and dealt with the hotel people and dealt with the spouse, helped her decide how to get home, what to do with the body, and all that stuff.

I got called to the jail a lot. One night I got a call, by this time I had been to the police station often. They use a different system in Mexico City. It's not really the jail, it's the police station. The beat officer out on the street doesn't really make arrest decisions. They escort you to the police station if there are any problems, instead of dealing with it themselves. Maybe they're not trained or whatever. A lot of people get taken to the police station and there's a kind of a hearing, it's something that in America would occur on the street, where the policeman gets the facts and decides if you ought to be arrested. So I got calls a lot, and I had learned that the first thing to do was to assure that the person is an American citizen. So I go down to the police station at about 6:00 or 7:00 at night and the police bring out the fellow and I ask if he is an American citizen and he says, "No, I'm Canadian." And I said, "Well, what did you call me for?" And he said, "Oh, Canada's small, America's big. They don't have a duty officer, you do." So I said that I wasn't authorized to help, but I did speak Spanish, and I am here. I'll make it clear that you're Canadian and see what I can do for you. So I helped get him out of jail.

Another common thing was automobile accidents. I got called to go to the scene of a lot of accidents. Of course we had a lot of stolen or lost passports, robbed hotel rooms, things like that.

Q: Did you find there was any problem with payoffs of local officials? Was this a problem, how to deal with it?

LAUDERDALE: Well, one heard stories all the time about the *mordida*, the common bribe system. I never used it. I was never asked for any bribes. If I went down to the police station to get somebody out of jail, no, I never offered anything and was never asked for anything. Now it's possible that in some cases where I was unsuccessful that a bribe might have made a difference. But there was no way I was going to bribe them with my own money anyway!

Q: Did you ever visit jails, people that were already in jail?

LAUDERDALE: Yes, we had a murder case. I don't remember the name of it, but it was a very famous case at the time. A wild man, an American, big, 6'4", 250 pounds, who went on a murder spree in Mexico. I think they called him King Kong. The police caught him and put him in jail for murder. I was assigned his case, so I went to see him and some other prisoners. He wasn't really in prison; he was in jail pending trial. On other occasions I went to the prison to see prisoners.

Q: How were they treated at that time?

LAUDERDALE: We used to have a system that the Embassy people collected pocket books and other kinds of materials that we would take to prisoners periodically. So I used to have a little

basket of goodies, books or cookies or whatever that I took as a present. The people there, by and large, were familiar with Mexico. They weren't just passing through. So they weren't bothered so much...I mean, if an average American had to suddenly live on tacos, it would be hard. But these folks were either used to it, or whatever. My memory doesn't tell me there were any great hardships there.

Q: What were you doing when you moved to the Administrative Section?

LAUDERDALE: I was kind of an aide to the Administrative Counselor. I spent the bulk of my time on the construction of a new chancery and the move to a new chancery. At that time we were in an office building up over Sanborn's on Paseo de la Reforma, and we were building further down on Reforma a new chancery. It was under construction. I had very little to do with the construction, except for the office layouts. But toward the end of my year we actually moved to the new building and gave up the old. So planning and executing the move absorbed a good portion of my time.

Q: You had two Ambassadors when you were there, Thomas Mann and Fulton Freeman. Did you get any feeling for how they operated?

LAUDERDALE: Yes. We really liked the Manns. As a junior officer it would be possible that I'd never even meet the Ambassador in a big place like Mexico City. But we were able to meet the Manns. I met him several times and my wife and I got invited to the residence on various occasions. We liked them, and they were popular with junior officers, maybe senior officers too. I also had the impression of competence, ability, but certainly popular with the staff. They left. He became Assistant Secretary for Inter- American Affairs, and Fulton Freeman came. A different type of Ambassador, but they were both career officers. I don't remember if he came toward the end of my time, but we didn't have much contact with him.

Q: Since you were with the Administrative Section you probably had more to do with Mexicans than any other section. What was your impression of how things operated in Mexico?

LAUDERDALE: The Mexicans then, I don't know about today, had a minor paranoia about Americans. So they're a little bit...we're the Big Brother to the North kind of thing, they feel second-class, I think. A couple of traits we noticed: they don't like to tell you "No." I don't know if it was because we were American or if they do that to each other. So they'll tell you "Yes" and then not do it, all the way from craftsmen coming to your house, who is supposed to come at 10:00 and never comes. If you ask him if he's coming he'll say yes. Maybe he has no intention of coming but he says yes. So that causes a little discombobulation. It happens socially too. We were invited to a party from another vice-consul who invited two Mexican couples and we were all going to have pizza and beer and socialize and so forth. She asked them if they were going to come and they said yes, but they didn't come. That was one aspect of it.

Speaking the language is very important, even though a lot of people speak English. We spoke Spanish, we traveled around everywhere. I dealt with an American business couple who spent a year in Mexico and we got to know. They didn't like the Mexicans and they didn't trust them. I

asked them why not and they said, well, they talk about you behind your back and so forth. And I asked him if he spoke Spanish and he said no. So I said, "Well that's your problem. I don't have any of that! You hear them talking but you don't know what they're saying and you make the worst of it." So we spoke Spanish, we practiced it, we enjoyed it, we traveled, we had good relations, we didn't have any incidents.

Q: This was your first Embassy. Overall, how did you think the Embassy was run, its effectiveness and all that.

LAUDERDALE: My overriding memory - now - of Mexico was the oppressiveness against junior officers and of the calling card diplomatic calling system and the treatment of wives. Some of my colleagues considered it oppressive even then, but we were wide-eyed and bushy-tailed and we accepted it. My wife and I were 29, we had two little boys and a baby by then in Mexico, living in temporary lodging. We had to make 18 calls on Embassy officials - Ambassador, DCM, Counselors, military attachés, immigration attachés. 18!! And my wife had to go too, with calling cards and the whole business. We had to find baby sitters, transport. It was a real burden and it created a lot of resentment. Also, there was a consular wives group run by Mrs. Coles, the wife of León Coles, who was the Counselor for Consular Affairs. Attendance was mandatory, monthly meetings, periodic, bring your own plate or pot or whatever, always mandatory. That created some resentment. We lived with it, but looking back at it now, it was a lot worse than we realized.

Q: As a post, let's do a little compare and contrast, how would you compare Mexico and Rio in those days in terms of people? Were there any differences?

LAUDERDALE: Yes. For Americans, Brazil is a better place to live. The living conditions in Mexico City were better than in Rio, but the relationships with the Brazilian people were a lot better, it's a lot more open, it's a lot friendlier. You feel less threatened. So I think the relationship between the two countries and between the two people's were probably more friendly with the Brazilians, and that's why I think it's a better place for Americans to live. In terms of amenities, Mexico City in those days was superior to Rio, but that may not be true today.

EDWIN MCCAMMON MARTIN
Assistant Secretary for Latin America
Washington, DC (1962-1964)

Ambassador Edwin McCammon Martin was born in 1908 in Ohio. He received a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University and joined the State Department in 1945. He held a variety of positions during his long and distinguished career, serving as Assistant Secretary of the Economic Area, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, and as ambassador to Argentina. Ambassador

Martin was interviewed by Melbourne Spector in 1990.

MARTIN: The second one was Mexico. They had a surplus of a very heavy oil that is a source of asphalt for road building. In the southern United States, we had a real scarcity at this time of this particular product. So there was great pressure from southern congressmen to let the Mexican oil in, but we had great pressure from Texas and other oil producers not to build a pipeline and breach permanently the wall that had been set up.

Somehow, in negotiating a solution to this, I got an inspiration, and we created something called the Brownsville Gap. There had been some talk about shipping the oil in boats up to a little town just across the border in Mexico, and then having trucks or a short pipeline bring it across the Rio Grande River into Brownsville, which was right on the border in Texas. But the pipeline would be a precedent, and nobody wanted to break the quota ceiling that way, and Brownsville didn't want to build up the port facilities in their competitor across the border, so I got agreement on the "Gap" from the Interior and the Customs Service after a considerable battle. Interior handled oil policy in those days. Under the Gap the boats would come to Brownsville, the oil would be pumped into tank trucks and the trucks would go back, under bond, across the bridge and then turn around and come in "overland." It got to be such a big business that Customs had to have a 24-hour staff on that bridge, checking them, coming back. The leaders of PEMEX, the Mexican state oil company, came up to my office to sign the contract under which this was done. (Laughs) But there were just lots of tricky little things like this that one had to deal with.

On the way back, I made three speeches in a day in Anchorage, Alaska, a Rotary Club, the university, and a World Affairs Council. Before going to Japan I had done so in Spokane, Seattle, Portland and Tacoma, in Washington and Oregon. After Alaska there was a speech in San Francisco. Then we borrowed a car from an old Northwestern friend and drove to Los Angeles and made a couple of speeches there. Then by arrangement with the Mexican ambassador, who was one of the most outstanding people I've known, Antonio Carillo-Flores, a marvelous man, we spent nearly two weeks at a little fishing village on the Pacific coast of Mexico called Puerto Vallarta. It was very isolated.

Q: In those days.

MARTIN: In those days, yes. You flew to Guadalajara and then had to take a tiny airplane to get to Puerto Vallarta, and because there were no lights at the airport you had to land on a grass strip in daytime. We got into Guadalajara too late to land in daylight, so we had to spend the night there before going on to Puerto Vallarta. It was a delightful spot, and we had a wonderful time. There was one nice hotel on the beach. It was a fishing village, the women were washing their clothes in the river. There was a small American retirement community there known as Gringo Gulch, and then there was another one on a little hillside called Snob Hill after a San Francisco one called Nob Hill.

While there, however, on a Saturday afternoon coming back from a birding walk - I was a birder at this point - I had a message at the hotel from the consul general in Guadalajara; he wanted to talk to me about my vacation plans. He wanted me to take a plane that afternoon and come back

the next afternoon, Sunday. There were no telephones except in the airline office. I went there and sent a message that as I was planning to leave in two days, I didn't want to take off a day. Well, I got a message back about an hour later by courier saying Rusk wanted to speak to me. That was different, so I caught the plane and went to Guadalajara.

Rusk said, "There are a number of personnel changes being made. They will be published in tomorrow's newspaper. I wanted you to know about them before you saw it in the newspaper." Every two weeks we might see a newspaper there, but he didn't know, of course, where I was. "You're being moved to another Assistant Secretaryship, and I wanted you to know it." He didn't mention what it was.

What happened was that In April I got a cable on a Wednesday from Tom Mann, saying, "A very distinguished Mexican author has applied for a visa to go to the United States to appear on an NBC Sunday talk show with Goodwin. We have a copy of his card as a member of the Communist Party. Therefore, we cannot grant a visa unless the State Department follows the usual procedure of requesting a Justice Department exception from the legal rule, which they can give. I urge that we do not seek such an exception."

Justice didn't like to do it, and State only wanted to do it when it was really critical. We had no knowledge that this was going to take place prior to this, although Goodwin should have checked with our public affairs people before agreeing to appear on the show. When I confronted him, he said that he didn't really know who he was going to be debating with, and he didn't know the rules that he should inform the public affairs staff.

I said, "I do not think that I can say that it's in the public interest for you to appear on television with a Mexican Communist, but you can discuss it with Rusk." I presented the situation to Rusk; he supported me. I think I had discussed it with him probably before I said this to Goodwin. He did see Rusk, I think twice, but Rusk agreed that the exception was not justified.

The New York Times had a story about it on Saturday, saying that the State Department had refused to issue a visa but not mentioning specifically the Communist connection. NBC did some calling to protest, too. Schlesinger called me to protest and Kennedy called me on Saturday to ask about it, based on the New York Times story and probably a Schlesinger protest, because Goodwin kept in close touch with Schlesinger who continued to follow Latin American matters considerably. I told him about the Communist connection, and he said, "I'd like to have wide public debate, but I can see the problem," and did not pursue it. I think he was not too happy about it, and Schlesinger, of course, wasn't at all. They didn't appreciate the State Department problem on this. But anyway, I think at this point Dick decided he'd better start looking around if he was going to be restricted in this way. I don't know that there was anything personal about it, because Rusk was fully supportive of my position.

HAVEN N. WEBB
Consular Officer
Guadalajara (1962-1964)

Mr. Webb was born and raised in Tennessee. A Naval Academy graduate, Mr. Webb served with the US Navy overseas before joining the Foreign Service in 1961. A Political and Consular Officer, he served abroad in Guadalajara, Hamburg, Helsinki, Panama City and Tromso, Norway, where he was Officer in Charge. His Washington assignments concerned Political/Military Affairs, as well as International Organizations. Mr. Webb was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Well you were in Guadalajara from '61 to when?

WEBB: Actually '62 to '64.

Q: '62 to '64.

WEBB: Yeah, and that was a very strange first post. We had a principal officer who frankly in many ways was rather weird. In some ways, I always thought he was probably a plus from the standpoint of the interests of the United States. He was a German, raised in Cuba. He was absolutely bilingual. But he totally preferred Latino culture, and he insisted on giving speeches on the drop of a hat. He would ward you off in this very flowery Spanish that just sounded wonderful, and then you would translate into English, but he would translate it literally. An English speaker would cringe to hear these flowery expressions that came across so well in Spanish, but nobody would translate literally who was serious about language. We had extremely strange hours of operation. I think there was eight in the morning to three thirty in the afternoon with no time off for lunch. Then, once a week you had to stay until six. Apparently this was all done for the convenience of the local employees, the Mexican employees. The Americans hated it, not that it was so inconvenient for us, but because at 3:30, all the Mexicans who had the duty shift, they left. Nobody who was an American left at 3:30. If you left at 4:00, he would notice and comment. If you left at 4:30, he would notice and comment. After 5:00 you might be able to sneak out without any dire results, but he always said he didn't mind working late, and he always stayed until 6:00 or so. You won plaudits if you stayed a little bit later. I don't think any more work was ever done. He said, "If we ever change our hours, all the Mexicans would quit." And when Mr. Limfiken came, who was a very sane and solid American business type, though he was a Foreign Service officer, he immediately changed the hours. There was a lot of grumbling, but nobody quit. He was a very strange man. He got along great with the local Mexicans. They certainly saw him I am sure, as a friend. He was on their side if you want to look at it that way. Which I always thought was a real problem in ARA. The people in ARA from my observation tend to be afflicted greatly with localitis, and they all seem to see themselves as representing their own country and their own region to the United States. I remember a senior American secretary who had spent her entire life in Latin America just happy as a rose when Argentina grabbed the Falklands. When I tried to explain to her that you know, I didn't think we really approved of that, and that it was perhaps likely that Maggie Thatcher was going to take it back by force, she was

just up in arms. I don't think she had any idea what American interests were. I can say that to a degree because I only served in Mexico and Panama, but it is somewhat true in all the countries, maybe less so in Chile and a few others. But the press is constantly drumming at you about the evils of Uncle Sam and he is always meddling in our affairs. Psychologically I think it can be very difficult. I got very worn out in Panama, particularly with the Americans there who any time the Canal Zone was mentioned in a staff meeting, I swear there were hisses. People just automatically assumed this was an evil institution. From what I have heard since then, the whole area has just utterly collapsed.

Q: Well going back to Guadalajara, what type of work were you doing?

WEBB: My first job was protection and welfare. I worked for a guy, Ken Skoug, who was just a little bit older than I was, and we even looked a little bit alike. He was a very difficult person in some ways, but I have a lot of respect for Ken in that he was one of the two hardest working FSOs I have ever ran into. It just amazed me, the infinite care. I remember once, we had to go see an American who was in jail for being drunk or something and disorderly. The fellow made no bones that the charges were correct and all. We didn't think to say much about it. Some months later, we discovered him dead in Puerto Vallarta. That meant that since we had no connections except by air at that point, we used to send our resident embalmer, undertaker, over there to fetch the bodies. Of course, to my knowledge, no American who has ever died in Mexico or perhaps any Latin American country, who was alone, who had any valuables on him including rings that were ever returned to the family. At that time at least, you could make one telephone call or send one telegram. We got the name of the mother I think it was, and we called her, and explained the situation. They had to send money and we would send the body, that sort of thing. The next thing we knew, we had Congressmen, I think it was all from Florida, Congressmen, Senators, very influential family. Apparently mother and father were divorced. We didn't know that. They were outraged that we had told one member of the family and not the other. How were we supposed to know. The cause of death was listed I think, as alcoholism or something, just absolutely outraged that their son had gone on the wagon years before. They had no doubt whatsoever he couldn't have died, have been drinking at this time. Ken just amazed me. He just stayed absolutely delicate in the way he answered the Congressman and the Senator. I would have just told the truth. I don't think he ever told them that we had seen this fellow picked up right after I arrived, apparently drunk in Guadalajara. But he was trying to prevent a mess and I suppose keep the State Department out of trouble and keep himself clear. I guess it eventually worked out, but the amount of effort that went into that. I could do that and occasionally did where I thought there were serious things involved, but something like that I must say I didn't have that kind of energy. He amazed me.

Q: Now there is a huge American community there of retirees. At this time, '62-'64, what was Guadalajara like?

WEBB: We were just getting a community. The first year I was there we had 100 American deaths in our consular district, but they were all practically Guadalajara, Lake Chapala, the WWII retirement group. We had a lot of veterans who had full pensions with all kinds of disabilities. I remember one fellow particularly explaining that for the amount of money that he was

guaranteed I guess for life from the U.S. Treasury, he could live in his home town in a small apartment. He had his wife and a couple of kids and his mother-in-law and himself to take care of. In Guadalajara, he could live in a four bedroom estate. He could have three or four personal assistants to help him with everything imaginable. They lived like kings. It was a marvelous situation for everybody concerned including the Mexicans. They certainly appreciated it.

Q: How did you find with this kind of thing the goose that was laying the golden egg? Were the Mexicans treating these people delicately and well?

WEBB: It was my experience, and I did protection and welfare for almost a year, that about 90% of the Americans who came to Mexico, visitors, and I assume it was pretty much the same for Lake Chapala, the retirement crowd and all, that we really didn't have normal retirees. Well we had some but not as I gather we have today. Most people, 80-90%, thought Mexico was wonderful. They loved the prices. Everybody was friendly. Unless you had something to do with the police, unless you had something to do with crime, unless you got your car picked up for some reason, in which case you could pretty well say goodbye to that car because the Mexican police would be driving it around as one of their cars. I remember one fellow who was so outraged that he ended up getting on talk shows trying to convince every American never go to Mexico. I think he was on Jack Paar. I suppose that was before Johnny Carson. Most people just thought Mexico was wonderful. Like I said, if you had to deal with officialdom, of course Americans didn't know how to deal with even bribery. In fact a very strange thing I thought. We had a certain amount of Mexican-Americans come in, mostly Californians, well and Texas. We were closer to Texas of course. Many of these people could hardly speak English, and they seemed to be Mexican in almost every respect. But if they had any sort of trouble with the police, they would start talking about those Mexicans, and all of a sudden it became we Americans. It seemed that Mexican Americans were sort of caught on the fence. They learned in the United States that you weren't supposed to bribe people, police. I am sure it happens, particularly in some areas. Then they would go to Mexico and they were never quite sure of themselves when to lay out a bribe and when not to. Our rule dealing with tourists and other Americans was don't ever get involved in bribery. You don't know how to handle it; you don't know how to do it. We had a list of lawyers and we would just hand them the list and say these people can handle English. They can represent you. We can't recommend anybody. Do your best. The lawyers I am sure got healthy considerations. They did what was necessary. In fact I think I made a young man, probably set him on the road to becoming a very rich lawyer. It was a young fellow that came to see me for some reason, I don't remember now. I got him on the list, and he was a young lawyer who spoke, I swear, better English than I did, just beautiful English. Actually, I never could figure out how. He had had a few years on the border, where I think he had gone to a gringo kindergarten or something, and I think he had a year at LSU in sort of graduate studies. He was handsome. As soon as the ladies met him, he was their lawyer.

He was very idealistic. At times he would tell me how he just hated the system. I remember one time, "What have you been doing today?" He had spent all day trying to get in to see some official. The problem was he didn't have enough money to buy his way in. I said, "What if you had," whatever the figure was, "100 pesos instead of five?" He said, "I would have been in and out in five minutes." It just drove him crazy.

The other thing is don't ever get in a Mexican jail, at least not 40 years ago. The one thing about protection and welfare of course, is, in my case, I saw my first dead bodies within a day or two of my arrival. I really met my first drunks, you could almost say. I met the first crazy people. One fellow particularly who seemed very sane. I have forgotten why he came in, nothing very important, but a lot of Americans would just come in to talk. That is what it amounted to. I finally asked him what was he doing in Mexico after 20 minutes that didn't seem to be getting anywhere. He said that President Lopez Mateos had brought him in to set up technical training schools, but his real reason was that he had invented something that was more powerful than the atomic bomb, called dry implosion or something like that. Up until then I hadn't a clue that there was anything strange about him. Well, he eventually got arrested because he was always buying things. He might not have had much credit, but somehow he was always buying things. Eventually the creditors would complain, and he got thrown into jail. He was there about a year before we could get him out. He was a rather large man when he went in. By the time we got him out, you know one meal of frijoles every day, his belt would just about go twice around him. Some days he would be perfectly sane. My lawyer friend and I went out to see him once. He said, "What is wrong with you? That man is as normal as I am or you are." But then he went back another day and it was totally different.

Q: Well you did protection and welfare for about a year. Then did you go into visas or something political?

WEBB: I did protection and welfare, which meant about once or twice a week I had to speak Spanish usually over the telephone with an official about somebody in trouble and in a difficult situation. My Spanish was totally inadequate, two, two plus at the time in speaking. It was just hopeless. We had an old fellow who had served I think in every consulate in Mexico at one time or another, including four or five that no longer existed. As far as I could tell, all he had going for him was he was a native speaker of Spanish. He was very unhispanic looking and acting, but he did speak the language as a native. One time I was having a very difficult conversation with some official about some poor American who was in trouble. He came walking by and with the most ingratiating smile I could muster I said, Mr. whatever his name was, "Could you talk to this man and find out whatever it is that he wants. I just can't understand." He looked at the phone and looked at me and said, "I am sure you will do all right without me," and walked off.

Actually I passed the written Spanish language test my first year in Mexico, which I attribute only to the fact that when you are living in a country and you see the language everywhere you go, and you hear it, if you have a basis you are bound to pick up something, but I certainly couldn't speak the language. It was only when I got into visas, which was the best thing that ever happened to me, it totally cured my fear of languages. I have been a fool about them ever since, speaking languages with people that I have never even studied, or trying to at least, and totally without any fear of making a fool of myself, which I think is the most important attribute in learning a language. Certainly I was very guilty of that. So I got into visas, and it was a perfect situation because basically I dealt with campesinos all day long. I interviewed as many as 180 in a single day. I eventually got my standard interview down to I think it was like 35 or 40 seconds. Half of the time before they could sit down, I had given back the form that they handed to me,

explaining that the young lady over there who was a native would explain what had happened, which was 99% of the time a rejection because these were people who were typically making 10 pesos a day working on somebody else's farm with eight or nine kids, age 29 or 30. They wanted to go visit relatives in Whittier, California, I remember on one occasion.

Early in the game I made the mistake of saying, "Who is going to pay your expenses." Some young fellow pulled out a wad of bills, dollars I think, I don't remember now. It would choke a horse. Thinking I had no choice, he could prove he had enough money, I gave him a visa. I gave about 20 visas that day, I think, tourist visas. The next day the INS on the border said, "Who is this guy, Webb, and what does he think he is doing!" So I learned my lesson there. But I did have one fellow who wanted to go to Whittier, California, and stay for three months. I wouldn't look at his money. They would also try to bribe you; they always knew what it would cost to bribe an American official. I would usually look away and act like I had not seen the money, but then I would tell them that anybody trying to bribe an American official would be forever prohibited from applying for any kind of a visa and certainly an immigration visa. This fellow wanted to go to Whittier, which is very unusual. They would usually say LA or something that made a little sense. He had to go to Whittier. I said, "Why Whittier?" He certainly never heard of Richard Nixon. He just said that he heard it was a nice place, and he had worked hard all his life and he wanted to go to the U.S. for three months. I must say I was awfully tempted to give him a visa, but I didn't.

Q: Well after this period, how did you like foreign service work?

WEBB: Oh that is a hard one. I went into the foreign service not very differently than I went into the Naval Academy. It wasn't something like my room mate whose greatest desire in life was to be a naval officer and second greatest desire was to graduate from the Naval Academy. He was a native of Virginia, and he never changed his mind until he died of Lou Gehrig's disease a few years ago. I went because I thought at the time it was the best thing I should do in both cases. In the case of the foreign service, I was married, I had no children, but I was obsessed with foreign affairs. I was obsessed with politics. I was obsessed with history, and very foolishly I didn't want to become a teacher and didn't want to go and get a graduate degree or Ph.D. in history or something, which was very stupid on my part. But at that time it was offered to me, as I think I explained earlier, a friend from Yale had the forms and all I had to do was fill them out. I got in, and in those days I was very good at talking to older people, and convincing them that I was exactly what they wanted. I am sure, I was right at the age, I was 29 when I came in, and because of my age and my experience and my previous earning power, they wanted to do the best for me, but under the regulations all they could do was put me in the last slot, as an FSO-8, which is an ensign with a lot of seniority.

Q: Did you get any feel after you left Mexico about Mexican politics and all as sort of a country?

WEBB: Well I went down there, and I think Time Magazine had a big feature cover article on Mexico. It was all this palaver that Mexico was really a democracy. It was a one party democracy, sort of like Norway where the Labour Party held the prime minister's office for 40 years. Because the PRI, the Parti de Revolution Institutionale supposedly welcomed contributions

from all four sectors of the society, the teachers, the laborers, the military, and the intellectuals and something else. This sort of made it a democracy. It was all just absolute nonsense. But it certainly wasn't a totalitarian dictatorship. People were very free to talk privately, very openly about most anything. In a public restaurant they might sort of lower their voices, but it was certainly not Stalin's Russia. Let me just give an example there. I knew a fellow, Harry Hudson, whose wife had all of the languages I ever tried to study. Ingrid was a Baltic Swede whose family had lived in St. Petersburg for decades. I assumed they were fluent in German, Russian, and Swedish. They left at the revolution, and she grew up in Helsinki and became fluent in Finnish. She met her husband when she was working at the embassy in Paris, and was no doubt very good in French. She had never studied Spanish, but she spoke much better Spanish than I did in Guadalajara. She told a story once of the difference between a totalitarian state. She was not an intellectual type and would not put it in these terms. But Harry was an admin officer in Moscow the year before to the year after Stalin's death. She, with her native Russian, said that once she was in a line, a queue, with a bunch of Russian peasant women more or less who were all talking excitedly among each other. Somebody looked down and saw her shoes, which at that time was a dead giveaway of a foreigner. Instantly the woman froze in mid-sentence and turned away with terror written across her face as did the other women and never said another word to her. A year later that wouldn't have happened.

In Mexico it was nothing like that. But you didn't want to get in trouble. I ran into something in our files that I thought was just devastating. It was a case that was several years old, and was labeled secret. I don't know if anybody else at the Consulate General knew about it. But it was a case where a young man working at Sears had seen a middle aged woman shoplifting. Doing his duty he had run over and grabbed her, and accused her of shoplifting. The woman just began to sputter in rage and said, "Don't you know who I am?" The manager came running up. It turned out that she was General Cárdenas' wife. This was the General Cárdenas, if I remember correctly, who was the ex-president of Mexico, that Cárdenas whose son was recently mayor of Mexico City, I think. Once the young man realized what he had done, he fled in terror. Now I thought of it at the same time as when the Kennedy family was being deified in America, certainly after the assassination. If that had happened to a Kennedy wife, I think the Kennedys would have put pressure to keep it quiet, but I don't think the young man catching a Kennedy woman shoplifting would have been in any danger of his life. It might have been bribery; it might have been all kinds of things like we saw with Mary Jo Kopechne, but you know, there is a vast difference between Mexico at that time. I frankly have a hard time believing it has totally changed by now. But it was that sort of situation. The police, the military were laws in themselves. There was a road rage case where a Mexican general felt that somebody had just dissed him on the roadway and chased the man down for a couple of miles in his car and shot him dead. Of course there were no repercussions. It never got in the newspapers, and it was only by word of mouth that we ever heard of it.

The junior officers there were assigned to a Mexican state in our district, and I had the state of Colima, which was 140,000 people, 90% I would say were illiterate from a practical standpoint. You could just about get to know everybody who had any influence in the world if you got down there two or three times a year probably. I read the Colima three newspapers as well as the three newspapers of Guadalajara. Never saw anything of any interest. Once a year the governor of

Colima would announce that some foreign company was going to invest billions of dollars, marks, francs, something in some sort of a iron mining project or something like that. A year later the newspapers would headline exactly the same story.

Nothing ever happened, with one exception. One day I discovered something that was shocking. That was one of my three Colima papers all of a sudden said that the mayor of Colima was an absolute bastard and a renegade and a crook and a scoundrel. As best I could tell the rule is very simple. You never criticize the mayor of a city you lived in. You never criticized the governor of the state in which you lived. And you never criticized the President of Mexico whatsoever. Almost anybody else was fair game to some degree including even cabinet ministers. This really mystified me. Then this went on for several days or maybe a week or two, and then all of a sudden with no explanation the mayor was a fine fellow. There was never any explanation of what this outburst was all about. Well I got down there on one of my infrequent visits, and I asked one of the rival newspapers. They looked at me and said, "Ah, they were just arguing over what the annual subsidy was going to be." I don't know if that classifies as a bribe or just an official subsidy. As best I could tell the newspapers were even more worthless than the Soviet newspapers. You had to be a Kremlinologist to get anything out of newspapers.

JOHN O. BELL
Ambassador to Guatemala
(1962-1965)

John O. Bell was born in 1912 and attended George Washington University as an undergraduate, later receiving a law degree at the same university. He started his career at the State Department at age 19. Upon joining the Foreign Service, he served in Denmark, Pakistan, and Guatemala among others. Arthur L. Lowrie interviewed Ambassador Bell in 1988.

BELL: The Guatemalans, who are as you know just south of Mexico, look at Mexico as the colossus of the north and the United States as a protector of people who lie south of the colossus of the north, or as potential protector.

Q: The critics of our Latin American policy over the years say we end up embracing these two-bit, tin-horn dictators in country after country. Do we and why?

BELL: Well I think we are so scared, we are so scared of violent change that we endorse anybody that has the power to maintain apparent calm. And that normally will turn out to be a military dictator. Why we're so frightened of any kind of experiment I don't know. The only country in Latin America which has succeeded, and it's about to collapse, in an experimental approach is Mexico. They adopted a one-party political system which worked pretty well for about 50 years and is now on its last legs I think, but I've been saying that for 10 years. May not be. We're

always trying to say the solution to their problems is to adopt an American-style constitution. Well they've had the words and most Latin American constitutions are parodies or paraphrases of the American constitution. Far more than the French. And yet it's meaningless. That isn't what the thing is all about.

ALLEN B. MORELAND
Administrator of Security and Consular Affairs
Washington, DC (1962-1965)

Allen B. Moreland was born in 1911. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Florida and served abroad in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Mr. Moreland received a law degree from Georgetown University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Germany, and Canada, and Mexico. Mr. Moreland was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

MORELAND: One other problem that developed at the time was that Willard Wirtz, who was the Secretary of Labor at the time, abolished the bracero program that had been working between the Americans and the Mexicans in the American Southwest for the import of temporary Mexican labor. Under the bracero program as it existed at the time, the farmers of Texas and the southwest, would certify to the agriculture representatives what temporary workers they needed at a certain time, this total requirement would be taken to the Immigration and Nationality Service and they would give it to the Mexicans, and they would recruit the needed workers and they would be hauled in to the U.S. by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. When the time was up, INS would pick them up and take them back. This was the operation of the bracero program. But there was great labor opposition to this in the areas affected. I think primarily because they couldn't be unionized. However, it was obvious that when one brings in temporary workers like this, for stoop labor in farm communities they will not have the very best of housing. On the basis that they were not given proper housing and that this was a demeaning program, they abolished the program with the stroke of a pen, which meant that if the farmers were going to get temporary labor, they would have to get someone with an immigrant visa to come over and do it. If he has an immigrant visa he would be here as a resident alien and wouldn't go back at the end of the season. Well, the waiting lists for immigrant visas in the Mexican posts within three months after this program was abolished, had developed to a point that if we had to issue all those visas with the existing personnel, we would have had about a six to ten year backlog and there was no disposition to send in new consular officers and proliferate the issuance of visas to these people who couldn't qualify for the provisions of the law that still required that one not be a charge on the public facilities or public finances of the local Community.

Something had to be done for the Mexican Consular posts in this situation. We tried to arrange some form of satisfaction of the "public charge" requirement of the law. We talked with the Labor Department and INS and came up with a compromise modus operandi. We instituted a

system whereby the consular posts in Mexico would require farm workers to present a written offer of employment by a specific farmer in the U.S. This letter would then be referred to the appropriate Regional Office of the Labor Department which would confirm the existence of the farmer and the bona fides of the offer. Its certification would be returned to the consular post and the visa would be issued.

Considering the size of the backlog of the applicants at all posts, it was agreed that existing IV applications would be canceled and new applications conforming to this plan would be required. All existing applicants were so notified. This got us back in business of having temporary labor coming in to do the farm labor in Texas, Southern California and Arizona and it got us out of those tremendous backlogs. As a matter of fact, we had to fight to prevent the labor certification concept that we established for non-immigrant visas from being embedded into subsequent legislation that was a revision of the 1952 Walter-McCarran Act.

KEITH C. SMITH
Consular Officer
Mexico (1963-1965)

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

SMITH: No, I had no idea, which was so stupid. I just said, send me wherever you want. So they assigned me to Nicaragua. I guess nobody else wanted to go to Nicaragua. At the time, my daughter who was the oldest child, suddenly became quite sick with multiple infections and had to be hospitalized. I didn't even own a car at the time. And then an FSO who had been assigned to Tijuana, Mexico went to Personnel and said, "I don't want to go there." And Personnel said, "gee, well here we have this other guy who's got a child who's sick. We can send him to Tijuana. They'll have adequate medical care, and we'll send you to Nicaragua." I guess at that point the other guy didn't dare argue. He went to Nicaragua and I ended up in Tijuana. I was there for one year.

I had the most horrible experience of my career with the consul general in Tijuana, but many wonderful times with the Mexican local employees.

Q: What happened?

SMITH: We had a consul general with a massive ego problem. I was at the post eight days before I was even introduced to him. The staff all joked about his delusions of grandeur. A lot of strange things happened during my 14 months in Tijuana. The consul general was a guy who insisted that every Saturday the duty officer cross the very busy Mexican border into California in order to get

his personal mail. He insisted that when we delivered the mail to his house we should also bring the garbage cans from the curb into the house. On one occasion, he assembled all the staff to instruct us about how diplomats should behave when traveling; this from a man who had spent very little time overseas. For example, he claimed that the first requirement was to have very expensive looking luggage. Since this was my first real experience with a senior American diplomat, I seriously began to wonder about the mental state of Foreign Service Officers. There were some other mid-level "hard to place" individuals at the post, including one who was a difficult mental case. Fortunately, there was a good group of junior people – both Americans and Mexicans.

The CG, however, was a constant problem. On one occasion, he decided to hold an Easter party for Mexican officials and he had decided that the most junior person in the embassy should dress up like an Easter bunny and give out Easter eggs. Of course, that was me!. Well, I refused to do it. His wife called our house and even offered to make me a costume. But I said I could not do it. And all the Mexican employees heard about the CG's request, and I had to endure a lot of ribbing about it. I insisted that wouldn't do it. Finally, the CG got on the phone and really harangued me. He was angry as hell. He then called the next most junior guy - who also turned him down. This junior FSO left the service within a year of his refusal. He was selected out, and to this day, blames me for his misfortune. In any case, the CG then that guy called the next most junior officer, who had already been warned not to answer his phone. And he kept going up the ladder until he found a Mexican-American FSO, who, to my surprise, agreed to do it.

There were a lot of nice young Americans at the post; some of them I've stayed in touch with. I found the local employees to be very nice, and the assignment did not turn out as badly as it could have. In any case, my daughter was very healthy in Tijuana, and I was only a three-hour drive from my parent's home. My friends in Pasadena would laugh at me saying, "You joined the Foreign Service and you're three hours away from home. "How can this be?" I did benefit, however, from being close to our families in the Pasadena area after being away at school for six years.

Finally there was an incident that indirectly saved my sinking career. The assistant secretary for administration sent a memo to all principal officers around the world saying that State wanted to build a more open management system. Washington encouraged all principal officers to solicit suggestions on post management from their staffs. And so the CG sent the notice out to all the people in the consulate. Only one naïve FSO sat down and wrote suggestions for the CG. At the time, I thought they were all useful, positive ideas for improvement; dealing with issues from improving the morale of the FSNs, to how to make the consular section more efficient. Not surprisingly, the CG took my suggestions as a personal affront. A week later I got a call to come up to his office. After cooling my heels for some time, he called me in and showed me a pile of copied memos on his desk. This large pile of paper contained point by point rebuttals to all the suggestions that I had written. He said that he was not going to send them off to the assistant secretary, but that he wanted the staff at the consulate to read his rebuttals.

I replied something to the effect that if his response represented Foreign Service mentality, I was not certain that this was the career for me. He readily agreed that it might not be the career for

me. I told him he could do what he wanted with my suggestions, but that they were well-intentioned, and in any case, I would inform Washington about what the result were of this exercise in "openness" in Tijuana. The CG dismissed me, but obviously worried about the effect on his career if he was viewed in Washington as squashing alternative ideas. He was extremely ambitious, and probably thought that it would harm his chances of becoming an ambassador if they knew what had happened.

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

Q: Before we get there, what type of work were you doing in Tijuana?

SMITH: I was doing rotational work, with most of the 15 month of my tour working in the consular section. I spent a lot of time interviewing potential Mexican immigrants and visitors. When I arrived in Tijuana, there was a backlog of 50,000 families that needed to be interviewed for immigrant status. All of us also spent considerable time on the protection and welfare of American citizens. I saw many sad, and some horrible things. I witnessed several deaths during my first few months in Tijuana. During my tour, I saw hundreds of people in jail; most of them clearly guilty of serious crimes. I had to deal with two American families that had driven down together to Tijuana for the day. Seven of the ten were killed in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. I was with the father of one family and the mother of the other when they died. It was a traumatic introduction to consular work. I watched a daughter, the same age as my own, die, simply from a lack of adequate medical care at the Tijuana Hospital.

Q: How did we treat prisoners in those days? American prisoners?

SMITH: We would visit American prisoners on a regular basis, both at the city jail and at the State Prison. As periodic duty officer, I had to go to the Tijuana jail, record the names of new prisoners, call their next of kin and usually ask the family or friend to send bail money. At that time, we didn't have to worry about a privacy act. Prisoners were generally treated ok, even though no Californian would believe it. Occasionally there were people who refused any help from the Consulate. One particular prisoner refused my offer of help one night. When I came back the next morning, he was dead. He apparently died during the night of pneumonia. I remember another case when I was called to the hospital and there was a young man who the doctors said had overdosed on drugs. They thought he was an American, but they could allegedly find no identification on him; no wallet or anything personal. There wasn't anything I could do to help. I didn't know who to call, nor was I sure he was an American.

I returned to the hospital the next morning to discover that the young man had died during the night. Suddenly a wallet appeared with his name and contact information, but no money. I felt angry and embarrassed. If we had the wallet the night before we could have gotten this guy into a U.S. hospital, where they would probably have saved his life. During the next few days, the Mexican police carried out an investigation in the hospital. I don't know what the outcome of the investigation was. As far as I know, the police never discovered who stole the wallet. Later, the family came to Tijuana and of course, they were angry about the whole thing. I remember feeling very bad for them. Their son died of a drug overdose, but he might have been saved if someone hadn't stolen his wallet the night before.

EDWARD MARKS
Consular Officer
Nuevo Laredo (1963-1965)

Ambassador Edward Marks was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1934 and graduated from the University of Michigan. He spent two years in the U.S. Army before joining the Foreign Service in 1959. His career included positions in Kenya, Mexico, Angola, Zambia, Belgium, Zaire, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sri Lanka, New York, and Washington, DC. Ambassador Marks was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: You left there in 1962?

MARKS: December, 1962.

Q: Where to?

MARKS: To Nuevo Laredo, for my sins.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MARKS: June/July, 1963 until June/July, 1965.

Q: What did you think about that assignment?

MARKS: I was appalled, terribly upset. I hadn't joined the Foreign Service to go to the American border. Mexico City would have been a delight, but the Texas border? And I was assigned as a consular officer which certainly did not please or interest me, although that was not the worst aspect of the assignment as in those days we all assumed we would do a consular tour or two. It was the combination of consular work and Nuevo Laredo. I couldn't get out of it, as the personnel people were unsympathetic, claiming that recent practice in changing assignments to meet officers complaints had resulted in a stern directive from the Director General that no

assignments will be changed, period. That may have been fiction but I was young enough and believed it. So, I went off to Nuevo Laredo with my new bride.

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

MARKS: Nairobi, she was from Tehran and had been visiting friends in Kenya. After I returned to Washington for Spanish language training, she came and we were married here, got her expeditious naturalization in less than 30 days (in those days spouses of FSOs had to be American citizens), and got in my little British convertible and drove to Nuevo Laredo.

As it turned out, Nuevo Laredo was not an absolutely terrible experience. In a small post, three officers and one FS Staff, you are free of the worse threat of consular work which is pure, undiluted visa line work. While I was the sole "visa officer" and stood on the visa line most of the day, I took all types of applications including immigrant visas. I also did protection and welfare and some administrative work. Actually all three of us shared the whole range of tasks. We did some, although very little, reporting. The principal officer was a very, very knowledgeable consular officer, Harvey Cash. You may know him.

Q: He is one of the top people in the consular trade. You couldn't have had a better professional.

MARKS: And a very nice man to boot. So, doing a variety of consular work, I hate to admit, was not without interest. And, I learned as do all Foreign Service Officers fairly shortly, that your best stories are consular stories.

Q: Could you give me some of the consular stories that you had?

MARKS: Stories. Most of the stories evolved around the peculiar atmosphere of the border. For instance, I have participated in what is almost an old locker room joke. I freed a man from a brothel. As you know, Mexican border towns all have brothels, usually clustered in what is called the Zona Rosa, or red zone. One day we received a call from one of the madames who ran one of the brothels in town. She had an American there who was not well, and who had run out of money. She was taking care of him but he had run up a very big bill and we had to do something about it. So, Harvey Cash, giggling and laughing, sent me down to sort it out. The madame was a nice enough Mexican lady. She explained the situation and took me to a room where my American citizen, a man in his late 30s or early 40s, was lying, apparently sound asleep in bed. He had shown up in the establishment about three days earlier, already reasonably drunk and had spent a couple of days buying drinks and girls and paying everyone's bill. After about two days of this, the madame thought she better get some more cash in hand, but it now appeared that he had run out. By then he was practically comatose as well, so she cleaned him up and put him in a bedroom. She was taking care of him, keeping him clean, feeding him, and allowing him one drink a day so he would come down gradually. I got his papers and his name and she presented me with a bill of \$600 or \$700, which was a lot of money in those days (1969).

I called his family, somewhere in the South, and discovered that he was the scion of a wealthy family who had managed this sort of adventure several times before. This particular time he had

disappeared about a month or so before with \$30 - 40,000 and had just been in a tremendous toot all through Mexico before hitting Nuevo Laredo on his way back home, broke. I negotiated with the madame and got the price down a little bit, notified the family of the amount, paid the bill, and transported him in the consulate car to the railway station where I put him on a train heading home to his family. By then he was sober if not in absolutely good shape.

Imagine, being held prisoner in a brothel.

One of the things you learned to understand on the border was the real cultural gap between you as an official and the applicant; in this case the poor Mexican who was trying to get across, who was just trying to move from one place to another because of his family or a job. What we now call economic refugees. To him you, as the consular officer, is this foreigner - this rich and powerful Gringo - talking about ideas that makes the doctrine of the Trinity seem like ABC, specifically the concept of a bonafide non-immigrant. To the applicant, you are talking gibberish. It was not a language problem, in fact my Spanish became quite good. As we all know, trying to explain the concept of the bonafide non-immigrant in English is almost as difficult. What I learned was that the consular officer and the applicant were often two different worlds in conflict. In that situation, where the applicant is essentially seeking to change his life, he or she would speak to the incomprehensible official world (which we represented) in any way that would work. Was that really lying? In our sense, yes, of course. However to that type of applicant, we are merely arbitrary officials who need to be placated because we hold the key to passage across the border. What is it you want to know? Whatever it is he will tell you. They don't care because your criteria is not about anything that has any validity or reality to them. What is important is to get across the border. All in all, it was a very interesting exposure to cross-cultural interaction.

Q: It is one of the hardest ideas I find, as a supervising consular officer, to try to explain to the young officers. This is not a personal affront and don't get your panties in a twist because somebody lies to you. You are an impediment to what they want to do and they don't understand what you want and are just trying to get through to you. One of the hard things is that some consular officers take this as a personal affront.

MARKS: Yes, and then just think of the person in question as a liar of low morals, and therefore ineligible for a visa. But there were also other types of cultural interaction. I remember a couple who appeared in the Consulate one day to apply for a visitor's visa. They represented a very different class of Mexican, very upper class. We usually did not see Mexicans of the aristocracy if you will in the visa line as the our local people of class all had permanent visitors cards, and those from the Mexican interior generally applied for visas in their neighborhood consulate or at the Embassy. Actually they were not a couple, rather a man in his thirties and his mother. I was fascinated to note she spoke to him with in the "tú" form while he used the [formal "you"] "usted" form with her.

Q: This the familiar and the non-familiar.

MARKS: Yes, this man spoke to his mother with the formal "usted" form, which was the

old-fashioned manner.

Q: What is the entry place for Nuevo Laredo?

MARKS: Laredo, Texas, and then straight up the highway to San Antonio.

Q: That has one of the biggest Air Force bases in the world.

MARKS: There were many in Texas at that time, and we had one just outside Laredo. It was a training base for jet pilots, including foreign students from allied countries. In fact, there were some students from Iran there at the time, and as my wife was from Tehran we got together with them which resulted in a picture and a long article in the Laredo newspaper.

However in my visa work, one section of the Immigration and Naturalization Act was Section 212 (a)12, that relating to immoral background or intentions. Well, here we were at the Texas-Mexican border, where prostitution is a legal industry, and a good number of the customers come from the U.S. Young boys from all over Texas hop in a car on Friday night and roar down to Mexico to spend some time in the bars and brothels of Mexico. Needless to say, that crowd also includes many of the servicemen stationed at the numerous military bases in Texas. Men, women, girls, and boys and everything being the way it is, some of them go on to more permanent relationships including marriage. So, we had a constant series of applications for immigrant visas by Mexican spouses of American citizen husbands. At this point Section 212 (a) 12 often reared its head.

Now Mexican prostitutes are registered by the local authorities, and inspected by public health officials so we at the Consulate (and I think at other consulates along the border) had a quick rule of thumb. We assumed that the Mexican spouse of a Mexican-American would not fall under Section 212 (a) 12: Mexican-Americans did not go down to Mexico to marry whores. However, an Anglo-American with a new Mexican wife was a different story (unless she and he are obviously of a certain class and background). Checking on the obvious cases, and they really were obvious, produced a positive identification nine times out of ten, and so the applicant was ineligible for a visa. Even though the applicant was the legitimate wife of an American citizen, the law said "'tis a pity but she's a whore."

That would usually not be the end of the story, though. The actual visa interview would take place in the visa officer's office, that is my private office away from the visa line. As the applicant is being interviewed the husband, usually present, waits outside in the waiting room. The visa officer interviews the applicant, after having already identified her as a "working girl," and attempts to get her to admit it. If she refuses, the visa is refused and it is up to her to explain to her husband why. However if the applicant will admit the charge, her husband can then apply for a waiver from the INS, on the grounds she has reformed. The INS would almost always grant the waiver, but take about six months to process it. At that point, the applicant can be given her immigrant visa.

So, you can see how this series of events could be fairly traumatic for a new, young, innocent

FSO, at least those faraway days. Getting a women to admit she is a prostitute, then having to go out and tell her husband, or having her go out and having him immediately wishing to discuss it with you. Remember, this was the early sixties, before the sexual revolution. The whole process was a very real introduction into life.

I have all sorts of stories about this process over a two year period as people reacted to in different ways. I particularly remember two. The first case was half-done when I arrived at post: a young lady who had been interviewed, found ineligible on 212 (a) 12 grounds, and was now about to receive her INS waiver and visa. An unusual aspect of the case was that her Air Force officer, a lieutenant: almost invariably the spouses of this type of applicant were enlisted men or the civilian equivalent. Then I saw the girl, and I almost fell off my chair. She was beautiful and elegant, well dressed in the style of that time and place in linen summer frock, high heels and handbag. Her English was fluent and correct with an attractive Mexican accent, and could have passed easily as the daughter of one of Nuevo Laredo's best families. Yet she was only 18 or 19 and had spent the last six years working in the cribs up and down the border. She had innate class and taste and was obviously brighter than her husband. She broke down in tears when I gave her the visa. I often wonder what became of her.

Another case was a real tear-jerker, involving a horny-handed construction contractor from Galveston. In fact he was quite well-to-do but a real diamond in the rough. He had met his lady love in one of the towns along the border. She was not beautiful, not elegant, not young (around 40) and had about 7 kids in tow from at least three fathers. He knew exactly who and what she was and he had fallen in love. He wanted to take care of her and the children but she could not get an American immigration visa, even with an INS waiver, because Mexican law would not permit her to take the children out of the country without permission from the father, or rather fathers. This was not possible as she was not even sure who they were, much less where to find them. She was therefore stuck in Nuevo Laredo where her American husband (they had gotten married) had set her up in a nice house, although he had already built a house for them in Galveston. He came down every weekend in his Cadillac and tried to get her through the Mexican system. We in the Consulate were rooting for them and were prepared to process the visas but could not do so without passports for the children which they could not get. (I do not remember why, but we could not get a passport waiver.) It was just ghastly.

In fact, we kept hinting to him that he ought to get the visa for his wife and then slip the kids across some night, but he would not. He insisted on doing it legally, and therefore remained trapped. It was almost a soap opera, but with real people. It was unresolved when I left Nuevo Laredo.

Another story involved rescuing a guy who thought he was Jesus Christ from jail and driving him through the city, across the bridge to Laredo on the American side and to the railroad station. All the time he was leaning out the window shouting about how he would bring about the coming of the Messiah. All consular officers have stories like that.

Q: I imagine jail visiting was part of your job. What was our impression of how the system worked at that time?

MARKS: The Mexican system?

Q: Yes.

MARKS: Not too bad because we were right on the border and American visitors were important to local commerce. By and large the Mexicans didn't make a lot of trouble for Americans, especially the kids, who got into trouble. The Mexican police would grab and book them for a quick fine and then let them go. We didn't have any long-term American prisoners in jail there and the few who did turn up we were able to get out fairly easily.

I only had one tricky situation in my two years in Nuevo Laredo. It involved a tourist of the type who does not usually get into trouble on the border - a doctor, lawyer or something who had been involved in a car accident. This sort of incident was usually sorted out quickly and rarely involved the Consulate. However this particular individual had gotten very aggressive with the police and others and they had tossed him into jail. He was very unhappy. I could have gotten him out right away, on his promise not to leave town until the accident charges were sorted out the next day, probably to include a fine. I could see by the look in his face and by what he said that he had no intention of keeping that promise which would have left me left holding the bag. The Mexican authorities would clearly have settled for a fine, they had not real desire to keep him in jail, but the American was very much into that indignant American mode: "Who do they think they are? They can't put me in jail, I am an American citizen, etc." I kept trying to explain that he was not in the United States, but he had trouble seeing the logic of this.

Essentially we did not have a lot of trouble with the police and American citizens because we were not deep in the Mexican interior. The cops in this town on the border, who I knew pretty well, were not looking to make trouble for American citizens. They wanted to milk them a little bit, but tourism was the industry of the town.

Q: You left there when?

MARKS: December, 1962.

Q: Where to?

MARKS: Back to Washington via Tehran to go on to Nuevo Laredo. I say via Tehran because I stopped there to see the family of my fiancée. As I mentioned before, I tried to get out of the assignment to Nuevo Laredo by saying I had grown up as a boy in a town on the Canadian border and didn't join the Foreign Service to go back to the American border. You can imagine how successful that line of argument was. Nothing else worked either so, off I went.

Q: We discussed this, didn't we?

MARKS: Yes, in much detail. The point being that for all its lack of ego gratification to substantive political and economic officers, consular service provides many of the average FSOs best stories, as I mentioned last time. It was an interesting professional experience in a way, which I didn't mention last time. Nuevo Laredo is the newer town, the older Laredo is on the American side. At the end of the Mexican War the border of the two countries was set at the Rio Grande and the town of Laredo, Mexico became Laredo, Texas. Many Mexicans of Laredo did not want to be Americans and so moved across the border and found the new town of Nuevo Laredo. So, the American town is the original. But the two cities get along very well, and claimed to have the best relationship along the whole American-Mexican border. Unlike most American border towns of the era, Laredo had a significant Mexican component in its professional and upper classes, and many families - and most especially the so-called best families - had both Anglo and Mexican backgrounds with members living on both sides of the border. I was told this was quite unusual for the border. Elsewhere along the border there were much sharper social and economic distinctions between Anglos and Mexicans.

Consequently, the two cities got along very well with many families having members living on both sides, in fact both cities shared the same moto: "Los Dos Laredos" [Spanish: "The Two Laredos"] and used it all the time. It was an interesting insight a mixed Anglo/Mexican community, a situation which has become much more prevalent now on the Mexican/American border, and has spread (some) to places like Los Angeles, which I think is the second largest Mexican city in the world after Mexico City.

The other interesting aspect of serving on the national border was vivid manifestation of DeGaulle's famous observation about foreign affairs and geography, a not unimportant lesson for a young diplomat I realized that however we got along with Mexico at any given time, the essence of foreign policy towards that country was the elemental and unchanging fact of geographical proximity. We share a border, we share a continent, we are neighbors and nothing is going to change that. That fact is often overlooked by all by people who sometimes scream and yell about our policy to Mexico. The geographical fact makes Mexico a fundamentally different foreign policy question for us than South Africa or even Japan, and that was true even before the population movements which are changing the nature of the relationship to an internal one in some respects. I began to learn that lesson in Nuevo Laredo.

VICTOR NIEMEYER
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1963-1965)

Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Monterrey, (1965-1969 and 1976-1979)

Victor Niemeyer was born and raised in Texas. He attended the University of Texas and later Texas University. Mr. Niemeyer served in the U.S. Army for four years during World War II and joined USIS in 1963. His career included

positions in Honduras, Peru, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, the Philippines, Mexico, Trinidad, Chile, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Lewis Hoffacker in 1999.

NIEMEYER: At any rate, I was then sent to Mexico City, where Jim Webb was the cultural affairs officer. I had the job as assistant CAO. This was very pleasant. Here we were near our home state, Texas. We both knew Mexico fairly well - my wife and I did - I from research at the university and several visits; she from Mexican parents. And we drove to Mexico City from Austin. It's a long way, but it's good highway. We knew it was something, though, when we left Laredo, Texas, that the heat was terrible. We just wondered how is it this hot? We just couldn't understand it. Well, what happened was that while we were in the *aduana* or the customs office there, our son, a little kid, had gotten up (and this time I had two more sons, one had been born in the Philippines, one had been born in Guatemala, if I failed to mention that, Steven in the Guatemala and Chris in the Philippines, just forgot that), he had played with the dashboard heater control. It was a little Chevrolet station wagon. It did not have a cooling system, just a heater. And he had turned on the heater, and we had not noticed it. But I looked around at Lala's mother, who was going down to Matehuala, and she was just dripping, dripping, seated in the front seat next to me, and Lala on the other side, and here were these four kids in the back of the station wagon. So we found out what it was, and then I think we all had to stop at the next little pueblo and get a soft drink or something, because we were burning up and very thirsty.

Mexico was great, but one problem that I had which pursued me the whole time I was there was my name. I'd have to spell it for people over the telephone, because they just couldn't understand Niemeyer. I'd have to say in Spanish, "*Ene de Nora, I de Irma, E de Ester, Eme de Maria...*" and go on down the line of the consonants and vowels with the given names of people. I remember doing it once and coming to Maria I said, "*Eme de Maria,*" for the *M* in Niemeyer, and the girl I was talking to over the phone said, "*¿Maria quién?* [Maria who?]" I said, well, I have to go back and start all over again. I remember, too, that at an art exhibit - this was part, of course, of the cultural affairs program - you tried to attend different art exhibits around town - I remember once going to the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City with my wife, and we met three Africans from an African country, diplomats all three, from their embassy. I got to talking with them and asked them their names. Well, I didn't understand their answers, and I asked again, didn't understand it, then finally the third time, I was almost too embarrassed to ask what the man's name was, and he said, "Oh, that's okay, just call me Richard. That was my colonial name." I'll never forget that.

Mexico is just a great place. In those days you could see the Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, the two big volcanoes, very easily - well, not every day, but the smog was a lot less, of course, than it is now. And we really found that the life there was just very, very delightful. The kids were in the American school there. They liked it. We had a great number of Mexicans with whom we made friends. And the job as assistant CAO, I was trying to do as much of the office work for Jim Webb to allow him, as the CAO, to get and attend more cultural events and make more talks and so forth, which he did, so a lot of it was paper - I mean, it was just office work, which I was pleased to do. But I found the staff there to be very well prepared, the exchange of persons program, Jack Goodwin, who had been in Cyprus or later went to Cyprus. There were Pete

Marchetti and Jim Hoyt, who was a specialist in Asiatic culture, Chinese especially. It was a very well-prepared, very well-educated staff, and I think that we were all very pleased to be in Mexico City and to be given responsibilities to work together, and to be doing a job for our country. We moved the office from the old embassy there into a new embassy building that was built to be an embassy. It was a big move, but one day we left the old building and had all of our desks tagged with different room numbers, and when we went to work the next day, we were in a new building with the desk and filing cabinet and so forth all in place.

I guess the one event that impressed me the most was carrying on a cultural program in Oaxaca, capital of the state of the same name, some 340 miles south of Mexico City. This was a one-man event, and I was the one that carried it out and stayed there for two weeks. I drove down, shipped a model mercury capsule, and carried a whole exhibit of books for presentation purposes; I also carried two 35 mm projectors and I don't know how many reels. At one time I had a projector going in one preparatory school and another one going in another preparatory school at the same time. Fortunately they were just a few blocks apart. But I was there turning out press releases, and I gave a talk which I had prepared beforehand at the University Benito Juárez. It was on the friendship between Abraham Lincoln and Benito Juárez. They never met each other personally, but they were both chiefs of state, each trying to save his country during a very crucial period in the history of both, our Civil War, of course, and the French invasion of Mexico in 1863. So I found in Latin America that you cannot go wrong by talking about Abraham Lincoln. You can mention other presidents, and I guess, to a certain extent, Franklin D. Roosevelt also as the author of the good neighbor policy, but Abraham Lincoln is universally admired.

Q: Isn't that interesting.

NIEMEYER: And you could almost talk about -

Q: This was a paper you wrote, for publication?

NIEMEYER: Yes, I prepared about a 12-page paper on the friendship between these two, how they worked together, although they never met, and how Lincoln helped Juárez and Juárez would help Lincoln.

Q: And it was well received.

NIEMEYER: It was very well received.

Q: Well, that's rewarding.

NIEMEYER: Yes, it was to me a real satisfaction to be able to give that paper in the university bearing the name of Juárez in the state of Oaxaca. Later, it was published up in northern Mexico, *El Norte* of Monterrey, and I gave it a number of times in Mexico, really.

Well, that was a cultural program down there that I enjoyed doing, and after some two years, I'm sorry to say, we left Mexico City for a new post. I had arrived there in '63, in July. In September

of '65 I was offered the job of branch public affairs officer, Branch PAO, in Monterrey, in the northern part of Mexico, by Al Harkness. Harkness was the PAO, and I accepted eagerly. He said, "Don't tell anybody." So a few months later, when we were up there, he said, "Well, did Lala like to get the news?" (That's my wife.) I said, "Well, you said not to tell anybody, so I didn't tell her." He said, "What? You didn't tell her? You should always tell your wife." I said, "Yes, I realize that." But she was overjoyed, of course, when we moved, this was close enough to Texas for her to visit her mother and family in Crystal City, Texas, about 35 miles from the border.

Q: This was a promotion, too, to branch PAO. I assume it would be.

NIEMEYER: Yes, I would gather it was a... It certainly involved more work and more responsibility, I would say that.

Q: Now, Monterrey is industrial, isn't it?

NIEMEYER: Yes, it is the industrial center of Mexico as well as the capital of the state of Nuevo León. It is also the commercial center of northern, especially northeastern, Mexico.

Q: It's different in that sense from Mexico City, yes.

NIEMEYER: Yes, very different. Monterrey was smaller than Mexico City but still had 1,500,000 or so people in it and towns on the city limits.

Q: So you dealt with the people in an industrial city, yes. Business.

NIEMEYER: There were plenty of cultural activities, labor organizations, businesspeople, government officials, and newspapers with which to establish and maintain contact.

Q: Was there a consulate there?

NIEMEYER: Yes, it was a US consulate general, and I was in charge of information and cultural matters from August of '65 to August of '69. We were there for four years - but in addition to Monterrey. I had an area to cover, too, and it's impossible to do a good job. You did what you could, that was it, because Monterrey was enough for one man, really, to try to cover, but I had the states of Coahuila, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, and Durango in my area. I tried to visit most of those states at least once every couple of months - sometimes not that frequently. I had to cover the border also, all the cities along the border, Matamoros, Reynosa, Ciudad Acuña, Nuevo Laredo, and there's always something happening on the border. I remember very well being in Durango, which is the extreme western part of my territory, picked up a paper that said, "Brother of Lyndon Johnson arrested in Matamoros." I thought, Oh, my God. Johnson was President then. Gosh, this fellow's going to need help. I should be over there trying... Well, it turns out they didn't need me, but Andrew Jackson Johnson - that was his name - had had, I think, a little too much to drink and had a little problem over there in Matamoros, and they had taken him into the jug, and he kept saying, "Well, I'm the brother of the President of the United States." Well, finally he was able to prove it, and Lord, I understand a whole convoy of police

cars from Brownsville went over, and the Mexicans, of course, very graciously released him to their custody. But there I was, over in another part of the territory, couldn't do a thing - didn't have to, anyhow.

It was always a satisfaction to me to go into a city and talk to newspaper editors, to talk to university presidents, to try to get to the head of the student organization, to talk to cultural groups, to give a talk wherever I could on some topic about our country and its culture. It was always a pleasure to do that, and I really enjoyed it. And one of the nicest features was to be able to pass out a book that was a result of our book translation program, because, as you know, we had a very successful book translation program in USIA. Representative books about the United States would be translated into Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese, French, various - I think some 30 - languages, and then were distributed overseas. They would find a publisher overseas in that particular tongue - whether it was Buenos Aires in Latin America and Mexico, those two cities, I know - and the publisher was told, If you can print two thousand copies of this or three thousand copies of a title, then USIA will buy x number, which was enough for him to realize a profit on it, anyhow, and then we got these books, and wherever a USIA officer went we could present them to people who would be interested in that particular topic. Books on economics - Milton Friedman, I remember, as the author of a book, presented that to the head of the economics department at the University of Nuevo León - and different appropriate topics for appropriate heads of departments and members of their teaching staff. So that was always a pleasure, to walk into somebody's office and give him a book in his own language that was in his field of expertise. And then in my case it was even a particular interest because I had written my doctoral dissertation on the governor of a Mexican state, the state of Nuevo León, and there I was, living in Nuevo León, in Monterrey. And some years before - I guess it was 1963 - I had given a copy of my dissertation to the rector (the president) of the University of Nuevo León, and he had had it translated. And the Center of Humanistic Studies of the University of Nuevo León published it. I'll never forget. It was in 1966. One of my staff came in, brought a box in, and I said, "What's that?" He said, "I don't know." So we opened it up right there. It was a hundred copies of my doctoral dissertation, which then I was able to give out to people because the governor had been Bernardo Reyes, the father of one of the great writers of Latin America, Alfonso Reyes. And here I had a book to present as something that I had done myself.

Q: Tell me again the thesis, the subject of your thesis.

NIEMEYER: It was The Political Career of General Bernardo Reyes - that was the English title of it - and it was just printed in Spanish as *El General Bernardo Reyes*. He was the man who governed that state from 1885 to 1909, when he was sent on a military mission because he was getting too popular, and he went to France. He later came back and landed on the border and attempted to overthrow the president of Mexico, Francisco Madero, a coup in which he perished (This was in 1911, just after the beginning of the Mexican Revolution of 1910). But he was a good governor, and people respected him because of his honesty and for his ability to get along, to join labor and investors at the same time. He was one of the best state governors of the Porfirian period, the period of Porfirio Díaz. Well, it was a nice thing to have a book you'd written to present to people who were interested in that.

The opportunity there that I had was also to become a member of the Nuevo León Society of History, Statistics, and Geography. And I became a member, and later that organization awarded each year the Alonso de León Medalla de Acero. Alonso de León was one of the first Spanish explorers of that area. And they would give it to writers who for one reason or another had distinguished themselves in local history, national Mexican history, or in US-Mexican history. And later, in 1973 - by this time I was in Santiago, Chile, I received this award, and my successor there, Doug Ellerby, who was branch PAO, he was able to go to the meeting at which it was awarded and get it for me and mail it to me. So I was honored by that particular organization to receive that particular medal.

Well, I don't want to dwell on that, but let me just say that we were there for four glorious years, in Monterrey, and my times out of the city, traveling, trying to do my job, sometimes I would take my wife with me, other times, I would just have to cover so much by myself. I remember once we were in Durango, and I was asked to give a talk at a little school about, oh, 15 or 20 miles out of the city. So I told my wife, who was with me, I said, "Honey, let's eat a big breakfast because I don't know what we're going to get between here and Monterrey." We were on our way back to Monterrey after the talk. So we got to this little school, and the director met us at the door with some of his teachers, and he beckoned to me to come with him. Well, let me back up a minute. Before we went, we left Durango and we stopped at a motel there and just ate pancakes and sausage and everything we could because we didn't know when we'd get to eat again. Well, we went to this little school, and the teachers were all there in a room, and the director motioned to me to come into his office. So I went into his office. There he had two or three teachers with him. He goes over to the wall and opens a little box and brings out a big bottle of tequila - this was about nine o'clock in the morning - with four big tumblers, and he pours each one of us a big shot of tequila. Well, that helped, but it didn't help for what followed, not very much, anyway. They brought me then to where my wife was waiting for me into a room with some of the other teachers. They had taken the desks out, had tables in there, and they had huge bowls of ground meat and tortillas, and here we were, already stuffed to the gills, and they sat us down, poured huge portions of this ground meat and tortillas - *picadillo* they call it - and there we were, with hot coffee, trying to look pleasant and trying to act like we really enjoyed it. And they're standing behind us as we were eating slowly, saying, "*¿Qué le pasa, no le gusta?*" ["Don't you like this? What's the matter?"] It was something I'll never forget.

Finally, we were able to eat some of it, but that time we were doubly stuffed, really, and then they took me into another room where the teachers were all lined up, and I gave the talk on the friendship between Abraham Lincoln and Benito Juárez. And just as I finished, somebody in the front row talked to some little *muchacho*, and this kid ran out. He comes back just a few minutes later with a picture of Lincoln, framed in a mahogany frame, and he presented it to me. Well, you know, this is just the opposite of what a USIS officer is supposed to do. He is supposed to give pictures of Lincoln to people, but this man obviously had had this picture hanging on the wall (because the nail was still in the wooden frame), and I've got it now in my study here, Lew.

Q: *That's very touching.*

NIEMEYER: I'll always remember that man for that gift.

Q: Did you get through your speech?

NIEMEYER: I finished, yes, I finished, and then we left for Zacatecas and finally home in Monterrey.

Q: You weren't too drunk. You didn't drink too much tequila.

NIEMEYER: Oh, no, one little bit. It probably helped me get through that second breakfast. My poor wife was the same, though. She couldn't eat any more than I could, but we somehow forced a good bit down. But they had gone to so much trouble to prepare this huge pot of ground meat and tortillas - I think that was all, maybe some beans - but anyway, whatever it had been, it was too much. Well, that's just one of those things that you tend to remember about a tour of duty in a country. The hospitality of the people is overwhelming.

Q: Well, certainly, you were living in a friendly environment.

NIEMEYER: Very friendly environment, yes.

Q: They were glad to have you, and relations between the two governments were good.

NIEMEYER: There was no problem. You find a great feeling of admiration and love for our country in Mexico, despite what officially may come out as some, well, resentment over the fact that we've taken almost two-thirds of their territory - that was in 1848 - and invaded them in 1916, in 1917 in pursuit of Pancho Villa, and violated the town of Veracruz in 1847, I guess, marched into Mexico City, took the capital. You still find a great respect and admiration for the United States, not necessarily its government, but for the people and the country. And we saw that very, very frequently, and I'm trying to think of some of the things that would maybe exemplify what I've just said. I remember a poll was run among several different high schools in Mexico City back in the 1960s, and one of the questions was what country do you admire the most? Answer: the United States. What country would you want to live in if you couldn't live in your country? Overwhelming: United States. The third question, What country do you fear the most? The answer was the United States.

Q: Yes.

NIEMEYER: Nevertheless, we saw great outpourings of respect -

Q: That's good. Your wife and the kids were comfortable and content there?

NIEMEYER: Oh, yes, they were.

Q: They were able to move around normally.

NIEMEYER: Yes, they certainly were. The kids grew up speaking Spanish. They would talk to

us in English, but then when they really wanted to express themselves, well, they went back into Spanish.

Q: *That's good. A great asset.*

NIEMEYER: It was good. Stephen and Chris - they, I think, really profited greatly from their exposure to the cultures of several different countries, but basically Latin American culture.

Well, four years in Monterrey this time. We were in Mexico City for two years, four in Monterrey, and came time, after having been out of the country for 12 years, to serve a tour in Washington.

We were there a little over three years, and they offered me several positions. One was the CAO in Panama, and then they said, "How would you like to go back to Monterrey" and we said, "Yes, we'll go back to Monterrey." So we went back to Monterrey for three more years.

Q: *It's like going home, isn't it?*

NIEMEYER: That's right. I had written a master's thesis on the Mexican constitutional convention of 1916-1917, which wrote the present Mexican constitution, and when I was in Mexico City, Americans coming down somehow had gotten wind of it - at least two people - and they wanted to know if they could get a copy of it. So that led me to think of doing a little more research and putting some personal memorabilia in it. I found several delegates to that convention who were still alive, and I interviewed them. One man had a whole book of memorabilia, of pictures. What the old congressmen did as they finished the Constitution was to go around and say, "Write something as a remembrance for me, write something in that." And I was able to get much of that and was able to put this into a book which came out in English in Chile while I was there. It was titled *Revolution at Querétaro: The Mexican Constitutional Convention of 1916-1917*. And it was published in Spanish in 1993 jointly by the Mexican Congress and the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Relations. When I got back to Monterrey, well there I had some friends who wanted to see the second book, which I was able to get a few copies of. The University of Texas Press that published it.

The return to Monterrey was like, as you say, Lew, a homecoming. We were able to get a house in the same *colonia* that we'd lived in before. Something that I had done in Santiago was to get a film from USIA called *The Golden Age of Comedy*. This film was made up of excerpts from movies of our earliest film comedians Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, etc.

Q: *Comedians?*

NIEMEYER: I'd showed these at home during the curfews in Chile, and they were just, oh, just great. They were the most hilarious films you'd ever see, and finally, when I got to Monterrey, I thought, well, the best thing I can do now is to just ask for this *Golden Age of Comedy* again. So I

get the projector set up at the house, and day after day we would show this and invite friends and contacts to come in for drinks and *batanas* [snacks], and it went over very well, I must say. I really enjoyed it, and everybody did, too. They would really laugh at the comedies. More than that, they would just howl!

Two activities that I carried out during my second tour in Monterrey were the following: First, I planned and carried out cultural missions in the cities of northern Mexico similar to what I had done in Oaxaca in 1965. These involved loading a carryall with films, a projector, books, and pamphlets for presentation purposes, etc. I would visit government officials, university administrators and professors, student leaders, and give talks on various aspects of American culture to any target group that would program me. I would usually take a local employee with me, and while I would be doing one thing, he would be doing another, i.e., showing films. These events usually lasted four or five days but we were always home for the weekend.

Second, in Monterrey, there was a group of five musicians, mostly Americans, who had formed a jazz band and who would give concerts on Friday and Saturday evenings. They loved to play music. The leader was an employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture program that was in the process of eradicating the screwworm in Mexico to the delight of Mexican cattlemen. Well, I got the idea of taking this band to the various cities of northern Mexico for a one-night performance in a school gymnasium or the town square. The band was a big hit everywhere it played. Some of the cities in which it gave performances were Tampico, Saltillo, Durango, and Chihuahua.

JESSE A. FRIEDMAN
American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) Representative
Mexico City (1963-1966)

Jesse A. Friedman attended undergraduate school at the University of Maryland and graduate school at the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations. He joined the Department of Labor in 1958 and proceeded to work with the AFL-CIO, the AIFLD, and ORIT. Mr. Friedman was interviewed in 1995 by James F. Shea. and Don R. Kienzle.

FRIEDMAN: It was not only the U.S. It is very important to point out that at the founding congress of the ORIT, which took place in 1951 in Mexico City, the Mexicans invited the CGT of Argentina. The Mexican invitation to the CGT of Argentina so offended all of the Latin American delegates at that time that the credentials committee refused to seat the invited guests there as not being legitimate trade unionists. That caused such embarrassment for the Mexican hosts that they walked out of the founding congress in 1951, which took place in Mexico City and in which they were partners. They walked out in protest. So ORIT was formed in 1951 without the Mexicans. They did not affiliate until 1954. So the antipathy towards the [Peronist] movement at that time was not only an American phenomenon, it was shared by the community of unions which comprised ORIT in those days.

Shea: Would you care to make a few comments about Mexico and don Fidel Velásquez ?

FRIEDMAN: Don Fidel Velásquez. Well, I know you have talked with Ben Stephansky about don Fidel. It was an honor to know him. He is a unique figure in the entire world. He is now in his 95th year, still at the helm of the CTM (Mexican Confederation of Labor). He is one of those people arteriosclerosis has passed by. Maybe he has a pact with God that none of us know about. I had the good fortune of seeing him on a frequent basis during the years I was in Mexico, and more infrequently since. Every time that I see him I feel that I am in the room with a giant. I think Bill Doherty would say the same. I even have been with Tom Donahue and Lane Kirkland in the presence of don Fidel, and I think that even they look at him with a certain...

Kienzle: Awe?

FRIEDMAN: Not awe exactly. We in the AFL-CIO were very disappointed with the lack of enthusiasm with which the CTM took on the whole NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) issue. They were not aligned with us and that hurt, frankly. We wish their policy were different. Still, don Fidel Velásquez is a person who helped to mold the Mexican trade union movement and keep it as a stabilizing organization in a country that was so unstable. I remember that Serafino used to say, when he would hear critics of Mexico, that he really did not find it much worse than Chicago of the 1920s, and that in Italy, when he was a very young man, if you wanted to describe a total mess, you would say, "What is this? Is this a Mexico?" Because that is how they perceived Mexico in the 1920s, in the post-revolutionary period. People like Fidel Velásquez and Blánquez had to make order out of that revolution. They needed a time of stability, and they needed guarantees for the workers. In that period of history, they played a huge role.

Now it is quite apparent that a new, more modern Mexican labor movement is emerging, which, in order to survive, must pursue its own interests much more aggressively and not be so in league with those keeping the lid on the pot. That, of course, is a question for them to decide. That Fidel Velásquez has played an enormous role, there is no question.

Fidel Velásquez always wanted to be a part of the international labor movement. He is the only one still around who knew Sam Gompers. Do you know anyone who knew Sam Gompers? Once I was part of a US delegation. We were all sitting around a table, and we told don Fidel we had all read about Sam Gompers and that we knew a lot about him, but we did not know much about him as a person. We asked don Fidel to reflect on Gompers as a person, and he did. He likened Gompers as a personality to George Meany, except he said that Gompers could be very stubborn and very...

Shea: In fact Gompers died on his way back from Mexico. There is some question as to whether he died in Mexico or Texas. He had met with the leaders of the Mexican trade union movement. I'm not sure that it was the CTM at that time.

FRIEDMAN: No, it was the *Casa del Obrero Mundial*, a predecessor organization. Fidel Velásquez was on the reception committee for that delegation that came down. Gompers' death is officially said to have been in San Antonio, Texas, I think. At least it is believed by the Mexicans that he died on the train going home, and that one of his last wishes was that, if he died, he wanted to die in the United States. To honor his last wish, they announced his death in Texas. I don't know if that is true or not, but I do know that that is what the Mexicans believe.

Kienzle: Are there any other comments you would like to make about your assignment in Mexico and your work with ORIT that we haven't covered?

FRIEDMAN: Well, maybe to remember Arturo Jauregui. I worked with Arturo Jauregui. He was another of those unforgettable and dynamic people. Jauregui could not stand a day off. He said days off gave him headaches. He was an indefatigable worker in the best tradition. I was lucky to work at his side and to learn. He was a Peruvian, a pasta worker. He worked originally at a spaghetti factory there.

Kienzle: He was the General Secretary of ORIT at the time you were in Mexico?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. He had been Assistant General Secretary for many years, then he was elected General Secretary. He replaced Alfonso Sánchez Maduriaga of Mexico. Those were the Alliance for Progress years. Jauregui could at times be a great critic of U.S. foreign policy. Sometimes he was supportive. He was an absolute democrat. He was an independent guy. He was determined that Latin American labor should grow and be a force in every country. We shared that point of view with him, so that during the years Jauregui was head of ORIT, the AIFLD, in the person of me and those who succeeded me there, had a mandate to cooperate with Jauregui.

We worked hard in many countries. ORIT had a school in Cuernavaca, not unlike the school that exists today at the George Meany Center, the Inter-American Trade Union School. I helped to run that school. Later, when ORIT fell on harder times, ORIT could not afford to maintain the school, so it reverted back to the state of Morelos - Cuernavaca is a city in the state of Morelos - whereafter it was given by the state to the CTM. It is now a CTM educational facility. Working with Jauregui during those years was a very good school for me. Working with the ORIT gave me the inter-American perspective which I think I needed.

Shea: You worked there with Jack O'Grady, of course.

FRIEDMAN: No. When I worked in Mexico, Jim, Irving Salert was the labor attaché then. Salert was a special kind of labor attaché. After Salert, I left Mexico and Jack O'Grady came. Then because of my job, I had to go to Mexico very often, six or seven times a year for one reason or another, and I got to work very closely with Jack O'Grady. Jack was a great man, another great credit to our Foreign Service. Much to the discredit of the Foreign Service, he was penalized and selected out for having too much of a one dimensional focus, which was labor. They should have erected a monument to Jack O'Grady for the people he was able to attract, for his understanding of events, and for the way he influenced things wherever he went. Instead they said he had too

much of a one dimensional character. So AIFLD was very happy, once the appropriate legalities were cleared, to hire Jack O'Grady. Actually O'Grady's last job was as an AIFLD director. So I know Jack O'Grady very well and worked with him closely. However, he was not the labor attaché when I was in Mexico.

Kienzle: What years were you stationed in Mexico?

FRIEDMAN: I went to Mexico in 1963, and I left in 1965 or 1966 . [Although he was not in Mexico during my tour there], I am witness to the fact that a labor attaché who had been there years earlier-I am talking about Ben Stephansky-was remembered very fondly. Talk about the image of the United States! Everything that a labor attaché or other diplomats did was measured against the model that Stephansky set. I think it would have been terribly hard to have been a labor attaché following Stephansky. I have the idea that, if there was a strike, Stephansky would be out among the crowd finding out all of the issues and somehow letting the strikers know that somebody understood them. If there was a major political decision to be made, of which the CTM or labor was to be a part, I have the impression that Stephansky was one of those in whom the Mexicans would have confided.

Shea: He went on to be our ambassador to Bolivia.

FRIEDMAN: Yes, he became our ambassador to Bolivia. But your [oral history] project is on labor attachés and Ben Stephansky was still very freshly remembered when I was living in Mexico.

Kienzle: Do you want to continue your remarks on Mexico?

FRIEDMAN: I think that covers it. During my particular stay in Mexico, I was the Education Director. I was in charge of the academic program at the Cuernavaca school. During the course of that period, I developed the curriculum. We selected students; we coordinated things with AIFLD. We coordinated education programs in the field where AIFLD and ORIT had a coincidence of interests. I gravitated towards - I never had the title - being the assistant to Arturo Jauregui. We could not have been further apart in terms of personalities, but we complemented each other. So we spent weekends together and many evenings together, and I was a very willing student at the time. I always marveled at his ability to speak to a group of peasants or to a council of ministers, each at its own level and with the proper vocabulary and his ability to be patient and to stand back when he could not influence a situation, and then move in with all guns blazing when he could influence the situation. I treasure those years and, of course, I would like to think I made a contribution toward building up ORIT, in [the context of] the circumstances that we were confronting in those days.

I have never lost my love for ORIT and even today I am the principal liaison officer with ORIT, on a functional basis with the regime of Luis Anderson in Cuernavaca. But circumstances and times are very different today than they were then. Who was it that said, "To look into the future, you have to stand on the shoulders of giants"? Jauregui surely ranked as a giant of his time.

Kienzle: You mentioned there were differences between the AFL-CIO and the CTM on NAFTA. Would you expand on that?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. The AFL-CIO, for reasons that are very logical and very easy to understand, opposed NAFTA because NAFTA had no meaty provisions for workers' rights and environmental protections, and the subsequent sidebar agreements never satisfied the AFL-CIO. That would have been the application of the basic principles of the ILO as an integral part of NAFTA. Otherwise there was a danger-and I think the preoccupation of the AFL-CIO has been borne out - that exploitation of labor would be one of the factors that brought us into "a race to the bottom," and NAFTA would not be a trade pact that would benefit both societies as a whole. That was the position of the AFL-CIO. It was the hope of the AFL-CIO that the Mexicans would agree and that they, in their country and we in ours, would together fight to achieve worker rights as a part of the trade pacts. I participated in several missions which went down there to discuss these issues with the Mexicans. They treasured their relationship with the AFL-CIO, but their position was that they had a labor law which was sufficiently comprehensive to protect their workers in all of the areas with which we were concerned. It was unnecessary to have these rights in the trade pact because they already had them. So we could never achieve the degree of cooperation on that level that we sought.

Kienzle: Were the Mexicans satisfied with the enforcement of their comprehensive labor law?

FRIEDMAN: Well, they said they were and perhaps they have to be taken at their word. Certainly we were not satisfied. Under the meager provisions that do exist under the sidebar agreement, we already have some cases in process that- (end of tape)

Kienzle: Do you want to conclude regarding the CTM's position on enforcement of the law?

FRIEDMAN: The CTM leaves it to the labor inspectors to enforce the law and maybe to their own leaders to bring violations to the attention of the appropriate authorities. We believe that the treaty is flawed and that the treaty is no good without a labor rights provision. The CTM position contrasts with the position, for example, of the Chilean trade unions, which would like to enter NAFTA. The Chilean trade unions say, along with us, that they do not want to have a treaty if the treaty does not have a labor rights provision.

It has always been our position that trade should benefit everybody in the society and not just the few investors. The treaties have all kinds of provisions for the protection of property rights and marketing rights and all kinds of remedies for their violation. The treaties don't have any real, meaningful provisions for the protection of workers' rights. It is just that simple, and it is that to which we object. That does not mean, however, that in other areas we do not have coincidences of interest with the CTM. We cooperate with them in the context of ORIT on the hemispheric side and exchange information on international issues. There are meaningful relationships which exist between the Mexicans and ourselves, but we do not have a meeting of the minds on NAFTA. They know our position very well; we know theirs; and we have agreed to disagree.

Kienzle: Do you think they are just out of touch with the times in Mexico or do you think there is

really not a problem there?

FRIEDMAN: As I said before - and this is a very personal view - the nature of the Mexican trade union movement is changing. That long period where the movement was a part of the stability and the old order of Mexico and its one party absolutely accepted political rule, all of that is changing, and the labor movement has to change with it. I know quite a few younger Mexican labor leaders who would like to be part of that change. They are good leaders. They understand that the old order is giving way to the new in Mexico. If they don't change sufficiently, I think they will suffer dramatic consequences. Already, even within that society, some unions have broken away and formed their own confederation, which strikes a much more independent stance, the FECEVIS.

Kienzle: Are they recognized by the AFL-CIO?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. They include the telephone workers. They have an excellent relationship with our own CWA. They have on-going cooperative programs at a very deep level. There is a good relationship between Morton Bahr, the President of the CWA, and Hernández Juárez, the President of the Mexican Telephone Workers. I think the airline pilots are with them. The bus drivers are with them. They represent a new, more militant generation of Mexican leaders. Even within the CTM there are those who want to change with the times. There are also those, of course, of the old guard, who are comfortable with the way things are. It is, of course, for the Mexicans and not for foreigners to decide their own destiny. But I think that any observer of Mexico sees the change coming and that those who do not accommodate to the changes are going to be left behind.

CLARENCE A. BOONSTRA
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico City (1963-1967)

Ambassador Clarence A. Boonstra was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1914. He attended Michigan State University, the University of Wisconsin, and Louisiana State University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1943. Ambassador Boonstra's career included positions in Cuba, Mexico, the Philippines, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Panama, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Costa Rica. Ambassador Boonstra was interviewed by Donald Barnes in 1989.

BOONSTRA: However, FBI did maintain a larger independent capability in Mexico about which I learned when I came there as DCM in the 1960s. Their intelligence activities became a matter of dispute between the then Ambassador to Mexico and the Director of the FBI.

Q: Was that Tommy Mann?

BOONSTRA: No, that was Tony Freeman.

Q: Oh, yes, Tony.

BOONSTRA: The upshot of it was that FBI would no longer maintain their absolutely separate intelligence operations and communication capabilities in Mexico. There would be consultation and communication with the Ambassador, as the CIA ordinarily does, although not always, as you know. The FBI in Mexico previously had refused to provide any of their communications to the Ambassador or to me as Deputy Chief of Mission. There was a major confrontation and for once the FBI lost but they did continue a large establishment there and they still have it. Of course, there is a great deal of police work going on there.

Q: Then you were transferred to Mexico?

BOONSTRA: Yes, as Deputy Chief of Mission. This was after my tour as Political Adviser in the Southern Command, with Tom Mann as Ambassador when I arrived. Tom Mann was particularly active getting a solution to the Chamizal problem. He left soon after I arrived. When President Johnson took office after President Kennedy's assassination he called Tom back to Washington almost immediately and later on Tom became Assistant Secretary of State. So I had about a half year as Chargé d'Affaires there and I finished up the Chamizal Treaty. I signed the treaty which I think was a notable accomplishment. Tom did an excellent job at figuring out the intricacies and making a tradeoff there since we couldn't really restore the lands that Mexico had claimed.

Q: Perhaps to our listeners and readers, you might say a word of what the Chamizal meant.

BOONSTRA: Chamizal is very important to Mexicans, although most of the United States never heard of it. In 1863, or thereabouts, the Rio Grande River broke out of its banks south of El Paso and cut an oxbow piece of Mexico off. Under international law the cutoff territory still belonged to Mexico, about 500 acres. Mexico demanded it but the Texans, in the independent Texas, took it over as part of Texas. Subsequently, El Paso's downtown area began to grow over some of it. The US refusal to negotiate was a principal reason why Mexico, during almost 100 years, would not settle many issues with the United States. In 1911, Mexico went to the World Court and the World Court ruled in Mexico's favor. The United States still would not return it. The Mexicans subsequently related just about everything we did with them to our refusal to return territory the World Court had adjudicated to them and which under normal international law was theirs. It was just a tiny bit of territory really of little importance but of great symbolic importance. This went on until the famous trip of President Kennedy to Mexico City, where he was much cheered by the people; you may have been there.

Q: I was there.

BOONSTRA: Kennedy made it a commitment that we would settle the Chamizal, provided that the Mexicans would negotiate about how it would be settled and not just state rigidly this is it. Tom Mann, who is a lawyer and a Texan, as Ambassador had principal responsibility to negotiate a solution. The Mexicans designated Ambassador Vicente Sánchez Gavito, a former

thorn in our side at the Organization of American States, but who became one of my best friends in Mexico. They negotiated a tradeoff. We couldn't return downtown El Paso, the Texans just wouldn't tolerate that. Governor Connally said he would be willing to work with the Kennedy Administration on a solution to the problem. LBJ, as Vice President, and subsequently President, gave full support. So, the pivotal organization was in line and there was a negotiating opportunity. Since we couldn't return El Paso, we sort of cut the disputed area in two and gave the Mexicans about half the original and the other half down the river nearby. And then we agreed to dig a whole new river channel on the new border. This cost \$30 million, including new bridges across the new channel. A rather clumsy arrangement, but both sides could live with it. When Tom left to go to Washington, I was left with the clean-up and the finishing of that arrangement along with [Director of Mexican Affairs] Bob Sayre in Washington. Then Tony Freeman arrived as Ambassador and later President Johnson made repeated trips down to Mexico celebrating the agreement. After this, Tony and I put together a list of, I think, 32 unresolved claims that we had against Mexico and we scheduled them for negotiation at the rate of ten a year. We were able to settle rapidly most of these claims, including the famous Pious claim by California. The Mexicans, who had held out on the Pious claim since the Mexican war, paid off the adjudicated amount. The Chamizal settlement was one of our great accomplishments in Mexico.

Q: I have a medal from the ceremony in Mexico and it said, I think very nice worded, "revolutionary justice among sister peoples."

BOONSTRA: Correct, I have that medal also.

JULIUS L. KATZ
Deputy Director of International Trade, Economic Bureau
Washington, DC (1963-1979)

Julius L. Katz was born in 1925 in New York, New York. He entered the U.S. Army in 1943 and served in World War II. Mr. Katz graduated from George Washington University and then entered the Foreign Service in 1950. He served in the European Bureau and the Economic Bureau and was Deputy Director to the Special Trade Representative in addition to working on the North American Free Trade Agreement. Mr. Katz was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

KATZ: There was one other experience I had with President Carter and that was with natural gas supply negotiations with Mexico in 1979. This is out of chronological sequence, but why don't we get it out of the way now. In the late 1970s we had the second energy crisis and were trying to obtain what energy supplies we could, especially from reliable sources.

In 1978, Mexico had indicated some interest in selling natural gas to us, although this was a somewhat delicate political issue in Mexico. Jim Schlesinger, the Secretary of Energy initiated

negotiations with the Mexicans which broke down over the question of price. The break off led to some bitterness over some statements made by Schlesinger.

Carter visited Mexico in early 1979 and the visit got off to a very bad start. At the outset, Carter in a speech made a reference to his experience with Montezuma's revenge during his honeymoon in Mexico. Secondly, President López Portillo delivered a rather bitter speech, detailing the affronts to Mexican dignity suffered at the hands of Americans. When the formal meetings began the next morning the atmosphere was distinctly chilly. Carter broke the ice by asking whether the Mexican's wanted to look back or to go forward.

Finally, it was decided that negotiations would be resumed and I was given responsibility for the negotiations. Again, the main issue was price. While I approached the task in a much less dogmatic way than had Schlesinger, there were still limits to how far I could go. Our position, for one thing, was constrained by the competition of natural gas with fuel oil. If the gas was priced too high, it would not sell. Secondly, we were concerned about the effect of agreeing to too high a price for fear that Canada would use that as a reason to raise its price on sales to the U.S. And Canada supplied far more gas to the U.S. than would Mexico.

I traveled to Mexico seven times that year in an effort to find an agreement and every time I got close the Mexicans would back away. They seemed to be quite schizophrenic on whether they wanted a deal. This reflected the sensitivity of the issue in Mexico.

At one point in the negotiations I was called to meet with President Carter to brief him on the state of the negotiations. He was clearly very interested and wanted a deal. His questions interestingly reflected some concern on whether I was being influenced by Schlesinger. I was not, but still there was a limit to how far I thought the price could go. Finally, we came to a crunch, with the negotiations about to break up, when Warren Christopher, the Under Secretary of State stepped in and agreed to a price I considered over the line. I told him so, saying that he could conclude the agreement but no gas would flow to the U.S. market. That was in fact what happened. The deal was concluded, but before the pipeline expansion could be completed, the price began to fall and very little gas was imported from Mexico

Okay, why don't we do NAFTA? Let me begin by saying that Mexico had a long history of antipathy, if not antagonism, toward the United States, going back to the last century. After the revolution in 1928, there was a long period of very inward-looking economic policies. So Mexico was not a member of the GATT, for example. We had a pre-war trade agreement with them, which was more honored in the breach.

Beginning in the 1970s there was some effort to reform their economy. Their economy was highly statist, with a great deal of nationalized property, beginning of course, with the oil industry, the hydrocarbon industry, and energy generally. Metals and minerals were partially state-owned, transportation of course, and telecommunications, as in most places in the world. Their trade was highly restricted, with very restrictive quotas. There was an effort in the '70s to

begin to break out of this, and an effort was made to enter the GATT. But that was viewed as treason by some people in Mexico, especially among some industrialists. So that effort was pretty well scotched. But clearly things were beginning to rumble there.

There was at the end of the Carter administration a group of private American citizens, Henry Kissinger being one of them, who were involved in a dialogue with the Mexicans. And just before the Reagan presidency, I believe it was in the transition, Reagan had a meeting with the President of Mexico, and there was some discussion about closer economic collaboration. Then, of course, came the collapse in oil prices and the debt crisis. The Mexican economy really went into the tank.

Q: This was during the early '80s.

KATZ: Yes. Reagan came in 1981, but by '82 they were in deep trouble. President López Portillo left under a cloud, because of a question of personal enrichment. But anyway, there were beginnings of new winds blowing in Mexico. Before President Bush came into office, he again had some discussions with President Salinas, but nothing very specific came out of that. That was in late 1988. Then in 1987 came the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, and that obviously set people in Mexico to thinking. President Salinas preceded by President de la Madrid, had begun taking some market-opening measures. And in 1986 Mexico actually entered the GATT, for the first time. And they began bringing down their protection very rapidly. They came from almost infinite protection, down to bound rates of 50%, that is, rates to which they were committed not to exceed. In fact, they were bringing rates down to around 20%, and ultimately down to around an average about 10%, with some quotas remaining, but a commitment to get rid of them.

President Salinas then began traveling around the world, trying to encourage investment in Mexico. He took a trip to Japan, which was not terribly encouraging. Then in early 1990 he went to Europe. That came as kind of a shock to him. He ended his trip at the World Economic Forum in Davos, an annual event that draws many important figures in the world: ministers, ex-ministers, CEOs of major companies, and some heads of government. When he got to Davos, in Switzerland, at this World Economic Conference meeting, the buzz was about Central and Eastern Europe. Of course, the old Soviet empire had disintegrated by then, and everybody was talking about the great investment opportunities in Eastern and Central Europe and Russia.

The other thing that was going on in Europe was something called "EC 92," that is, a program in the European Community to remove the remaining internal barriers to trade to dissolve the borders for economic purposes, to harmonize regulations, remove all remaining customs barriers, and harmonize banking regulations, standards, and to complete the so-called single market. So what Salinas found was that Europe was very inward looking at that point. Their preoccupation was building this internal market with a lot of investment having flowed into Europe to get behind this new wall, and then beyond that, all the external interest was to the east. And so as Salinas surveyed the horizon in North America, there was the United States and Canada, and Canada was a bit of a competitive threat to Mexico, or at least a threat to their aspirations, not a real threat, because Mexico was not a legitimate competitor of Canada at that point. But certainly

as an aspiring competitor, they would be shut out. As you looked across the Pacific, nobody there with any great interest, and in Europe very little interest. So he decided at some moment in that period, and I don't know if that was a confirmation of something he'd been thinking about, but he decided that Mexico needed a home, as it were -- an economic home. After he returned from Davos, sometime late in February, on one Sunday night, he telephoned George Bush and said "I'd like to do a free-trade agreement with the United States." This came to us as a little bit of a surprise. Not a tremendous surprise, because there had been some rumblings about it, even going back as far as the Reagan Administration, but mostly by Americans. Some Mexicans had also expressed interest, but they were private sector people.

Q: Just to get a little feel for the role of your operation, your office at that time, were you looking around for places to make agreements, or were you so busy that you ...

KATZ: No. We were pretty fully occupied with the Uruguay Round negotiations, which we were supposed to finish at the end of 1990, we were committed to finishing at the end of 1990. We had a tremendous amount to do to get there, because we had the problem with Europe and agriculture, and hadn't really gotten that started, and we were pushing the Europeans to do that, plus all the other issues in the Uruguay Round. And then we had a normal array of bilateral issues around the world: Japan and specific issues such as telecommunications. We had a separate mandate under law to examine barriers to U.S. telecommunications trade, and then we had a similar provision with respect to government procurement and we had another mandate with respect to intellectual property. So we had a pretty full plate. Also I had just initiated a trade agreement negotiation with the Soviet Union.

So the word came from the White House that Salinas had made this bid, and we had to go to work quickly to see what we thought about it; what were we going to recommend.

Q: Just one other thing, on the operational side: Is there sort of a free trade agreement "folder" that one has tucked away somewhere, that you pull out and fill in the blanks?

KATZ: No, not at that point. Of course, we had the precedent of the Canadian agreement, which was a pretty good agreement, but which fell short in a number of ways. No, we hadn't really gotten to that point. In fact, there was still a certain amount of tension between the view of some people, particularly some people in the Administration, Jim Baker, Bob Zoellick and Bob Mosbacher, who thought that we ought to do bilateral free trade agreements wherever we could. And then there were the old multilateralists, like myself, who thought that our primary interest was in fostering the multilateral system. So that was certainly in the back of my mind when I was confronted with this issue by Carla Hills. I did have the concern about the diversion of attention away from the Uruguay Round, but more than anything I was skeptical about the Mexicans, and about how far they were really prepared to go. When they said a free-trade agreement, did they mean a true free-trade agreement in the sense of a reciprocal comprehensive free trade agreement, or were they looking for a special, preferential arrangement, really kind of a one-way free-trade agreement.

There was one other question that bothered me. And that is, we had a major interest in Mexico,

but we had other interests in the region, particularly in the Caribbean region. And would an agreement with Mexico result in the diversion of trade away from the Caribbean countries? So we discussed this, and decided we had to do a little bit of work before we came to a decision. The first question we looked at was this question of diversion, and we put our economists to work on that.

Q: Did you have a stable of economists that knew the Caribbean economies, the Mexican economies, that you draw on in your office? Or did you go elsewhere? How did you do it?

KATZ: "Stable" is a vast overstatement. We had an Office of the Chief Economist with an excellent economist, David Walters, with an assistant, who was borrowed from the International Trade Commission. And we had the equivalent of a country desk. We had some people who were working on the Caribbean area. In any event, we put the economist to work, and he came up with a report that concluded that the diversionary effects would be minimal. Something which, incidentally, is still being argued.

Q: The real interest for us was we wanted to make sure the Caribbean countries were viable, right?

KATZ: We did not want to destabilize that area by causing economic harm. But the conclusion was that the diversionary effects would not be very great. So that was not a consideration. As far as the Uruguay Round issue, I concluded pretty quickly that was not something that was a primary concern. My view was that I got my training in the infantry, and if there was one more hill that you had to climb, or walk another mile, or fire another shot, you did it. If we worked 12 hours a day, well then we'd have to work 14 hours a day. But that could not be a reason not to do it. And the other question about whether the Mexicans were interested in the right kind of agreement, we would have to test, by entering into some preliminary discussions with them to see how far they were prepared to go in producing terms of reference for the negotiation.

So, that was basically what we went back to the President with. To be very candid, left to my own devices, I would have probably argued for putting this off for a year. But there were some internal politics involved too, and it was characterized by the phrase that we did not want USTR to be viewed elsewhere in the Administration as "wet serapes."

Q: What does that mean?

KATZ: Wet blankets. We were not going to rain on this parade. So, there was pressure for us not to be negative, and we quickly concluded that we wouldn't, but that there were legitimate questions that had to be asked and answers had to be found, and we proceeded to do that.

Q: This became a great political issue, which we kind of knew it would.

KATZ: Well, that was later. I'm now speaking not of the public aspects of this, but the internal administration deliberations.

Q: So at that point, you weren't saying, "Gee, will the public buy this?"

KATZ: No, that was another consideration, but in fact, early in our report to the President, we did make that point too. We said that we had looked at this, and we were concerned about the Caribbean, and we'd satisfied ourselves that that was not a major preoccupation. I don't know if we commented on the Uruguay Round, or whether we just satisfied ourselves on that. We just set it aside. We also strongly urged that we seek consultations with the leadership of the Congress before we proceeded. And with Labor, although I'm not sure that came up in that first report to the President. But the President said, okay, go ahead.

So we proceeded. Carla Hills went up and spoke to Rostenkowski, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Lloyd Bentsen, chairman of the Finance Committee -- those were our two primary committees of jurisdiction, and also to the ranking Minority Members of those two committees. And the advice that we got was basically, "Boy, if I were you I wouldn't do it. You've got enough on your plate right now, but it's your call." So we had, I would say, grudging support. And I would have to say also, by way of background, that we had excellent relationships with our congressional committees. They were very supportive. They did provide advice, but they were very supportive, so that while they had reservations about this, not so much on political grounds at that point, but really in terms of "do you really want to take this on? You've got more than you can handle. But if you think you can do it, go ahead." We did not go outside the Congress. This was still pretty private and confidential.

Then we began some discussions with the Mexicans. We had a series of conversations. We tried first to negotiate a statement, and what we wanted was a comprehensive agreement, covering trade and goods and services, investment, and intellectual property. Those were the four basic pillars. The Mexicans did a lot of squirming. First they said "sure, the agreement would be comprehensive." "On all four points?" " Well, yeah, on all four points." Of course, that didn't mean that there wouldn't be problems in each of these areas. So we got past that, and sometime in the spring of 1990 it was decided that the two Presidents -- and I think they met somewhere, on the edge of some other event -- should ask their Trade Ministers to make a recommendation to them as to the feasibility of the negotiation and the terms of reference, and so forth. That's when we began having very active negotiations about the shape of the table, as it were. That is, what would the nature of this negotiation be.

Q: But just to put it in perspective, this whole project was very much presidential driven. You obviously, if you had your druthers, wouldn't have done it at that point. How did you feel -- did the Mexicans had the same attitude?

KATZ: It was all go on their part. I should identify the players apart from the two Presidents. The primary interface was between the Mexican Trade Minister, Jaime Serra Puche, and Carla Hills. And then at the next level, Serra's deputy, Herminio Blanco Mendoza, and myself. When we met, generally the four of us met, or I would deal with Blanco, but basically it was the four of us. But two other elements came into this pre-negotiation. For one thing we were required under the law to review annually the performance of countries on intellectual property. We had to determine whether countries were targets or actionable countries, or priority countries, or priority watch

countries. We had intellectual property problems with Mexico of long standing.

Another annual exercise was to decide on the lists of commodities subject to, or available for generalized preferences. This preferential tariff treatment applied to developing countries, of which Mexico still was one. And there was a connection between the two. If a country was a very bad performer under intellectual property, they could lose their GSP eligibility. So we had this side negotiation going on, and it became very much involved in the pre-free trade negotiations too. Carla Hills applied heavy pressure on the Mexicans to come up with a good intellectual property agreement.

In fact, we ended up with a terrific agreement, far beyond what the Mexicans had any intention of agreeing to when they started. There were some very politically difficult things, like compulsory licensing of pharmaceutical patents. It is a worldwide problem in many countries. The laws require that pharmaceutical companies give up their patents or license local firms to produce their products. We always regarded that as a taking of intellectual property. So we got satisfaction on that and on parallel imports, and a whole series of copyright protections. Mexico, like many countries, pretty much ignored, or did not enforce copyright laws. So that books, publications, music, computer tapes, video tapes, etc., were being counterfeited or effectively stolen. So we got that agreement.

We also resolved the GSP issues and then at the same time we were negotiating what was it was we were going to report back to the Presidents. And then finally, on August 1st of 1992, the four of us met. We'd had a number of meetings along the way, but we flew out to Los Angeles, and met there. Through the course of the day we negotiated a statement, which was essentially the terms of reference. This was a joint report to the two Presidents, which basically a statement that we thought that an agreement was feasible.

We also talked about the timing of the negotiations. The Mexicans were very concerned that this negotiation be completed and ratified before 1992. And what they were concerned about was, first of all, was the U.S. election in 1992, and secondly, there was a Mexican election a year later. And they did not want this to go over into the Mexican elections. But they also had in mind they didn't want it to really be an issue in the U.S. elections. They were maybe a little more farsighted than we were in that respect. Now I said I thought this was doable in that period of time. Having started out as a skeptic, I became an enthusiast. And I said that if 'twere done well, 'twere done quickly, and in fact, I didn't see any reason why we couldn't do it.

I outlined what I said was a back-to-the-future scenario: take the date, and then work back from that. And what would that require? Well, it would require that we start pretty much in that Autumn of 1990, and do the preliminary, what I call pre-negotiation phase. And that is, to use a litigation analogy, discovery. That is, you exchange information on tariffs, regulations, you identify difficult sectors, and we knew there were some, such as automobiles, energy, (I'll have to come back to energy), and you begin trying to develop solutions to problems, or at least options for solutions. You're not really negotiating, but you're conceptualizing. You're laying out the map of the negotiation and conceptualizing possible solutions to difficult problems without really being in a bargaining stage. Now, there's a reason for that; a reason why I suggested that. And

that had to do with our fast-track authority.

The term fast-track is really a misnomer. The first thing to understand about fast-track is that it is not fast. It is a procedure that gives you some certainty that if you inform the Congress in a timely fashion, if you consult closely with the Congress, and then you bring back an agreement, which the Congress has been informed about all through the negotiation, then the Congress will take that and consider it and decide within a specific time frame, but importantly not change the agreement. That is, they will ultimately vote up or down within a fixed timetable.

So what fast-track required in the first instance, is that we provide 60 days notice of intention to enter into an agreement. Now, this is 60 legislative days. Sixty legislative days we calculated in August of 1990, would take us through until about perhaps May 1st of the next year, because we were assuming that there would be a recess. Since we were going into the Autumn there would be a recess from sometime in October until January. So this would stretch out over a long period of time. And we would use this period of time to conduct the pre-negotiations. So that when we started, we could pretty well finish the negotiations quickly. I estimated in seven or eight months. That would take us through the end of 1991. We could then present the agreement to the Congress in January of 1992, and by the end of June, we'd have it all wrapped up, and put into force in September or October.

I have to say that I tend to be optimistic about these things because I have never gotten over the tendency to assume that people are going to be reasonable. But, in any event, that was my conception. Now, on the other side, Carla Hills was very nervous about that. She did not want to negotiate under a timetable, because she said, "Well, we'll negotiate until we're finished. And when we're finished, we'll be finished." Her concern was giving people the impression that we were going to cut corners in order to reach agreement. Now part of my optimism was based on the fact that we already had a model, which was the U.S.-Canada agreement. And we would basically bring Mexico into that arrangement.

There are two other things to cover in this pre-negotiation period. One was Canada. The other was our consultations with the AFL-CIO. We knew that we had to consult not only with the Congress, but with the private sector. Importantly, Labor would be one of those, because we knew that Labor probably would be somewhat antagonistic to this. We didn't really know how much. It was my task to inform the AFL-CIO. So I telephoned Tom Donahue, who was the Treasurer of the AFL-CIO. He was also Chairman of our Labor Advisory Committee, one of the many public advisory committees that serve the USTR by statute. And I said, "Tom, I want to tell you that we have been considering this, and the President has decided that we are going forward, and I want you to know about this beforehand. I hope we can work together on this." He said, "Well, let me tell you. You know we are going to oppose this." I said, "Well, that doesn't surprise me, but nonetheless, I still hope we can work together, and we'd still like to reflect your interest and views to the maximum extent possible." And he said, "Well, there is a price." And I said, "What is that?" And he said, "Adjustment assistance."

Adjustment assistance is a program for compensating workers who lose their jobs because of trade. It is a program that had languished over the course of a decade or so, and labor wanted that

program refurbished and renewed. I said, "Tom, I'm on your side on that one. I think that is absolutely reasonable. I don't know what we can do, but I'm certainly prepared to work with you on that." Well, despite that promising beginning, Labor subsequently decided they were going to go all out to defeat it, and they certainly did try.

Q: Did you believe that this Labor feeling a good chance to sort of show some muscle? Because Labor had been languishing over time.

KATZ: That is an interesting story that requires someone else to investigate. Because something happened. My impression was that Tom Donahue was prepared to bargain on this, realizing that he wasn't going to defeat it, but he wanted to exercise maximum leverage. But somewhere between then and subsequently, the decision went the other way. I've heard that it was a grass roots movement; that some of the locals decided that they had to oppose it. The whole story about the vehemence of the opposition to this, I think needs examination. A lot of it had to do with the fact that it was Mexico. It was almost, I don't know if racial is the right word, but ...

Q: Not quite racial, but almost social. A different culture, second rate. Canada was one of us although the Canadians hate us the same way.

KATZ: I think it was sort of characterized by a Perot remark, which I used to some advantage in a television interview sometime later, during the approval process, where Perot said, "These are people who aspire to have indoor plumbing." It was that kind of looking down. So I think there was a lot of that. And of course, there had been the experience with the *maquiladora* operations along the border. This is a zone along the U.S.-Mexican border where companies can operate as kind of a special customs area, where they can import duty-free, and then export the products. A lot of this involved importing components from the United States, assembling them in Mexico, and sending them back. Cheap labor, in some cases poor working conditions, environmental degradation, and that was part of the background too. At any event, we made our efforts with Labor, but that didn't work out very well.

Our discussions with our other advisory committees -- basically the industrial, and even the agricultural advisory committees went pretty well. I think they were generally supportive, and in some cases enthusiastic.

But then Canada came along. Canada had gotten wind of this, and they were very apprehensive, because they saw this as a dilution of the benefits they had with their agreement with us. About that time, there was an article written by a Canadian economist, Ron Wonnacott, who used the term "hub-and-spoke." He said that what was happening was that there was evolving a hub and spoke architecture, with the U.S. being the hub, and other bilateral partners being spokes; the U.S. basically getting many benefits, and as you add more spokes, each of the spokes receives lesser benefits. This got some attention in Canada, and in any event, the issue went before the Canadian Cabinet. The Canadian Ambassador here, who was Derek Burney, had raised the question with me. I said, "Well, you cannot be serious in thinking about interposing an objection to our doing an agreement with our third largest trading partner." "No, no, it's not that, but we're still concerned with the political problem in Canada." And I said, "Well, you've got a choice. You

can ask to be included." "What would be the reaction to that?" he asked. I said, "I don't know, but there is no reason you can't ask."

Well, there was a split in the Canadian Cabinet, because they had gone through something that looked like a rehearsal for our deliberations on NAFTA, with the tables turned, with Canadians arguing that their economic interest would be prejudiced, because the U.S. was much more competitive. Another argument was that Canada would lose its sovereignty, that they would have to give up their social security system, and that they would lose their economic independence. This of course was an old story, but it was all exacerbated by the free-trade agreement, and it became a white hot issue in Canada, culminating in the Canadian parliamentary elections in 1988.

Ten days before the elections I was in Canada, and met with a group of -- I was outside of the government then -- Canadian Deputy Ministers, and they were all very gloomy. They thought Mulroney was going down to defeat, and free trade was going down to defeat, but Mulroney pulled it out, and won an almost landslide victory. But still, there were people in this Cabinet that said, "Oh God, we don't want to go through this again. We don't want to have another debate on free trade." But ultimately, two ministers, John Crosby, who was the Trade Minister, and Michael Wilson, who was the Finance Minister, argued very strongly that they should come into the agreement, or rather that they should come into the negotiations; they should seek participation in the negotiations and ultimately Mulroney decided they should.

Over Labor Day of 1990, President Bush was at Kennebunkport, and Brian Mulroney, the Prime Minister of Canada, was his weekend guest. And he said, "George, we'd like in on this negotiation." So that started another debate within our Administration, with some folks saying, we don't want the Canadians in this. First of all, their up to no good, they are really seeking to frustrate the negotiation with Mexico. They are going to be a problem. Canadians are very difficult. A whole series of objections. And interestingly, many of these were coming from the State Department. I argued on the other side of this, that we couldn't exclude the Canadians. Moreover, I found objectionable the notion of having two bilateral agreements. I didn't like the prospect of having many bilateral agreements, because at heart I was, and remain a multilateralist. And I saw these free-trade agreements as being not only an exception, but I saw the possibility of harmonizing them with the multilateral system ultimately. But if we had many separate bilateral agreements, you would have tremendous confusion in our own trade relationships, but also in the trading system.

Later on, in a somewhat different context, I took on this Ron Wonnacott metaphor of hub and spoke, and I said the prospect we were facing was not hub and spoke, but spaghetti. We had the prospect of many bilateral agreements by many countries. And I used the phrase at a conference on the subject, and I had a baseball cap made up which said, "NAFTA NOT PASTA." I was arguing for the extension of NAFTA to the Western Hemisphere, but not a series of bilateral agreements.

In any event, we had this all out within the Administration and then began discussions with the Canadians. We asked, "What if we can't reach agreement? Clearly, you're not going to be able to

frustrate this negotiation with Mexico." And the Canadians said, "We have no interest in doing that." So ultimately we worked out an agreement with the Canadians and then a three-way agreement. The Mexicans then became very nervous, also about having the Canadians in. Although, interestingly one of the arguments against Canada from inside our Administration was that it would be two against one. That we would face two adversaries instead of one. I did not view it as that kind of negotiation, and in any event, we were bigger than both of them together, and I thought that was a silly argument. You didn't settle issues by majority voting, so that was kind of silly. But we worked out with Canada an understanding that no one party could effectively block the other two from proceeding. So if Canada decided that it could not agree, then it would step aside. If we couldn't reach agreement with Mexico, of course that would not prejudice the existing agreement.

So by middle September it was decided that Canada would be a party to this, which required an amendment to our fast-track notice to the Congress. This notice period then had begun, and I said, "Okay, let's get to work, and start exchanging information." We had a couple of meetings, but it was clear that nothing was really happening very fast. The Mexicans weren't really ready, and something that was to bother, almost plague us over the next several months as we got into the negotiations was that the Mexicans had never really done anything like this, and were somewhat lacking in confidence and hesitant. Their decision process went right up to the top, so it was slow.

But then, of course came the intensification of work to try and finish the Uruguay Round at the end of 1990, the Brussels Conference, so we were spending more time on the Uruguay Round. The other thing that happened was that the fast-track authority was expiring, effective March 2, 1991. The expiry date was really June 1, but to execute an agreement we had to notify the Congress 90 calendar days in advance, so that would make it March 1 or 2. So we had to renew fast-track, and what happened then, was that the fast-track debate became a Mexico debate. Labor began to mount its campaign against it, and we spent just about two months, three months almost, in an intensive lobbying campaign with the Congress and the public to some extent, to get approval of the extension of fast-track. And incidentally, this was not an affirmative vote. The way the law read was that fast-track would continue unless the Congress voted against it. In any event, there would be a vote by the Congress. So in that period, we really accomplished none of those pre-negotiating objectives that I had intended. We got very little work done in that period. The Mexicans weren't ready and we were preoccupied. That lobbying effort was intensive, it ultimately succeeded, and by early June we had our fast-track authority.

We formally began the negotiations on June 12. We had our first ministerial meeting in Toronto, where we agreed on the organization of the negotiation. Basically the structure was three levels of negotiators. The three ministers at the top were the ultimate authority. Then three chief negotiators beneath them, that would have day-to-day responsibility for the negotiations. I was the U.S. Chief Negotiator, John Weekes for Canada, Herminio Blanco for Mexico. Beneath the chief negotiators, we had Deputy Chiefs and negotiating groups. We had 22 negotiating groups on all of the issues: tariffs, services, intellectual property, travel, business travel, investment, energy, etc.

The negotiations lasted 14 months to the day -- we began on June 12 and concluded on August 12. We had seven ministerial meetings and the Chiefs met 16 times in various locations in North America. And of course the negotiating groups met even more frequently, and for longer periods of time. The Ministers and the Chiefs typically would meet for several days at a time, although toward the end of the negotiations, the duration was longer and the end of the negotiation lasted several weeks. There was a Chief's meeting that went for almost a week. And then the Ministers came in and they met for 12 days and nights to finish the negotiation. All through this process, we also felt it was very important to carry out our consultation process and at the beginning of this, having in mind previous experiences, I instructed my subordinates keep detailed records on the meetings that were held. We had on the average one consultation a day with somebody in the Congress, with a member or staff people, and four a day with the private sector, with our advisory committee structure, which consisted of 1,000 public advisers. But additionally, with other associations, or anybody we could identify that might have an interest.

Among the groups we consulted with was the environmental community. One of the issues that came up in the fast-track debate was that early in the debate, Chairmen Benson and Rostenkowski sent us a joint letter, with a series of questions on how we would address various questions and criticisms. And out of that came a response that involved a number of commitments, things which we would do with respect to labor and the environment. As to the environment, this was a completely new subject to us; we had never dealt with this in a trade agreement. As a result of our consultations with the environmental community, what we did tactically was to divide the environmental movement between the extremists, the bomb throwers, and the reasonable people. And out of that came agreements, or an understanding of what we would seek to achieve in the agreement. And in fact, for the first time ever, we put environmental provisions into a trade agreement, the NAFTA.

Q: How did the Canadians feel about that? They used to complain about us; were they enthusiastic, or did they find that it was also inhibiting them too?

KATZ: Well, they were a little concerned in some areas about how far we were going to go, and of course the Mexicans were too. I should say also, again going back to the fast-track consideration, that we worked out some understandings with the Mexicans on labor and environment. There were some environmental programs along the border, and there was a memorandum of understanding on labor cooperation, which was less far-reaching than the environmental agreements. In fact, in the environmental agreements we actually proposed putting some money into cleanup.

As a result of our continuing consultations, it was concluded that those agreements we reached with Mexico in the spring of 1991 would not be sufficient, so we put some other things in the NAFTA agreement. For example, we had some hortatory language on the environment in the preamble, and we gave specific recognition to four environmental treaties, which would be given precedence over the NAFTA in the event of a conflict between the agreements. The environmental community was complaining that trade interests were being put ahead of the environment, and there had been a fisheries dispute where, in effect, it was perceived that the GATT was going to override the environmental agreement. So we put a provision saying that with

respect these four treaties and conventions, that they would have priority over the NAFTA on any dispute. We could add other international environmental agreements in the future.

We also had a provision that said that no party would use waivers from environmental laws in order to attract investment, which was an allegation that was extant. We changed the provisions of an agreement that was being negotiated in the Uruguay Round on sanitary measures, putting the burden of proof on the defending party, as opposed to the plaintiff party, with respect to disputes about such provisions. So we made a number of efforts to specifically recognize environmental concerns. Of course, these were not enough to satisfy the extremists in the environmental movement, but it did gain the support of some of the responsible organizations.

The other major issue to which I alluded earlier, and one of the particularly difficult issues in the negotiation was over energy. Energy policy, and in particular hydrocarbons or oil, had almost a mythological quality in Mexican politics. I remember some experiences in the '70s with President López Portillo over gas exports from Mexico, where he described hydrocarbons as Mexico's patrimony. The Mexicans took the position early on that energy policy was inviolable, and couldn't be part of the agreement. We said, "Well, we understand the special conditions, but energy policy could not be inviolable, and that this was a comprehensive trade agreement, and must cover all of the elements of the economy. We would try to work around the special conditions in Mexico, but we couldn't just leave energy policy out. The Mexicans would not even admit publicly that there was an energy negotiating group. I had a shouting match on the telephone with Minister Serra, when Carla Hills was unavailable, because there had been a press story about the deliberations of the energy group. He threatened call off the negotiations unless I would deny that there was no such group, which of course I refused to do.

At the second Ministerial meeting in Seattle Serra came forward with a position which became known as the "Four No's": it was not possible to provide in the agreement for exploration or production of hydrocarbons; it was not possible to include transportation, primary petrochemicals, nor distribution. Neither foreigners nor private parties could own gas stations. Throughout the negotiations the Mexicans kept reminding us of the four no's, to the point where my Deputy, Chip Roh, who was kind of a wag, and a bit of a cartoonist, drew a cartoon with a face. At one meeting I kept hearing about the "Nos," and asked where are ayes? What *can* we do? So Chip drew this cartoon of a face with a bulbous nose, with little squinty eyes, with a caption which said, "All no's, no ayes." And this problem was to dog us throughout the negotiations. We finally chipped away and we got an energy chapter in the agreement.

Q: Did the Canadians help in this type of thing? When the Mexicans nationalized the oil industry in Mexico, this was one of the crowning achievements of the revolution. So that in a way I would think that the Canadians, being neutral in this without these pejorative feelings, could come in and say, "Come on fellows, we're all doing this together." Did it work that way?

KATZ: The Canadian role was kind of interesting, and it evolved over time. At the very beginning, the Canadians were very passive. I think they saw their role and their mission as being defensive. They were supposed to defend what already existed in the bilateral agreement. As we went on and we had U.S.-Mexico problems, the Canadians would occasionally try to be helpful.

But through much of it they were really on the sidelines. As we got to the end of the negotiations, there were a number of provisions that directly impinged on Canadian interests. In fact, there were provisions and issues that touched on the existing bilateral agreement, such as investment policy and cultural policy, where the Canadians became very active. And then agriculture policy, which was another very tough issue, that I will come to later.

One of the problems on energy was that this was an important issue in the U.S.- Canada Agreement. One of the concessions we got out of the Canadians was that they would not use export controls against us in an emergency, as they did in the 1974 energy crisis. That was hard fought, and hard won, and became a bit of a political issue in Canada. The Mexicans would not agree to anything similar. The Canadians then became very concerned that if the Mexicans would not agree, this again would become a political issue in Canada. And in fact, it did, when the Chretien government came in. Separately Chretien had said that they were going to tear up the agreement if they were elected to office. Then he said he would change it, and when he came into office he talked about it, and then there was a meeting with Clinton and they sort of swept it under the rug. But in any event, this was a legitimate concern by the Canadians, and a concern on our part, that if we acceded to the Mexican reluctance to agree on supply in an emergency, that this would put the Canadians in an impossible position and we would lose this benefit with Canada.

One of the evidences of this extreme paranoia on the part of Mexico over energy, was a provision they insisted on in the preamble to the energy chapter. The first sentence, which reads something like, "Each of the parties express their respect for their respective constitutions..." And that really stuck in my throat, and I said, "Come on now, you can't be serious." And they said, "We absolutely must have this sentence." And I said, "Well, is there any question that about each of us respecting our own constitutions? But implying that we respect other peoples constitutions goes too far." The Mexicans were insistent on the provision and insistent that it go into the energy chapter. I said, "Well, if it goes any place, put it in the preamble the whole agreement." "No, no, no," they said, "it had to be in the energy chapter." I said, "This is really silly the point of being childish." "Listen," they said, "trust us. This is something we absolutely need for our own politics." In the end, Carla said, "What the hell." So we went along with it.

Another major issue was agriculture. This was an issue primarily with Canada. Canada would not agree, as they were not agreeing in the Uruguay Round, to give up what was called supply management of dairy and poultry. That is, to have quotas on imports of dairy and poultry products. I, said to them, both in the NAFTA and the Uruguay Round, "Look, in the end you know you're going have give this up, because this is going be the price for the Uruguay Round Agreement." And privately, some Canadians said "Of course we will. In the end we will not stand in the way of this. But we just can't do it now." And the reason they couldn't do it, was that these products were produced in Quebec, so it was part of the Quebec issue. But they were absolutely unwilling to agree to this.

So in the end, we had a period of a serious questioning whether Canada would remain in the NAFTA negotiations. We said we were not prepared have an agreement without agriculture. Of course, in the U.S.-Canada agreement, the provision was that all tariffs would be eliminated. The

quotas could be maintained. They had theirs, and we had some on our side. But in the Uruguay Round they were going to disappear, and we wouldn't agree to that formulation in the NAFTA. Mexico didn't have quotas and they didn't want any either. By then, they had gotten rid of their agriculture quotas. So ultimately, what was decided was that Canada would be excluded from the agriculture part of the NAFTA. So the NAFTA covers everything except agriculture, where in effect, there are three bilateral agreements: U.S.-Canada; U.S.-Mexico; Canada-Mexico. This is one of the shortcomings in the agreement.

An interesting consequence of that, not so much of that, but of the U.S.-Canada agreement, was something we saw coming. In fact, the Canadians had raised it with us. They said, "Now, if we ever agree to eliminate the quotas through tariffication in the Uruguay Round, we will have a problem with the FTA, the bilateral agreement, because that requires that all tariffs be at zero. And of course the elimination of quotas would mean substitution, conversion of tariffs. So we would have a problem." And I said, "Indeed you will. But are you prepared to talk about tariffication?" And they said, "No, we can't agree to discuss tariffication." And I said, "Well, then, there is nothing to talk about." So we never did talk about it. And then ultimately, and not surprisingly, Canadians had to agree to tariffication in the Uruguay Round. They have to eliminate their quotas. They've substituted very high tariffs for those quotas. And now there's a problem under the Free Trade Agreement. It is now going to dispute settlement, the U.S. is bringing a case against Canada for violation of the agreement.

Q: Did by any chance while you were doing this whole thing, look at this as a model agreement that could be used? Was this really your objective?

KATZ: Absolutely. We had in mind, first of all, producing as good an agreement, I mean as close to perfection as possible. We knew it would be well short of perfection, because there were inevitable exceptions, not only on agriculture, but on investment policy and culture in Canada. And we had some exceptions on our side, on investment policy. The Mexicans, of course had their exceptions on energy and investment.

But the other thing that happened was that in 1991, President Bush delivered a speech on hemispheric policy, and it became entitled The Enterprise for the Americas, where he laid out a policy which invited free trade agreements in the hemisphere. We had a vigorous bureaucratic argument about that. Again, there was this view in the State Department, Bob Zoellick, primarily, and also shared in the Treasury and Commerce Departments, that we should negotiate bilateral free-trade agreements with everybody. And I thought that we should seek to do it with large countries, or groups of countries, that is, we should encourage subregional integration in the hemisphere. What ultimately came out of it was compromise language that we are prepared to do agreements with countries or groups of countries. I can't remember the exact language, but the implication was that it would be with large countries or groups of countries, even though it didn't say large countries. My concern was the State Department would then use this as a political prize. And in fact the question came up of doing a free-trade agreement with Panama, which I thought was ridiculous.

That was the beginnings of discussions of free-trade agreement with Chile. The other point that

was made in the President's Enterprise for the Americas speech was that we are prepared to enter into these agreements with other countries, but our first priority was the Uruguay Round and the completion of an agreement with Mexico. So this was June of 1991. But for that reason, you are very right, that we did have in mind that Mexico was going to be a precedent, and we wanted it to be a good agreement. Ultimately it turned out to be a very fine agreement. Trade policy experts around the world agree that it is a good agreement, with some exceptions, primarily the rules of origin.

There are two rules of origin, which people have taken issue with. They are bad examples, although I think they are not terribly important. They are on automobiles and textiles. They are restrictive. On textiles there is something that is called double or triple transformation. Typically a rule of origin will require a transformation from one stage of production to another. In the case of textiles it isn't enough to be the fabric of a NAFTA country. It has to be the fiber; U.S. fiber or North American fiber. In some speeches after the negotiations were completed I facetiously said that it wasn't true as some people had alleged that woolens have to be the fiber of sheep that have spent at least three generations in the United States. But it was pretty restrictive. On the other hand, the volume of our imports from the world are so large I don't think this is a serious impediment.

Similarly with respect to automobiles, the requirement is 62 percent value added as defined in the agreement, which is very high. Normally it is 50 percent value added. But given the volume of our imports in the United States, cars from Japan, I didn't think that was a serious criticism. The question is now why is it 62 and not 61 or 63, or 60? The reason is because it's between 60 and 65. And because of the insistence of the auto industry, we sought 65. The Canadians were the primary protagonist. The Mexicans supported them, but not all that vigorously. The Canadians were willing to go to 60, and we ultimately compromised on 62.

This led Red Poling, the CEO of Ford, to scream "sellout." And the night that we concluded the negotiations Carla telephoned him to say that we got 62, and he began to scream, and Carla finally said, "Well, you talk to Jules Katz." So he got on the phone and said, "You know, this is absolutely unacceptable. We said 65 and we mean 65." And I said, "Mr. Poling, I don't understand what you are saying. It's just incredible to me that you are making this fuss over three percentage points on a tariff that is 2 percent. The MFN rate for automobiles is 2 percent." "Well, it's a matter of principle," he said. And I said, "Well, I'm sorry Mr. Poling, but we're dealing with a very practical circumstance and that's the way it is going to be." So we got blasted on both sides, although the other companies weren't as strident about it. But this is part of the last minute complications.

Q: Well, it's also a bit of the theater, isn't it?

KATZ: Oh, he was dead serious about it. In fact, I was in a subsequent meeting with him where I debated him on this point. He was not quite as strident, and everyone else smiled. I had to hold back from ridiculing him.

Well, there are a lot of other little side-bars in the negotiations. The investment provisions were

very difficult with Mexico, and then ultimately with Canada. But to be fair, the U.S. had some exceptions on things where we had provisions of law on such things as maritime on which the U.S. took an exception and on ownership of airlines and ownership of telecommunications and radio and television stations.

Q: We felt these were essential our national defense?

KATZ: No, it was pure politics. We weren't prepared to take on everybody in the country in the legislative process. We knew we would have a difficult enough task -- more difficult, it turned out even than we had suspected.

I would make one other overall comment, and that is that I started out by talking about how skeptical I was about how far the Mexicans were prepared to go, and I was wrong about that. The Mexicans were prepared to go farther than I had suspected. But I think in the end they went farther than they had believed they would have to go. Their policies and approach really evolved through the negotiation.

One of the things I came to admire greatly was the approach of Minister Serra, who was really a major figure. He, like many of our Mexican counterparts was highly intelligent, a Pd.D. economist. I think his Pd.D. came from Yale. He had taught at Stanford. An extremely bright man; extremely volatile too. He could blow up frequently. But typically his approach to an issue would be say, "Well, wait a minute. Let me understand it. Why is this important to you?" And he would listen, and say, "Okay, I understand, but let's see if we can't find another solution." There were innumerable occasions when he approached matters in that fashion.

All of the Mexicans on their team were very bright. They tended to be young, they were not terribly experienced, either in trade agreements, or even in negotiations. Many of them had been recruited from universities and banks for this negotiation. So they were really going into it as on the job training, as it were, while conducting the negotiations. And that, in part, accounted for what I impatiently regarded as delay. But with it all, we produced an agreement that was 2,000 pages in length in 14 months, covering every aspect of the economy. I think that was a pretty impressive job.

Q: I have heard in other interviews, although I've never dealt with Mexicans, that in the Mexican government the Foreign Ministry has been turned over almost to the anti-Americans, whereas most of the other ministries, like the Ministry of Finance, are people who are used dealing with the Americans all the time. Did you get any feeling about this?

KATZ: Yes. I have had that experience in the past. I certainly had that experience in the late 1970s, when I negotiated with the Mexicans on energy policy. The interesting thing in this negotiation is that the Foreign Office played no role. This negotiation was conducted primarily by SECOFI, which is the Trade Ministry. But at a very early stage, in fact, even in the preliminary stage at that August 1, 1990 meeting in Los Angeles, Serra said, "One thing I want make clear: I have the primary responsibility within the Mexican government for this negotiation. Who will be my counterpart? Will you, Carla, be my counterpart?" And that was agreed. Now

they drew on the other agencies, but where issues developed with the other agencies, it was clear that Serra was in charge. Serra would go to President Salinas if there was an issue. And within our government, we ran the negotiation.

I must say, the only real problems we ever really had, were with the State Department, and that was with Bob Zoellick. There were a number of occasions where the Mexicans tried to do end-runs, notwithstanding Serra's one-stop shopping approach, with the Chief of Staff of President Salinas. There were a number of times when he did end-runs when he would go to Bob Zoellick and complain about me or about our positions. Bob Zoellick being the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs and the Counselor of the State Department. He was pretty discrete, making clear he wasn't going to interfere in the negotiations, but why was it we were taking this unreasonable position? Carla was probably more irritated by those events than I was. But with the rest of the government, we really had very few difficulties. Our team was made up from many agencies of the government. These 22 negotiating groups were in many cases led by people from other agencies of the government: Commerce, Treasury, State Department, Labor -- those were the primary agencies.

There was one particular meeting which was noteworthy that I might describe. That was in February 1992, after we'd started these negotiations in June, and had meetings in July and August. There was a period of several months when we were doing a lot of exchanging of information on tariffs and regulations and so forth.

In my effort to speed the negotiations along, I wanted the drafting process to start right away, so it was agreed in September or early October, that we would actually start drafting chapters. And the three delegations went off and wrote chapters individually, and then they came back in December. And then there was a meeting at the Deputy Chief level and lawyers, primarily, that set about to take the three versions and put it into one document. So in some cases you had chapters that consisted of three versions of a chapter sequentially. But they then began trying to take out words and merge paragraphs, to begin to produce this document, even while the issues were still being discussed. That was part of the process also, of identifying issues.

It became clear that these negotiating groups were negotiating individually, and we the chief negotiators had some difficulty in getting our arms around the process. So we decided on a meeting where we would have everybody together at one place at one time, which was kind of a big enterprise. We had separately had a political problem with various communities along the border, that wanted to be the location of NAFTA, and there was a group of people in Dallas, who were very aggressive; very purposeful I should say, but also aggressive, saying that Dallas was going to be the Secretariat of NAFTA. We said there wasn't going to be a Secretariat in any one place. "Well, never mind, but we insist on this." So they sent a delegation, consisting of Mayor Bartlett, to see me, to make this pitch. "We want to have the negotiations in Dallas." "Well," I said, "We have these meetings in various places, and people are meeting all the time, sometimes in capitals, sometimes in other places. We will have some meetings there."

But we decided we needed to have this big meeting, and the question was where could we have it? And Dallas stepped right up and said, "Hey, we'll do it." And we said, "Well, it's going be

pretty big." And they said, "No problem." They gave us the top floor of the Design Center in Dallas, which is a big vacant floor where they put up temporary partitions and they provided hotels and arranged with American Airlines to provide discount fares and put on social events, which we tried to avoid. But we finally had to agree to have a breakfast and a banquet. In all, they put up about \$500,000.00 for this meeting. And I don't know how we would have done it otherwise. Then of course, I got into trouble with the ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Archer, who came from Houston. He was pretty agitated. He is now the Chairman of the Committee. Fortunately it hasn't affected my long-term relationship with him.

Altogether we had about 400 people at that conference from the three governments, with about 120 from the U.S. But that was a milestone in the negotiations, because that was the first time we really began to start dealing with issues and resolve issues, and identify others. But we began to narrow the issues to the point where we could begin to see thousands of issues, not tens of thousands of issues. The process was that the negotiating groups would meet. They would then report to the Chiefs and say "Well, here are the problems we have in our chapter." And then the Chiefs, with some subordinates, would then discuss them, try find areas of agreement, and that would be incorporated, and where we couldn't we'd set it aside and say, "Okay, here's where we have some ongoing problems." And that was a week-long meeting, from Sunday to Saturday morning, a milestone in the negotiations.

Q: How did you find the role of President Bush? Did he say, "do it," and then get out of the way?

KATZ: Yes, that was basically his style. But there were a few occasions -- we reported to him constantly -- but there were some issues we brought to him. On the energy issue, there was one meeting somewhere along the border, where he met with Salinas and Bob Mosbacher was present. Salinas raised the energy issue, and the President agreed that we would be respectful or sensitive on the energy issue. The Mexicans interpreted it one way, and we interpreted it another way. But in the end, he was less involved in it than he was in the Uruguay Round, for example, where he became much more involved in specific issues, namely the agriculture issue. There were very many issues that were extremely difficult. It was a matter of constantly working the issues. In February we had thousands of issues and in May in Mexico City we had maybe one thousand issues and when we got to the Watergate in July we had hundreds of issues. In the last several days we had about 150 issues, then 50, then 25, and then 4 in the last hour, and then finally resolved those.

Q: You came up with an agreement. But you had left before the big battle in the public came about?

KATZ: What happened was, we reached agreement at 12:40 am on August 12, 1992. Then there was a period of fine tuning the text. The text had to conform to the agreements, and it had to have legal scrubbing. And that went on for weeks and weeks and in fact, it ended up being months. But our target was to initial and sign the agreement. I believe the initialing was on October 7th in San Antonio. There was a ceremonial initialing of the agreement with the three Ministers, the three Heads of Government standing behind them, and a lot of private sector people. The agreement was ultimately signed on December 7, because there was another 60 day waiting

period. There was no formal ceremony for the signing; that was really anticlimactic. But then we left office.

President Clinton had been somewhat ambivalent in the campaign. I shouldn't say ambivalent, he was really quiet on the subject. And there was a certain amount of goading from the Bush campaign, saying what is Clinton going to do about NAFTA? He's ducking the issue. Finally, late in August, or early September, he made a speech in North Carolina in which he endorsed the Agreement, but said that there were a number of issues that would have to be dealt with to make it acceptable to him, basically on labor and environmental issues. And some issues that were covered in the agreement, which he didn't seem to realize. In fact, someone told me later that they told him that the provision was in the agreement, but he said never mind, he was going to say it anyway. (A safeguard provision that was already in the agreement.)

Then came the election, and he came into office. The Administration then set about to negotiate some side agreements with the Mexicans primarily, but also with the Canadians on labor and environmental provisions. And that was a long, extended process. That lasted until August. It was a rather bitter negotiation. The Mexicans were very unhappy with Mickey Kantor, in particular, over this. But finally that was done, and then the question was getting this through the Congress. Opposition was building all this time. Even though I was out of the government then, I was fairly active in terms of making speeches in support of the agreement; a lot of television appearances. And then Ross Perot got into the act too. But the President really delayed and delayed, and then finally he got into it, and that made the difference in terms of mobilizing the support. Of course, the key event was the Gore-Perot debate, and interestingly, in May of that year, I proposed to the business coalition supporting the agreement that Perot be challenged to a debate.

Q: You were saying coalition. What coalition was this?

KATZ: This was a business coalition in support of NAFTA. I think it was called "NAFTA Now." It was primarily led by the Business Round table and some other business organizations were working for it. But I called the NAFTA coalition, and said, "You've got to get somebody to challenge Perot to a debate. You can murder him. He obviously doesn't know what he's talking about. He's inconsistent." In fact, when he appeared before the Congress, they said, "Mr. Perot, you don't like this agreement." And he said, "No, that's not true. I believe in the agreement. I just think it needs to be changed." They said, "Well, how would you change it?" He said, "I hadn't thought about it." So the Coalition people said, "Who would you get to debate him? Would Carla Hills do it?" I said, "Well, I don't think she's the right person. I think you need to get someone more in the political arena. What about Senator Bill Bradley from New Jersey?" "Well, let us look into that." And then I called Bradley's office. In fact, I had talked to Bradley earlier. I had appeared with Bradley before an audience. So I called this contact and I said, "Do you think the Senator would go for this? You may hear about this, because I've stimulated this possibility." They thought he might very well agree to it. I heard nothing further, and nothing happened.

Incidentally, my activities in this regard were somewhat limited, because I'd gone into business with Carla Hills, and we decided that we were not going to do lobbying as such, that we would

not do lobbying in the literal sense of the term. But we could speak out as public citizens, which is what we did, and on request met with members of Congress. So my role was active, but limited in that regard. But then, suddenly Gore volunteered to debate Perot, and a lot of nervousness prevailed. I was somewhat nervous about Gore doing this, because I wondered if he had the personality.

Q: He has sort of a wooden delivery, for those that don't know it. He does look like he's wound up. It's funny.

KATZ: That's right. But he was equal to the task, and he destroyed Perot. That was a major turning point. And the other thing that happened that I thought was a major turning point was a week before the vote, the President kind of took the gloves off, and he took exception to the campaign by Labor. He directly criticized labor for the vicious campaign that they were waging. That kind of provided a shield for some people in the Congress who were a little nervous about taking on Labor themselves.

All through this, I have to say that I felt that we would win, until about the last four days or so, because the Administration was doing a lot of wheeling and dealing. They had promised, for example, one Congressman that they would have a development bank along the border, that became the NAD Bank, the North American Development Bank. And the word was, "Well, that got his vote." So one bank, one vote. And obviously there weren't enough banks to get 218 votes in the House. We knew that the Senate would not be a problem; the problem was in the House. But, it began to turn around on the weekend before. By Monday it was pretty clear we were going to win. I think the vote was Tuesday or Wednesday, and of course we won fairly big. We won with 236 votes in favor. The Senate vote was anticlimactic, so it came about.

OSCAR J. OLSON, JR.
Economic/Commercial Officer
Juarez (1964-1966)

Mr. Olson was born and raised in Texas and was educated at the University of Texas, Yale University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Primary a Commercial and Economic Officer, Mr. Olson served in Venezuela, Spain, Germany, Mexico, Panama and Ecuador. In his Washington Assignments he dealt with Management issues. Mr. Olson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Oscar. It is the 13th of September 2004, and this is our second conversation. We are going to start off this morning talking about your assignments from '64- '66 in Ciudad Juarez as economic-commercial officer.

OLSON: Yes, would you believe that we actually had an economic-commercial officer slot at a Mexican border post, which did mostly consular work. The Juarez economy was interesting

enough, based on, let's see, prostitution, divorce, gambling, alcohol, drugs, pornography—what else is there? But the economic interest was not really on the border but in the consular district, the state of Chihuahua, with important mining, cattle ranching, agricultural, and other economic-commercial interests. I found that many of the ranchers and businessmen in Chihuahua had closer ties—banking, commercial, even family ties—to the north, in Texas, than to Mexico City. Yet especially in Juarez, living right on the border with many connections to El Paso, our contacts seemed especially proud to show off the best attributes of Mexican culture. I imagine Juarez and El Paso were much closer to being two parts of the same community when I was there than is the case now. Then it was much easier to cross the border in either direction. Several of us from the consulate would often pop over to El Paso for lunch on workdays.

We were returning closer to home after two assignments abroad. Having joined the foreign service from Corpus Christi, my original fear was that they're going to send me immediately to Matamoros or Laredo, and I would be 150 miles away from home. Now what kind of foreign service would that be. But by this time it was good to be back closer to the States. People said, "Oh well, you are going home." I replied, "Yes, a mere 750 miles from El Paso to Corpus Christi."

Since I was the only one in the consulate doing other than consular work, I spent a lot of time down in the consular district. We had a wonderful time there, with interesting places to visit. There was the flourishing Mennonite colony that made wonderful cheese. And Colonia Juarez, a colony of Mormons who left Utah when polygamy was abolished. Gov. George Romney of Michigan was born in one of the Mormon communities in Chihuahua. One of the ranchers I became acquainted with would take me up in his Piper Cub for beautiful views of the range land.

I was the first to arrive at the consulate under new rules that said, "If you are to draw a housing allowance, you will actually live in your consular district—you will live in Juarez." Before, the consulate's American staff lived in El Paso. The new rule was, I think, completely appropriate, and we were able to find a nice place to live for our family of three kids. There was an active social life on both sides. My wife had lots of interesting things to do, and I was the only gringo member of the Juarez Rotary Club, which I enjoyed. An excellent source of contacts for the legitimate local business community, and I actually was asked to speak to the Rotary District Convention in the interior of Mexico. A bunch of members and wives went down by train to Guanajuato, which was a fascinating experience as well. The train suffered a 'hot box' and was stalled for several hours in the middle of the desert of Durango. Also at several stops along the way the local Rotary Club would come to serenade us during our brief stay.

What was then Texas Western University, now the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), had a very active relationship with the University of Chihuahua. The consulate had a Jeep station wagon. Many times when I was going, at least once a month, down into the interior, I would take along a professor or two, perhaps with an art exhibit or with books or with all sorts of scholarly materials—all for an interchange with the people at the University of Chihuahua.

Q: The University of Chihuahua was not in Juarez but...

OLSON: In Ciudad Chihuahua, the capital. Juarez also had close ties to Texas Western, with a number of Juarez residents enrolled there. We were there when unknown, underdog Texas Western pulled off the upset of the century, beating #1 ranked Kentucky for the NCAA basketball championship. At least in our social circle in Juarez, there was a lot of interest in the playoffs. Social invitations for a night when there was a game would be accepted on the understanding there would be access to a TV set tuned in. And we could hear firecrackers in the streets in Juarez the night the championship was won. I wonder if there is still the same feeling between the two cities.

On most of my trips down to the state capital, I would make a courtesy call on the governor of Chihuahua, who at that time was a retired general. He had spent his youth as an aide to Pancho Villa. I don't think he was all that busy as governor, because he would love to spin tales, which I loved to listen to. A peek into history, an added pleasure to my duties there. My wife and I also got to know the mayor of Chihuahua and his wife well. He was also a Rotarian. During one of the NASA Gemini launches, the consulate had a chance to do a bit of 'show and tell' for some Chihuahua state officials and also the mayor. Our air force attaché in Mexico City sent down his plane to carry the consul general and me, together with our Mexican VIPs, to the NASA tracking station in Guaymas, Mexico, to witness its operation during this launch. It turned out that the launch was postponed or scrubbed, but in any case we had a good tour of the facility. I recall they pointed to a small consol that had been what was used to track the Mercury missions. Then they had a whole wall full of instruments that would be used for Gemini. And they showed us the several rooms added to the building to house all of the computers and equipment they would use for the coming Apollo missions. They also had a computer monitor programmed to converse in Spanish with anyone who approached, asking questions and making appropriate responses. Our guests were most impressed, as were we hosts.

At one time there were rumors that Che Guevara was out in Chihuahua's Sierra Madre mountain range recruiting and training guerrillas. The rumors proved false, but they added a bit of excitement. The consul general and I actually took an extra trip deep into the interior just to ask people what they were hearing about such goings on. It all added interest to the assignment.

I got a call after two years informing me that the person who had been designated for university training at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy had at the last minute dropped out. The Department wanted me to fill that slot. I think this was mid-August. The department usually had one mid-career officer in training at Fletcher, plus one from AID (Agency for International Development), and one from USIS (United States Information Service). An academic year interested me—I may have at some time said something along that line on my April Fool preference form. Only later when I got back to the Department after that nine months did I find that there had been some debate as to the appropriateness or the timing of this assignment. I would be doing graduate economic work, but my undergraduate economic coursework was weak. I barely had an economics minor—it was more political science and history. Apparently Jock Reinstein, director of the FSI year-long economic course that gave the equivalent of a undergraduate degree in economics, argued that I should have that first and then be sent for graduate work. He lost the argument—someone in personnel wanted that open slot filled. And off I went.

Q: To Fletcher?

OLSON: To Fletcher. The timing was bad, and my decision was bad in another sense because the Department had decided to open a one-man post in Ciudad Juarez, and I was the one who was to have gone there.

Q: To where?

OLSON: I mean to Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua. Chihuahua would be opening as a one-man post. They were beginning to open these limited listening posts at several places in Mexico and elsewhere. I don't think this program lasted very long, but in retrospect it's what I should have done rather than thinking that I would never again have a chance at an academic year. That was pretty ridiculous. Plus the difficulty of moving the family twice in nine months.

Q: Before we talk a little bit more about Fletcher, your experience there, let me ask you just a couple questions about Juarez. You did economic and commercial reporting; did you do it directly to Washington or through the embassy?

OLSON: It was through the embassy primarily.

Q: And, did you go to Mexico City fairly often?

OLSON: No, we were able to go to Mexico City for consultations and discussions just once.

Q: Was there much coordination or contact with the other Consulates in Mexico on the border?

OLSON: No, not very much. The USIS public affairs officer with responsibility for our consular district was assigned to the consulate in Hermosillo, Sonora. He would visit us occasionally and join us on one of our treks with Texas Western professors down to the University of Chihuahua.

Q: And who was the consul general during most of your time?

OLSON: Bill Hughes. William Hughes had been the head of FBO (Foreign Buildings Operations) during its glory days of the '50s, early '60s, when we hired the world's most renown architects to design and build these wonderful unsecure...

Q: Palaces.

OLSON: Well, not just palaces but very good architecture. A very interesting fellow—he was a good person to work for.

Q: But he was not particularly interested in the consular side of the staff?

OLSON: You know, this was his retirement post, his reward. He and his wife then retired to El Paso.

ROBERT S. STEVEN
Consular Officer
Merida (1964-1966)

Staff Aide to the Ambassador
Mexico City (1966-1969)

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

Q: Today is the 15th of August, the ides of August, 2001. Bob, you're off to - how do you pronounce it? - Merida?

STEVEN: Merida.

Q: Could you tell me about the post and the area in which it was at that time?

STEVEN: Merida is a marginal post. It was considered so then, I think. The main reason it was open at that time was the proximity to Cuba, and we obviously had people there who were more interested in Cuba than they were in Mexico. Technically it was a two-man consulate routine. The primary function, as many of those are, was visas - there was heavy traffic going back and forth - plus economic interests. Yucatán was at that time still the leading source of binding twines for agriculture machinery. I never knew there was a big market for that - it's enormous - and they have henequen, the natural fiber. It's been largely replaced, I understand, over the years by plastic fibers. I did a mix of consular work, protection and welfare for American tourists, visa issuances, and some economic reporting and pretty much ran the consulate. The consul had other things on his mind, so it was an opportunity to excel. I spent a year and a half there.

Q: You were there from '66 about?

STEVEN: I got to Merida in November of 1964 and left in April of '66, ahead of time. My tour was interrupted and I was called up to Mexico City to become the staff aide to the ambassador to Mexico. I've never quite understood why.

Q: Let's stick to the Yucatán for a time. It doesn't look like a very prosperous area down there. Visas, who was going where and why?

STEVEN: I would say the Yucatán is a fairly prosperous place; at least it was at that time. It had,

I would say, a very large industry. The prime industry was the henequen manufacture, but there were other industries there. There were cattle. Tourism was already a major development. Since then, of course, there is far more. The political situation was interesting in that Yucatán has always considered itself somewhat separate from the rest of Mexico. At one point in their history the Yucatecans petitioned to become an American state and be taken over by the USA, which we declined. The focus of travel often was from Merida directly to Miami. We tend to forget that the distance was much shorter from Miami to Yucatán than it was from Yucatán to Mexico City. So there was a very much closer tie to the States than other parts of Mexico. It was worthwhile to have a consulate there. Every time the Department has a budget crisis, they contemplate closing Merida down, and they always somehow manage to keep it going. It serves a useful purpose.

Q: Did you have any particularly difficult protection and welfare cases?

STEVEN: Oh, yes. One of the more interesting ones, I guess, was an American fishing boat off the coast had a fire onboard, and the captain of the fishing boat was rather badly burned. They got him ashore at the port down there - it'll come to me - got him ashore and then just called us, "What do we do with this man?" Through the course of the night working on the telephone, I was able to get in touch with the Coast Guard in Miami, and the Coast Guard flew an airplane down in the dark, getting to Yucatán just before morning light, circling over the airport, and then landing right at dawn. We had been able to arrange all this by telephone with the help of the Mexican authorities to have this fellow ready to go, and they put him on the airplane and took him back to Miami and, I gather, saved his life and he eventually recovered. Other cases were the normal ones that you handle in small posts, Americans getting into trouble with the law. We had to work with the local police. If you were lucky and had good contacts, they were usually happy enough to send them home, just expel them to get rid of the problem. One American, a young man on a motorcycle, thought that driving at 60 or 70 miles an hour at night on a Yucatecan country road was a smart idea. Well, the cows consider the roads theirs at those hours, so he ran right onto a cow, and the cow was demolished and he was fairly badly broken up. That took a good deal of effort to get him hospitalized and eventually get him moved. Another typical case that happens more and more, out at Cozumel, which was then the leading tourist attraction - now it's Cancun, which has opened up since then - at Cozumel a young American went scuba diving under the supervision supposedly of a Mexican diver, a professional diver. Unfortunately they'd stretched things, and the diver took down too many people and couldn't keep track of them. They stayed down for the allotment of time at 100 to 150 feet, and the diver came up and discovered that one of the people in the group wasn't there. So the young Mexican diver, who had already exceeded his allotment of time and knew that if he went back down again he was very probably going to get deathly ill with the bends and the nitrogen, without questioning me he went back down and spent another 20 minutes or 30 minutes searching. Never found the body; they never found it; it just vanished, wiped out to sea somewhere. Then when the young Mexican boy came up, he was in terrible condition himself. He had the convulsions. That was an extremely difficult case. Again, the US Coast Guard came to our rescue and had nearby on a ship apparently a decompression chamber which they were willing to make available, so they came in and they put the boy into the decompression chamber. He ended up, I think, a paraplegic but at least survived. I think he never regained the use of his legs. These are the sort of routines that go on in consular work and which in my case interested me. I enjoyed that type of work and thought that this would

be a useful thing to do. That was back in the days before we were into our coning system and you could contemplate being an economic officer at one post and a consular officer at the next. That changed. But Yucatán, as I say, was a fascinating place. I would still recommend it as a tour for your officers.

Q: Who was the consul while you were there?

STEVEN: Paul Dwyer. He's long retired.

Q: Was there much political activity at that time?

STEVEN: At that time I was there the political activity was again, as I say, focused on Cuba. We were more concerned about Cuba's relationships and the movement between Cuba and South and Central America.

Q: Were there, from what you were gathering, many Cubans in the area?

STEVEN: Yes, there were Cubans there, not ostensibly openly and politically acting. They weren't allowed to. The Mexicans just simply didn't permit that sort of thing. But there were Cubans there; there was a Cuban consul. There were relationships. There was a fair amount of traffic back and forth. When I say 'we', I mean the US government had a good deal of interest in what was going over there, so that was part of the US activity in the area.

Q: Then in '66 you went up to Mexico City.

STEVEN: I was called up to Mexico City as a staff aide to the ambassador, which came as a bolt from the blue. The ambassador was Fulton Freeman. It always used to be amusing, because if anybody called on the phone or wrote to Fulton, we knew that they didn't know him; he was universally known as Tony Freeman. A marvelous man, he grew up in China with missionary parents. He spoke Chinese and read Chinese. He ended up as ambassador to Mexico. We were extremely fortunate, both my wife and I, in the personal relationship and the official relationship. Normally that's considered a one-year or at the most a two-year tour. As the end of my second year came along, he and I both were sort of tentative, and it turned out that we were both thinking very much the same thing. He very much wanted me to stay, if I would, for the rest of his career, and I very much wanted to. Naturally the career guides back here warned me that this was not the way your career was to progress, this was too long at one job. Not for the first time or certainly the last in my career, after discussing it thoroughly with my other half, we decided that we still wanted to do that. So we stayed almost three years in that job.

Q: Until about '69.

STEVEN: We left there in the summer of '69.

Q: Okay. How did you see, from your position but people talking and sitting at the side of the ambassador, how did you see our relations with Mexico at the time, and what were the kind of

issues that concerned us?

STEVEN: I think the relationship was as it has been in the overall sense for the last several decades, completely open, good, with points of irritation. One was the famous dispute over a few acres of land along the Rio Grande River - I forget the name of it now. The Rio Grande had shifted and it had cut off what was considered Mexican territory, and we built on it and took it over, and the Mexicans said, "Hey, you can't do that; it's ours, so give it back," so we finally did - that type of thing, border issues. Politically there was not a great deal of difficulty. That was unfortunately though the period of the famous riots that they had in the city.

Q: Was this because of the Olympics?

STEVEN: No. The Olympics took place during that period, but the riots were more politically oriented, students protesting, and the difficulty was it got out of hand and the military did some shooting.

Q: Quite a bit.

STEVEN: Quite a bit, yes.

Q: Who was the Minister of Interior at the time? He later became President.

STEVEN: I forget.

Q: I want to say Echeverria - I can't pronounce it. Anyway, I don't know.

STEVEN: It was very sad that it happened. To me, it always reminded me of the Kent State incident that we had. I think it was not a question of anybody in the government ordering the police to fire to break this thing up violently. I think it was more a question of scared young conscript, soldiers and police who fired, just as exactly what happened at Kent State. The relationship was generally good. Tony Freeman had excellent relations with the local government. He could go to them very quietly and resolve a great many problems that never rose to the level of major political difficulties. One interesting historical note while I was there that I always remember: At the time the Vietnam War was on, and, if you recall, President Johnson was at the point where he decided that he would not run again and withdrew from consideration, but he hadn't yet announced that when Vice President Humphrey came to Mexico City on an official visit. I was very much involved in that, of course. The Mexican President then, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, honored us most exceptionally by accepting an invitation to the ambassador's home. Most presidents don't do that. Our President, for example, has always made it a practice you don't go to foreign embassies, because if you go to one, then the others are offended, and the Mexicans had about the same thing, but Díaz Ordaz accepted an invitation to come to our ambassador's residence for a dinner for Vice President Humphrey, and I was right there with them. That was the same evening, by coincidence, when the radio broadcast, special broadcast, of President Johnson was to be made, and we expected something was going to happen. I had the great good fortune - and Foreign Service Officers sometimes are able to do this - of being in the

library at the ambassador's residence with the ambassador and his wife, Vice President Humphrey and Muriel, President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and his interpreter, and me. The ambassador had one of those big Zenith radios, you remember those shortwave radios we had, and was listening to the broadcast. I shall always remember the interpreter whispering in Díaz Ordaz' ear while the thing was going on, and Johnson announced that he would not accept or run again. As soon as the broadcast ended, Muriel Humphrey turned to Hubert - and I'll never forget it - in tears and said, "Hubert, what are we going to do?" I'll always remember and wondered, had they not thought this through, had they really not known it was coming. He made it clear, as I recall the conversations that came out - the ambassador obviously was interested too - that Humphrey knew pretty much that Johnson was not going to run again, but he didn't know it was going to be announced that night, so it came as a surprise to him too. I'll always remember the interpreter turning to Díaz Ordaz and whispering this in his ear about the announcement and Díaz Ordaz turning his head sideways and staring at him like that, and then blank, turned back, no expression, no emotion. Once again an example of how Foreign Service and trained diplomats think of these things: There was press attention, a great deal of press there, not only Mexican but a lot of American press were at the residence too. They were kept in the front lobby in the hall. But as we came out of the library they were all lined up and they were demanding a response.

Humphrey's aide was obviously thinking only of the politics of this thing and that Humphrey needed to speak to the American press and the other press that were there responding to the event that had just happened. As they were moving across the big living room - I suppose you could call it - or reception room toward the dining room where the dinner was waiting - it had already been delayed for about 20 minutes because of the broadcast - Humphrey looked a little incisive and he sort of looked at that aide and at the press and at the ambassador, and Tony Freeman just very quietly said, "Mr. Vice President, we do have as our guest the President of Mexico, and I wonder if it would be possible to continue on with the evening. In fact, I think maybe we should continue on with the evening." Humphrey picked up just like that and said, "You're absolutely right," and they walked past the press without a word and into the dining room for dinner. Then after, he came out and said a few words. It's the sort of diplomatic touch that a real professional has.

Q: How did Tony Freeman operate? He was one of the big names. In a way, he moved over with his Chinese expertise sort of to get out from under the fire of McCarthyism and all.

STEVEN: I think that was probably part of it, yes. He had a manner which was probably the perfect blend of authority and good human relationships. It was clear who was in charge at the embassy, and when necessary he made firm decisions, even unpleasant decisions, but always in a manner that left people feeling very comfortable and friendly and open with him. People felt quite able to come and argue with him or protest things he was doing or make suggestions - to me, he was the ideal ambassador in his relationships, both with his host government and with the people in his embassy. But he had a heart attack while he was there and spent quite some time - I forget how long; it was measured in weeks, I think - at the residence, part of it in bed recovering. I think - I don't know this, but I believe - that he sort of sounded out the Department if they thought he ought to resign or give it up, but he was able to continue to work, so everybody agreed he'd stay on and I would take work to his residence and he would do it there. He also later was

offered the job, or pretty much anything he wanted to do. I know they talked to him about becoming Assistant Secretary for then ARA. He turned it down and said no, he didn't want to get back into that high-pressure political atmosphere of Washington. I believe, and I wouldn't want to be quoted on that one publicly, but I believe that he was offered Brazil, and, again, he said to me and to others who were with him in the office that after Mexico what does it offer? Is it a bigger, better job? No. Mexico was one of the best ambassadorial jobs. So he went ahead and decided to retire and accepted a job as president of the Monterey Institute for Foreign Studies up in Monterey, California, which was right in his home area. He came from that area and had lots of good ties there, and so he went out there for a few more years and ran the Institute. He died very much as I think Tony Freeman would have wanted to, walking off the 18th hole of the golf course. He finished a nice 18-hole round of golf, started back toward the locker room, and... If you've got to go, that's probably as good as anything.

Q: Did you get any feel for how we viewed the politics of Mexico? At that time the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] was the power... It had just been there since the '20s, I guess. Was this an accepted thing?

STEVEN: It was accepted. It was *de jure* and *de facto* the dominant force. It kept the country reasonably stable. We weren't worried about Communist takeovers as we had been in Cuba. The relationships with the US were completely acceptable. There were minor irritations but nothing major. There were no alternatives, I think, that the United States saw that were better. We didn't see a strong opposition party that was capable of replacing it and insuring stability as we now see. It's a different situation. So I think it was generally accepted by everyone. It's all right. We aren't necessarily endorsing publicly the idea of a one-party government that runs the way it does, but it worked.

Q: I've been told - I've never served in Mexico but I've been told - that the Mexican Foreign Ministry is sort of the place where it's sort of the designated place where you can be somewhat anti-American and all. While everybody else goes about their business dealing quite amicably with the Americans, the Foreign Ministry sort of is the place where the somewhat anti-American sentiment resides. Did you get any of that feel?

STEVEN: When I was there, no. I would think more, if there are people who feel that way or even if it is true, it's tactical as much as anything. Mexico does have problems with this domineering power to the north, and the Foreign Ministry would be expected to uphold Mexican honor and interests, and if that required talking tough to the Americans, it could be done. I think it's more just a tactical thing. You'd be expected to be protective of poor little Mexico.

Q: Did you, or the ambassador and you with him, get drawn into any of these major controversies over border problems or...?

STEVEN: Well, drawn in very much in the sense of dealing with them, but I recall no instance in which the ambassador or the embassy were ever identified either by the Mexicans or our side as part of the problem. The problem existed, and we did our best, the ambassador did his best, to deal with that problem in an amicable way with the Mexicans, and it generally worked. I don't

recall instances of the embassy itself becoming controversial or the ambassador becoming controversial. Most of the problems we had with the Mexicans were worked out, and it was more practical questions like that piece of land that had to be handed back to Mexico and other decisions of that type that were made. In trade relationships I don't recall there were major initiatives like NAFTA and so on at that time. Things went along pretty well.

Q: Did Cuba come into the equation at all?

STEVEN: Some. Of course, you were concerned about Cuban influence in Mexico, but it wasn't regarded as either likely or dangerous. Of course, the Cubans were active. They had their embassy there and so on. The Mexicans insisted in keeping relationships open with Cuba. I have no official knowledge of it, but my impression might have been that it didn't bother us that much because it gave us opportunities to work on Cuba too if we had somebody there in Mexico to see what they were doing, etcetera. Mexico had the very comfortable position of not fearing Cuba. The Mexican armed forces have always been a fascinating subject since the revolutionary days of the '20s. They have not been an overt factor but were very much in the background. They support the PRI, of course, and the government, but they have never been an independent factor and have never been big enough or powerful enough to be too dangerous in Mexico. A famous story - it's probably apocryphal but it might very well have happened - was the Mexican government bringing its budget to President Díaz Ordaz at the time I was there for their military expenditures for the upcoming budget year, and they wanted to buy some tanks. It turned out Mexico had, I think, a half dozen light tanks from the World War II period mainly for parade purposes, but they actually wanted to buy a few modern tanks. They came to the President and put this in the budget. He is said to have looked at this and said, "Tanks, hmmm. Well, who are we going to fight? Why do we need these?" The southern border with Guatemala was of some concern at times. There were differences down there and so on. He said, "The Guatemalans are going to invade?" "Oh, no, no, Senor President." "I see. If the Americans decide to invade, there's not much we're going to do with a few tanks. If the Cubans decide to attack us, the Americans aren't going to permit that. They'll immediately step in and stop that, so why do we need tanks? Scratch them out of the budget." Well, that's almost exactly what Mexico has always done. Their air force was a pitiful collection of a few T33 jet fighters; I don't think they even have those now. For what purpose? They've been blessed and cursed at the same time by having us right here. We're not going to permit anybody to attack Mexico. It wouldn't be in our interest, so they have complete protection under our umbrella. Aside from their own internal security needs, which are basically police and light infantry requirements, there's no purpose in having a military, so they've been fortunate to be able to keep the military very much out of it.

Q: Did our involvement in Vietnam bring protests, demonstrations, that sort of thing?

STEVEN: Some. We had protests and demonstrations, and Vietnam was an element of it. I remember the students, again, marching up the avenue in front of the embassy one day and lot of shouting and crowding, but the student leaders themselves designated marshals, and as they came by the US embassy, the marshals lined the sidewalk arm to arm holding like this and formed a human rail across the front so that nobody would go near the embassy, and they marched yelling and shouting but nothing was thrown, no incidents of that nature. I suspect that it was almost like

the types of demonstrations you had in this country at the same time. They didn't generally get violent at all.

Q: How about your and your wife's social contacts with Mexican society?

STEVEN: We were very fortunate because of the ambassador, of course, and I was exposed to a lot that I never would have been able to see. It was also so very busy. We had Mexican friends and spent what time we could meeting them and seeing them. We were very much involved in the ambassador's social activity. It was common enough that I be at the table when he had the Foreign Minister there for dinner. I was fortunate in that he was an ambassador who included me in most of what he did, for example, meeting in the library when the Vice President and the Mexican President were there. At many of the activities he went to, I was there with my wife. My wife was pregnant in the middle of all this, and that slowed her activity down a little bit. But it was a very good period.

JAMES J. GORMLEY
Vice Consul and Rotational Officer
Mexico City (1964-1965)

Vice Consul
Merida (1965-1967)

Narcotics Officer
Mexico City (1986-1987)

James J. Gormley was born in New York in 1932. He received a bachelor's degree in management from Fordham College School of Business in 1954 and served in the U.S. Army from 1954-1956. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964. In addition to serving in Mexico, Mr. Gormley served in Paraguay, Vietnam, Thailand, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: What was your first assignment?

GORMLEY: My first assignment was Mexico City. I was for a while on the visa line, for a while in American citizen special services--protection basically--which was a lot of fun with the kind of characters that come through there. That was about six months altogether, mostly protection. Then I was for six months sort of a gofer in the economic and commercial section. After a year in Mexico City I was sent down as vice consul to Mérida which was great because the consul left soon after I arrived and the new consul didn't come in for two months and it was a very heady experience.

Q: Well let's go back to Mexico City. What was it like on the visa line? What type of cases were

you dealing with and how were you supervised?

GORMLEY: I suppose it was not as bad as places I have heard about like the Dominican Republic but it was bad enough; there were a tremendous number of cases every day, the vast majority of which were not entitled to a visa. I remember that when I first arrived I was staying at the María Isabel Hotel whose dining room looks directly across at the entrance to the visa section so at breakfast I could see my customers already lined up. Many of them would be campesinos, there with their white pants and white shirt, broad brimmed straw hats, thinking that they were going to the States as tourists. I think anybody on the visa line who didn't have a seventy percent refusal rate wasn't doing their job.

Q: Was there much second-guessing of "why did you do this" or were you pretty much told you have a seventy percent refusal rate and get out there and do it?

GORMLEY: No, No. There was no pressure either to deny or to let in people. At least I never experienced it. Remember this was only one month that I was there. There is a tremendous amount of pressure on the local staff. You would have these young girls in their early '20s crying from the kind of treatment they were receiving from the visa applicants. It was a pressure-filled place and you had to try and keep spirits up until the day ended. Certainly from the moment you started until you closed down, say at three or four o'clock, there was never a let-up, you would eat lunch on the run.

Q: You said the protection of welfare was a lot of fun. Can you think of any cases that you had that particularly stick in your mind?

GORMLEY: I don't know if these are useful for diplomatic history, more for dinner table conversation.

Q: Well, that's all right; these things get used.

GORMLEY: The thing that is unique about Mexico, maybe Canada too, but I think more in Mexico, is that Americans cross the border and think that American laws still apply. You would continually have people thinking that the US government could order Mexican officials around and it was always disillusioning to them to be told that no, this is their country and they run things. We do things according to their laws; American laws don't apply here. I remember a case where a woman had called up the duty officer about a problem she had. She had rented a house. In back of the house was a settlement of squatters and they were urinating against her wall, which she said had caused her son to have typhoid or something, I forget what it was. She was calling to US Embassy to see that this situation was corrected. Apparently the duty officer had given her not too kindly treatment, a little short shrift; but I did get on and told her that she should call the police but that we would definitely follow up. I gave her plenty of soft soap because she was so mad at the duty officer. I wrote a memo on it and I suggested three things that the US could do to solve her problem. One was to take it up to the UN Security Council, the second was that the Ambassador should make a speech against pissing on walls, and the third was that USIS should issue a pamphlet against the practice. After that I didn't see there was anything we could...no, no,

the last one I think was that Americans should look over their walls before they sign a lease.

Again I think these are hardly of great moment, but I had a call one time from a woman in Ohio who was calling about her son. He was 17 or 18, anyway a young man, not a kid, who apparently was having a lot of problems with the family he was staying with in Mexico City. She said I should go out and see him, I guess she called maybe midnight, get him into a hotel and see that he is settled and get him out of this bad situation. I said, "Madam, your son is here. You are in Cleveland. If he has a problem, why doesn't he directly contact me? Anyway, the State Department does not run a global baby sitting service." Immediately the old threats about writing congressmen, etc., but that was the last I heard of the case.

Q: Then you went down to Merida? Where is that located and what is its local political and economic situation?

GORMLEY: The whole Yucatan Peninsula has always had a very large amount of separatist sentiment. They don't regard themselves as Mexicans. The biggest manufacturing employer in the peninsula was Cordemex, a cordage company, nationalized. I heard the director, who was a Mexican, complaining that on the job application anytime it would say nationality they would always put Yucateco. Yucatan had declared independence at least twice--at the time of the Mexican War and the time of the Revolution they had declared themselves independent, neither time lasted very long. Of course, the overwhelming majority of the population was Maya, a very, very nice people. Basically gentle, honest, clean--a thing that they would say would distinguish them from other Mexicans. Even the upper class which was generally called the *casta divina*, the divine caste, spoke Maya, learning it from the maids. Like all the states in Mexico the political system was completely dominated by Mexico City. The local politicians had to have a *patrón* in Mexico City. The decision on who would be governor would be made in Mexico City and that required the various contenders, within the one party, within the PRI, go on pilgrimages to Mexico City and pay off whoever had to be paid off, do favors or promise to do favors for whoever was there. And that was how you got a governor. The church was very strong there as it wasn't in some other parts of Mexico. The Archbishop was an important political figure and the Catholic Church was strong. The PAN shortly after my time there actually won the mayoralty in Merida and I believe they have come very close to winning the governorship on more than one occasion.

Q: What were the principal duties of a consular officer there?

GORMLEY: It was a mix of things. Because it was so far from Mexico City and had such an amount of separatist sentiment, there was a lot of reporting on the general political feelings there. Before I got there, (I am not sure exactly when it was closed down) there was a CIA station mainly focused on Cuba because Cuba is very close to Yucatan. Before Castro the connection between Merida and Havana was closer than it was between Merida and Mexico City; most of the doctors, for instance, had been graduated from Cuban medical schools. There was a Cuban consul in Merida, the only other foreign consul in town. My boss when I got there was fixated on the Cuban consul and on communists in general to such a degree that I think it was counterproductive.

Q: How did this manifest itself?

GORMLEY: Again, before I got there he had engaged in a campaign, some people might say a vendetta, to get rid of the director of state public education, who I assume was a communist. And he succeeded in getting him put out as director of state education. He then resurfaced as head of the electricity authority which meant we never got authority to operate the transformer that ran our air conditioning and so while you were going over one hundred degrees most of the year we had no air conditioning when I got there. One of the first things I did after he left was to go call on the director of electricity and tell him that we were having a problem, that we had no authority to install our transformer and I was dying from the heat, could he do something about it. He said to me, "I'm very sympathetic but nobody from the consulate has ever come to see me about it." I said, "I'm here now, I'm seeing you about it." We got our air conditioner. I always made it a point every time I saw him to give him a big *abrazo*, partially to embarrass him, I suppose.

Q: But also to keep the air conditioner going.

GORMLEY: Then economically we were still interested at that point, I assume that it is a dead industry now, in the henequen production. Henequen was used for agricultural baler twine in the States.

Q: Henequen is what, a twine?

GORMLEY: It is a cactus plant and they make rope and twine out of.

Q: Well I think they still use that. My understanding is that although they use plastic as cordage for so many things, for baling things for livestock, particularly cattle, they can't have anything plastic because eventually the cows eat the stuff and it gets in their stomachs. You have to have something that is dissolvable.

GORMLEY: Yes, it's just that I am not sure now how much of the industry still exists. Certainly the last time I was down there, in 1987 I guess, there was very little henequen being produced at that point. But henequen was the basis of the whole economy in the peninsula, they called it "green gold." Certainly in the early part of the twentieth century it was a fantastically prosperous area; big, big houses--some of them by the '60s in derelict condition. But we were still reporting on that. We were encouraging the production of winter vegetables for transport to Florida especially. There weren't that many American businessmen we had to deal with.

Q: The big tourist industry at Cancun had not started at that point?

GORMLEY: No. Cancun had not...I am not even sure when Cancun was brought into being.

Q: Probably in the '70s.

GORMLEY: Of course, the ruins themselves were a major tourist attraction--especially for

Europeans, more so than for Americans--and they were well developed, especially at Chichen Itza and Uxmal. In the Caribbean you did have Cozumel and Isla Mujeres which were resort islands but nothing compared to the cut-rate, package vacation land that Cancun is now.

Q: How did the writ of our Embassy in Mexico City run there? Did it have any effect on you?

GORMLEY: One of the great things about being there at that time, I suppose it is not true now, was that there were no communications except the telephone which was out half the time. They really couldn't ride too much herd on us. All of our communications were by airgram rather than by telegram. The distance lent a lot of enchantment.

Q: From 1984 to 1990. You have written an article about part of this time. What period did that cover?

GORMLEY: The article really hit all of the highlights, but it focused on Mexico, which was only one year.

Q: The article was in the Foreign Service Journal of June, 1992.

What were you doing when you were in the Washington area?

GORMLEY: An awful lot of it was working on preparing and defending budgets. We were also the backup and the Washington representative of our field offices, representing their needs and issues in Washington. I handled, because of the fact that we were only three people, Colombia myself--I was in effect a desk officer. That was the country where at the time most things were happening; the whole focus at that point was on cocaine, that was the center of interest. Then we had another person who handled Bolivia and Peru, and a third Mexico and the Caribbean and anything else that happened to come along.

Q: What was your impression of how we were handling these things?

GORMLEY: Well in the way that the situation is almost hopeless in consideration of the demand in the United States, the State Department never felt comfortable with the narcotics issue. It was an irritant to people higher up in the Department, certainly Shultz never wanted to pay any attention to it. As high as they went at the time was, I guess, Whitehead; he did take a little bit of interest in it--mainly defending the Department politically from charges that it wasn't doing enough. There were a lot of people in the field who were quite enthusiastic and did some rather good things, but the whole thing was quixotic. As long as you have the enormous demand in the United States, what we are doing overseas is almost irrelevant.

Q: Was it that there was just no way a program would work overseas?

GORMLEY: You may notice in the article, and I meant that article to cover the whole period of

my time, there is virtually nothing said about Thailand, even though I spent more time in Thailand than in Mexico. Basically because the Thai program was pretty decent you did have a reasonably effective movement out of production of opium in the north of Thailand; but how much of that was due to our efforts and how much the result of a general economic development of the north? I think the development was the key that allowed it; it just became easier for them to produce cabbages for the Chiang Mai market than to deal with the army coming through and cutting down their opium crop and they could make just as much money raising vegetables. So you did have a pretty successful crop substitution program there, but across the border they were producing more than they ever were.

Q: Did you have this feeling most of the time you were there? What about the people with you?

GORMLEY: Especially in Mexico the DEA and the Ambassador...

Q: Who was the Ambassador then?

GORMLEY: The Ambassador was Charles Pilliod, who had been the chairman of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. They attempted to pretend that we were getting cooperation from the Mexicans, which we weren't. The Camarena case was sort of a centerpiece...

Q: This was a DEA agent who was kidnapped.

GORMLEY: Who was tortured and murdered by elements which included police. That is rather extensively and well-handled in a book by a journalist, Elaine Shannon, called *Desperados*. That book, I think, covers it very well. One of the things about the Camarena case that we later learned through tapes--I don't know how these tapes actually came into our hands but they did; the tapes of the interrogation--was that it included a lot of questions about what he knew about the Commander of the Mexican Army, the Minister of Defense, General, and what he knew about the Minister of Interior, Manuel Bartlett. These names--the Minister of Interior is the second most powerful man in Mexico and the Minister of Defense is awfully powerful--left little doubt that they had an involvement with the drug lords. And what do you do about that in a country like Mexico.

Q: In Mexico, do you think the Ambassador and the DEA were in a way putting the best face on it? Would confrontation make any difference?

GORMLEY: I think I said that in my article. I said that I thought Pilliod's basic thrust was to get away from this style of confrontation that his predecessor, John Gavin, had engaged in. Gavin loved the press, he spoke fluent Spanish for one thing, and he loved to lambaste the Mexicans, sometimes going off half cocked. Certainly I think that Pilliod was quite right that that did not serve any useful purpose, that you had to work with the government. I think he was right in that, but he became an apologist for them, he went too far in the other direction.

Q: What about the Drug Enforcement Agency; what was your impression of how it was run and its effectiveness?

GORMLEY: I had very little use for most of the people involved in Mexico. The head of it is portrayed very unfavorably in *Desperado*, which is why I recommend it. He had been in Mexico too long, I think he was on his fifth tour there, maybe longer. He had just been there too long, was too much in bed with the Mexicans; he was an apologist for what they were up to. Since they have difficulty in getting good Spanish speaking people, very often they turn to Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and a lot of them seemed like time-servers to me, to whom the war on drugs was just a ticket to continued employment. I must say that I felt very differently about the organization in Thailand; I don't know why I keep coming back to Thailand, I guess because I like Thailand and I like the Thai people. The head of DEA in Thailand became my best friend; a really super guy. Of course he had a better police force to work with there than you did in Mexico. I think they were reasonably effective in Thailand.

Q: Just to nail things down, when did you serve in Mexico and when did you serve in Thailand?

GORMLEY: On the narcotics business I got into Mexico in August of 1986 and stayed until October of 1987?

Q: You were the narcotics officer?

GORMLEY: The counselor. And then from October of 1987 up until August of 1989 I was in Thailand.

JAMES MARVIN MONTGOMERY
Political Officer
Mexico City (1964-1967)

James Marvin Montgomery was born in 1935 in New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree from Juniata College and furthered his studies at Emory College. He joined the State Department in 1958, serving in Vietnam, Mexico, Thailand, South Africa, and Washington, DC. Mr. Montgomery was interviewed by Thomas F. Conlon in 1996.

Q: Your next assignment was to the Political Section of the Embassy in Mexico City. How did this assignment come up? When did you learn about it, and how did you decide on it?

MONTGOMERY: I still had the view, "I can do nothing about my assignments."

Q: You accepted whatever the Department told you to do.

MONTGOMERY: I first heard that I was going to be Principal Officer at Colon, Panama. Then I was going to be in the Political Section in Santiago, Chile, but the Ambassador said that I was too young. Finally, I ended up assigned to the Political Section in Mexico City.

Q: Obviously, you were up for assignment abroad, you spoke Spanish, and you were probably going to go somewhere in Latin America.

MONTGOMERY: Somewhere in Latin America, which was fine with me. I was perfectly comfortable with that. I did not particularly choose Mexico City but I was not particularly upset about this assignment. I thought that it would be sort of interesting. So we packed the family up at the end of the summer of 1964.

Q: You had two children?

MONTGOMERY: We had two children at this point: our daughter, Laura, born in Saigon, and our son, Darrow, who was born in Washington, DC, when I was working on the Vietnam desk. So, we packed up - and off we went.

Q: How did you go to Mexico City? Did you fly or did you drive?

MONTGOMERY: We drove down through the United States. We would need a car when we got there, and it was perfectly feasible to drive. So we drove to Mexico City. It was a huge city, even then.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

MONTGOMERY: The Ambassador was Tony Freeman. He was a career Ambassador and was there during my whole tour in Mexico City.

Q: How large an Embassy was it? How many Foreign Service Officers were assigned there - approximately? Was it as big as Saigon, for example?

MONTGOMERY: Well, the Political Section had six officers.

Q: Well, that's about the size of the Political Section in Saigon until about 1964 or so, when it grew much larger. So, a similar sized Embassy, and, of course, Mexico is a major partner of the United States in so many areas.

MONTGOMERY: Yes. It had a big Economic Section and a huge Consular Section, needless to say. There were several constituent posts, including those along the border with the U.S. There also was a Consulate in Vera Cruz, in the State of Vera Cruz. In addition, San Luis Potosi, Tampico, Merida, down in the Yucatan Peninsula, and Monterrey had Consulates or Consulates General.

I guess that the main impression I had is that I had a tremendous decompression problem after four straight years working on Vietnam, first in Saigon and then in Washington. I was assigned to the Political Section in Mexico City. It was clear that Washington did not particularly care about Mexican politics - at all. It didn't care about how Mexico was put together or how it was run.

Nobody in the U.S. Government in Washington really was very interested in Mexico - certainly not at the political level.

Q: A current problem is illegal immigration into the United States from Mexico. Was that a problem when you were there?

MONTGOMERY: Obviously, it was occurring, but it was not regarded as a problem.

Q: It was not seen to be a problem. So what did you do in the Political Section?

MONTGOMERY: Well, I handled internal politics. I concentrated on the operations of the PRI, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, that is, the Institutional Revolutionary Party. That was, in many ways, like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in that it was not so far Leftist. Certainly the PRI had a view similar to the Communist Party in the Soviet Union about who should hold power. Only the PRI could win elections - at least, national elections.

It was there that I discovered that there were two reasons to hold elections. One was to decide who was going to be in power. The other was to show who was in power. [Laughter] The PRI preferred the latter, of course.

We were there when Gustavo Díaz Ordaz assumed power as President in October, 1964. So, obviously, he was President for the whole time that I was there. The presidential term was six years, with no reelection. I was beginning to get a pretty good idea of how the system worked.

In the Political Section I worked for an officer named John Barber, who had been born and grew up in Mexico and spent most of his career there. He knew Mexican politics very well. John knew so much about Mexican politics that he was intellectually constipated. You couldn't tell him anything that he didn't think he already knew. He hardly produced anything in the way of reporting because he had known it for so long. He thought that everybody knew it. It was one of these curious phenomena of knowing too much so that he was no longer curious. He no longer thought that anybody could be interesting because he had known it for so long.

I became a close friend of the Ambassador's Special Assistant, named Ed Corr, who ended up subsequently as Ambassador to Bolivia, Peru, and El Salvador. There was another officer in the Ambassador's front office named Bob Allen. We formed a sort of breakfast club. We became acquainted with a group of Mexican "secretarios particulares," or private secretaries to the various Mexican cabinet ministers. Business breakfasts were very much the thing in Mexico, coming out of the revolution.

Q: How did they say "business breakfast" in Spanish?

MONTGOMERY: They just said "desayuno." In this context it meant, "business breakfast."

Q: I suppose that no women were invited, at that time.

MONTGOMERY: No. The way you could join one of these breakfasts was either to be invited or simply to show up at a breakfast. You would grab a big table and sit there, and people would just sort of come up and join you.

Q: Were there any women officers assigned to the Embassy during your time there?

MONTGOMERY: In the Consular Section, but not in the Political Section, that I recall.

We began to learn an awful lot about how things worked in Mexico because these private secretaries were political practitioners, and they wanted to brag. They couldn't really brag too much to other officials inside the government. They found us, particularly when it was just one of them, to be safe people to brag to. They would tell us all kinds of things about what was going on and how things worked - actually worked - and how things got done. A private secretary to the Minister of Gobernación, or the Interior, was really extremely informative.

So I began to generate a stream of political reports that upset my superiors in the Embassy.

Q: Did you identify the source of your reports to the Department?

MONTGOMERY: Of course. These reports were in classified telegrams and so forth. The problem was that my superiors felt that these private secretaries were too high-ranking for me to be hanging out with. But nobody else was hanging out with them, because John Barber felt that he knew everybody and everything. He felt that he didn't need to talk to them, because he knew what was going on. Wallie Steuart was the Political Counselor. He was a perfectly decent fellow but he didn't want to get into any trouble. It was no big deal, and I continued to do what I had been doing, but I had to be more careful about it.

I also worked with student leaders - some of whom were 60 years old at this time. That gave me insights into how the student movement works and so forth.

There was one interesting incident where one of the many Vietnam peace feelers came through Mexico City.

Q: Could you describe how that happened, if you know?

MONTGOMERY: Yes. It's been written up in some of the histories on the subject. I can't really remember all of the details. However, what I recall is that the Political Counselor very reluctantly called me into his office and showed me this piece of paper involving a Vietnam peace feeler, because I was the only one in the Embassy who knew where Vietnam was, so to speak. He didn't want to show this to me, because I was too low-ranking.

Q: You were a Second Secretary?

MONTGOMERY: Second Secretary at this stage, I guess. I was too low-ranking, but they had to show it to me. I helped to prepare a response, spell the names correctly, and make some

suggestions as to how to proceed. A telegram came back from Washington, which they wouldn't show me. [Laughter] That was probably the most exciting thing, substantively, that happened when I was in Mexico. Another interesting thing that happened was that it was my first, very disturbing brush with our friends in the Agency [Central Intelligence Agency]. I had a contact in the Mexican Foreign Office, Fernando De la Garde. He was on the Americas desk. Fernando and his wife, Olga, and my wife, Deedee, and I became pretty good friends. We used to meet twice a month, have supper, play bridge, and enjoy a very pleasant time together. He was an interesting and very useful fellow. You know, Mexico was one of the few Latin American countries which maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba. Consequently, they had one of the most fragrant diplomatic pouches in the world, filled with H. Upmann No. 1 Cuban cigars. I saw to it that Fernando never ran out of Jack Daniels whiskey, and he saw to it that I never ran out of Cuban cigars.

Q: Sounded like a good exchange.

MONTGOMERY: It was a good deal. One day Fernando told me how the Soviet Commercial Counselor tried to recruit him. Then he disappeared from sight, one day later. The Commercial Counselor was presumably a KGB [Soviet Intelligence] agent, talent scout, or what have you. De la Garde disappeared and his name began to be reported in the newspapers: a Foreign Office official "ha desaparecido" - has disappeared. It became a real cause célèbre.

Q: Were you in contact with Olga, his wife? Did she know anything about this?

MONTGOMERY: She knew nothing about it, was very upset, and so forth. One of the officers from CIA, without knowing what happened, wanted me to go to the Mexican Foreign Office and tell them about the recruitment attempt which Fernando had mentioned to me, apparently with a view toward getting that particular Soviet Commercial Counselor in trouble, the implication being that the Soviets had made Fernando disappear.

I must say that, at this point, Wallie Steuart, the Political Counselor, stepped forth in resolute fashion. He said, "Jim, don't do it. We don't really know what happened. You'll look foolish if this turns out to be wrong." The CIA guy kept pushing me, so Wallie weighed in and told him to lay off.

The police kept searching for Fernando and finally found him, dead, on the edge of a lake - chopped into little pieces, in a trunk. It came out that it was his first wife and her blind American boyfriend who waylaid him, because Fernando had been trying to regain custody of his child by his first marriage.

Q: So there was no political involvement at all.

MONTGOMERY: No political involvement. His former wife and her lover disposed of Fernando and then fled the country. Percy Foreman took up their extradition case - and that's the last I remember of it.

Q: Percy Foreman was an Embassy officer?

MONTGOMERY: No, Percy Foreman was a well-known Texas defense attorney. It really put me on the alert that some CIA people were quite willing to use official Americans in a disposable fashion. My credibility would have been zilch if I had gone to the Mexican Foreign Office with this story of an alleged recruitment of Fernando. Steuart was absolutely right. His instincts were absolutely correct. Probably, somebody burned him at some point. It took about three weeks before the chopped up body was found. We buried his remains, one sad day, in his family mausoleum.

The other interesting thing that occurred to me in Mexico was something which did not have a lot of political significance, although, in a way, it does. It goes back to the question of illegal immigrants. This happened on November 1, 1965, the "Day of the Dead," [All Saints' Day for American Catholics]. This is an important day in Mexico, when everybody goes to the cemetery, sits around the graves of their ancestors, and celebrates all night. We learned that the son of a Mexican family who was living in Los Angeles, California, had joined the Marine Corps. The family name was Maldonado. He was killed in Vietnam. The family wanted to bury him in Mexico, in Marine uniform, and with full military honors, in the town of Irapuato, about half way between Mexico City and the U.S. border. This is a town famous for its strawberries. The family wanted the Embassy to send a representative to the funeral. So, I was sent.

Well, this was in Mexico, the "Halls of Montezuma," in the words of the Marine Hymn, where American Marine Guards in the Embassy are not allowed to wear their uniforms outside the Embassy. The annual Marine Ball [November 10 each year] is held in very private circumstances. So here was this Marine being buried in this little town in Mexico. I drove up to Irapuato. There really was no way to fly up there. I arrived at the family home. They were fairly middle class. The young man was lying in state in his casket, with an American flag displayed and with a young American Marine Corporal, in full uniform, standing guard beside the coffin in the house. The dead Marine had gone to a military high school in Irapuato. A lot of his classmates were there.

On the day of the funeral the hearse came, and the casket was slid into it, with the American flag on it. The Marine Corporal came out of the house, in uniform, and got into the hearse. We all went to the church. There was a funeral service in the church, which was somewhat unusual, because Mexican men usually don't go to church. They're anti-clerical, like in the "Power and the Glory," the novel by Graham Green, and all that. At the end of the service the funeral director wheeled the casket down the aisle and began to put it into the hearse. The dead Marine's classmates came and said, "No, no. We'll carry it." They hoisted the casket on their shoulders, with the American flag still on it, and started carrying it through the streets of the town. It was about two miles to the cemetery. All of the men, including me, took turns carrying the casket, with the Marine Corporal behind it, through the streets. His father kept making sure that the American flag didn't blow off the casket.

We got to the cemetery, and the military school's marching band was at the grave. The cemetery was jammed. So this brass band marched down the paths of the cemetery, between the tombs,

with this Marine Corporal in front of it, followed by the casket, with his father holding onto the American flag. They put the casket into one of these mausoleums above ground.

I heard from that family for many years. The name of this dead Marine is down there in Washington, DC, on the Wall, the Vietnam Memorial. It said a lot about the Mexican-American relationship - a lot that doesn't fit with the political horseshit that you hear about. As you can tell, the memory of this still touches me. I felt highly privileged to be there. Then the family went back to Los Angeles. But there was no bitterness at all toward the United States on the part of anybody that I met in Irapuato. He had lived in the U.S., he had volunteered for the Marine Corps of his own free will, he paid the price which everybody knew could be exacted, and he was buried with full U.S. military honors - and particularly with U.S. Marine Corps military honors.

But, outside of that, I don't think that I touched history very much during my tour in Mexico. I think that I was able to generate a few insights as to how the country was run, because of this unusual breakfast arrangement we had. Breakfast emerged from the fact that a lot of the revolutionary leaders in the early part of the 20th century couldn't read. They'd learn things from each other at breakfast. So the idea of everybody getting together in the morning and having breakfast was quite common. As I say, you could go to places and end up with a lot of people at your table - and learn a lot, just by showing up. So, in that sense, it was very useful.

However, Mexico was not a major issue as far as the United States Government was concerned at that time. On a political level the United States was really preoccupied with Vietnam. Mexico was not causing a lot of trouble for the United States. The illegal immigration problem was certainly not as prominent as it is today.

Q: When did President Johnson work an arrangement for Mexican guest workers to come to the United States on a temporary basis?

MONTGOMERY: The guest workers arrangement had come and gone and come back again. You still see it in one form or another. They are not all illegals. This was called the "bracero" [worker] program.

Anyway, that was Mexico. I learned some things, particularly that things are not total high tension all the time, for one thing. I learned a lot about Mexico, which is a very foreign country. It is more foreign than a lot of countries in Europe, and it's right next door to us. It's a dangerous place. Everybody is armed to the teeth. Everybody carries guns in Mexico. You don't yell at people in traffic. You might get shot. [Laughter] Then there are the corruption problems. What we're seeing today in terms of corruption in Mexico was obviously under way in those days.

The idea that you could oppose the PRI was not well received. That's clearly begun to change.

The Mexican police force was extremely summary in its procedures. Occasionally, American citizens would get caught in this. There is a legal procedure in Mexico called the "amparo," which amounts to a kind of summons or an arrest warrant. If you were having trouble with a business partner, or anybody else, for that matter, you could go to some obscure court outside of

town and get an "amparo" sworn out against this person. You would give it to the cops, who would arrest him. Arrest first, sort out later.

You'd go to the prison. I never got this far, although I've been in a couple of Mexican jails. Lucumberry was the name of the big prison there. You'd go in there and find that there were guys awaiting trial. They'd been there for 10 years for an offense that carried a sentence of a year!

There was one guy in jail. He swore that he was innocent. My buddy, the Consular Officer, went to talk to him. He said, "What are you charged with?" The man in jail said, "I was standing around with a bunch of guys. A police car drove by, and one of the guys threw a rock at the car. We didn't know it was a police car at the time. The cops stopped and arrested us all for throwing rocks at the police car. I told them I was innocent." They said, "Never mind." The guy in jail said, "I've been here for five years, awaiting trial." He said, "I couldn't have thrown rocks at the police car since I had lost both arms below the elbow." And he was in jail for throwing rocks at a police car!

When you stop to think about it, particularly now with the demise of the Soviet Union, the PRI in Mexico is the regime longest in power in the world, without interruption, which has not been called to account by either an election, an invasion, or an internal revolution. There is no other country like Mexico. The country closest to this record is China. The Communist Party has been in power there since 1949. They are pikers compared to the Mexicans in the PRI, who have been in power since 1919. The Soviet Union used to be the other contender for this honor.

However, the government in Mexico is a lot more accountable to the people in informal ways, from the mere fact of living next to the United States.

Q: Speaking of that, we are used to referring to ourselves as "Americans." Do the Mexicans insist on calling us "Norteamericanos?" Were they sensitive on this point, because they are "Americans," too?

MONTGOMERY: They're not particularly sensitive. Our Embassy is called, "La Embajada de los Estados Unidos." When you have the word "Embajada" in front of it, they understood. You always said, "Embajada de los Estados Unidos." Of course, Mexico's official name is "Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos." However, that didn't seem to be a sensitive point.

One of the interesting things was that in the Bureau of Human Rights one of the principal activities that we had to go through was basically to fight off the geographic bureaus and the pertinent American Embassies in difficult countries, who essentially wanted to whitewash the human rights practices of their clients.

Mexico was a case in point. Think of what's happened in Mexico since the mid-1980s. It boggles the mind. We had our biggest problems in the State Department with the Mexican and the Israeli desks.

NANCY OSTRANDER
Assistant Chief, Visa Section
Mexico City (1964-1967)

Ambassador Nancy Ostrander was born in Indiana in 1925. She graduated from Butler University in 1947 and entered the Foreign Service immediately thereafter. Ambassador Ostrander served in Cuba, the Netherlands, Belgium, Mexico, Jamaica, Suriname, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted in 1986 by Ann Miller Morin.

OSTRANDER: I picked my own job from there and decided that I wanted to go back into consular work, and I picked Mexico City, to run the immigrant visa section.

Q: You were able to do this because you knew the right people?

OSTRANDER: I went around and talked to them. They wanted me. They knew me in personnel and knew I was a conscientious worker. I looked at a lot of jobs. I remember one of them was the consular officer in Cairo, which sounded kind of interesting. Then I heard that NEA thought that would be an interesting idea to send a woman to the Middle East, and I thought, "Oh, boy, I don't want to be that. I'd just as soon somebody else did that." Then I saw the job in Mexico City. I suppose I'm still longing for Havana again somewhere in the back of my mind.

The immigrant visa section in Mexico City needed a chief, and it was the right grade, an FSO-4 at the time. So off I went to do that job. I was probably a very good choice for it, because I can remember that when I walked into the office for the first time, the entire waiting room was full of Cubans, and I knew most of them. It was the exodus from Cuba, and we were setting up the Cuban program there. I certainly understood that and was able to carry on.

I remember my first visa applicant. I had no sooner sat down and put my purse into the desk drawer than my secretary, Georgina, walked in and said, "Juanita Castro is applying for a visa and wants to see you." This was Fidel's sister. I leaned over and took my purse out of the desk and said, "I don't think I want this job at all." She, of course, was a defector, and those are very difficult visa cases.

Q: How had she gotten out?

OSTRANDER: I suspect Fidel was delighted to see her go. You had to have an exit permit at the time. I got to know her pretty well, and she finally got her visa.

Q: Is she still in this country?

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Q: She got an immigrant visa?

OSTRANDER: Yes.

Actually, I suppose I might have considered it as a premonition of what was to come later. After about six months on that job running the immigrant section, they set up in the visa section in Mexico City a new job, which was to be the assistant to the head of the whole visa section. It was to take care of what I learned to call the "no win" cases, the cases that were going to make headlines whether you issued the visa or refused the visa. You were going to insult half the population and upset half the population, no matter what you did. That was the job I got. It was awful. There were some fifty or sixty cases a day of those, and it was constant pressure. I learned to hate everything that the Mexico City consular section had to offer, while adoring living in Mexico City.

I can remember deciding it was time to go through the visa files and take out all of these refused visa cases as I came across them, and try to get reversed some of the previous 1952 rulings of ineligibility at the time of [Senator Joseph] McCarthy; trying to get some of those reviewed and reversed, because in McCarthy's era, if you were a wife of a communist, you were ineligible for a visa, for instance. There had been policy evolved later that you would have to be a party member yourself before you were ineligible. There was also involuntary membership. That whole theory had evolved later. So I spent a lot of time doing that.

Q: Were those eligibility rulings actually changed?

OSTRANDER: Yes, they were. But a lot of them, there just simply wasn't enough evidence to sustain a finding of ineligibility. I did get a lot of those changed, and just sent them in, just poured them in as fast as I could--because we were insulting so many of the Europeans who had immigrated to Mexico and were living there. An awful lot of people in Europe joined the Communist Party as a protest to Naziism, because it was only the communists that were fighting the Nazis. I thought it was time to look again at some of these cases, and I did get a lot of them reversed. I doubt if any of those people ever realized that anything special was done for them, but it was a real job. The Mexicans, of course, and the South Americans who were in Mexico, who were borderline cases, it was just a list of all of the VIPs, you know--the poets, the writers. That's just what the situation was. Every one of them, no matter what you did, you were going to be wrong.

It was a hard job, and I never want another one like it again, and I never, ever want to go back to Mexico City in the consular section. I was offered several times to go back as consul general. No way. Just no way.

Q: But you still love Mexico City?

OSTRANDER: Oh, I still love Mexico. I absolutely adore Mexico. Consular work in Mexico is unique and it's something that is a lot better now than it ever was when I was there. I can

remember when I used to draw up the duty roster, even in the visa section we had to stand duty for protection cases. We were averaging something like three deaths a day. It was just awful. So if you were in the visa section or in any section, when you were on duty, which was a week at a time, you were up all night, you were working all day. And they were horrible cases, really grizzly stuff. They've got a lot more help now than they did then. I can remember learning in Mexico City that when the work takes more than 24 hours a day, you're lost. You're understaffed. Something is wrong.

I started to tell you about this one officer. I remember she came to me and I showed her the roster. We had a lot of officers then, too. She wouldn't be on duty again for another six months, and she looked at me and she said, "Six months. With any luck, I'll be dead by then." And I knew just how she felt, because it was that bad. [Laughter] Yet we had a wonderful group there and I loved them all. We worked well together and it was a good team.

Q: Heaven help you if you fell out with all that workload.

OSTRANDER: Right. It was grim.

Q: How long did you do that particular facet of it, the "no win" cases?

OSTRANDER: The whole time. It was not a happy personnel situation that's for sure. There were an awful lot of problems. It was also the time that they decided that Mexicans would get border crossing cards rather than visas. That sounded like it would save work. But what it meant was that we had two procedures going on at the same time, the issuance of border crossing cards under the Immigration Service set of regulations. We didn't have any computers at the time, either. And on the non-immigrant visa side of it. The border crossing card was only good for a certain amount of time to visit the United States coming in from Mexico. Many Mexicans go to Europe, so they would have to have both documents. Sometimes they transited the United States, so they might end up having three visas and one border crossing card. We buried ourselves in so much work, it was just ridiculous.

Q: You were really understaffed.

OSTRANDER: We were doing it to ourselves. It just was crazy. They have backed away from that. What seemed like a good idea at the time did not turn out to be a good idea.

Q: They don't have the border passes now?

OSTRANDER: Still at the border, but not down into Mexico City. I don't think they do that any more at all. We still do an awful lot of consular visa work that I feel isn't necessary. There are a lot of countries in this world that we shouldn't be issuing visas to.

Q: You have to issue them to Europe, as you say.

OSTRANDER: Right. I think an awful lot of Europeans really shouldn't have to have visas to

come to the United States. I wish the Congress would act on that.

Q: Do we make all Europeans obtain a visa?

OSTRANDER: Of course. Everybody has to have a visa except the native-born Canadians. I'm sure there are some exceptions to that, too.

Q: You mean the Queen, maybe, didn't have to?

OSTRANDER: I'm sure you get a waiver for her, but you would still have to do a waiver. I just think that in the days of thinking we should be cutting back on work and putting people to better use, and in days when we just really can't afford to be spending that kind of money, the Congress should act to release us from that.

Q: How is it that we don't need visas to go to France or Italy or England?

OSTRANDER: They have internal controls, central internal control. Every night you go to a hotel, you turn in your passport and that's checked out. We don't have that. What the U.S. has always done is check you in at the border and check you out at the border, and anything you do in the middle, you're on your own.

Q: How would you get around this, then? Because people could get lost very easily in the United States.

OSTRANDER: And do, whether they have the visas or not. So, therefore, you look at the record of the countries that the people habitually go back to. You would have an inspection. The consular bureau has worked up a law, the Congress and the administration have presented bills, so they've looking into all that sort of thing, and made their recommendations. It just seems to me that you take all those people in England issuing visas, and Germany and Japan, issuing all these visas, even with facsimile signatures, because it's so routine, and put them to work where you do have an awful lot of people who do overstay.

Anyway, I make my pitch and the visa office makes its pitch, and it just doesn't seem to get through Congress.

Q: I wonder why. No lobby for it, I guess.

OSTRANDER: There is an awful lot of thought that somebody's going to cry "discrimination," because if you do it for the British, why don't you do it for everybody?

Q: Of course. Discrimination or racism or whatever.

OSTRANDER: That's right. I think the answer to that is to look at the record. How many of you overstayed? How many of you disappeared? How many of them didn't? But it's not that easy, and I am the first to agree to that.

Q: But we are tying up people.

OSTRANDER: I think so, too. Maybe they're learning a lot and maybe they're not. I just think that we need their services elsewhere.

Q: This work is very hard, Nancy, and as you say, it's just overwhelming.

OSTRANDER: It causes a lot of burnout, yes.

Q: Was it interesting?

OSTRANDER: When I look back on it, yes. I can remember that one of Mexico's most famous painters, he was very much involved in the murder of Trotsky and was sent away for twenty years in jail. I kept thinking, "I bet you anything that when he gets out of jail, the first thing he does is walk in here for a visa." And I can remember the day I was transferred from Mexico to Jamaica, and I thought, "I'm not going to have to worry about Siqueiros!" And he applied the next week. The next week, his twenty years was up. I could see the time coming. So somebody else had to handle that. But that's the sort of thing.

Another person still writes about how badly he was treated at the American Embassy in Mexico, and I don't think he understands the few times he got into the United States was when I was down there getting him in. Because he was a fine poet in spite of his political beliefs, I thought he could come up and lecture. That's the sort of case I had.

I can remember also Dolores del Río.

Q: What was wrong with Dolores?

OSTRANDER: Dolores was always coming up to the U.S. under contract, and although Dolores was eligible for a visa, we did have to look closely at her, because she toyed around with some causes that might give question, so you always kind of wondered what she'd been up to in the last six months. She was always all right. Dolores del Río, old-time actress, the flamboyant, extrovert of the star period, of the real Hollywood star, always came at the lunch hour, because she knew that it would take a long time and that because consular officers were out to lunch and were trying to cover this, she could parade around a crowded visa section and play to that audience. She was wonderful.

Q: She enjoyed being a star.

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. Which reminds me, there's only one other that did the same thing, and I've seen a lot of stars. That's going back to Havana--Josephine Baker came in. She had on each eyelid five eyelashes that were at least three inches long. I loved it! Of course, she was out of Paris, and you could not issue her a non-immigrant visa without checking with her home port, her home city. Those were the times we sent telegrams. I can still see her batting those eyelashes

and saying, "Phone Paris."

Q: Had she given up her U.S. citizenship?

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes. She was not a U.S. citizen at the time; she was French. I can remember phoning Paris to talk about Josephine Baker, who was at my desk. She was a star, too, that's all there was to it.

Q: Oh, yes, indeed.

OSTRANDER: I can also remember, in Havana, telling somebody whose name was not that on his passport, "Did you know you look just like Paul Muni," and being told he *was* Paul Muni.

Q: He traveled by his real name?

OSTRANDER: Yes. Star that he was, he had none of that flamboyant sort of thing.

Q: What was Muni's nationality?

OSTRANDER: I'm not sure.

Q: So you said to him, "You know you look just like Paul Muni?"

OSTRANDER: "Did anybody ever tell you you look just like Paul Muni?" "I *am* Paul Muni."
[Laughter]

Where are we now?

Q: We're in Mexico, and I think you're about to have burnout.

OSTRANDER: That was 1967. My mother died when I was in Mexico, and I was overdue for about a year on my home leave, so that was arranged for me very quickly so I could get out. I appreciated that. I spent the summer at home trying to untangle things. My sister was ill, I was taking care of her children, trying to get everything untangled. The State Department was very kind and I had my full home leave. It was maybe only two or three weeks, at that. But I did come into Washington and tell them at that time, in September, that I really felt that they could do away with that job, if they were trying to cut down on something. I was handling all of the advisory opinions, all of the really difficult cases. The theory then was--and it was a good theory--that if you find a problem in a long visa line of non-immigrant visas, take the problem out so that the line will move, but I didn't really feel that the new officers were learning anything. Every time they had a good case that really got into nitty-gritty, they came and dumped it on me. Besides, I didn't know how much more of this I could stand. It was three years, anyway.

JOHN T. DOHERTY
Assistant Labor Attaché, Labor Department
Mexico City (1965-1967)

John T. Doherty was born in 1928. He joined the Foreign Service in 1965 and served in Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Belgium, Portugal, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by James Shea in 1991.

Q: John, did you get any training before you went off to your first post in Mexico, and did they give you any Spanish [language training] at the Foreign Service Institute?

DOHERTY: Yes, while I was with the Labor Department, I studied Spanish three mornings a week at the Foreign Service Institute at 8 o'clock, so I had a fairly good base. I went off to Mexico almost at a 3/3 [proficiency level]. Then when I got to Mexico, I studied each morning there to perfect [my Spanish]. In terms of other kinds of training, I think that having conducted workers educational programs and having dealt so much with Latin American affairs both at St. Johns and at the Labor Department, I was fairly well trained for the job before I reported. That plus basic orientation at the State Department and I think I was pretty well prepared when I got to Mexico City.

Q: The basic orientation was overall State Department policy?

DOHERTY: Yes, and it was conducted at the Foreign Service Institute. Also I took a communications course there and then a program was arranged for me to visit international representatives of the various trade unions headquartered in Washington. I also visited various international organizations, for instance, the OAS and with the Mexican Embassy and had quite a few discussions with people familiar with Mexico.

Q: How long were you in Mexico?

DOHERTY: I was there less than two years. I forget the exact number of months. Irving Salert was the labor attaché, and I was his assistant. I was anxious to move on to my own post and let the assignment people in Washington know that I was available for transfer if they had any openings. That's when I went off to Lima, Peru.

Q: What were your impressions of the Mexican Confederation of Labor (CTM) and its Secretary General Fidel Velásquez?

DOHERTY: Well, I guess my impressions of Fidel Velásquez are lasting because he's lasting. (laughter) I understand he's still [in power]. This is 1991 and that was 1965 and he was in control for many years before that. He was a very powerful man and a very interesting man. Even though he struck fear in the hearts of an awful lot of labor attachés visiting from other countries, I found him to be very open to discussions, and even though I was the assistant labor attaché, I found it very easy to arrange meetings with him and to have talks with him. I thought that he was quite a formidable political and labor leader and that he was one of the real forces in the country. If you

talked to Fidel Velásquez, you had a fairly good idea of what the truth was about a situation.

Q: I always had the idea that the Mexican labor movement was held back by rampant corruption. Would you care to comment on that?

DOHERTY: Yes, there was quite a bit of corruption in Mexico and you have probably read that in recent years they actually put the head of the petroleum workers in jail, which I never thought would happen. I think wherever you find unions that are relatively advanced, particularly those that have been part of the ruling party, such as the CTM has been with PRI since the 1920s, you are going to find not only corruption, but you are going to find struggles for power and struggles for money. We had an assistant at the Embassy, Pancho de Real, who was a very interesting old fellow-He had been with Carranza during the revolution- and whenever a Mexican labor leader would die he would feign grieving and wipe a tear from his eye and say, "We have lost another millionaire." And probably he was right. (laughter)

Q: Who was our Ambassador at that time?

DOHERTY: It was Fulton Freeman, a wonderful man, who had a very good understanding of the political situation in Mexico including the unions and the trade union movement, the CTM, and Fidel Velásquez and how they all fit in. Going back just a minute [to the issue of] corruption, I found subsequently that in countries where the unions were not connected with a political party which was dominant or in power, then corruption diminished or was much less, if it existed at all. For example, the Peronists were very much a part of the Peronist government, whereas in Peru, the APRISTAs never really came to power until recent years, and therefore they didn't have money or power, and the opportunity to become corrupt was accordingly diminished. You can carry it to an extreme. I remember visiting the Sugar Workers Union in Orange Walk, Belize, an extremely poor union, and of course the leaders themselves were poor. There was no money to corrupt anyone. So I think a lot of corruption has to do with whether or not the [union is] connected with the party in power or with a strong political party and whether or not the unions themselves are well off.

Q: While you were in Mexico, John, did you see representatives of the AFL-CIO fairly often? I'm thinking of people like Serafino Romaldi, and Andy McClellan.

DOHERTY: Yes, in fact they had representatives there. One of them was Jesse Friedman, a dear friend of mine, who had worked with me at St. John's College and was of course Serafino Romaldi's step-son. Jesse was headquartered in Cuernavaca. He worked quite well with the ORIT and had very good relations with the CTM as well, particularly with the CTM's education department. In Mexico City itself from time to time we would have representatives of the American labor movement who were actually working in the ORIT office. At the time I was there, Joe Bermúdez from the AIFLD had actually become the treasurer of ORIT. Frequent visitors to Mexico were Serafino Romaldi and my brother Bill and even more frequently Andy McClellan. In addition to Jesse Friedman working in Cuernavaca on the education side, AIFLD also had an office and representatives in Mexico City. I believe the last representative in Mexico City was Pepe Sueiro. So AIFLD had an office there and was working closely with the CTM and

ORIT.

Q: And what about representatives of the various trade secretariats? I am thinking of people like John Snyder and Wally Legge.

DOHERTY: Yes. The trade secretariat people would come through frequently. They did not have offices there. I think only the metalworkers had offices there and the metalworker (IMF) officers were Mexicans. But there was a lot of trade secretariat activity. I remember the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union coming in and working in cooperation with ORIT and the AIFLD. They organized the first Inter-American Congress of Textile and Garment Workers [Unions], which was held in Mexico and was really quite successful. I remember Saby Nehama coming down as the representative of the Garment Workers and later on Sasha Zimmerman. I think the textile workers [provided] a good example of what could happen with cooperation between the secretariats, ORIT, the AIFLD, and the unions themselves in the textile field.

C. CONRAD MANLEY
Information Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1965-1969)

C. Conrad Manley was born in 1912. He began working with the U.S. Information Agency in Uruguay in 1955, serving in Washington, DC, Colombia, Mexico, Sudan, and Libya. Mr. Manley was interviewed in 1988 by John Hogan.

MANLEY: That is right. I was back from the Dominican Republic only about three months when I was transferred to Mexico City as information officer of the USIS post there.

Q: That was quite an experience and I know that Mexico City made quite an impact on you.

MANLEY: I had been familiar with Mexico since around 1929 when as a high school kid, I got a job on a pipeline on the Mexican border near Laredo. I was very happy to go back to Mexico with USIA.

Q: You are a Texas boy, aren't you?

MANLEY: Not really. I was born in New Orleans, but when I was not quite ten, my family moved from Louisiana to Texas, so I had about seven years in Texas before I went off to college.

Q: Connie, tell me a little about your remembrances of your time in Mexico City.

MANLEY: Mexico is a fascinating country, so many differences and contrasts. I was able to visit every one of the Mexican states with the exception of one, the smallest state, Colima, on the Pacific coast. I thoroughly enjoyed my three years in Mexico, then and when the opportunity offered after my retirement, I went back there for six more years.

Q: Well, tell me, do you recall anything particularly exciting or different or unusual that happened while you were in Mexico City during this first tour?

VISIT OF PRESIDENT OF MEXICO TO WASHINGTON: 1968

MANLEY: The Mexico City operation of USIS was pretty standard. It had been a program in operation for a long time and was probably one of our largest overseas posts, but for me, I think one of the most interesting occurrences was a little outside of the ordinary field of Agency operations.

Early in 1968, Mexico's president, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, made a state visit to Washington. His press secretary, not being familiar with Washington and having very little command of English, asked if I would go with him as his aide to help him.

I referred the request to our embassy and our ambassador, Fulton Freeman, approved it, so, off I went to Washington with President Díaz Ordaz, and some twenty or twenty-five Mexican newspaper, radio and television people. We set up camp in the Mayflower Hotel.

I was running around doing translations, little errands for the president's press secretary and trying to be as helpful as possible during the visit.

One highlight of the three-day visit, during which Mexico's president spoke to a joint session of Congress, was a press interview with Lyndon Johnson at the White House. He fielded questions for twenty minutes or so and as we were leaving, this group of Mexican journalists and I, Johnson shook hands with each and gave each of them one of his presidential pens.

When my turn came, he shook my hand, gave me a pen, and said, "You don't look like a Mexican." I did not get into any further conversation over that.

From Washington, we flew to El Paso, Texas; Johnson flying in a separate plane and, right on the border, he returned to Mexico, what was called the Chamizal, a fifteen-acre area of land along the Rio Grande which overnight, during a flood period, some years before, had shifted from the Mexican side to the American side.

During our brief visit to El Paso, Johnson returned the acreage to Mexico and the two presidents dedicated the land to a joint international park between the two countries.

ROBERT E. GRANICK
Deputy Counselor for Administration and Administration Officer
Mexico City (1966-1968)

Robert E. Granick was born in New York in 1925. Following graduation from the

University of New Mexico in 1950, Mr. Granick went overseas with the U.S. Army. He joined the State Department in 1963, serving in Washington, DC and Mexico. Mr. Granick was interviewed by William Knight in 1992.

GRANICK: Oh, Perot, please. Anyway, it was fascinating times. But that's how I started. It was a fantastic introduction to the State Department. And then from there I went on to be Administrative Officer in Mexico City and once again I was thrown into an entirely different kind of situation. But my background prepared me for what I had, a lot of administrative, particularly in personnel, and that's primarily what they wanted me to do. Tan Baber was the Administrator Counselor in Mexico and I had two titles, Deputy Counselor for Administration and Administrative Officer. So I was Mr. inside and he was Mr. outside.

Q: What was the difference in what you actually did?

GRANICK: That's a good question. I guess I would say that he would deal a lot with the other agencies. He would work a lot on the setting up of budgets. He would meet with the Ambassador quite often on what the Ambassador wanted done. As you know, the Administrative Officer has a lot to do beside running the embassy, and the Ambassador used Tan a lot. Tan was a very effective Counselor for administration. And he would use him for a lot of projects. Tan was quite content to let me deal with the Division Chiefs, GSO, Budget and so forth.

Q: What kinds of projects...in other words, you were sort of the DCM to his Ambassador?

GRANICK: That's right. And also, he took off a lot. He was gone a lot. He went back to the States on home leave and also sometimes we'd go to other posts. That's another thing. Mexico had 12 or 13 or 16 posts - that went up and down as they closed them - but he would also travel a lot to the constituent posts and leave me in charge. I'd be in complete charge when he was gone as a DCM would be to the Ambassador. But I worked very hard, too, when he was there, trying to make sure there was a big boost of training in the embassy and that our personnel rules and regulations were in place. People knew where they stood. People had the proper position descriptions and I think I mentioned to you the other day that I had a couple of extra duties which were fabulous. The Olympics took place in '68.

Q: Yes.

GRANICK: And not only was I in charge of the Olympic Attaché who had a staff of 2 or 3 but also at that time a lot of the Mexicans left tried to stop the Olympics because they felt Mexico was spending too much money on it, money that should have been spent for the betterment of the people. And it wasn't just protests and throwing rocks and eggs, they were actually firebombing American schools, American buildings and because of my position as the liaison between the embassy and the school board I became the person who would decide each morning if they'd open the schools depending on what other agencies at the embassy would tell me. I'll be circumspect. Depending on what intelligence there was, every morning the head of the American school would call me and I would tell him yes or no you should open today depending on what the plans were that we heard about, for firebombing or terrorizing the kids. They'd drive by and

scream at them and things like that, and threaten to kidnap them and so forth. And then the head of the American school would tell the school that had a lot of American kids in it whether they should open it up. It was kind of a hierarchy and that was a fabulous experience.

Q: I think it would be interesting to describe the whole setup that you established to handle all of the details of the Olympics.

GRANICK: Well, I don't want to imply in any way that I was running the Olympic Attaché's office. He was a professional who had come out of Texas. He had been something in charge of athletics in the city and he knew what he was doing and he would come to me primarily for money or when he had problems but I pretty much let him run...

Q: So he had a lot of contacts with the Mexican counterparts?

GRANICK: Exactly.

Q: Even the police?

GRANICK: The police and the Mexican government. And he spent a lot of time out at the Olympic village and I got involved also. Some of his staff was dealing with the commercial aspects of it, that is the selling of T-shirts and stuff like that, could they put an American flag on it, could they do this or that. Also as always there was a matter of tickets. Who got tickets and who didn't. He had people to handle that. But when things got real tough if somebody was complaining about not getting tickets or Americans felt they had been slighted, then they'd send them to me. He'd always use me as the next level up to take care of it, but I didn't get involved in the day to day nitty-gritty. The one thing I did get involved in was the Ambassador asked me to put on a show at the embassy using the Olympic cultural people. I don't know if you remember this or not, but I'm not sure it's ever been done again. Mexico decided that in addition to the physical or athletic Olympics to have a cultural Olympics and they brought stars down from all the countries around the world. From the states we had Duke Ellington, for example, and Jimmy Lunsford and Count Basie, a lot of jazz greats. So I had to again work with the Olympic Attaché and work with the Mexican government too directly in this case and make sure we did get these people in and we gave them a fabulous show there at the embassy. That was just one of the little details. Now, to go back to the terrorism which occurred by the left to stop the Olympics. Not only were they firebombing or terrorizing the schools but also they were constantly harassing and threatening the embassy.

Q: Now this was before the Olympics or during?

GRANICK: Before the Olympics, they still had hopes of stopping it. And I'll tell you what the climax was in a moment. I didn't mention this the other day, but I remember one day for example there were thousands of them marching down Paseo de la Reforma and we always had these swat teams, these riot swat teams, Mexican toughies on the side streets and one day I was shocked to look out of my window and see tanks in the side streets. Well they were going to have a big demonstration that afternoon, the parade came by and suddenly someone shouted an order and

the crowd broke and began to rush the embassy. Thousands of them. And the police were trying to hold them back but they would not have succeeded.

Q: Did you have those great iron gates closed?

GRANICK: Yes. They were all closed. But I'm sure they had ladders and things, they were going to try to invade the embassy. Well they didn't see the tanks of course and I'll never forget this as long as I live. All of a sudden you heard rrrrumblerrrrumblerrrrumbler and these tanks came around the front out of the side streets and they set up a phalanx outside of the embassy and this is the part that's most frightening, those huge guns came down and pointed right at the crowd and the crowd stopped and then just broke into a thousand pieces and took off. Oh, yes. And I'm convinced they would have shot. The reason I say that is the final turmoil and the final terror was the government invited all of the ringleaders of these groups that were trying to stop the Olympics to a big meeting in a big square in downtown New Mexico. It's called the Court of the Four Cultures. I don't know whether you've heard of it or not but they've got ruins there, the Old Mexico and the New Mexico and the Future Mexico and so forth. Very large, it's ringed by apartment and office buildings. Well, the opposition came, and they had been pretty thoroughly beaten, but they were still trying. The government obviously thought they still had some pep left because when they got them all in the square they open fired on them. Now this didn't get too much publicity, it did get some publicity and particularly in the foreign press. They killed a lot of them. The number is still in dispute.

Q: This is still in the same time period, just before the Olympics?

GRANICK: Just before the Olympics. That was the end of the protests. Suffice it to say, Bill, I can't prove this, they killed hundreds. The government I think at the time just said some people were killed they never gave a figure, but I think it was hundreds. They had bloody pictures all over the newspapers. The foreign press played it up large, I don't know how large it was here but they killed enough and that was the end of that. They put an end to that. So then things went on and the Olympics were held and we had the usual problems with tourists and people complaining about being mistreated or not getting their hotel room or not getting tickets. We used to sleep in the office quite often. I had a cot, we couldn't go home. There was just too much going on. During the days of the protests we never went home at all. We had a command post set up there. But it went off and the Olympics were very successful and Mexico recouped most of its money, but those were hectic, wonderful days. I could go on in this vein, or I wrote down a couple of notes here of things that interest me particularly in the administrative field if you'd like to, but go ahead and ask questions first if you want to.

WILLIAM N. HARBEN
Consul General
Merida (1966-1969)

William N. Harben was born in New York in 1922. He graduated from Princeton

University and entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His career included positions in Germany, Indonesia, Rwanda, Mexico, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, Austria, and Washington, DC. This is an excerpt from an unpublished memoir.

HARBEN: I asked for my own post, be it ever so small. I was assigned as Consul in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico, a consulate with one American vice-consul and eight Yucatan employees. In addition there was the American director of the American library, cultural center and English language school who was, however formally independent though vaguely subordinate to me.

About eighty percent of the population were Maya Indians, about half of whom spoke little or no Spanish. The rest were mestizos, a small Lebanese commercial caste, and a thin stratum of almost pure Caucasian aristocrats who had once owned the vast sisal plantations. My predecessor spent most of his time cultivating this last group. I could hardly blame him; their exquisite manners, charm and friendliness were unequalled. I quickly decided, however, that these people were of little interest to Washington. A consul's duties revolved mainly around immigration visas, visitors' visas (both issued according to regulations and requiring little work on my part), drug smuggling, aid to American businessmen and tourists in trouble, and American criminals wanted in the U.S. for crimes committed in the U.S. or who had committed, or were about to commit crimes in Yucatan.

On my first day on the job I asked the capable Vice-Consul, James Gormley, what pending business we had.

"Well, an airplane on the way from Belize to Florida crashed in the jungle. The two pilots were unhurt and came out and I arranged their departure to the U.S."

I asked him to show me on the map where the plane had crashed. He pointed to the spot. "But those fellows were not en route directly to Florida. That place is due west of Belize. Florida is due north. Pilots don't make ninety degree errors in navigation," I said. It turned out that they were smugglers of ancient Maya archeological treasures. This aircraft, overloaded with stone sculpture, had crashed on take-off from some jungle airstrip. Gormley had quickly exfiltrated the pilots, who had made their way out of the jungle to the consulate, and thus saved us the bother of the trial and imprisonment of some American citizens. Actually they could easily have bribed their way to freedom with the help of the lawyer to whom we invariably steered such cases, but it would have been a great nuisance.

One day we received a telegram from the Department saying that a man named McMasters had kidnapped his two toddler daughters from their mother, the San Francisco heiress Dolly Fritz, who had custody, and had fraudulently obtained passports for them at one of our consulates in Canada. Mrs. Fritz and some private detectives and a lawyer were on their way to Yucatan, where McMasters was believed to be hiding, and we were asked to assist them and seize the passports when the children were found. They did not need much help, since they bribed the Yucatan police force into dropping everything else and working for them "en forma económica" as the local dialect delicately puts it.

The lawyer was a good-looking athletic fellow, a classmate of mine at Princeton, where he was a member of a prestigious eating club, with which fact he tried to impress me. In his law firm he apparently had no duties other than managing the complex legal affairs of Dolly Fritz.

The police turned up a pretty Yucatan divorcee who admitted to a recent, brief intimate acquaintance with McMasters, who had then disappeared.

We, Gormley in particular, were troubled by the overwhelming force deployed against McMasters, who had no legal counsel and who did have some rights under Mexican law, since his marriage to Dolly Fritz had taken place in Mexico and there was some question whether the California divorce, and the award of sole custody to the mother were valid in Mexico. When Vice-Consul Gormley politely raised these doubts the lawyer observed that some Foreign Service Officers with cloudy vision with regard to certain realities, had been known to suffer instant rustication to hell-holes like Vietnam if their obstinacy persisted.

"Are you threatening me?" asked Gormley.

"Oh, no," replied the lawyer. "I was just making a comment, that's all."

I had invited the lawyer to a large dinner I was giving. He arrived a bit late, breathless but triumphant.

"I found the son-of-a-bitch! I was walking down the beach near Progreso and there he was, swimming with the kids. I had a nice talk with him. He was quite reasonable, but just to make sure I assigned one of the Yucatan detectives to watch the beach house where they are staying."

"Which Yucatan detective?" I asked, as the maid placed the food before us.

"The one who questioned his Yucatan girlfriend."

"Oh, dear me! I'm afraid I have bad news for you. He's not watching the beach house."

"What! How do you know that?"

"I met her. She's very pretty. She came to me about a bad check which McMasters had given her for pesos. Having lost both her lover and the money she undoubtedly needs much consolation. As a student of Yucatan masculine human nature I can assure you that the detective has gone to question the woman further," I explained.

"You don't mean it!"

"I do," I said.

"Christ!" shouted the lawyer, who jumped up and dashed out the door. The next morning he reappeared, unshaven and disheveled and related that he had caught McMasters in the act of

decamping. The detective was of course not there. McMasters had said something in Spanish to the Indian maid, who dashed off and returned with the police, who apparently had been told he was a burglar. They hauled the struggling lawyer off to the jail and kept him overnight in a cell next to the urinals. McMasters escaped, only to be found a short time later in Campeche. Gormley drove down to get the passports.

"Look carefully!" he said, throwing them on my desk. I instantly noted the extraordinary resemblance of one of the girls to the lawyer.

Some time later McMasters again kidnapped one of the girls and spirited her off to England, where the minions of Mrs. Fritz followed and appealed to a British court. The judge, impressed by McMasters' claim to have been deprived of his children in a highly prejudicial manner by pistol-whipping Mexican police, hesitated to return the child to her mother. The lawyer called me and asked if I would sign an affidavit saying that it was all a pack of lies. I replied that a British judge was likely to take a very jaundiced view of his hiring the Merida police to act for Mrs. Fritz in a private capacity.

"Did you put that in your report?" he asked.

"I did, and the report is unclassified and I could hardly contradict my own report, could I?"

McMasters sojourned a while in Merida and proved an interesting fellow. An antique dealer, he claimed to be an intimate of the greatest nobles in Europe, and to have earned the gratitude of the Prince of Thurn and Taxis for returning to him a crested soup tureen which had been looted by American troops and which ended up in McMasters' inventory. His claim to intimacy with the British royal family seemed far-fetched at the time, but in the light of recent developments (1992) it seems in retrospect quite likely that they admitted such raffish characters to their family circle. His recollections of the kleptomania of the Dowager Queen Mary was embellished with much detail, such as her having invited herself to lunch at the new flat of an impoverished guardsman who was obliged to follow custom and place some suitable treasure in view for her to steal. All he had was a jade carving, and he tried to keep an eye on it, but when Her Majesty was gone, it too was gone, and he received a note from a lady-in-waiting: "Her Majesty has commanded me to thank you for the exquisite little gift..."

McMasters claimed to be the rightful heir of the Lairds of Inness, and we called him "The Laird" thereafter. He had with him a teenage son by a French countess who, listening to his father, often interjected, "Mais tu exagères, Papa!" He undoubtedly did. The Laird was the most accomplished linguist I had ever met, and could imitate even regional dialects of French and Spanish perfectly.

He disappeared, and the last I heard of him was from a Yucatan couple who spotted him at the airport in Madrid. He seemed impatient not to prolong the meeting because he was smuggling some "national treasure" out of the country.

I generally avoided the local aristocracy. Although very pleasant and exquisitely polite, they knew little of interest to the U.S. Government (drug trafficking, international fraud, desperadoes

fleeing justice, etc.) and almost to a man belonged to the Partido Accion Nacional, more or less permanently out of power.

Nevertheless, Gormley and I were invited to dinner at the residence of Fausta Peón de Médez, widow of a famous local folklorist. There we discovered how raw was the nerve of the Yucatanians with regard to the "Mexicans." To make pleasant conversation, Jim remarked that he had spent a very pleasant year in Mexico City, whereupon our hostess snapped, "Well, I hope you did not pick up any of their barbarous habits while you were there."

One day we got word that a small airplane, stolen by some American beach bums on Isla Mujeres was seen crashed in the great coastal swamp north of Campeche. Gormley went to investigate. Towing a flat-bottomed swamp canoe with an Indian guide in it behind a hired launch, the police and Vice Consul Gormley made their way up the coast, losing the Indian and the punt (found later), capsized on landing (ruining an expensive U.S. Government camera) and made their way inland assailed by swarms of mosquitoes, in the blistering sun. No bodies were found.

I was happy to have a vice-consul who could deal with dispatch with the assorted lunatics who came our way, like Cornelius Rockefeller Vanderbilt Harriman the Fourth, who came to the attention of the police at the airport for drunkenness and insulting behavior. Approached by Gormley, who accused him of being drunk, this self-styled scion of America's richest families opened his suitcase, vomited into it, closed it, and proceeded to shout abuse.

Pathetic drug addicts were part of my job. One pretty red-headed girl of Jewish extraction used to sit in the Cafe Express with a dazed expression typical of an addict. She had been abandoned by a boyfriend, also an addict, about whom I will write more later. I asked her if she needed help. She sneered and spat some insult. Day after day she sat there. I knew she stayed in the hotel a few doors away. One day she was absent, and I overheard a group of typical smugglers joking about "la gringa." One had just come from her room and said to another, "Go on up, it's your turn." A few days later she was back and a waiter handed me a note: "I want to go home." I called her stepfather and asked him to wire plane fare to Boston. "Tell me this," he said, "is she going to need a fix when she gets here?"

American smugglers became a large part of my work. The professionals, like these pilots, always escaped scot-free, and worked with Yucatanian or Merida confederates who kept the local authorities bribed. I discovered that the local official in charge of protecting the ancient sites even advised the smugglers of the price they should ask and received a commission. The guard at the ancient ruins of Oxkintok, which I visited, came to the consulate a few days later and offered to sell me an idol.

Many of the treasures were forgeries produced by local crooks such as Mario Díaz Triay, who specialized in stone, and Enrique Gottdiener Soto, who did jades with a dentist's drill. Mario, whom I knew well, was caught once and accused of robbing a ruin. He feared to tell the court that the works the police confiscated were fake because he felt that if it were to get out his business would be ruined. He tried to bribe the judge, to no avail. Mexico City had ordered a crackdown. Moreover, "experts" had come from Mexico City and had testified that they were

genuine. Finally he told the disbelieving court that they were forgeries, and took them to his workshop, where Indians were busy carving idols from small photographs taken in the ruins.

Mario offered me one for the garden in his New York gangster accent. "Anything ya want - rain god, corn god. My boys carve it up real good; put strings all over when they put it in the acid bath, like root marks. Sprinkle a little iodine on, like those brown spots on the rocks in the boonies; pee on it, leave it out in da sun a while so it looks like it was layin' aroun' in a milpa somewhere."

A peddler of Mayan and colonial antiquities sometimes came to my door and tried to sell me choice objects. It was technically illegal to remove pre-Columbian artifacts from Mexico, or indeed from the site where they were found, which the peddler had certainly done. I soon discovered that he was a goldmine of information about the activities of criminals in whom Washington was much more interested, and I bought a few items in order to keep him coming - and talking. The embassy on one occasion asked what I knew of a certain Yucatanian who lived on the road to Progreso. I asked the peddler.

"He has a business of shipping documents," he said. "For example, if a shipload of American wheat is on its way from New Orleans to, say, Nigeria, he has documents which make the ship deliver the wheat somewhere else - to one of his partners."

I asked him one day about Moreno Chauvet, the heroin czar of Mexico, who was a Yucatanian, and the peddler told me that one of Moreno's assistants came from Mexico City once a month to Progreso, the port of Merida, "to go fishing".

"But when he comes, it is always when the ship from Antwerp in Belgium arrives!"

I passed considerable narcotics information to Washington, and, although I asked that thanks be conveyed to my Mexican informants in the local bureaucracy to give them credit with their superiors, it never was.

There were about 30 clandestine airstrips all over the peninsula from which small planes carried drugs and archeological treasures to the U.S. and to which they smuggled American appliances, watches, and guns in return. Some American shrimp boats, instead of catching shrimp, traded merchandise for shrimp caught by Mexicans in Campeche. Sometimes they would tie their craft together at anchor and engage in drunken parties off Campeche. Whores would go out in motorboats to add to the fun and were sometimes thrown overboard, unpaid. I refused to become engaged in these insoluble problems, other than to bury the occasional American shrimper shot to death by his roistering comrades in some brawl and thrown overboard. A Campeche woman we called "The Dragon Lady" had a lucrative business salvaging American shrimp boats deliberately scuttled in very shallow water by their captains, whom she bribed.

Occasionally American desperadoes came to Yucatan. One hijacked a small airplane, holding the young pilot at gunpoint, and ordered him to fly to Cuba. The pilot protested in vain that he did not have enough fuel. The craft crashed in the ocean. The pilot was killed, the hijacker saved by

the Coast Guard (U.S.). When I radioed the Coast Guard to land him at a Mexican court to face justice, the C.G. refused and delivered him to a Florida hospital, from which he was quietly released by the FBI. Our despicable policy was always to keep American citizens out of the hands of the Mexican authorities, regardless of the heinousness of their crimes. No one has ever been extradited in either direction under the extradition treaty.

The brother of the pilot, mad with grief, went gunning for me, thinking, apparently, that I had somehow prevented the hijacker from being arrested. He was caught and disarmed.

The hijacker had left his automobile at the airport. The Mexican police asked us to be present when they searched the car, and even permitted my vice-consul (not Gormley) to search the trunk. A couple of months later I was thumbing through the file on the case and found a piece of paper with the name and address of "The Dragon Lady" on it. I asked the vice-consul how it came to be there.

"Oh, I found it in the trunk of that guy's car," he said nonchalantly.

I flew into a rage. "You mean you deliberately withheld evidence in a criminal case?" I shouted. I forget his idiotic answer. The selection process of foreign service officers varies according to the ideology of the White House. This fellow was of very humble origin, and was to cause much grief. I had to bring the piece of paper to the Mexican authorities with my apology.

The vice-consul's next outrage involved the disappearance of two American airline stewardesses and a Mexican drug peddler/addict on a tiny rented hotel sailboat off Cozumel Island. The vice-consul was to spend the day in Campeche on a consular matter and I was to take our pouch to Mexico City. On the eve of his departure I reminded him that the post must at all times be manned by an American and that he must return before dark because the ambassador had prohibited driving by night. Next day, when I arrived at the embassy from my hotel in Mexico City I found the consular section in an uproar. Frantic parents of two girls lost on a sailboat had called the consulate and no American was on duty! The vice-consul had decided to spend the night in Campeche! The girls were never found, despite a search by Coast Guard aircraft.

The final blow by this gem was when I received a note threatening harm to my daughter, Valerie, and my wife unless I delivered a large sum on a lonely road at night. I went to the police, who prepared a plan. On the evening designated by the extortionist I would leave the back door of the consulate open. The vice consul would conduct them inside and I would meet them there and together we would go to the now "staked-out" rendezvous. We (I and the vice-consul) were to tell no one, since one of our servants might have been in collusion with the extortionist. I went to the consulate and found it locked. I went to the vice-consul's house alongside and there were the policemen, machine-pistols in their laps, being served coffee by the vice-consul's wife. At this moment my own wife arrived for some housekeeping reason (we lived next door) and found this armed band. Why was she not permitted to know what the vice-consul's wife was permitted to know? Again I was furious. I drove the consulate station wagon, with the police concealed on the floor, to the rendezvous, but nothing happened. I could see the cigarettes of other police glowing in the dark alongside the road, so perhaps the criminal had been alerted and frightened off.

I co-opted a resident American smuggler, Tom Kingsbury, as an informant. One of his tasks was to apprise me of the presence in Merida of any dangerous American. He had introduced me to Licenciado Eduardo Palomeque Pérez de Hermida, a half-mad pharmacist who operated a snack bar cum drugstore near the market. Suspicious characters seemed to end up eventually at Eduardo's, attracted like the flies struggling in the saucers of strawberry jam he set out on the counter as fly bait. I dropped in at Eduardo's one day and was introduced to a customer - a balding, blue-eyed man, about 40 and six feet tall, with a wife who could have been no more than twenty, and two small boys, about 2 and 3. The customer said his name was "Ward" and said vaguely that he was looking for business opportunities.

Some weeks later Kingsbury came to see me and reported that a highly suspicious gringo was in town - Ward. "He talks about killing people all the time," said Kingsbury,

"A lot of people talk big, but it's all bluff," I said.

"Maybe so," said Kingsbury, "but I'm worried. One of the people he talks about killing is me!"

"Why would he want to kill you?" I asked.

"Because he found out that I know you and he's afraid I'll tell you what he does for a living."

"What does he do for a living?"

"He buys cars in the U.S. under an assumed name, pays one installment, drives them to Mexico and sells them. Forges birth certificates and drivers' licenses for wetbacks, too."

"Well, nobody is going to get very excited about that," I observed, "but if it will make you feel better I'll call the FBI at the embassy. I asked for Nate Ferris, the "Legal Attaché" (i.e., FBI chief).

"Say, Nate, there's a guy down here, about 40, blue eyes, half bald, very young wife, two little kids..."

"Hold 'im! Don't let 'im out of your sight! That's Bolin, public enemy No. ____." (I forget the number)

"Well, Nate, I have other things to do, and the fellow I would use to watch him is scared to death of him, but I'll try to keep tabs on him."

Ferris alerted the Mexican Government, which sent two powerfully built detectives to Merida with huge pistols in their briefcases.

"He's at the Hotel Miramar in Chetumal," I told them. They captured Bolin and delivered him to the FBI at the border at Brownsville. Bolin got only a year in jail because they could not prove a

murder he had committed. I bought one of his guns of the designated caliber from a gun fancier who had bought it from Bolin's wife. I fired it into my swimming pool and sent the retrieved bullet to the FBI, but it proved to be from the wrong gun. Nevertheless I received a letter of commendation from J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the F.B.I. for my alertness in the capture of Bolin. Later I kept Bolin's 9 mm Browning automatic under the seat of my car in Cambodia. On my first leave from Moscow a little more than a year later I read in the Washington Post that Bolin had been killed while trying to hijack a Texas shrimp boat - just about the most foolhardy scheme imaginable. Curiously this was precisely what he was planning to do when I arranged his capture.

Americans in Yucatan had more to fear from their own countrymen than from the mild Yucatanians. One day I received a call from a man named Ben Haggott in California. His son-in-law had sent a cable from Yucatan informing him that his daughter had been killed in an automobile accident. Could I verify this? I called him back later and told him that neither the police nor the hospitals had any record of a fatal accident. Haggott replied that meanwhile his son-in-law had returned to California and announced that she had died of a heart attack; he had invented the automobile accident "to spare my feelings," said Haggott, who thought this very fishy. He was coming to Yucatan to investigate. I promised to help.

The woman had died on Cozumel. Haggott went there and found that the doctor of the small army unit stationed there had certified the cause of death as cardiac arrest - largely on the statement of her husband, a cosmetic surgeon. Mexican law prohibits the movement of cadavers by public conveyance more than 24 hours after death, so the woman could not be exhumed and autopsied elsewhere. But Haggott, a rich man, paid the expenses of a forensic medical team from Mexico City, which conducted the autopsy and found barbiturates in her muscles, but not in her stomach - proving that it had been injected.

In the meantime I had found a raffish character, Conrad Ream, who, with a Yucatanian, testified that they had both danced with the pretty, 38-year-old woman during a previous visit of the woman to Isla Mujeres with her husband. Ream recalled that she had told him that her husband had once tried to smother her.

There has long been an extradition treaty between the U.S. and Mexico, but no one has ever been extradited in either direction. Defense lawyers in the U.S. always claim that their clients would not get a fair trial in barbarous Mexico, and the Mexicans for nationalistic reasons refuse to hand over criminals to the U.S. unless they are U.S. citizens, and in that case they just push them across the border without ceremony. So, it was impossible for Haggott to have his son-in-law extradited to Mexico for murder. Instead, he filed a "wrongful death action" in California. The motive of the murder? California is a community property state. Haggott's daughter apparently had grounds for divorce, which would have netted her half her husband's fortune. Conversely, by killing her, he would get all her considerable assets. Unbeknownst to him, however, she had written a will leaving all her assets to her mother!

Mexico is the ideal place to murder a spouse. Another fellow, a youth in his twenties, simply took his fifty-ish alcoholic wife swimming off Progreso and drowned her. No witnesses,

indifferent police. He inherited her money.

One day I received a letter from a man who described himself as "The Black Orpheus" an American Negro musician, saying that he was visiting Yucatan and would be willing to give a concert at the American cultural center, in order "to relieve the arid cultural climate" of Yucatan, as he put it. Before I could discuss it, however, I received a letter from a court in New York asking me to serve a summons on the fellow, one Pritchard, for paying for three plane tickets to Santo Domingo with a rubber check. I could not legally do this.

Knowing the political sensitivity of anything having to do with Negroes in the U.S. I replied by letter to Pritchard in terms of 18th century courtesy, thanking him and saying I would take his offer under advisement. He wrote again, suggesting a meeting, but I politely put him off. In the meantime the Department responded to my request for information on Pritchard. The thick pouched dossier was a catalogue of fraud and blackmail on three continents. Pritchard, a homosexual, had seduced the private secretary of the president of Senegal, ingratiated himself with the director of the U.S. Information Service (always soft touches for Negro culture-bearers) and used these connections to commit various frauds. In Liberia he rented the house of a deceased politician from his widow and threatened her with a revolver when she came to collect the rent. He had used the rubber check to buy airplane tickets to Santo Domingo for himself and two Lebanese homosexual friends, stayed a month in the Holiday Inn and refused to pay on the grounds that the manager, a Southerner, had uttered racial slurs at him.

I knew then that if I ever found myself in the same room with him he would claim that I had insulted him with racial slurs. So I avoided him.

He began to cultivate young men in Merida, and the mother of one of them came to me and said that Pritchard had given her son a check and promised to get the boy a scholarship at the Julliard School of Music. Unable to cite the Department's dossier, I merely cited the summons from the New York court, which was a matter of public record. She got the point.

Pritchard wrote again, insisting that I host a concert for him. I claimed I was about to go on a trip. Another letter announced that he had been invited to join a "secret Nazi study group" of Yucatecans, and threatened to write a book exposing them. Another letter said that he might be forced to accept the offer of the Cuban consul to give a concert there. He did give a concert at the Cuban consulate. One of my volunteer spies said the music consisted of simple pieces used as exercises by piano students.

A Belgium Communist named De Ridder suddenly appeared on the scene. I thought perhaps the party had assigned him to "manage" Pritchard in the manner most useful to them. An informant then told me that Pritchard, who was now living in a rented beach cottage at Sisal, had usurped the pulpit of the church in Hunucma and had harangued the Indian congregation on racism, American and Mexican. This was my opportunity! I went to Governor Luis Torres Mesías and said that heretofore Pritchard had been a purely American problem, but with his speech at Hunucma and the threatened book he was interfering in Mexican politics and attempting to stir up racial antagonism in Mexico.

To my surprise the governor replied, "We have been watching them ever since one of the Negro's assistants was in an automobile accident and a group of students came to demand that he be freed. We noted that all these students had been to Cuba. My men kept the beach cottage under observation and heard the sounds of firing practice. We believe they were in contact with Cuban trawlers off the coast. So today my men broke in and arrested them all. They will be sent to Mexico City and then expelled from the country."

The "firing practice" was undoubtedly duck hunters, for Pritchard and his pansy cohorts were hardly the stuff for guerrilla warfare. To the leftists in town my influence now seemed enormous. I went to see the governor and within hours poor Pritchard was in handcuffs! At Brownsville Pritchard gave an interview to the local newspaper saying that De Ridder was a spy of mine whose task was to get him into trouble.

Later, when Vice Consul Gormley was in Washington, he sent me a clipping from the Washington Post which said that Pritchard had defrauded a national Anti-Vietnam War Committee of thousands of dollars it had given him for "expenses" in the recruitment of major musicians and orchestra conductors for the noble cause, these worthies being close friends of his, according to Pritchard. As the date approached when these famous artists were to speak, or play, at a great meeting organized by the committee, a nervous functionary had called them and was told that they had never heard of Pritchard! Pritchard refused to be interviewed, saying that he was suffering from porphyria, "the royal disease" which affected George III and he must not endure anything upsetting.

Then there were other less thrilling tasks - like remonstrating with the University of Yucatan for allowing one of its staff to sell medical school degrees to Americans who had never attended that university, and complaining to the state government about the sale of false Mexican passports to applicants for US immigration visas. The passports fraudulently identified them as close relatives of Mexicans already legally admitted.

Yucatan had tried twice to secede from Mexico. In 1848 it had requested admission to the U.S.A. but was turned down. In 1917 the Yucatanians, under a military adventurer named Argumedo, had rebelled and were crushed by the invading Mexican army of Gen. Salvador Alvarado, who shot and hanged many of them, while others fled to the U.S. A general dislike of Mexicans persisted - and there was a small, clandestine independence movement. Two men who had given me a wall calendar inscribed to me as "ambassador to Yucatan" invited me to a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce - which I normally would have attended. But some suspicion kept me away. At the meeting they presented an appeal to the United Nations to pressure Mexico to grant independence to Yucatan. If I had been present the Communists would have claimed that the Yankee imperialists were behind it and some gullible sections of the ruling party would have believed them. Gullibility is a common Mexican failing. When I sold my Volkswagen to a young P.R.I. official when I left, a Communist leader said that the car was a gift from the CIA and in it the purchaser would record conversations of politicians by means of a listening device implanted in the purchaser's knee. He had been in an automobile accident and had had to have an operation

on his knee.

Yucatan was overwhelmingly in favor of the conservative Partido Acción Nacional, but the ruling P.R.I. regularly rigged the elections to keep them out of office. Too close acquaintance with PAN activities was compromising, so I carefully balanced my contacts among both parties. I had excellent sources of information and I was beginning to get evidence that the PAN was going to make a determined effort to frustrate the rigging in the forthcoming mayoral election. So firmly embedded was the P.R.I. suspicion that the U.S. secretly backed the PAN that the governor told me that if they continued their agitation he would be obliged to "force" the election. He obviously intended that I convey this threat to the opposition. Of course I did not, but, convinced that the PAN might actually win, I decided to leave Merida for Cozumel before the election, so that I could credibly deny the later inevitable charges that I masterminded a PAN victory. How could I have? I was not even there! The PAN won - by shaming the troops guarding the polls into not letting the governor's thugs steal the ballot boxes. I was able to cite my Cozumel absence to convincing effect. The leftist leader Lombardo Toledano made the expected accusation in the press, as did the small Merida Communist Party in wall posters.

The Mexican press is rather more venal than the American press. One day a Mexican (not a Yucatecan) visited me in my office, said he was a journalist from Guanajuato, about 1000 miles away. He blandly said that unless I would pay him a certain sum he would publish highly damaging articles about me. I held my temper and replied very politely that I was indifferent to whatever articles about me which might appear 1000 miles away. "But your embassy..." he began.

"Is quite satisfied with my work, and I would not even have to explain myself should such articles appear. Furthermore it is far more compromising to a foreign representative to give money to a journalist in the country of his assignment, for he could then be accused of interfering in the country's internal affairs. I might add that such articles as you might publish in Guanajuato would not be republished here. The editors of both Yucatecan dailies are good friends of mine..." He left, obviously chagrined.

It was one of my local newspaper friends who came to see me one day to report that his yacht had been stolen by "gringos" and the Indian watchman on board kidnapped. This was serious! How did he know they were gringos? Witnesses said some were tall and blond and spoke what they thought was English. I told him I would investigate and call him later.

I went downtown to the Cafe Express, a smugglers' den at that time - where I picked up useful information from time to time. I think I spent more time there than at the office. A good diplomat - or intelligence officer - should spend as little time as possible in his office.

I greeted newcomers as they entered the cafe and asked each to sit down and have a "cafecito." I asked each if they had seen any suspicious gringos in town lately. Finally one said that his cousin, a receptionist at a cheap hotel opposite the bus station, told him that five or six gringos carrying golf bags had spent the night there and would not allow the bellhops to carry the bags! The receptionist had noted that one of them had a tattoo of "the world with an anchor behind it"

[the Marine Corps emblem].

I called the FBI and gave them a description. Later the FBI called back and said that the group was known as "The Anti-Communist Liberation Army" headed by one Frank Sturgis, and they were on their way to liberate Guatemala. I protested that Guatemala was not a Communist country. "We know that; that's why we threw the report away at first. We decided the informant was giving us a cock-and-bull story."

I summoned the owner of the boat and told him I had reason to believe his boat was headed south along the coast of Quintana Roo, where a two-knot current flows north. Together we calculated the fuel consumption and decided they would have to put into Belize for fuel. I cabled Tepper, our consul there, and asked him to inform the British that heavily armed pirates would be arriving. The British arrested them all.

Some months later I had lunch with the British ambassador to Mexico, Peter Hope, and asked him what had happened; I had heard nothing since the arrest.

"Well, just as you said, they were heavily armed - but none of the ammunition fitted any of the guns! We asked the Mexican consul if he wanted them extradited. He said he wasn't interested - I understand he is interested only in smuggling for his own account."

Frank Sturgis later achieved notoriety as the commandant of the Watergate burglars. I assume his Guatemala expedition was some sort of fraud perpetrated against some densely ignorant millionaire who put up the money.

Dealing with lunatics is a large part of any American consul's work. One morning, in the middle of breakfast, there was a knock on my front door. I opened it to find a man in a fedora wearing dark glasses.

"Harben?" he asked, in an authoritative basso.

"Yes, what can I do for you?"

"You'll be getting a message from Washington filling you in on my mission in a day or two, but I thought I'd touch base with you before I got down to work. I'll check back in a week or so and go over a few things with you."

"Yes, of course, thank you," I stammered. He turned and left. Very angry, I called the Embassy and said I thought I told those people down the hall to inform me when they send somebody into my district. I blew the cover of the last one. "Now there's another one at my door!"

"We didn't send anybody down there," said my supervisor after checking. "Must be another nut." And so it was.

In succeeding weeks "008" as the habitués of the cafés soon were calling him, sat in corners,

eyeing people suspiciously and scribbling in a small notebook. He told too many people he was a secret agent of the CIA, which worried me. I sat down at his table and said, "Look here, you could get yourself in a lot of trouble if anybody suddenly believes you. So get out of here before that happens!"

He replied rather rudely and said that I had better watch my step. If I interfered with his mission I would find myself transferred to some pesthole.

There was nothing I could do except discreetly spread the word that he was mentally ill. One day the airport called to say that he had been arrested for insulting the officials there, whom he accused of diverting a special aircraft sent by President Lyndon Johnson to bring him back to Washington for consultation. I found him weeping in a jail cell, his mind having cleared sufficiently to recognize the shattering of his pretense. I had him shipped back to the Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare for hospitalization.

Another maniac, a Trotskyite living on a collective farm (ejido) in a remote village used to visit me and was so impressed with the Marxist learning I had picked up in my Columbia courses that he wrote a letter to the New York Trotskyite newspaper describing me as "a foremost Marxist scholar."

To give the devil his due, my insubordinate vice-consul was a marvel with maniacs. I sent him to handle a huge, crazed American who was threatening several people with a machete. He not only disarmed him but brought him meekly to my office. He was very helpful in still another tragic case. A discolored body of a young woman, covered with feeding crabs had been found on the mud flats near Chetumal, in Quintana Roo. When this "cadaver" was brought to the morgue, however, it showed signs of life. She was also heavily drugged. It took a month for the hospital to bring her back to health, but it was discovered then that she was insane, and even attacked the doctors and the nurses. Since dangerous patients must be accompanied on international airlines, it took some time to find a reliable person to accompany her to the U.S. During that time she lived with the Vice-Consul and his family, and he somehow managed to keep her calm. She had the disconcerting habit of suddenly stripping off her clothes in restaurants, but did not attack anyone while in the Vice-Consul's care. The young woman had come down to Mexico with two burglars and had been abandoned by them. She was pregnant. Her mother was in an asylum. It would be interesting to know how many hundreds of thousands of dollars she and her progeny have cost the government thus far.

On another occasion I had a violent American citizen shanghaied back to the U.S. - certainly a violation of his civil rights and all that. He came to the consulate and demanded a passport, which we were not authorized to issue. When my pretty Yucatecan secretary told him so he abused her in foul language and said he would come back in a few days and he'd better have his passport or there would be blood on the floor. A quick call to the Department revealed that he was a dishonorably discharged soldier who had defected to East Germany but beat up so many people there that the Communists had pushed him back across the border.

My secretary had elicited the fact that he was staying in the port of Progreso, where there lived a

kindly, middle-aged gentleman who was very pro-American and had helped the consulate with Progreso problems before.

I described the fellow to Arturo Milán González and told him that the American had used language with Lolita, my secretary, which no man should ever use in the presence of a lady, much less to a lady. Arturo, who admired Lolita, was shocked. He would see to it, he said. Next day he called to say that they had found this gringo in a bar and bought him drinks - many drinks. When he passed out Arturo and his friends put him on the vegetable boat headed for Pompano Beach, Florida. When awakened he was halfway to the U.S. and out of my hair. It cost me a bottle of rum.

Some time later the embassy sent a cheap form letter, signed by the ambassador, to be sent to special friends of the consulate. I told the embassy I would not send such a trashy looking piece of paper to anyone, and insisted on a proper letter, on letterhead bond. I got it. Arturo has it to this day, despite the slights of a later consul who remonstrated with him for giving the impression that he had some official connection with the consulate.

I had some minor economic responsibilities. The embassy asked me to report on the "Alliance for Progress" - a scheme of President Kennedy whereby the U.S. guaranteed collateralized bank loans in Latin America for worthy projects. Mostly it was used to finance capital flight out of the recipient countries; in Yucatan it was used for smuggling. "It's like this," a banker told me. "You borrow or rent a herd of cattle from a friend and use it as collateral for a bank loan for some fictitious industrial project. Then you buy a couple of truckloads of Scotch whiskey in Belize, pay off the customs, drive it into Mexico, sell it, and pay off the loan. The banks like it; everybody likes it." The embassy was silent, as all embassies usually are when they discover the failures of a project dear to the White House.

A request came to find some technical assistance project which might be used for propaganda favorable to Pres. Johnson. I had just the thing - a letter from an humble Indian in a remote village begging for a pump to irrigate the fields of the village. It was written in the "Great White Father" style which would look fine in a USIA pamphlet. We got the money and with enormous difficulty transported it over a very rocky road to the village. So afterward I began to receive visits from angry Indians from the village who complained that the Indian who had requested the pump, and on whose land it was located, was demanding exorbitant payments for the water and was threatening them with a shotgun when they refused to pay.

EDWARD H. WILKINSON
Vice Consul
Mexico (1967-1969)

Edward Wilkinson was born in Indiana in 1936. Mr. Wilkinson received his bachelor's degree at Purdue University and served in the army from 1957-1959. His career included positions in Philippines, Mexico, Costa Rica, Argentina,

Taiwan, Ecuador, Korea, Thailand, and Germany. Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2002.

Q: How much training did you get in consular work?

WILKINSON: Two weeks. Mazatlán at that time was a two-officer post. We did nothing, essentially, but American Services and non-immigrant visas. The two weeks of consular training, which was all that was provided new consular officers at the time, consisted of three days in American Services and two days in non-immigrant visas, plus an entire week reviewing immigrant visas, which we didn't do in Mazatlán. So I went off to my first consular posting with five days of useful training.

Q: You were in Mazatlán from when to when?

WILKINSON: I got there in May of '67 and I was there until July, I think it was, of 1969.

Q: What was Mazatlán like? I mean, where is it located?

WILKINSON: Mazatlán is a port city on the west coast of Mexico. It was, and is, a fishing center. Shrimp is the main thing. If you picture a map of Mexico, think of Baja California coming down on the left side. From the bottom tip of the Baja, you just go straight across to the mainland, a little bit north maybe, and there you will find Mazatlán.

It was a town of maybe 100,000 people at that time. It was, and continues to be, a very popular tourist destination for Americans, Canadians and others. Some were retirees, but mostly the American visitors were just plain tourists. It was quite a nice place. Mexicans in general are just friendly, friendly people and I certainly was extremely well treated there. And my boss and his wife were wonderful, too.

Q: Who were they?

WILKINSON: The consul was the late Abraham Vigil. He and his wife treated me royally. I replaced a vice consul there whom I met only briefly, so Mr. Vigil was stuck with teaching me everything. I had nothing but the greatest respect for him.

Q: Why would we have a consular post there? Protection and Welfare?

WILKINSON: Yes, although we handled non-immigrant visas, protection and welfare was what we spent most of our time doing. Partly, don't forget, communications in those days were nothing like what we have today, so you couldn't solve protection problems from a distance as easily as you can today. I might add that the consular office at Mazatlán was closed ten or so years ago, although there is now a consular agency there. The town is still a very popular place for tourists.

Q: Talking about those days, in the late '60s, an American gets into trouble. What kind of trouble

and what did you do? How did the system work?

WILKINSON: Well, in those days, and I'm sorry to say it's not all that different today, many of our countrymen's problems were drug related. The difference is we tended to focus on marijuana, whereas today it's on harder drugs. But it's the same old business; too many people think they can just go down to Mexico and, with impunity, do whatever they want. Now, there is a great deal of freedom that exists in that country that we don't have in the States, but it is by no means a free lunch. So you had a regular, steady stream of people who went to jail, mostly for drug-related reasons.

You also had a number of natural deaths to attend to because a large percentage of foreign tourists who came to the resort town were older people. What you did in those days in a death case is not all that different from what must be done today. Unless there is a close relative on the spot available to attend to details, you arrange to deal with the remains, and you work with the police to get the deceased's belongings and ensure that that they are returned to the family. You try your best to follow the wishes of the next-of-kin, and you do that under State Department rules and regulations, but most of the work is simply common sense.

Q: What about Americans that get arrested? One hears, particularly in those days, about the problem of corruption, the bribes.

WILKINSON: Oh, yes, "la mordita" existed then, and it still exists.

Q: When somebody got into jail, how did you deal with that?

WILKINSON: I don't think there were many arrests of people who understood the system. It wasn't impossible to arrange for an alternative to going to jail, if you had the funds and knew how to play the game. So, the potential was there; I don't deny it. I read an article recently, in, I think, the New York Times on that same issue. It's still going on. I certainly didn't deal in it in any way, shape, or form, but I knew it happened.

Q: This was the time of a lot of young students, many called hippies, going out to explore the world. It was very much the thing to take a year off and the dollar went pretty far and you could hitch hike around and all that.

WILKINSON: You know, we didn't see a lot of the hippy-type people there, simply, I think, because that type of person didn't want to go to a place where there were a lot of American senior citizen tourists.

Q: Okay, good point.

WILKINSON: Young, more serious, people went to places like San Miguel de Allende and similar locations where there are schools to study Spanish. But they didn't go Mazatlán to study the language. Of course, we saw students, though. Oh, we just dreaded the spring school break, and for the same reason any Mexican who could put two pesos together got out of town during

the pre-Lenten holiday period.

Q: The kids would all come in?

WILKINSON: Well, kids and everybody else. It was kind of a mess. But, of course, the local people, the shop owners, and for that matter the police and the civil authorities – everybody – liked it because it produced a lot of income for the town.

Q: How about getting people in jail? Did you have any problems taking care of them?

WILKINSON: No, no, not at all. Many young kids who came to town got caught buying marijuana. They did a minimum of two years, and very often it was exactly two years. Often the sentence was four years, but normally the Mexican authorities would let the kids out after two. One exception I remember was an American citizen convicted for murder. I think he was in jail for life. He died of natural causes in jail while I was there. Except for him, I don't think there was a soul incarcerated in Mazatlán during my tenure there who was an American who wasn't in jail for some drug-related offense.

Q: How did you find the Mexican community?

WILKINSON: I liked them very much. They were and are very friendly people. There was a restaurant that is still there called El Shrimp Bucket, situated in the Hotel La Siesta. El Shrimp Bucket employed a group of waiters most of whom had been in the States for a time, and their English was pretty good. El Shrimp Bucket was owned by an American by the name of Carlos Anderson. The food was pretty good, and it was an amazing place in the sense of the atmosphere. Carlos would almost inevitably “buy” you one or two Kaluas after dinner. It was a very friendly, happy place and I spent a great deal of time there, as did many, many tourists, and not a few Mexicans. Carlos later opened restaurants in a number of places all over Latin America.

HENRY DEARBORN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico City (1967-1969)

Henry Dearborn was born in Massachusetts in 1913. He attended Dartmouth College and later Yale University. Mr. Dearborn's career included positions in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Argentina, and Peru. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

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

DEARBORN: Yes I went directly to Mexico City. I was there from April, 1967 to September, 1969. I went there because Tony Freeman asked for me. He left Colombia in 1964 to go to

Mexico. His DCM was Clarence Boonstra who was being assigned as Ambassador to Costa Rica. So Tony Freeman asked for me and the Department said I could go but would have to stay a few months with newly arrived Reynold Carlson. So as soon as those few months were up, I went to Mexico.

Q: What was the situation in Mexico? The Mexican-American relationship is always a difficult one. Did you find yourself really in a different world?

DEARBORN: Well, the thing that surprised me the most was that they were so friendly. I had never been in Mexico. Back in Yale Graduate School I had written a history of Mexico from the Aztecs to Cárdenas in 75 pages. So that was what I knew about Mexico. Considering our history I was astonished at how friendly they were and how helpful they were. What they were saying behind my back I have no idea. But they certainly put up a good front.

It was a completely different relationship with the government. In Colombia the Ambassador or I, if I was Chargé, could see the President anytime we wanted to. But that didn't happen in Mexico. You just didn't see the President. You went through the Foreign Minister. I think that was quite a shock to Tony Freeman when he got to Mexico. He wasn't used to that and he had to get used to it because that was the way they operated.

I was fortunate in a way. As you say, the relations have difficulties, but looking over a long period, our relations with Mexico during the Freeman years were about as good as they have ever been. We had an excellent relationship with the Foreign Minister, Antonio Carillo Flores, who had been ambassador in Washington. He was an exceptional person for any position. He would have been a great Secretary General at the UN. In fact the Chileans approached him and asked if he would be receptive to that position. I went over and I asked him if it were true that he had been approached. He said, "Yes, they did ask me, but I gave them General Sherman's answer." You could tell how much he knew about the United States. I don't think there was another Foreign Minister in the world who could have said that.

Q: Yes, "If nominated I will not run, if elected I will not serve."

DEARBORN: I remember sending a telegram back to the Department reporting exactly that. Later I found out that they thought that was my interpretation of what he had said. I said, "Not at all, that was what he said." He was excellent and the reason in large part of our good relations at that time.

Q: I have never served in Mexico but have heard that traditionally as they slice things up within the ruling party, the Foreign Minister is sort of thrown to whatever serves as the left there and is often more anti-American. At least there are so many close relations on the military side, on the security side and all with the United States, so the Foreign Ministry is left to be the playground of those who come out of the universities who are kind of anti-American and all that.

DEARBORN: Carillo Flores was the Foreign Minister during my whole period and that was my good luck because he was pro-US. His right-hand man was also pro-US. Now there were

elements in the Foreign Office that were extremely nationalistic and they took positions in the UN against the United States. The man in charge of their relations with international organizations, García Robles, was always taking positions in the UN against us. It irritated the Department no end and they thought he was a communist, which he never was. In fact, we became quite friendly with him. The Counselor of Political Affairs was friendly with him. It didn't change his mind any, however. He was a strongly nationalistic Mexican.

I was fascinated by the fact that the CIA station chief, who had been in Mexico for many years, Win Scott, knew him well. He knew everybody by that time. In fact, he knew the President. He was one man who could go in to see the President whenever he wanted to because in the past when the President was Secretary of Government, Win Scott had a close relationship with him. So Win's relationship with the President was special. When he retired, just before I did, I said, "Look, I know you don't want a big party, but let me take you and Janet out to dinner." I said, "I will take you out to dinner and invite any other couple whom you might want and we'll have a nice evening." I couldn't believe it when the man that he wanted was García Robles who was the *bête noire* of the US in the Foreign Office. But it wasn't communism, it was Mexicanism.

We had our problems. All the Latin American countries broke relations with Cuba, but Mexico didn't. The Cuban Ambassador was present in Mexico. In fact it got to be embarrassing at one point because he had been there so long that when the dean of the corps was transferred, the deanship fell on the Cuban. In order to avoid embarrassment to the Mexicans the Cuban just went home.

The CIA had a big operation and their main concern was watching the Russians. It was the first place I had been where there was a Russian Embassy. They had a large establishment.

Q: Were we concerned about the Soviet influence in Mexico?

DEARBORN: The main job of the Soviet embassy in Mexico was to watch the United States. So we were watching them watch us. In fact, when in 1968 the Olympics were held in Mexico, we had an Olympics attaché and an assistant Olympics attaché sent down. The latter was a CIA agent. I guess they were hoping that he could get some information, or defectors, etc. I think I have to mention that that fellow was Philip Agee. As far as I knew he was a very nice fellow. I got along well with him. He wrote up excellent reports on the Olympics. But after I left Mexico, he defected and wrote a book exposing a lot of CIA activities which caused a terrible situation.

Q: He was responsible for fingering CIA operators overseas, including the killing of Robert Welsh in Athens in 1974, because he continued a series of books about the CIA.

DEARBORN: He wrote this book called "Inside the Company, CIA Diary". I never knew what was wrong with Phil, but I know his personal life was messed up. We had a telegram come in addressed to the Ambassador from a Washington lawyer saying, "I want you to tell Phil Agee to send his children back to the United States immediately." So the Ambassador said, "I don't know what this is about. Call Phil in and find out." I asked Phil and he said, "Well, what happened is that my wife lives in the Washington area with our two little boys. We are divorced. She has

custody of the children. I went up to see them and I saw how she was treating those little boys [they were about 3 or 4 years old, let's say]. She keeps them locked up in the apartment and won't let them go out to play. They are going to grow up to be misfits. I couldn't stand it. I told her I wanted to take them to the zoo. Instead of taking them to the zoo I took them to the airport and brought them to Mexico. I am not going to return them." So CIA told him that he had to return his children or he was fired. He opted to be fired. If you asked Phil if he were fired, he would say, "No, I quit". If you ask CIA, they would say he was fired. Anyway all of this was going on in his life and I always thought he might have had some resentment against the company. How much a part that played in his defection, I don't know.

Q: I would have thought that being DCM in Mexico would be a very complicated job because we have such a huge mission there.

DEARBORN: We had 675 people there.

Q: And then there are all these ties of people both in Washington and Mexico City who call each other by their first names--from the Agricultural service, the Parks service, etc.-- who bypass the Embassy. Was this a problem?

DEARBORN: I think one place where it caused us headaches was in the protection business, because being on the border with people going back and forth they would sometimes get into trouble. Sometimes they would get murdered, sometimes they would murder. As a result of this, often a congressman would get involved, because the family would write to their congressman and he would demand action. The guy would be in jail and we would be pressed to get him out. Things like that. There were a few cases like that.

Another problem we had was with LBJ's brother. We assigned an immigration officer to go down to Acapulco and latch on to LBJ's brother and try to keep him out of trouble, because he was always getting in trouble.

I was just noting that in spite of the fact that we didn't have any military missions, and only a one-man AID office in the field of education, it was still a very large Embassy. We didn't have any of those normal adjuncts that we generally have in Latin America, but we had activities that we didn't have anywhere else just because it was a border country. The FBI had a large office because of fugitives, stolen cars, etc. Customs had an office there, Narcotics had an office there. The only interagency spats that I can remember were between Customs and Narcotics. And that only reflected what was going on back home. We had a Public Health officer, we had a US Travel Service officer, we had a man from the Weather Bureau, the Immigration Service and then we had nine consulates. We had a supervising consul general and five consuls in the Embassy. So it was a very big thing. If we had had the AID and military missions besides it would have been colossal. It was like being mayor of a city to be DCM.

Q: Was there any problems with the consulates in Mexico?

DEARBORN: No, we had very good people in those consulates. I don't remember any problems.

I remember one funny thing. The Consul General in Hermosillo was leaving. He left quite suddenly and we needed a Consul General immediately. I happened to think of a fellow by the name of John Barfield, who was taking a leave of absence at his own expense and going to LSU for a year. He was the right grade and had had experience in that field. I had just gotten a letter from him a little while earlier saying that he was now interested in the big picture. He wanted to get into policy matters and out of the consular field. But I immediately thought of him and telephoned him. I said, "John, I have your letter here about what you are interested in in the future, but there is an opening for a Consul General in Hermosillo, would you be interested." He said, "Give me five minutes to readjust my thinking and I will be there." Within a couple of weeks he dropped everything and he became Consul General. He had been in Italy and he wanted to brush up on his Spanish so he started attending Spanish classes with the teacher who was giving lessons in the office. The first lesson he took he fell desperately in love with her. They were married and now he is retired and they are living happily in Tucson, Arizona. A happy ending.

Q: You were there during the Olympics. It was sort of a messy business with students...

DEARBORN: Well, just before the Olympics there was a blowup. There were some students that were trying to embarrass the government before the Olympics. The government was determined not to have any disruptions during the Olympics. They came down very hard on those students and there were no disruptions. They managed to keep the law enforcement people pretty well out of sight. They were behind buildings ready to pounce, however, and this was generally realized.

The Olympics were a tremendous success in Mexico. They had an interesting aspect to them. I don't know whose idea it was, but they had a sort of cultural fair along with the Olympics. All of the participating countries sent cultural contributions-- paintings, dramatic productions, etc. We sent down the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, among other things. They came to the Embassy and played for us.

Q: A New Orleans jazz.

DEARBORN: It was a great success. All along the main avenue they had these posters painted by children of various countries--from Africa and Asia, etc. It was very impressive.

Q: What was the Embassy attitude towards the PRI, the party that has been in power ever since 1910, or something?

DEARBORN: The PRI was a fact of life. The Mexican power rests on a tripod of business, agriculture and labor. The government has to keep those three elements satisfied. Agriculture and labor tend to be on the left side and business on the right side. They do a balancing act, if you do something for one you have to find something to do for the others. They always say that the President of Mexico is so powerful, but the fact is that he is powerful because he keeps his finger on the pulse. In an election time, the candidate of the PRI goes out and stumps the country as if his life depended on it. There is a reason for this. He has to keep in touch. He doesn't sit up there

and order people to do this and that. He knows what he can do and get away with. But the Mexican stance in general has to be leftist. Anyone in the State Department and US government has to know this. And they have to have the image of standing up to the United States. This is an essential part of a Mexican government retaining its support. But within that we get along pretty well.

And then we have tools that help us. We have these inter-parliamentary meetings with Mexico. One year our delegation from congress meets with their congressional delegation congress down there and the next year, up here. They pick different places to make it more interesting. Once they met in Hawaii, I think. These meetings help the legislators of each country understand their respective problems. But you are right about there being so many non-governmental connections--even more than when I was there.

When I was there Mexican policy on foreign investment would not allow a business dominated by foreign investment. Now you can. This is a big change.

Q: Did illegal immigration play a major role?

DEARBORN: It was something that was always listed among our problems. In the inter-parliamentary meetings, for example, it was always a concern. The Mexicans were interested in how the United States treated Mexicans who came up here. We had had an agreement called the Bracero Agreement where a certain number of seasonal workers were allowed to come up, but that wasn't functioning when I was there--it was before.

There was tremendous tourism, of course. Wherever you get a lot of tourists, protection becomes a major problem. There were a couple of dramatic cases. There was one up in Monterrey. There was a man in jail for murdering some tourists. He was an American. His people appealed to US Congressmen and we got all this pressure to do something about him. Finally he escaped and the last I heard of him was that he escaped to Texas and not too long afterwards was murdered in a barroom brawl.

There was a dramatic rescue of somebody whose name I forget. It was written up and I think they made a movie out of it. He was a man who was in prison and was rescued by helicopter--he was flown right out of the prison yard.

Q: What happened? There must have been quite a lot of pressure on the Embassy to do something to get the guy back.

DEARBORN: I don't remember that. I think both sides were glad to be rid of him. In fact, the fellow who escaped up in Monterrey, we always thought the Mexicans looked the other way, being tired of him and the problems he was causing.

Q: How about corruption? Was this a problem?

DEARBORN: From our point of view, corruption was a way of life in Mexico. For them it was a

way of doing business. The *mordida*, as they call it, is the way of supplementing a salary. Yes, from our point of view, nearly everyone was on the take. To get a contract you had to throw in a little extra. If the police stop you, you can give them a little something and get off. It is a way of life. I don't know. When it is so deeply rooted how you can get rid of it. That is the scary part. In any country, if it digs in how do you get it out?

Q: Did you retire from this post?

DEARBORN: Tony Freeman left in January, 1967. I was Chargé for over six months. Along about February or March, I had a message from the Department saying that I had been out 15 years and had to come home. It took me until the next morning to send off a letter handing in my resignation. My thought was that I was 57 and had 3 more years to go to retirement and I didn't want to work my last three years in the Department. I had had 11 straight years in the Department, but that was a long time ago. After they got my letter I had a phone call saying, "Look, would you be willing to stay until we find a new ambassador?" I said, "I am willing to stay here for 10 years; it is the Department where I don't want to work." So they said, "Great, we haven't found an ambassador yet so agree that you should stay on until we do and then stay a couple of months with the new ambassador."

Month after month went by and no ambassador. About July Bob McBride was named Ambassador. When he arrived I stayed with him until September and then I came home. Then I waited for financial reasons until February to retire.

In September, the very month I came home relations with Mexico went into a tailspin because Nixon, recently in the Presidency, and his cohorts did something that we never would have done under LBJ. He suddenly, overnight, closed the border because of the narcotics problem. He didn't tell the Mexicans in advance even though he had just met a few days previously with the Mexican President. Well, Diac Ordaz was furious. He said a wall of suspicion had arisen between our two countries. This was pretty strong language considering how good our relations had been. So the last thing I really remember doing before retirement was writing a memo and sending it to everybody I could think of saying that this was not the way to handle relations with Mexico. We had been very successful with talking things over, being open and frank. But this secretiveness and drastic action was not the way to do things.

Q: Do you recall what caused this sudden border closing? Was this a reaction within the White House?

DEARBORN: I think what happened was that the Justice Department, and especially a man named Kleindienst grabbed the narcotics thing and ran with it. They overpowered everybody else who tried to stop them. I remember saying in my memo that I didn't blame the Justice Department and Mr. Kleindienst for what they did because after all they are policemen and they did what they were supposed to do. But I said I couldn't understand why they weren't politically overridden. I know Kleindienst got a copy of this memo and he didn't like me very much.

Q: He later went to jail didn't he?

DEARBORN: He did.

Along about June, after I had retired, Charlie Meyer who was Assistant Secretary for Latin America called me on the phone and said, "Look we want you to come back to work." I said, "Well, I retired to retire not to go back to work at the Department." He said, "Well, what happened is that we don't have a director for Mexican affairs and we have a Presidential visit coming up and we need somebody in there who is familiar recently with everything. Ambassador McBride told us that he thinks you are the one. It will just be for a month or two." So I agreed and went back for a month or two--it got to be three months, four months, five months. Finally I wrote a desperate memo repeating that I had retired to retire not to work in the Department. Finally they let me loose again.

**ARNOLD DENYS
Consular Officer
Hermosillo (1967-1969)**

**Consular Officer and Cultural Affairs Officer
Tijuana (1981-1984)**

Arnold Denys was born in Belgium in 1931. He began studying at the Flemish University until he immigrated to the U.S. as a student in 1950. Once in the U.S., he continued his studies at Gonzaga University, Georgetown University, and the University of Pittsburgh. Mr. Denys became a U.S. citizen in 1955, served in the U.S. Army, and joined the State Department in 1960. His career included positions in Panama, Egypt, Greece, the U.K., Mexico, Canada, Belgium, and Washington, DC. This is an excerpt from his memoirs.

DENYS: As a Consul in Tijuana, I dealt with US-Mexico border problems of great proportions. The number of undocumented aliens from Mexico and Central America was increasing. Tijuana was one of the largest nonimmigrant visa issuance posts in Mexico, and its strategic location near San Diego made it fertile ground for investors in border industries (the maquiladoras). It also became a site of heavy drug trafficking.

The positive side of being a consular officer in Tijuana was the constant cultural interchanges between the two Californias at a time when Mexico was undergoing rapid political and social changes.

I next flew to Mexico City, a short flight and my first visit to Mexico. My arrival at the Mexico City airport was in the evening, but foggy weather conditions offered something mystical about this location. A big billboard lit up with a heartwarming sign, FELIZ NAVIDAD (Happy

Christmas). It made me feel welcomed and at home.

It took only a few moments to get cleared through Mexican immigration and customs. In Mexico City I checked into the Geneva, one of the older hotels, near La Reforma in the center of the capital. It is a colonial style hotel, not far from the main tourist sites. I took a long walk by myself and liked what I saw: a city with architectural characteristics like Paris, Madrid and New York. What most impressed me were the throngs of people roaming the streets.

At the National Archeological Museum I admired remnants of the city's Aztec past. The Aztecs had built a temple where the present Presidential Palace is located, and where the Spaniards conquered Mexico and made it into a more commercial city. They started by building roads. The Valley of Mexico was at one time a large lake with eight islands. This is why the city is still sinking today. Many national projects are underway to prevent the Mexican national shrines from sinking further.

The Liberty Bell on top of the front door of the Presidential Palace in Dolores was used by Mexican patriot Father Hidalgo when he appealed to Mexicans to free themselves from the Spaniards. In the Palace one can admire the paintings by Diego Rivera. No painter in Mexico has had a greater impact on the Mexican character (psyche) than Rivera. His murals depict the life of early Mexican civilization prior to the Cortez' invasion and show Mexico's history and struggle for independence. They depict a heroic people with a distinct historic past. When I asked an average Mexican which way his country would move in the cold war struggle, he replied, "The Mexican way." Jose Clemente Orozco was another painter from the State of Jalisco who reflected Mexico's glorious past and human endurance. His major work, *Hombre del Fuego* (Man of Fire), at the Las Cabañas (Cultural Museum in Guadalajara), dramatizes Mexico's traumas with life and death to its fullest.

December 8, I visited the palace and cathedral in Mexico City built in the 16th century. The golden altar, the Basílica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, is called the Altar of Pardon. The painting in the center of the altar of the Virgin Mary is worth mentioning. It was painted by a prisoner who was condemned by the Inquisition for being an unbeliever. Later on, the church hierarchy had a second look at this man's fate and, in awe of his painting, they concluded that he must have been a man of faith and they pardoned him.

In the Basílica I watched highly skilled craftsmen repairing the golden side altars. In this ancient cathedral Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlota were crowned. Maximilian was the brother of Francis Joseph of Austria. Empress Carlota, a former Belgian princess, was the daughter of the first king of Belgium, Leopold I. Although they reigned only a short period in Mexico, these monarchs had a strong cultural impact on Mexican society. Various historical works portray Maximilian as a capable military man, but an ineffective sovereign. Carlota is seen as a beloved Empress, but she failed to convince both Napoleon and the Pope to offer military and financial aid to her beleaguered husband, who was shot in a Mexican uprising while she pleaded for help in Europe. They are remembered for their tragic reign and the European court style they introduced at Chapultepec (1864-1867). The only things they left behind at Chapultepec are their French furnishings. This castle, now a national museum, was home to Mexican rulers and

presidents until 1935.

Nothing shows the empirical epoch of this reign better than the mural of Juárez's triumphal concept of liberty, which encompasses that political philosophy. Benito Juárez tourist guides often mention Francisco Madero (1873-1913) and Miguel Hidalgo (1753-1811), who rank as Mexican statesmen and Revolutionary martyrs.

Before I left Mexico City I attended a reception of the Panamanian Congress of Pharmacists at the Cristóbal Colón Hotel. I had been invited by a good Panamanian friend, Mrs. Doris Blaitry, who was also a pharmacist. My friend Pat Sheridan was also at the Congress.

July 25, I received a cable from the State Department assigning me to the Consulate General in Hermosillo, Sonora. In hindsight it was destiny to be assigned to Mexico, for it was the beginning of a permanent friendship with Mexico and its people.

A few days later I received a confirmation letter from Barney Taylor, Consul General in Hermosillo, informing me that we would have an air conditioned, one story house to stay in, but that we would have to furnish it ourselves. It has been State Department policy to provide its employees with some housing allowance if no government quarters are available. For young aspiring candidates as American diplomats, it is worth noting that the US housing allowance abroad (because Foreign Service employees stationed in Washington are not entitled to a housing allowance) is, of course, equivalent to free rent.

A few days before leaving for Mexico I had lunch with Lois Rork, Senior Visa Officer in Hermosillo. She became a dear friend of mine. Lois had extensive Consular experience in Hong Kong, Copenhagen, La Paz and Havana, and she shared this with me.

On October 11 we flew to Tucson. As soon as we arrived at the airport I was impressed by the warm desert climate of the Southwest. The palm trees and flowering bougainvillea decorated the streets to the Desert Inn Motel, where we rested before we started the long ride to Hermosillo. There is beauty in the Arizona desert. We enjoyed being surrounded by so many cacti and other desert plants.

State Department employees who go to border posts are required to drive their cars to the post. Since our car had been burned in Egypt we bought another secondhand station wagon to drive to Hermosillo. On October 14 we drove the two and a half hours from Tucson to Nogales through breathtaking scenery of the Arizona canyons. We were met at the Nogales border by US Consul and friend, Virgil Prichard. Virgil had taken care of immigration and customs papers to permit the importation of our car into the Mexican Republic. Mexican officials were meticulous with that type of paperwork, but cooperative.

On this, my first experience with the US-Mexican border, I became aware of how many Americans travel to Mexico for business and pleasure. I was less conscious of the fact of how many Mexicans cross into the US seeking economic opportunities. Nogales was still a small but important border town in the late 1960s.

It was good to see Virgil and Charlotte Prichard again. We had a nice visit and lunch in their home overlooking the Nogales hills. Rebecca was happy to play with their son, Lito, in the flowered garden.

Virgil had wide experience in Mexican border posts. He often spoke of his tour of duty at Piedras Negras. When we set out for Hermosillo through the Sonoran desert we did not realize it would take about seven hours to drive along a winding and hazardous country road. We made a brief stop in Magdalena where Father Eusebio Kino is buried. He was an Italian Jesuit missionary and an explorer in the American Southwest. Father Kino also worked with the Indians in Sonora. There were only one or two small gasoline stations, and we arrived in Hermosillo after 7 p.m., when it had already turned dark.

My first impression of Hermosillo was of a well built provincial city, clean and full of bougainvillea flower gardens. We checked into the Bougainvillea Hotel, in the Pitic area, about a five minute drive to the Consulate General and, conveniently, near the Maxim supermarket. It was not easy with a one and a half year old baby, but we got a lot of moral support from the Barney Taylors -- the Consul General and his wife, who came to our motel with a baby bed. Administrative Officer Harold Grisser and his family helped us in our settling in and informed us about living conditions in Sonora.

I became quickly acquainted with the American and Mexican staff. It was clear to me, from my first get to know chat with Consul General Taylor, that I would be working with a qualified veteran Foreign Service Officer who had served in demanding posts such as Vietnam and Haiti. Barney had built up a great reputation with Mexican officials in this capital of the state of Sonora. He was very popular and knew how to mix with Sonoran ranchers and their families. He was also liked by the American community. I was assigned as US citizens and protection officer, which was a front line job in Sonora. He told me that I would be directly responsible to him since citizenship and protection had wide public relations overtones. Although the Consulate General had a big immigrant and nonimmigrant visa load, Barney told me that my main responsibility would be to look after American citizens' interests, as there were many American citizens spending part of the winter months in Sonora.

In 1967, Hermosillo was a city of 120,000, with a relatively high standard of living. Sonora is a rich state of cattle, farming, mining, and fishing. My consular duties began as soon as I arrived. As US protection cases were always at hand, I soon had to go to the port city of Guaymas, a two hour drive from Hermosillo, to visit some incarcerated Americans.

I was lucky to have a nice office on the third floor of the ISSTE building (Social Security), across the street from the municipal palace. Beatrice García, my Mexican citizen assistant, helped me a great deal with citizenship matters, such as foreign service reports of birth and death abroad and

issuance of US passports. Citizenship and protection jobs were interrelated. Both required a lot of personal contact, correspondence, daily cables to Washington, and investigative reporting of accidents and detention cases in which American citizens were involved. My other clerk, Anna, was also a valuable asset in our section.

Every Thursday morning we had a staff meeting in the Consul General's office at which time each American officer would comment on his or her area of responsibility. This sharing of activities gave each officer a chance to learn about political, consular, economic, administrative, and cultural things going on in our consular district. Consul General Taylor stressed the importance of my job as it involved contact with Mexican district attorneys and police officials. US protection work was the key assignment in Sonora in the 1960s. It was not unusual to have some weekly articles in the Hermosillo newspapers covering items on American tourists. It put our Consulate in the media spotlight, and is still the hot spot in Sonora today.

Guaymas, with its NASA tracking station for satellites, had a good number of American families. The Kino Bay area was a choice site for American fishing fans, but the post was not a popular one with junior officers. Many who had preceded me had asked for transfers. In 1974, when Foreign Service Officer John Patterson was kidnapped and his body was later found in the Sonora Hills, our post's image did not improve. I considered it a challenging position, however, and it was in Hermosillo that I grew as a Foreign Service Officer. We were fortunate to have close contacts with the American and Mexican staff. We participated in many social events in the state capital. I enjoyed working with economic officer George Durgan who had an in-depth feeling for Mexican economic affairs and the world economy. Consul Lois Rork and Vice Consul Carolyn Allen were my colleagues in the consular field. They were handling large immigration visa loads.

One of my first social calls was on Armando Cantu, director of the Mexican-American Cultural Association. He had wide experience in coordinating cultural and educational projects with USIS and the consulate.

The first week after my arrival I visited the American prisoners at the State Penitentiary in Hermosillo. At that time we had five Americans there accused of drug smuggling. As Citizenship Officer it was my job to see to it that they were treated well. The conditions in the Hermosillo jail were adequate. Since this was my first Mexican assignment I had no basis for comparison. In Mexican jails most prisoners prepare their own meals. They are allowed to receive food supplies in jail as long as it is paid for. Some Americans received dollars and medicines from their families and did reasonably well. But there was a serious morale problem as few Americans were fluent in Spanish and many of the Mexican prison officials were not proficient in English. The American prisoners relied primarily on the Consular officer's visits to help communicate. I spent a couple of hours on this first visit to talk to each one personally. The Director provided a special room for the Consular visit. I decided to see them twice a month, and more if they had special needs, such as medicines and messages for their family.

I was again in Guaymas on October 27, assisting three jailed Americans. This time I got better acquainted with the local officials. I met Mr. Gordillo of the Ministerio Público Federal (District

Attorney's office) and Mr. Villairne, Chief of Police of Guaymas. It became clear to me that personal contact would be a practical tool to resolve many of the American protection cases. At noon I was invited for lunch on board the oceanographic cruise ship *The Vega* of Stanford University. There I learned that my three incarcerated Americans were marine students from that ship. They had been caught in a taxicab that had packages of marijuana. Since there was no positive proof of their drug involvement I was able to obtain their release later in the day.

While I had my consular duties Maïté often attended social functions in town, such as teas at the casino for the benefit of poor families, or the Blanco Y Negro Charity Ball, given at the Governor's palace the first weekend in November. At such events she met the wives of the Governor of Sonora and other leading officials. Foreign service spouses often play an effective representational role in the career of a foreign service officer. The local newspaper of Hermosillo *Imparcial*, reported on social and diplomatic activities.

Rebecca adjusted well to the quiet life in Hermosillo, except for a few too many bouts of tonsillitis, which made us call Dr. Duarte, a pediatrician who often came to the home to alleviate her symptoms.

November 7, the local townspeople celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the death of Jesús García. He died a heroic death on November 7, 1907, by staying on a burning train in order to save lives. There is a well known ballad (*corrido*) of Jesús García. Mexican ballads evoke the historic struggles of the past.

By mid November we finally settled into a little ranch house on 79 Boulevard Hidalgo y Castilla. It was the first time we were together again at home since May 27, 1967, when Maïté and Rebecca were first evacuated from Egypt. The home was a five minute walk from the office, and easily accessible to local markets and the Cathedral.

Although we moved into the house, most of our personal belongings from Egypt were still en route and arrived in Veracruz at the end of November. We learned how to make do without many items, such as TV, books, and appliances. On November 20 we were in Hermosillo to celebrate Mexican Revolution Day, which commemorates the Mexican uprising against the dictatorial regime of Porfirio Díaz. A parade in downtown Hermosillo was organized by the local school. The Governor of Sonora, Faustino Felix Serna, presided over the event. One float in the parade drew much attention as the "1968 Olympics Delegation" that would help manage the Mexican Olympics in Mexico City.

Apart from the job, we led a rather sedate, provincial life. We made friends with local neighbors and developed friendly contacts with the Granich and Camu families, well-known ranch families of Sonora. From time to time they invited us to their home. The Granich family originally emigrated from Yugoslavia. Mrs. Juan Granich was particularly fond of Rebecca and often stopped by with delicious grapefruit from her farm.

One of the side benefits of being in Hermosillo was that officers at the Consulate rotated on the diplomatic courier trip to Nogales, Sonora. The trip consisted of consultations with the US

Consul in Nogales, Sonora, and an extra day to shop in Nogales, Arizona. We were able to buy frozen vegetables, still unavailable in the Hermosillo supermarkets. In 1967, Nogales, Arizona, had about 50,000 inhabitants. There was a great Mexican influence in Nogales. Most large supermarkets had bilingual salesclerks. I was impressed by the constant flow of Mexican people, goods and services between Sonora and Arizona.

At this time Consul General Barney Taylor suffered a heart attack and was recuperating at home. Consul Lois Roork very capably took over his duties during this period.

On a balmy evening near the end of November we were dinner guests of John and Dianne Scafe, in honor of Dr. Harkness, Counselor for Cultural Affairs at the Embassy. John, Public Affairs Officer in Hermosillo, had built a good reputation with Sonoran teachers and students. We had interesting conversations and exchanges of ideas between the Mexican and American families.

In early December the winter tourist season began and so did an increase in the United States. protection case load. Some weeks, I would have as many as twenty cases of stranded American tourists to assist in Sonora. On one hand, I was looking after the welfare of an American student who was hospitalized and his brother, who was in jail. At the same time I had a death case of an 84 year old retired American citizen in Alamos. Death cases in Mexico had to be handled quickly as Mexican law requires internment within 24 hours. As soon as someone died in our consular district I would arrange for shipment of the remains to Tucson. There were times that the next of kin would come over but in most cases the details of the transshipment were handled by me on the telephone. One American prisoner, age 21, died in his cell of a drug overdose. Local authorities performed an autopsy. The father of the deceased accompanied me to the municipal hospital to identify the body.

I received, in my office, Licenciado (Attorney) Roberto Reynosa Dávila, Rector of the University of Sonora in Hermosillo, on a get acquainted visit. He was accompanied by his niece, Licenciada Vásquez. Rector Dávila was one of Hermosillo's most reputable lawyers and was permitted to practice law while he held the top academic post in Sonora. Later I had a chance to appreciate his skills as a defense lawyer in a case of two American prisoners.

I also had numerous US citizenship cases to litigate. They involved Mexicans who had emigrated to California, Arizona and Texas, married, and lived there. Their children often had claim to US citizenship, based on the father's or mother's residence in the United States. Citizenship and nationality questions appeared, at first glance, more complex, and I often had to refer to the Foreign Service manual to resolve these claims. After reviewing the details of each case I had to submit the cases to the State Department for final approval.

December 14, we held our first dinner at our home for Consul Lois Roork, Vice Consul Carolyn Allen, and also some Mexican employees.

I was also a guest at the distribution of diplomas of the US-Mexican Cultural Center in Hermosillo. The same week Maïté and I attended the Policeman's Ball at the old casino. On this occasion we represented the US Consulate General.

Just a few days before Christmas I had to go to Guaymas because three Americans who had been on a fishing trip were lost at sea near the port. After a thorough search by the Mexican Coast Guard and Guaymas police, only a part of the body of one American citizen was recovered. There was strong suspicion that sharks had devoured the others.

Kino Bay Tragedy

In early January, 1968, we had one of the most tragic accidents at sea in Kino Bay. Three Americans, accompanied by a Mexican guide, Juan, from Hermosillo, had left Kino Bay with their outboard motor boat to fish. The spouses of the American tourists had stayed behind in a motel. Kino Bay, in Sonora, was located about one hour from Hermosillo. It could be reached along a narrow winding road from where we saw cacti and agricultural plains. The spouses notified us that their husbands had been missing for over twenty four hours. The winds had been unusually strong but they said that Juan was an expert fisherman and familiar with the fishing conditions. He had gone with many Americans before.

As soon as I learned of the missing Americans I rushed to Caverna Restaurant in Kino Bay where Consul General Taylor was waiting for me. When there was no word we suspected an accident. The Consul General and I were busy for days trying to keep abreast of the case, and answering questions of the local and American press. There were some negative press reports referring to "Foul Play." The worst part of the search and rescue operation was that they did not come up with any bodies nor clothes, not even a piece of the fiberglass boat. Rescue teams were never able to recover anything.

As weeks passed with no closure, the Kino Bay tragedy was more difficult for the spouses to deal with. They were not able to obtain Mexican death certificates; we could only prepare a Foreign Service Presumptive Report of Death form at the Consulate. In most US states it takes up to seven years to prove that a missing person is presumed dead.

Twenty two years later, in March, 1990, Foreign Service Officer Robert Witajewski published an article in *State* magazine, recalling a similar accident in his article, *History Repeats Itself in Hermosillo, Mexico*. He stated, "It was on January 2, 1990, 22 years later, that a major disaster occurred in the Gulf of California. The *Santa Barbara* was adrift in the Gulf of California. Of the sixteen on board only two were ever rescued in the San Carlos-Guaymas area."

My friend and colleague, Robert Pastorino, who served with me in Hermosillo as Economic officer in 1969, and in 1990 was Deputy Chief of Mission in Mexico City, recalled his experience with the Kino Bay accident in an interview with Witajewski.

In retrospect I believe that the difference between the 1968 and 1990 disasters was that in the disappearance of a crew of four at Kino Bay no one was ever certain what had happened because nothing was ever found. The *Santa Barbara* was found, as well as two bodies.

Once the workload on the Kino Bay tragedy was under control I took an extended reconnaissance

tour of other cities in our consular district of Sonora. I visited the city of Ciudad Obregón, a rich agricultural area. There are also many cultural artifacts of the Yaqui Indians who continue in their traditions.

I called on Mayor Xavier Bours Almeda. He was one of the influential politicians in Sonora and was often mentioned as a possible candidate for Governor. I also visited many district attorneys and the chief of police. During my visit to Ciudad Obregón I stayed at the home of Leland and Mrs. Anderson, who were long-term American residents of Sonora. He was president of Caterpillar, the giant construction vehicle manufacturing firm. The Andersons had wide experience in business and personal contacts with Sonoran families. In the protection of American citizens he became a most reliable contact.

I next traveled to Navajoa, about 50 kilometers to the south of Obregón. There I spent a few hours with Mr. Quiros, mayor of the city, and became acquainted with local police officials. On my way back I stopped in Guaymas to meet Morton Berndt, American Director of the NASA Tracking Station there, a site where they track manned space flights. Morton showed me the impressive technological equipment at the station. Morton Berndt was as influential in the Guaymas-American community as Leland Anderson was in Ciudad Obregón. While I met the other members of the staff I also had the opportunity to speak with Oscar Ruiz Almeida, mayor of Guaymas.

On January 20, 1968, we attended the grand ball given by the Rotary Club of Hermosillo, at the Casino, in the presence of Governor of Sonora and Mrs. Faustino Felix. We were also invited to the home of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Adolfo Felix. He was a famous Mexican surgeon and Director of the Social Security Hospital in Hermosillo.

In the Foreign Service we never lose sight of our nation's foreign policy priorities. It was clear to all of us working in Mexico in 1968 that the Vietnam war and the race riots had played an important role in the presidential election. The Johnson administration was committed to the freedom of South Vietnam and the sovereignty of South Korea. Everything that happened politically at home, such as social unrest and opposition to the Vietnam war, affected us in our role in the foreign service. Our priorities reflected the Administration's foreign policy objectives. It often happened that the host country's own foreign policies did not coincide with ours.

At the end of January, 1968, I had lunch at the San Alberto with the Federal District Attorney in Hermosillo, Licenciado Jaime Ortiz Sosa. He handled many federal crime cases in Sonora and was, of course, aware of drug violations of some of our American citizens. My contacts with him proved to be useful in evaluating the outcome of some of my protection cases involving American prisoners.

Every month I cabled to the State Department Office of Special Consular Services a progress report on the status of each American prisoner's legal case. Although the prisoners' families contacted us, the State Department needed to be informed with all details regarding the health and legal problems of incarcerated Americans.

I also met Dr. Quintero Arce, Archbishop of Hermosillo. He was intimately connected with the social and religious problems of Mexico. Originally he was from the state of San Luis Potosí. He told me about the need for priests if the church was to survive in Mexico. He said, "Hermosillo has only 50 active priests. Many Mexicans are nominal Catholics, but there is an indifference toward religion, especially among men, because of the lack of understanding of the spiritual and theological values of the church." Our first meeting developed into a good friendship and lasts to this day. At a later date the Archbishop helped me to get approval on the telephone of the marriage of Consul General Barfield and his bride, Constanza, in Tucson.

In Hermosillo I began to learn about the political party system in Mexico. On February 2, 1968, I met the mayor of Hermosillo, Jorge Muñoz Valdez, at the municipal palace. He belonged to the Panista (PAN) opposition party, whereas Governor Faustino Felix was a member of the PRI, the majority party that had run Mexico for over 65 years. Because they belonged to different parties, the mayor and governor were often at odds in the political arena. We cultivated friendly relations with both Governor Felix and Mayor Muñoz. With the Mayor we spoke about tourism and contacts between the border states of Arizona and Sonora. That same week I paid a courtesy call on General Talamante, Chief of the State Judicial Police.

I went on my first diplomatic courier trip to Mexico City and stopped over in Mazatlán to exchange diplomatic pouches with Vice Consul Wilkins. On this brief stop I enjoyed the sandy beaches, palm trees, and mild climate of the Sinaloan seaport. This visit had been arranged to permit me to meet some of my counterparts at the Embassy. My consultations included talks with Joseph F. Henderson, Counselor for Consular Affairs, Consul General Tony Certosimo, and Consular Officers Cicali and Hugh Scott. Joe Henderson supervised all constituent posts in Mexico. I also visited with Personnel Officer Geraldine Oliva and Wallace Stuart, Counselor for Political Affairs, for whom I had worked in Panama City.

Joe Henderson told me that high on the Consular agenda was the issue of 7500 Mexicans, who had worked in the United States and retired in Mexico, and were entitled to social security benefits. However, they were going to lose their social security benefits if they did not meet US residence requirements. "The Mexican government," he said, "is putting a lot of pressure on Washington to work out a special treaty on social security, affecting these and future Mexican beneficiaries." Since then a treaty has been in effect for social security benefits of retirees in Mexico.

In the evening I was invited for dinner by Edythe Watson, then Communications Attaché at the Embassy. We had worked together in Panama and discussed the similarities and differences of the two posts.

March 22, 1968, we celebrated President Benito Juárez' birthday. He was one of the great reformist presidents of Mexico and is often called the "Patriot of the Americas." He lived at the same time as President Lincoln and they had much in common as far as human rights are concerned. Now, more than a century later, Mexico is somewhat isolated from the major crises of the world, but it is struggling to attain democratic and judicial reforms and has joined the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada. In spite of

several peso devaluations, Mexico has shown that it can put its economic and financial house in order.

At another gathering of the Mexican-American Institute I met Professor Villegas, Director General of Education in Sonora. The theme of the meeting was that Mexicans should learn English language skills in order to broaden their knowledge of the English speaking people of the world. To this day, I believe that diplomacy and education go hand in hand.

Two events in April, 1968, affected the domestic political scene in America: Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination in Tennessee and President Johnson's decision not to seek reelection in 1968. Dr. King had been a stabilizing force in the struggle for racial equality. It was a long, hot summer in the big cities of the United States. Many people saw Johnson's decision not to run as a setback for the Democratic party. Others saw it as an opportunity to back Senator Robert Kennedy as a dynamic young leader who could lead the Democratic party to victory in 1968.

A few weeks after Dr. King's assassination I received some calls from the Associated press in the States referring to the fact that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was looking for the alleged assassin of King, James Earl Ray. An Associated Press reporter said that an American by the name of Daniel Kennedy, who looked like the suspect, had been arrested by the Mexican police in Caborca, Sonora. They wanted me to check this out. The police had detained and questioned Kennedy, a 41 year old Baltimore man who was a "desert" mathematician. Police told me that they had arrested him erroneously because he looked like Ray. The matter was cleared up in a few days but the incident had nationwide coverage in the press and mentioned my name.

At the end of April I took care of two serious car accidents in which two American citizens were injured. When Americans were involved in car accidents in Mexico they could not immediately leave the country. They needed to get legal counseling and assistance from insurance agents, and clear the city of any responsibility. They were advised by our Consulate to obtain legal counseling from a local Mexican attorney, who would familiarize himself with all aspects of the accident. The attorneys were usually able to determine whether the American citizen involved had any responsibility for the accident. They were usually very adept in expediting the paperwork in the local district attorney's office where the case was being handled, and the American citizen was permitted to leave the country. I knew Captain Raymundo Cervantes of the Mexican Highway Patrol, and Mr. Enrique Manzo, delegate of the Automobile Registration Office (with jurisdiction in Sonora, Baja California, and Sinaloa) on a personal basis. I took advantage of this solid contact to take American tourists with car problems to their offices. Today, when Americans enter Mexico, they obtain a special import permit for the duration of their stay. They also need to have money in their possession. At the port of entry, the importation of American cars was scrupulously supervised. The Mexican government did not allow their citizens to own or operate an American vehicle.

In early May, 1968, I flew to Pittsburgh to be near my father who underwent critical kidney surgery. This time there were regulations on the books that covered foreign service personnel family visitation rights and reimbursement for transportation.

Reverberations in Mexico to the Senator Robert Kennedy Assassination

On June 6, 1968, Senator Robert Kennedy was assassinated at a primary rally in Los Angeles. We were all shocked in Hermosillo. Since I had worked for him in London, the tragic news was more poignant. His death stunned the people in Mexico because ever since JFK's death the Mexicans were immortalizing the Kennedy name. We received instructions from the State Department to fly American flags at half mast and to cancel all social engagements. Robert Kennedy's passion for human dignity, justice and peace has remained with us.

In the middle of June, the Consul General asked me to invite Federal District Attorney Licenciado Ortiz Sosa, Captain Cervantes, and Mr. Manzo for lunch. He also sent me to Guaymas to entertain five police officials and District Attorneys Mr. Villaseñor and Mr. López Escalante. It was an occasion to visit Empalme, a small railroad town of about 30,000 people. I was told that it was the first time that a US consul had visited that municipality since the Consulate General had been opened in Hermosillo. I felt honored to represent the Consulate General at this official visit. I was received by Major Hector García Ruiz and his staff. After a get acquainted talk, Mayor Ruiz took me in his station wagon for a ride around town. I visited the regional repair shop of the Ferrocarril Del Páifico (a large Pacific Railroad repair shop), where they repair locomotives and trains. The program also included a visit to the primary, secondary and preparatory schools in Empalme.

At a working luncheon with Enrique Romero, director of the penitentiary and District Attorneys Woolfolk and Macías, in Hermosillo, we discussed US citizens protection cases.

On June 17, I drove to Nogales, Arizona, to attend a meeting with Mr. Cypert, officer in charge of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and Consul Prichard. Mr. Cypert explained recent changes in the immigration bill signed by President Johnson. The Johnson bill did away with discrimination, especially toward Asian countries. We were informed that Latin America would be allotted 120,000 immigrant visa numbers per year. I took advantage of visiting Messrs. Carroon and Parish of the Carroon Mortuary in Nogales. They were cooperative in resolving transshipment of US remains in Sonora to other points in the United States. One of my key contacts for consular work was Jaime Carballo, Director of Tourism in Sonora.

The following week, in Hermosillo, I attended the Mexican Folkloric ballet at the Civic Auditorium and met Doña Amalia Hernández, Mexico's foremost folkloric ballet director.

At the end of June, 1968, the Taylors bid farewell to officials of the consular district and Lois Rook took over as Acting Principal Officer. It was then that I became involved in a border project between Sonora and Arizona. I had an exchange of letters with William J. Schafer, Pima County attorney in Tucson, on a possible exchange of visits between him and District Attorney Macías of Hermosillo. Actually, it was the mayor of Tucson, James Corbett, who had expressed an interest in visiting Hermosillo to observe the system of criminal justice procedures. He was keen on learning about Mexico's crime rate, what they were doing about it, and if not, why not. The mayor's office felt that such exposure would be mutually beneficial.

On July 18, Mexico commemorated the death of President Benito Juárez. Most federal offices

were closed and wreaths were put at the statues of Juárez and Álvaro Obregón (Mexican President from Sonora). The same week I had to process a repatriation loan for an American citizen who was stranded in the city and had no funds to return home. An American citizen may obtain a small loan at the US Consulate if circumstances beyond the citizen's control prevent his or her return home. We were allowed to pay only for a bus ticket from Hermosillo to the border at Nogales, Arizona. I had another repatriation loan request from a 61 year old mentally ill American who got lost in Navajoa, Sonora. I was finally able to contact his brother in San Diego who came to pick him up. I was also responsible for protection and welfare work in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, on the periphery of Sonora.

July 19, I received a surprise personal call from Ambassador Fulton Freeman, in Mexico City, to congratulate me on my promotion to Foreign Service Officer. He told me that I was doing a good job in Mexico. In conjunction with consultations at the Embassy I found myself in Taxco (Guerrero) and Cuernavaca (Morelos). I visited the Cortez Palace, in Cuernavaca, and became acquainted, for the first time, with Diego Rivera's murals. In the Taxco area many little churches are literally made by hand by Mexican Indians. A guide took me to the 17th century church of Santa Prisca and San Sebastian, with its seven golden altars. But since my time was limited I delved into the information on the US smelting company that used to have interests there. The silver mines were already nationalized and are now known as Acarca Mexicana.

When Richard Nixon was nominated by his party to be the presidential candidate in 1968, foreign service professionals believed that we would have a man with stature and knowledge in foreign affairs. Vice President Hubert Humphrey was also considered a formidable leader. The war in Vietnam had divided many people in the country and the violence on campus and in the inner cities had affected the social fabric of the nation. Social unrest was also prevalent in other countries. Mexican university students were very vocal in the summer of 1968, and when the heavy handed police tried to quell the University of Mexico City riot, in which several students were killed, Mexican President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was criticized. Since this was on the eve of the Olympics, scheduled in Mexico City, many people doubted that this great sports event would occur peacefully.

Student discontent and labor strikes had broken out in the major cities of France and had a snowballing effect. Although there was a small improvement in US-Soviet relations under President Johnson, the Soviet Union's 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia ignited fires for freedom and showed how imperative it was to keep a strong military presence in Western Europe.

On August 18, 1968, John Daniel Barfield assumed charge as the new Consul General. It was sad to see a good principal officer go, but there were advantages to working with a new Consul General. Every new foreign service officer who "comes on board" has his or her own special leadership talents and administrative innovations which strengthen the foreign service post. John Barfield proved to be that dynamic, charismatic diplomat. Like Barney Taylor, he expressed interest in the intricate workings of consular operations. He was sanguine about the importance of protection work. A native of Georgia, he had wide experience in Latin American policies and had recently been assigned in Brazil. John immediately embarked upon a number of projects and travels through Sonora. He asked me to be his key man for consular work and to set up a series of

luncheons where he could meet local officials in Hermosillo who had been helpful to the Consulate. One of these projects took place on August 28 when he asked me to see the acting Governor of Sonora, César Gandara. John had received special instructions from Washington regarding a complex estate case involving an American citizen. He wanted me to talk to him and find out if any precedents could be set in this case.

We first had John and Lois Roork over for dinner at our home. A few days later I arranged a luncheon at the San Alberto where I introduced some Hermosillo officials to John. They were Licenciado Jacinto Lozano Cárdenas, Federal District Attorney; José Flores Romo, Chief of Customs; Moreno García, Chief of Hermosillo Police; Enrique Manzo of the Vehicle Registry office; Licenciado Miranda Romero, secretary of the Mayor of Hermosillo; Carlos Cumming, of the State Judicial Police; Messrs. Montoya and Salazar, of the Investigation Department of the Hermosillo Police; and Mr. Cholula, Manager of the airport. On September 12, we had a similar lunch for Mrs. Elsa de Banderas Silva, President of the Red Cross. The Mexican Red Cross was cooperative with the Consulate on accident cases involving American tourists. Commander Katasse and Captain Cervantes were also at the lunch.

In the evening John and I were invited by Hermosillo Mayor Jorge Valdez to the occasion of a visit by the Chorus of the City of Norwalk, California. Hermosillo and Norwalk were sister cities. With Mayor Apodaca of Norwalk we shared the table of honor.

As Mexican tradition goes, on September 15, 1810, Father Hidalgo rang the church bell in Dolores, Guanajuato, and cried for Mexican independence. In the late evening of September 15, we were guests at a reception by Governor of Sonora Faustino Felix Serna at the Palace to celebrate the 158th anniversary of the Mexican call for independence (El Grito). On this evening the Governor appeared on the balcony of the Palace and waved the Mexican flag and shouted, "Viva Mexico!" The golden room of the Palace was packed with socialites and Sonoran officials. Prior to the independence reception many of us attended the folkloric ballet of Sonora that performed pre-Colombian dances.

September 19 I went to a State of Sonora judicial inspection at a farm site near Carbo, seven km. from Hermosillo, to act as a consular observer in the case of an American citizen-rancher who had been accused of stealing 300 head of cattle from his neighbors. The Consulate had received a Congressional interest inquiry. The judge, attorneys, and criminal experts of both parties accompanied us to the site.

Under the Consular treaty with Mexico, there is a provision that permits a Consular officer to attend court sessions in which US citizens are involved. My job was to see to it that the American rancher was treated justly, according to the laws of Mexico, and to keep the State Department up to date on the judicial actions taken in Sonora.

Teaching at the University of Sonora

In the fall of 1968 I was offered an opportunity to teach a course in French at the University of Sonora, in Hermosillo. The course was for first year French students, and was given by the

Department of Letters and Languages. The Consul General approved it, and the University obtained a work permit for me. At that time it was unusual for foreign service personnel to work on the open market, although English teaching at bi-national centers for government employees and dependents was a common practice overseas.

I started teaching the evening of September 23, 1968, and continued through June, 1969. I had eight students in my class. Then, in 1969, during my last summer in Hermosillo, I taught an English class to five Sonoran students who worked in chemical engineering. At that time, many Mexican students wanted to qualify for scholarships in the United States. One of the requirements was proficiency in English. It was believed that future scientists would have to master English, which is the language in which most of the research material was written. Many scientific advances emanated from the United States.

My teaching project coincided with a deteriorating political climate in Mexico City. Following a student uprising, the Mexican Army took over the campus of the University of Mexico and its Rector resigned. There were leftist groups involved in this unrest. The Federation of University Students, in Hermosillo, called a general meeting to discuss the situation in the capital. The Hermosillo students opposed the Government's occupation of the University in Mexico City and the fatal shooting of Mexican students. President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz had two more years left before his term expired. These events could not have come at a worse time because the world Olympics were to start in Mexico City in mid-October.

At the end of September, 1968, Reynosa Dávila, Rector of the University in Hermosillo, under heavy pressure from the students, resigned. He was finishing the term of former Rector Canalle. The University Board decided to take matters into their own hands. A student strike caused classes to be dismissed for two weeks. Classes resumed when the students finally settled for peace and harmony. In spite of the student discontent on the Mexican campuses, the Olympics proved to be a spectacular sports event.

On October 12 we were invited to a buffet reception at the Governor's Palace. Governor Felix Serna had invited all Consulate General officers to the occasion of his "Informe" (State of the State address). It is an annual report on the government of Sonora's economic and social projects.

Official Visit to Alamos

Following this heavy social season the Consul General and I drove to Alamos, Sonora, on an official visit. It is an old, colonial type city, set at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains, and was once the capital of Sonora. It had since become a colony for retired Americans. We stayed at the Casa de Tesoras and were guests at the home of Mrs. Marjorie Allan. In her 200 year old Spanish colonial home she arranged for us to meet Americans and Alamos dignitaries. Americans retired in Alamos appreciated a visit from US Consular officials.

Consul General Barfield and I met at the official residence with L. Fuentes Martínez, Chief of Hermosillo Police Investigations; Mr. García Ocaño, Federal Immigration representative in Hermosillo; Licenciado Ricardo Valenzuela, international lawyer; and Humberto Tapia.

Valenzuela received his training at the University of Brussels, and had great knowledge in international and public affairs. He served on the Advisory Board of the University of Sonora and also taught French there.

When quiet had returned to the campus, Dr. Frederico Sotello, a famous orthopedic surgeon, was elected as new Rector of the University. I got to know him better at a wedding reception at the home of the Granich family. We also entertained Judge Irene Vidales. She was the first woman judge appointed to the bench in Hermosillo. She headed the Civil Registry office, which took care of the registration of births, deaths, and marriages. The Civil Registry offices come under the jurisdiction of the state, rather than the municipality. Judge Vidales' husband worked in the Judicial Department of the Governor of Sonora.

The official character of these social events are not to be discounted. The Consul's personal ties with people of the host country create and reflect a positive image of the United States. A consular officer is often in contact with a wide spectrum of society. The day to day chores of consular work help to develop friendships.

One of these contacts was with Mrs. Enriqueta de Parodi, State Senator of Sonora. She was also a known writer on Sonora and historic figures of the state. One day we invited her for dinner. She had a great sense of humor and we remained friends. She wrote a book on Dr. Alfonso Ortiz Tirado, a scientist and artist from Alamos.

In early January, I was kept busy with a car accident in which two Americans were killed. Another case, in the sugar cane center of Los Mochis, Sinaloa, where US rancher, Charles Maftle was murdered, required contacts on various levels.

On January 20, 1969, I flew to Mexico City for consultations. It was the inauguration of Richard Nixon, our 37th President. I watched the ceremony, via Telstar, in the Embassy theater. After talking with Joe Henderson and Vice Consul Don Welter, I took off a few hours to visit the Mexican pyramids at Teotihuacán, 27 km. from the capital. The ruins of this pre-Colombian city are almost 2000 years old. I saw the Pyramid of the Sun and its smaller counterpart, for the moon. Tourists pass a series of vendors before reaching the ruins.

At that time there was friction between the United States and Mexico resulting from a US ban on the export of Mexican tomatoes to the United States. Many Mexican businessmen had lost money. Press reports stated that the US government was pressured by the tomato growers in Florida. It became one of President Nixon's first foreign relations problems with Mexico.

Labor Relations Problems

At this time Paramount motion pictures was shooting the film *Catch 22* in Guaymas, Sonora, directed by Mike Nichols. Orson Wells and Anthony Perkins were in the cast. In January, 1969, the director laid off 150 American actors and other personnel from the Tucson area. I received a call from the Union representative that they would be put in buses and escorted by the Guaymas police to the border at Nogales. The laid-off workers wanted to meet with a Consular official in

Hermosillo before heading for the border, to complain about the labor dispute. I met them at the city limits in Hermosillo and talked with the Union representative and Paramount manager Jerry Best. A reporter from *The Daily Citizen*, a Tucson paper, was also present. (Any problems overseas, personal or otherwise, reach the Consulate one way or another. We are required to send a Consular representative to the scene to determine whether the Consulate can facilitate solutions. In this case, they just needed to air their complaints.) We advised them to return to the States (a six hour drive), then to take the matter up with their union. They were bused to the Nogales border with no further incident.

At the end of January I faced a heavy load of US protection cases: two American students were killed on the highway, a couple from Los Angeles, who were in Sonora for their honeymoon, had hit a crossing cow. The woman had to have surgery in Guaymas for serious head injuries and was given a small chance of survival. I contacted her family and they flew over to be at her bedside.

In February, 1969 I met Alfonso Reina Celaya, Minister of Agriculture of Sonora. At the American-Mexican Institute I was introduced to Mexican painter, Amao. He presented his paintings in Hermosillo. His works are full of mysticism and colors. He painted some scenes of Madero Park and the church “Capilla del Carmen” in Hermosillo.

During a February 10 courier flight to Tucson, I talked with Harold Milks, Latin American Editor of the *Arizona Republic*. He was a good friend of the Consulate and had traveled extensively in Latin America. He was particularly interested in consular activities and the welfare and whereabouts cases of US citizens. Whenever appropriate I would cooperate with him.

We spent the opening of Carnaval, February 15, 1969, in Guaymas, as guests of Licenciado Octavio Villaseñor, district attorney. Octavio and his wife wanted us to be present for the baptism of their two week old baby son. It was an all day affair, complete with Mariachi music by a group of Mexican artists performing with violin and trumpet, a tradition that emerged at big wedding parties during the French occupation of Mexico (the word is derived from the French word for “marriage”). They prepared a traditional pork roast and shrimp buffet with Mexican tortillas. In my honor they had hung a large tapestry of President Kennedy in the living room.

In 1969, Mexico experienced a period of economic development, but it was generally believed that it would not keep up with the rapid population growth. At that time, experts estimated that they would need 400,000 new jobs each year. This was not an easy goal to attain considering the lack of industrialization infrastructure. The State of Sonora had some advantages. It was a rich livestock area where landed people could find some part time labor on ranches and in the fields. Most Latin American countries suffered chronic unemployment and substandard economic conditions.

In February, 1969, the Nixon administration faced a difficult situation in Peru. The Peruvian government expropriated some American property. This aggravated our relations with Peru since they also had captured an American shrimp boat. American Embassy political officers argued that American political leadership in Latin America was needed to keep our relations with Latin America on an even keel. They warned us that economic and social progress worked at a slower

pace than in an industrialized nation.

Our Consulate General was also faced with a rotation of American officers. Vice Consul Carolyn Allen, of our visa section, was reassigned to Bogota. Mary Gerber replaced her. Our good friend, Administrative Assistant Mae Worsham, returned to Washington and was replaced by Mary Schenk. Our Administrative Officer, Harry Grisser, was posted to Belem, Brazil. This entailed retraining new officers. Although the new arrivals were experienced officers, they needed familiarization with job requirements in Sonora. My workload increased when Consul Prichard told me that four American prisoners tried to escape from the Nogales jail and had been transferred to the State Penitentiary, in Hermosillo.

At Easter time Hermosillo looked deserted because local families leave for the country during Holy Week. But there was an influx of American students and tourists driving through the main street in Hermosillo, which leads to Guaymas and Mazatlán. Car accidents were daily occurrences during the Easter recess.

On April 3, 1969, there was a serious accident on the road to Kino Bay. An American couple, who were towing a trailer, hit and killed a five year old Mexican boy. This type of tragedy always causes distress and anxiety for both the family of the victim and the American tourists involved. I always tried to give the Americans a list of local attorneys to choose from. Quick access to a local lawyer expedites their case, as American drivers need to be represented in the office of the district attorney and the judge. According to Mexican law, the involved tourist is incarcerated during the preliminary 72 hours of investigation.

Besides a few hours visit in the old capital of Ures, I spent Easter weekend visiting injured Americans in the General Hospital, arranging funerals and helping arrested American tourists. On Easter Sunday, the Mexican wife of an American farmer in Kino Bay was murdered. She was 42 years old. Her sons and an American friend were held for questioning.

As Consular Officer I learned about Mexican health issues. Mexicans who worked for the government were covered under the Mexican social security system. Others not working for any government agency could go to the General Hospital and receive free emergency medical treatment and medicine. In recent years social security medical benefits became available to general workers as long as their employer covered them. Mexico is also advanced in its campaign for national vaccinations against polio and other childhood diseases.

Many of our American tourists who needed medical care were hospitalized in private clinics. The cost of a room in one of these clinics in the late 1960s was about \$10 per day. I was impressed by the highly professional care patients received. Many Mexican doctors and surgeons had done graduate work in stateside medical schools.

Unemployment benefits, as we know them in the United States and Europe, were not available in Mexico. The Mexican government did provide basic staples, free milk, and medicine for lower income people.

I also had a case of an American citizen who had set up a fishmeal plant in Hermosillo. He had the backing of a US stockholder. A New York lawyer called to see whether the Consulate could offer its good offices to recover the money of his investment. There were many similar cases -- we could only provide facilitative services, such as contacting the parties involved and showing Consular interest.

We also had cases of selective service involving dual nationals (Mexican-Americans). They had to register for US military service at the age of 18, whether or not they lived in the United States. This registration was done before the consular officer. Many were hesitant to show up because they were concerned that they would be sent to Vietnam.

President Charles de Gaulle's political defeat, in April, 1969, was a significant international development that was widely covered in the Mexican press. His departure left a political vacuum in France. Although he was held in some esteem by Mexican officials, it was generally felt that his exit would create an opportunity to reinvigorate the Atlantic Alliance begun after World War II. His successor, President George Pompidou, was more flexible in foreign affairs issues with the United States.

On May 3, there was a command performance at the Hermosillo airport to welcome US Minister and Mrs. Henry Dearborn, who made an official visit to Sonora. He was Chargé d'Affaires in Mexico City, pending the Senate's confirmation of Ambassador Robert H. McBride to Mexico. Mr. Barfield arranged a reception for 300 Sonoran officials to meet him.

Also at this time, Vice Consul Robert Pastorino and his family arrived at post as Economic Officer, replacing George Durgan. We had George and his wife, Judy, over for dinner. Robert was also cross trained for consular work and prepared to take over my duties when necessary.

Once a year, the job performance of foreign service personnel is evaluated. Much effort goes into this annual procedure. In Hermosillo, the preparing officer was Consul General Barfield. The reviewing officer is always a higher ranking FSO than the preparing officer. In my case it was Mr. Joseph Henderson, Counselor for Consular Affairs at the Embassy, who reviewed John's evaluation of me. There was, at that time, a secret part to the performance evaluation that made some recommendations on future assignments. This part was not available to the employee.

In mid-May, President Nixon sent a special mission, headed by New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, to Latin America. It was believed to be Mr. Nixon's goal to reformulate US foreign policy toward Latin America. The Rockefeller party made its first stay in Mexico City and, unlike in Honduras and Guatemala, received a favorable reaction in Mexico. In the late 1960s, Latin American countries looked for an active US role with their economic trade and social problems. The wave of student disorders in Latin America that followed the Rockefeller visit was not an anti-US campaign as such. It only triggered it. It was an outburst of social displeasure with prevailing economic conditions.

In early June, 1969, there were celebrations in Hermosillo for Archbishop Juan Navarette y Guerrero's Golden Jubilee as Bishop. He was the first Catholic bishop of Sonora. There were

reports that he endured many hardships during the persecution of the church in Mexico after World War I. The Catholic Church in Mexico had become very powerful, and President Elías Calles, wanting to restrict that power, closed all the churches. Unlike Spain, church and state are separated. The Church was not allowed to own property and priests could not overtly exhibit Catholic traditions, such as processions. A mass, said in the original Yaqui Indian language was included in the program.

An article appeared in the Nogales, Arizona newspaper in June, 1969, about a possible closing of our consulate in Nogales. Nogales had many protection cases, including 20 US citizens in jail. It was not until September that Washington confirmed the closure.

Early in his administration, President Nixon showed great interest in foreign travel, especially in countries behind the Iron Curtain. His trip to Romania in July, 1969, and his private visit to Poland earlier in the year, showed this. Mr. Nixon developed these foreign policy ventures as Vice President under President Eisenhower, and in the early 1970s became an architect of détente with the USSR and opening the doors to China.

On July 4, 1969, I went on a ten hour bus ride from Mexico City to Acapulco, Guerrero. Late in the evening, I took a cruise around the bay of Acapulco from where I saw the homes of Frank Sinatra, John Wayne, and the blue villa where President and Mrs. Kennedy spent their honeymoon. The tropical beauty of the area is unforgettable.

In Puebla I saw many colonial style homes and churches. I remember the Cathedral of the Virgin of the Angels and its splendid baroque interior, with side altars built in the main altar. A Mexican lady connoisseur in Guanajuato told me in later years that Puebla has the nicest churches in Mexico. I visited the Jose Luis Bello González museum in downtown Puebla. It has a rich collection of French *objets d'art*.

Mexican Response to the US Landing on the Moon

On July 22, 1969, at 1:15 p.m. Hermosillo time, I watched the descent of Apollo 11 to the lunar surface. Neil Armstrong's first historic walk on the moon was a spectacular event and was covered on Mexican TV. We received many calls and telegrams in the office, including some from Mexican President Díaz Ordaz. Mexicans were in awe of the US space program. The lunar landing was the culmination of many years of hard work in the United States. It was the success of our private enterprise system, industrial productivity, and organizational ingenuity. President Kennedy started it, and our people's spirit of teamwork made it a national goal and accomplishment.

Two days later we were invited to the home of John and Perdy Scafe for a "Splash down party," and to watch the return of the Apollo 11 crew. There was worldwide admiration for the courage of the US space program, and it was a boost to President Nixon's subsequent travels to Asia. Although Nixon's priorities were in armament talks with the USSR, his administration also opened negotiations that led to establishing consulates in each other's countries. It eventually made it possible to open a Soviet Consulate in San Francisco and a US Consulate in St.

Petersburg. This agreement augured well as American travel in the late 1960s increased at a rapid pace.

In early August I had an unexpected visit from my friend, the mayor of Empalme, Sonora. One of his constituents had received medical care from a Texas hospital. Since the bill was quite high, he wanted to know whether I could call the hospital director to obtain a waiver and allow monthly payments. My talk with the Texas hospital director resulted in him waiving the medical fees altogether. This, he said, "was a gesture of friendship to Mexico." This case created goodwill between our two countries. I felt I had been instrumental in working this out.

At the end of August I received my reassignment to the Consulate General at St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, replacing Foreign Service Officer Richard Howell. From a career standpoint it was an ideal assignment, as I would be the only other American officer at the post besides Consul General Wesley E. Jorgensen. He suggested that I attend the International Trade Seminar,, in Washington, in October, as there would be much emphasis on US exports.

In September, 1969, diplomatic tensions were high between the United States and Mexico. The US government began a pilot inspection program of all vehicles entering at Nogales and Tijuana. They began to screen vehicles for possible drug smuggling. Mexican officials resented this and businesses on the US-Mexican border retaliated by not buying American products.

At the end of September Consul General and Mrs. John D. Barfield and Consul Lois Roork held farewell parties for us. Many Mexican officials and friends attended. The last days were busy ones saying goodbye. We moved into the San Alberto Hotel and invited some of my students for a last reunion before we left Hermosillo for home on October 4.

On the US-Mexican Border: Tijuana, Baja California

The State Department required a physical prior to transferring to Tijuana. During this home leave-orientation period I also met with John Barnett in the Office of Personnel, and with Consul Joanne Moates, who had worked in Tijuana. Mr. Ferris, a computer expert in the Department's Visa Office, briefed me on their plans. "The Consulate General in Tijuana would be completely computerized during my three years of duty there," he said. When I spoke by phone with Consul Lloyd DeWitt, in Tijuana, he confirmed this plan and he said he was looking forward to having me on his staff.

I also briefed Thomas Gewecke, the newly assigned Consul General to Antwerp. Tom had just finished a tour in Caracas. This was a typical briefing-debriefing in the State Department's Foreign Service Lounge, where foreign service personnel often come and go.

At that time, President Reagan and Mexican President José López Portillo met in Washington. Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda accompanied the Mexican president. It was at this occasion that President Reagan proposed his Caribbean economic development plan and also a

new global policy for Central America. The Mexican president promised his country's intervention with Russian leaders to curtail arms shipments to Central America.

On August 24, I began an intensive Spanish course at the Foreign Service Institute. This would equip me with Spanish language skills to deal with the big influx of legal and illegal immigrants in Tijuana.

It was also a time to familiarize myself with current political and cultural events in Mexico. Vice President George Bush attended the Independence Day celebrations in Mexico City. At the Foreign Service Institute, former Ambassador Larry Pezzulo, who was President Carter's emissary during the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, gave us an overview of Central American political reality. I knew Ambassador Pezzulo well from my days in the cultural affairs section of CU/ARA (American Republics).

A genuine rapprochement appeared to be taking place between the US and Mexico during the early months of the Reagan administration. Mexican officials began to hold trade talks with their counterparts in the US Department of Commerce. Mexico wanted to trade more with the US and other countries and there was talk of Mexico becoming part of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in the future.

September 22, Miguel de la Madrid was nominated by Mexican President López Portillo to be the PRI (Mexico's majority party) candidate for the July 4, 1982, presidential elections. There was no serious political opposition to de la Madrid's candidacy.

President Reagan's presence at the North-South Summit in Cancun, Mexico, received positive coverage in the international media. It improved his image in Latin America.

On November 12, around noon, I crossed the Mexican border at San Ysidro, and was waved through by the Mexican border guards. There is seldom any wait at the border going into Tijuana but on my left I could see long lines of cars waiting to enter the United States.

This is one of the busiest border crossings in the world -- one million vehicles per year -- and unique for the diversity of those that cross. Thousands of retired Americans live in Baja California in trailer and motor home parks, and in luxurious condominiums that cost perhaps \$250,000 in Mexico, but would be worth a million dollars in California's coastal cities, such as La Jolla or Del Mar, less than 100 miles to the north. Foreigners may own the buildings, but they can only rent the land. (This can create legal problems that reach the Consulate.) A wide toll road from Tijuana to Ensenada allows for a fast and scenic trip -- the 70 miles down the coast offers spectacular scenery that rivals Italy's Amalfi drive. These retired Americans may cross for shopping or doctor visits.

Others living below the border may work or go to school in California -- Southwestern College is a few miles north of the border. Many Mexicans cross daily to work -- both legally and illegally.

("Wetbacks" is a somewhat derogatory term for illegal aliens, but so called because they must cross the Tijuana River, which is dry part of the year and flooded during the rainy season. North of the border they can earn \$5 an hour as ranch hands, maids or nannies. Live-in nannies may earn \$100 a week if they speak English. They can earn \$28 a week at a maquiladora (factory) in Tijuana.) And there are smugglers, of birds as well as drugs.

Among those going into Mexico are vacationers to the resort towns of Rosarito or Ensenada. They go down in their trailers for the weekend or stay in the hotels. Teenagers pour across at vacation times and weekends because there is no age limit to buy alcohol. Naval personnel, Marines, and other soldiers, like to go to Tijuana during their time off -- it's a border town with entertainment to attract those who like to gamble -- horse racing and dog racing in Agua Caliente -- and nightclubs and beautiful beaches.

Shoppers pour across, particularly at Christmas, for the pottery, leather goods, and clothes; and for the good, cheap Mexican coffee and tax free liquor and cigarettes. The sick come to buy prescription medicines which are available over the counter in Mexico at one third the price of the same product in the United States. Some go to visit clinics for treatment not approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), such as Gerovital, the so called "Fountain of Youth" drug.

Volunteers, including doctors and nurses, church members, and other interested people, come to treat the sick, provide plastic surgery to children with cleft palates or other disfigurement that would otherwise go untreated, and do other work to help the poor and sick. Orphanages, such as the Orphanage of Hope, are adopted at Christmas time by stateside churches and other groups. One American woman, Christine Brady-Kosko, who visited an orphanage, returned to organize the Women of Colonia Esperanza (Colony of Hope), an area of wood shacks with dirt floors, no running water or electricity, and perched on a hill, with ditches for drainage and toilets. She organized the women to build their own clinic and school, mixing and pouring the cement themselves. Volunteers staff the clinic and school. Most of the men are among those who slip across the border in search of work. Some of the women work in the maquiladora. Mother Teresa on her visit to Tijuana compared these slums to those of Calcutta. On the hills overlooking the city are some fine mansions. Former President Carter on occasion comes to Tijuana with the "Habitat" team, putting up homes for the poor.

On this, my first day, I drove through Tijuana and got lost in the narrow streets crowded with shoppers. I was finally escorted by a local police officer who pointed the way to the US Consulate General on Avenida Agua Caliente. I made a courtesy call on Consul General Robert Ezelle and Consul Lloyd DeWitt. This first day had been a realistic introduction to my three year consular assignment on the US-Mexican border.

Nonimmigrant Visas

I had met Robert Ezelle at a Consular Officers' conference in Europe and he now introduced me to the staff of the Nonimmigrant Visa Office, where I had been assigned as Chief. I was immediately struck by the many people waiting in line. There was an overflow of people outside,

trying to get in. The non immigration visa operation in Tijuana was worse than I had anticipated. It was poorly staffed when I arrived and, although I was the head of the Visa Section, I had to interview applicants at the counter. From time to time I would get some assistance from junior officers Joel Cassman and Thomas Pabst, both vice consuls, who were in Tijuana on their first Foreign Service assignments. Adrianna was my able right hand assistant, and other consular clerks prepared visas for pickup in the late afternoon. I also set up an initial screening process that permitted us to request additional proof of eligibility. The bulk of the workload consisted of nonimmigrant visas (tourist, business, students) and permits to enter the United States for medical, sports, or highly personal reasons. Some third country nationals living in California would come to apply for international trader-investor visas. These required special interviews and review of business assets and banking documents to prove their bona fide business and trading ties.

The visa lines were too long for one Consular officer and needed at least three permanently assigned junior officers to assist with interviews and consular paperwork. This did materialize but not until much later.

My duties at the Consulate were to train new junior officers coming in on the nonimmigrant visa line. Many preferred working in economic-political slots upstairs. Those junior officers who worked in visas soon realized that the visa line was a good place to learn about economic-political and social conditions as well as an opportunity to practice their Spanish. The rotation system of junior officers initiated by Robert Ezelle in the early 1980s was a positive move, providing an opportunity to get acquainted with the different sections of the Consulate General.

Besides nonimmigrant visas we also issued special visa waivers for medical emergencies, to students and youth groups going to Disneyland (group waivers), and to Mexicans who needed to visit with a family member in California who was hospitalized or to attend a funeral. Mr. Corona of Mexican Immigration at the Tijuana side of the Border would call me from time to time to issue such waivers. These I routinely approved as they were bona fide requests from Mexican immigration authorities.

Early on I met our Consular agent, Don Johnson, who lives in Loreto, Baja California, and worked out with him a system of pre-screening nonimmigrant visas. Since Don knew the applicants in his area better than we did, our job issuing visas was made easier. We also facilitated special visas for Hermosa Beach, California.

February 24, I flew to La Paz, capital of Baja California (South) to issue tourist visas to Mexicans living in that remote area of our Consular district. I also visited Americans in the La Paz penitentiary. It was beneficial to meet La Paz officials and exchange ideas with tourist leaders. Each year, thousands of American tourists visit La Paz and go fishing in the waters around Cabo San Lucas. At Los Arcos Hotel I met Lic. Jorge Talamos Castaños, who was knowledgeable about consular and tourist matters. The next day I had lunch at Estrella del Mar with Manuel Orosco, of the Department of Tourism. This gave us ample time to review some American protection cases.

In March I met Mr. Rainz, Chief of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, in San Ysidro, California. He and his assistant, Mr. Van der Graaf, who was in charge of special investigations, expressed concern about increasing problems caused by illegal entry of third country nationals, such as Chinese, San Salvadorans, and Guatemalans. Many of these undocumented aliens tried to hide their identity and purpose of entry but were determined to get across the border to find a job. Some were hiding in car trunks, and others would present fraudulent documents to attain their goals.

Terry Daru, US Vice Consul in Merida, Yucatan, joined my staff on detail for two weeks. It was State Department policy to let junior officers visit other posts in order to familiarize themselves with conditions at other American consulates in Mexico.

On March 30, I drove to Mexicali (capital of Baja California North). I had been asked by the Governor of Baja California's office to issue visas to Mexicans living in Mexicali. Marco Antonio Bolaños Cacho, Secretary General of the Governor's office treated me as a special guest, and put the Governor's office at my disposal to conduct visa interviews. When I got to the Governor's palace there were huge lines of Mexican applicants waiting to see the US Consul. Every time a US Consular officer visited Mexicali it was customary to issue visas there. Advance notices of the US Consul's visit appeared in the press and local media. These consular visits to Mexicali took place about every other month, and we combined these trips with visits to American prisoners and other official duties.

Mexicali is also a border town but differs considerably from Tijuana. One catches the train here to go down into Mexico. Mexicali has wide avenues and the customary plaza as center of the town. I enjoyed seeing a folkloric ballet that reflected the Spanish influence of the past century. Mexicali is also interesting for its large Chinese population composed of descendants of Chinese who had been coolies, working on US railroads in the 19th century, who emigrated to Mexico from California. (There is also an inland settlement of Russians who emigrated to Mexico to escape the revolution in 1917.)

On April 1, the State Department authorized us to issue border crossing cards at the Consulate in Tijuana. The first weeks we had more applicants than we could reasonably handle.

A few days later I gave a speech to the Immigration Committee of San Diego attorneys in the Federal building on our visa issuance procedures in Tijuana. My duties were to inform those with a need to know about our procedures. Immigration lawyers in the Los Angeles and San Diego areas were kept busy with immigrant and treaty trader-investor visas. They also invited me to speak before the Los Angeles Bar Association. Mr. Raoul Acosta, of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, was there. He was responsible for approving H and L Petitions for temporary workers. With these approved petitions applicants would come to the Consulate in Tijuana to apply for a visa. I also issued E Visas, (treaty trader and treaty investors), which required a review of the applicants' bona fide status in the United States, and proof of substantial volume of trade or investment with the United States. Since the 1994 implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), between the United States, Mexico, and

Canada, these visas have been in high demand.

From time to time, important people from the sports and media world would apply for nonimmigrant visas. On two occasions I issued a temporary worker's visa in my office to Fernando Valenzuela, the famous pitcher of the Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego Padres. Since he is from Ciudad Obregón, Sonora, we talked about events there. He was always accompanied by his manager, Antonio D. Marco.

Pelé, the Brazilian soccer champion, also applied for an H visa (temporary worker's visa), and told me at length about his humanitarian projects for children. We took some pictures with the staff. Maria Antoinetta Collins González, a TV reporter for Univision (US-Spanish speaking channel), in Miami, used to come over regularly to have her media (I) visa renewed. These were excellent public relations visits that promoted better understanding between the US, Mexico, and Brazil. One day I also met Joe Herrera, a Mexican publicity agent for the well-known Mexican actors Jorge Negrette, Maria Felix, and Anthony Quinn. Dr. Jorge Gómez de Silva, of the Governor of Baja California Press Office, came to see me to apply for a J-1 exchange student visa. I often issued nonimmigrant visas to trainers and jockeys at the Agua Caliente Racetrack, in Tijuana. These included trainer Juan García, jockey Victor Navarro, and his agent, Carlos Munguia.

Tensions mounted in the visa section on May 10, when special security police were placed in front of the Nonimmigrant Visa section. The Consulate security guard was removed by local Tijuana police for questioning in an alleged fraud scheme to obtain nonimmigrant visas. These guards were stationed there after two Mexican women were picked up for allegedly getting some tourist visas fraudulently. Then they tightened things up on the visa line, sending in two extra junior officers to secure better control over incoming nonimmigrant visa traffic.

The next month, I spent a full day in the Inspector General's office relating my views on the matter. In November of that year, however, the investigation cleared everyone on my staff. In October there had been a breakthrough in the issuance of B1/B2 non immigrant visas (business and pleasure). We began to issue B1/B2 visas for an indefinite period, which were valid for the period of the validity of the Mexican passport. Now, as many Mexicans wanted such a flexible visa, there were still longer lines at the Consulate.

Cultural Affairs Officer

I was fortunate that Consul General Ezelle had asked me, in addition to my heading nonimmigrant visas, to assume responsibilities for cultural affairs. He often sent me to schools and to cultural events to represent the Consulate General. As Cultural Affairs Officer in Baja California I made many contacts on both sides of the border, which also provided interesting political contacts. It is at cultural events such as these that one meets political and business leaders who are knowledgeable about political and economic developments. Consul General and Mrs. Ezelle always had an impressive guest list of cultural leaders at their official residence, a mansion in the Chapultepec area of Tijuana, which, we were told, belonged to the general manager of Mexican actor Mario Moreno.

My first assignment in the cultural area was on November 20, 1981, as representative of the Consulate General at a reception given by the Chinese Embassy in Mexico City. The occasion was at the Tijuana International Trade Fair Center, at the Chinese Trade Exhibit of the Province of Fisiun of the People's Republic of China. I met Mrs. Helena Nasser, Mr. Pamp Van Borslet, official mayor of the Governor of Baja California, and also the Chinese Ambassador to Mexico. Tijuana was already becoming an important maquiladora center in Mexico and US, Chinese and Japanese firms were interested in investing on the US-Mexican border. In addition to increasing job opportunities, trade and investment, the maquiladoras created a vital and complex economic and cultural entity in the San Diego-Tijuana area, stimulating international trade and tourism.

On December, 24 1981, our first Christmas in Tijuana, we took a family trip to Pasadena to visit the Norton Simon Museum, where we saw many European masters. In the evening we stayed in nearby Glendale with friends Elie and Araxi Tchakmakjian, and their daughters Caroline and Christine. We had dinner at the Marina del Rey Lobster House and spent a few hours at the Los Angeles County Museum and at the Getty Museum in Malibu. From time to time, our friends, Ellie and Araxi, came to visit us in Tijuana, always bringing home cooked Lebanese food. In November, Rebecca enrolled at Hilltop High School, in Chula Vista. It was not always possible to match the time of the assignment with the beginning of a school semester. If there were some drawbacks to our Tijuana assignment, there were many benefits -- travel, new cultures and language exposure.

Our good friends, Miguel Angel and Laura García, were also very supportive during our stay in Baja California. They asked me to become godfather of their daughter, Gabriela.

January 14, 1982, I represented the Consul General at a dinner given by the Tijuana Chamber of Commerce in Club Campestre, on Avenida Agua Caliente. A variety of people interested in border programs attended, including media people covering historic and current events in Tijuana; Juan Curiel of TV Channel 12; Dal Watkins, Director of the San Diego Convention and Visitors Bureau; Ronald Beardreau, President of the Chamber of Commerce of Coronado; Ignatio Soto, Mexican representative of the San Diego Convention and Visitors Bureau; Hector Lutteroth, Secretary of Tourism of Baja California; and Bob Kuntze, President of the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce.

At a late January, two day conference of the Commission of the Californias at the Luzern Hotel, in Tijuana, I met California Lt. Governor Michael Curb; Dr. Miguel Rolan of Mexicali; Lic. Juan Tintis Funche, Secretary of Tourism; and Mr. and Mrs. Russek of Pasadena, who were involved in US-Mexican border exchanges of students, church groups, and athletic teams.

On March 18, 1982, I had lunch in the Old Town area of San Diego at a monthly meeting of the Mexican Tourist Office. The US Consul was always invited. I met Jose Alfaro, director of sales, Mexican Tourism, in San Diego. Other guests were: Judy Jones of Mexican hotels; Reynolds Heriot of Chula Vista Travel Center; and Ignatio Soto of San Diego Conventions. These luncheons promoted travel and business in Mexico and improved bilateral relations on the United States-Mexican border.

Official Visit to the University of Baja California

May 19, 1982, I paid an official visit to the University of Baja California in Tijuana, to discuss the possibilities of cultural exchanges and the participation of students, scholars, and cultural leaders under the Fulbright Exchange Program. Lic. José Antonio López Tubillo, director of Services Escolares (Dean of Studies) introduced me to Rector Rubén Castro and Vice Rector René Andrade. This was a useful meeting to discuss academics and student exchanges. I also talked with Lic. Raquel Staelmaky, vice director of the School of Tourism, one of the most popular departments of the University in the early 1980s. During this protocol visit, I met Professor Reyes, a noted historian of Baja California. I was impressed with the intellectual talent at the University and the interest in border exchanges.

As cultural affairs officer, I followed up on the cultural grant application of Lic. López Tubillo of the University of Baja California. He would be an excellent leader grantee.

As I got to know more people in academic and political circles they came to visit me at the consulate. My visitors included Carlos Rodríguez of the Technological Institute in Tijuana, Antonio Mena Munguia, secretary general of the Workers Union (Sindicato de Trabajadores de Industria), Dr. Mario Di Soto, and his wife Candy. Dr. Di Soto, a famous oncologist, did graduate work at Emory University. Dr. Ramón and Rosa Naranjo Ureña and Dr. Carlos and María Reyna also became close friends, and would, at times, visit me.

Members of the Tijuana and San Diego Press, including Philip Sousa, editor of the Travel Section of the *San Diego Union*, often commented about Mexico's economic dilemmas. One day I met Juan Luis Curiel, reporter for Tijuana TV Channel 12; Juan Manuel Martínez Pérez, of *Heraldo*, a popular Tijuana daily; Arturo González Peréz; and Aracelia Domínguez, of the ABC newspaper. Información ABC) Jonathan Freedman of the *San Diego Tribune* (evening paper), interviewed me for a story on nonimmigrant visa procedures, as did the manager of *Diario de Baja California*. Jim Robinson, associate publisher of *Tijuana Magazine*, came to discuss United States-Mexican cultural projects.

At a reception of Consul General Ezelle, I had a long talk with Gerald Warren, former editor in chief of *The San Diego Union* (now called *The Union Tribune*). Mr. Warren used to work for President Nixon at the White House, and since then, I have read all his in depth columns on international politics. Also present were tourist Secretary Hector Lutteroth, Mr. Bustamante, and Mr. Limon. They confirmed that there were some food shortages in Tijuana supermarkets. Since we used to shop at Calimax, a Tijuana store, we had noticed this problem. Arthur P. Shankle, political counselor, Embassy, Mexico City, was guest of honor. I also met Mel Tano, former US Consul in Amsterdam, and Mr. Cameron, former chief of Immigration Border Patrol in San Ysidro, California.

On September 17, 1982, I met Mr. Sirak Baloyan, a well known Tijuana businessman. The

Baloyans had been a frontier family in Tijuana, and were associated with its early history.

Inauguration of Tijuana's Cultural Center

FONAPAS, a large cultural center and a showcase of Mexican culture, opened in Tijuana on October 20, 1982. I attended the opening ceremonies, along with Consul General Robert Ezelle and his wife, and Consul Lloyd De Witt. Mexican President José López Portillo and his wife joined Baja California Governor Roberto de la Madrid and his wife at the inauguration, as did hundreds of guests from Mexico and the United States. We watched an Omnimax film entitled "People of the Sun." Omnimax has created excellent documentaries on Mayan culture and US-made documentaries. I met some people who helped me in my cultural affairs work: Mr. Ibarra, public relations officer of the mayor's office in Tijuana; Mr. Alesio, former manager of the nearby Agua Caliente racetrack; (his daughter, Lupita Alesio, is now a famous Mexican singer); and Mrs. Irma de la Cruz de Laroque, who managed public relations for FONAPAS at that time. Mrs. María de la Parra, director of the Casa de la Cultura (the older cultural center) and I talked about United States-Mexican contacts on the border and about projects to exchange musical, theater, and folkloric groups. With Tijuana Mayor René Treviño, and his predecessor, Roberto Andrade Salazar, the Consulate General had good public relations contacts.

In mid-November, I attended a press conference at the Aztec Hotel in Tijuana, that was set up by Dr. Jorge Gómez de Silva, director for press relations of the Baja California government. Hugh Kottler, our embassy officer for border cultural affairs also participated. Many border issues were discussed, including immigration, culture, media communication, and sewage problems. Sewage from the Tijuana River flows out to sea and pollutes American waters and beaches, such as Imperial Beach. At the time, there was talk of building a sewage plant in Mexico, with United States help. Now such a plant is being built in the Tijuana River Valley in San Ysidro.

I had invited my friend, Miguel Ángel García, to hear the Murray Korda String Quartet at Club Campestre, and there we met Fernando Amaya Guerrero, assistant director general of the *El Mexicano* daily. I visited "Templo Mayor" at FONAPAS, which showcases Mexican Indian art. At the International Trade Center, I saw the Puebla and Hidalgo exhibits of folkloric artifacts, and I attended some cultural sessions of the Commission of the Californias at the Luzern Hotel. The Commission of the Californias met twice a year to debate issues between California and Baja California. Key representatives of the governors of both states became involved in policy decisions affecting these two border areas.

In the fall, Martha Grant, of the US Information Agency in Mexico City, came to interview applicants for United States scholarships. Her job was to grant scholarships to outstanding Mexicans who wanted to study in the United States. She spoke with candidates from Baja California and Sonora. I set up appointments for her and attended the review board. Two candidates were selected: Lic. José Luis Anana, Vice Rector of the University of Baja California, and Carlos Rodríguez of the Technical Institute in Tijuana. Consul Robert J. Chevez hosted a lunch for Dr. Grant, which architect Esparza of Mexicali and I attended. Esparza had been very active in promoting cultural and academic exchanges between Mexico and the United States. That evening, we were guests at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Richard and Anita Potts in Bonita, a

beautiful rural town just north of the border. (Dick Potts handled medical examinations for immigrant visa applicants in Tijuana.)

In November I was invited to visit the Centro Bachillerato Tecnológico, in the Tijuana Beach area. Rafael Parra Ibarra and Daniel Bolaños showed me the various technical departments. The Tijuana media documented the visit.

Mayor of Guadalajara to Visit Mayor of San Diego

On December 26, 1983, I welcomed Mayor Guillermo Vallarta Plata of Guadalajara at the airport in Tijuana. He was accompanied by Vice Mayor Ing. Ignacio Montoya. He came to San Diego on a Leader's program sponsored by the US State Department's Cultural Exchange Program. At the request of US Ambassador John Gavin, I managed the trip to its minute details. The next day I accompanied the mayor of Guadalajara to see Roger Hedgecock, then the mayor of San Diego. Hedgecock received us at San Diego City Hall. In addition to US Consul Robert Chevez and myself, other San Diego officials attending the event were Mike McDade, Regmigio Bermúdez, and Councilman Bill Cleator. First the two mayors discussed various similarities between the cities of San Diego and Guadalajara, which is in the state of Jalisco. The mayor of Guadalajara was interested in the San Diego sewage treatment plant. After the meeting with Mayor Hedgecock, Cleator (who later ran for Mayor against Maureen O'Connor, and lost) went with us to see the well known agriculture plant. Dr. Richard King, director of water utilities for San Diego, and Dr. Charles Cooper provided a technical briefing at the plant site. The Mayor of Guadalajara was satisfied with his visit and the information given by his host. Ambassador Gavin and Public Affairs Officer Rogers confirmed this later in a message of thanks to me.

In January, 1984, I attended the San Diego Boys' Choir presentation in Tijuana's cultural center and went to see "Señorita de Tacna," a play at the Bugasan Theater in Tijuana. (There I met Silvia Pinal, a famous Mexican actress who was the wife of the governor of the State of Tlaxcala. I also met Irani, another versatile Iranian-Mexican actress.)

In February I was guest speaker at the junior Chamber of Commerce of Tijuana (the Jaycees) and mingled with many promising young members. The next day I co-chaired a meeting on ecology and the Tijuana River estuary (sponsored by USIS) with Dr. Charles Cooper of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), as the main lecturer. Mayor David Ojeda Ochoa, of Ensenada, and Dr. Ismael Llamas Amaya, assessor of the Governor of Baja California attended the lectures. It was not until March 9 that some concrete steps were taken by both the US and Mexico to make progress on pollution problems shared by the two countries.

Peso Devaluation

In the spring of 1982, the Mexican peso plunged in value from 25 to 45 pesos to the US dollar. An earlier devaluation took place in 1976. Rumors of the flight of Mexican capital to US banks further deteriorated the Mexican economy, despite President López Portillo's pleas to Mexican financiers to invest in Mexico.

On April 13 we had our first look at PRI candidate Miguel de la Madrid, who was José López Portillo's appointed successor. Traditionally, Mexican presidents pick out their successor (it is called "*dedaso*"). He had good credentials, having graduated from Harvard University School of Economics. De la Madrid made a name for himself when he was running the Mexican Federal Budget Office under President López Portillo.

In September, economic conditions worsened in Mexico, and financial speculation rose when President López Portillo nationalized the Mexican banks. In his last State of the Union message (*Informe*) the following day, Portillo announced that all Mexican banks were closed. When they reopened on September 6, 1982, the Mexican peso fell to 70 pesos to the US dollar. This economic scenario presented the new presidential candidate, Miguel de la Madrid, with a major problem: how to preserve international reserves, while concurrently keeping the federal deficit in check.

Governor Roberto de la Madrid (not related to the PRI presidential candidate), of Baja California attempted to ease the financial plight of Baja California merchants. The border area was, and is, dependent on business with the United States, and most business transactions are made in US dollars. In the governor's State of the State message on October 1, 1982, in Mexicali, he referred to the advantages of stimulating border industries to improve Mexican trading policies with its neighbor to the north.

Reagan in Tijuana

On October 8, US President Ronald Reagan and President elect Miguel de la Madrid met at the Benito Juárez Monument in Tijuana. It was a traditional ritual between the US and Mexican presidents following a presidential election. (Miguel de la Madrid had been elected for a six year term in July.) White House communication specialists were operating out of the Consulate General in Tijuana to supervise the security for the presidential visit. After the ceremony and remarks at the Juárez Monument, President Reagan hosted a luncheon for the Mexican president at the waterfront Hotel del Coronado in Coronado, just south of central San Diego. It was the first time I witnessed many of the technicalities that go into arranging a presidential visit abroad.

Central America, the Contras, and the Ripple Effect in Mexico

In March of 1982, US Secretary of State Alexander Haig made a strong statement concerning subversive perils in Central America and on the future of the Caribbean basin. Officials had uncovered some proof that the Sandinista government in Nicaragua was involved in political affairs in El Salvador. On March 23, a right wing military coup intensified the Guatemalan political crisis. The guerrilla warfare in Guatemala had already debilitated the Guatemalan economy and exacerbated the lot of the poor people. In just five days, however, things in the area changed somewhat for the better. José Napoleón Duarte's middle of the road Christian Democratic party in El Salvador was elected with 30 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections. These favorable election results gave an impetus to the democratic process in El Salvador.

In May, Ted Wilkinson, of the political section of the embassy, briefed us on political conditions in Nicaragua, and the strategy of the Contras, who were supporting anti-Sandinista subversive operations in Central American countries. The minister-counselor of the embassy, Mexico City, came to Tijuana to give us a classified briefing on the situation. He was worried about the destabilizing factors affecting Central America, such as the Sandinista revolution, the Contras, and the Mexican currency devaluation, and its impact on Mexico and US foreign policy. Secretary of State George Shultz delivered a strong speech to the Organization of American States (OAS), in which he expressed concern that the Soviet Union was shipping arms to Nicaragua via Cuba. He stated that it was evident that these shipments to Nicaragua, backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba, were primarily aimed at destabilizing the Central American scene.

A politically strong Mexico was viewed in Washington as favorable to US national interests. There was a fundamental fear in both US and Mexican political circles that Cuba's influence in Nicaragua could spread further into Central America, and to Mexican states such as Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca, where guerrilla training was common in the mountains.

The Falkland Islands Crisis (Malvinas)

On April 2, 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. Emotions were running high in Tijuana when President Reagan backed British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's invasion of the Falkland Islands. The OAS in Washington held an emergency meeting to evaluate the geopolitical consequences of this crisis. President Reagan's stance on the side of Great Britain had been controversial. Although the United States is part of the OAS, President Reagan demonstrated that our historic close ties with Great Britain always take priority over any other considerations. The Reagan administration took the side of England against Argentina when it allowed Great Britain to use a US reconnaissance satellite during the British invasion of the Falkland Islands. It was therefore seen as a positive move on his part when President Reagan toured Latin America in November, 1982. In the aftermath of our support for Great Britain in the Falkland Islands his visit helped to mend fences with Latin American countries that felt that America's "good neighbor" policy of the early 1930s was waning.

Social and Official Visits

In October, 1982, the Foreign Service inspectors were in Tijuana. They were given a chance to talk to members of the staff at receptions hosted by Consul General and Mrs. Robert Ezelle and Consul Steve and Elsa Hobart. Foreign Service inspectors wanted to learn more of the posts' internal operations, and were particularly interested in potential foreign service morale problems.

On December 1, 1982, Miguel de la Madrid was sworn in as president of Mexico. Bernardo Sepulveda Amor, former Mexican ambassador to the United States, took over as foreign minister. Thomas O. Enders had become our assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs. They would be key players in United States-Mexican relations.

US Citizens and Protection Services

On May 31, 1983, the consul general offered me a new position as Chief of the US Citizens and Protection Services. I agreed with him that it would be interesting for me “to test new waters.” Protection work was a pressure filled job in Tijuana. Calls came in from citizens in need on an hourly basis. It was a challenging job with a staff of four capable Foreign Service nationals who handled protection work during the day. Every week we had an American duty officer who handled emergency calls around the clock. Every morning I had a meeting with my staff. We would go over news items in the Tijuana press mentioning accidents of US citizens. Calls were made to local hospitals, jails, the office of the Federal Highway Patrol, and key police stations, to find out whether any Americans were in trouble.

My two right hand men, consular assistants Ed Assad and José Vásquez, primarily handled arrests, accidents, and prisoner cases; and were liaisons with the District Attorney’s offices and the Tijuana Police. Both Ed and José were indispensable to the US Citizens and Protection Services. They knew each other’s jobs and could fill in for one another. We also had another foreign service national who took care of social security benefits and veterans cases. It was a smooth operation and I intended to keep it so. During my daily, morning staff meetings I stressed the importance of American citizens’ human rights and our ability to lend consular assistance when it was needed during their visits in Baja California. The Tijuana-San Ysidro border is a complex port of entry. Many foreign tourists who visit Baja California, Mexico, venture across the border through San Ysidro, and take the trolley to visit San Diego for a few hours. There are daily crossings of Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, and other nationalities.

On July 7, 1983, José Vásquez went with me to the Tijuana Airport to meet Ing. Cirilo Picazo Cuevas, director of the regional aeronautical inspection team which handled the emergency overflights which US hospitals frequently requested. I was particularly interested in how could we improve medical evacuations of American tourists.

The Consul General also often received requests from the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) Medical Center and Mercy Hospital to admit some Mexican patients for emergency surgery or care unavailable in Tijuana. Celia Díaz, of San Diego, who worked on the San Diego Bi-National Emergency Committee, was a key contact in these critical situations, and we maintained constant contact with her.

Tijuana is the busiest port of entry on the US-Mexican border, and our Consulate’s Citizens and Protection Department was the hotline for taking care of problems resulting from this high level of activity.

Later on I met Lic. C. Montes, chief of the Regional Border office of the Automobile Registration office in La Paz, Baja California, South. In the past, Mr. Montes tried to assist American tourists traveling in the Baja California peninsula.

From time to time letters or calls of complaint came from retired US citizens living in Rosarito. Usually they complained about lack of services in their apartment buildings. Many had invested in condominiums and in the 1980s, foreign owned property located within 100 miles of Mexico’s coast had to be put in a trust (*Fideicomiso*) for 30 years. I investigated these complaints and

brought them to the attention of Lic. Wilfredo Ruiz, chief of tourism in Tijuana.

On July 13, 1983, I attended a Border Crime conference at the Luzern Hotel in Tijuana. Many police officials from both sides of the border attended the seminar. Vice Consul Lynn Allison went with me. We were assigned to a committee dealing with the recovery of stolen US cars. Many cars were stolen in the San Diego area and brought to Tijuana for sale or use there. Some of these vehicles were taken apart in Mexico, and the parts were sold to car dealers. To this day car theft is an epidemic on the US-Mexican border. When I was in charge of United States citizens' protection work in Tijuana, we had a special person on my staff handling US vehicle recoveries (autos, RVs, trucks and trailers). In the early 1980s there was a spirit of cooperation between the United States and Mexico on how to solve some of the outstanding border problems, including car theft, water pollution, and drug smuggling. At the conference, I met California Attorney General John K. Van de Kamp, Mr. Sausa of the Automobile Registration Office, and Governor Roberto de la Madrid, of Baja California.

American Ambassador John Gavin made an official visit to Tijuana on July 28. He stopped by the Consulate to say hello to the staff. I escorted him through the US Citizen Protection section, and he showed much interest in our operation.

Prisoner Transfer

The bilateral consular treaty signed by Mexico and the United States permitted the exchange of prisoners between the two countries. On July 15 I became involved in just such a prisoner transfer. Magistrate Harris of San Diego presided over the move. Other officials at the transfer were Lic. Ruiz Duarte, Director of La Mesa prison in Tijuana, Lic. Raul Cabrillo, Federal District Attorney in charge of drug problems, and Lic. Ángel Saad. After a few weeks on this job, I saw that the consulate general had cultivated excellent contacts with Tijuana and Baja California officials. Whenever an American citizen was in trouble with the law or in need of medical attention, we knew where to call for help on a 24-hour basis. Tijuana officials in turn, often called us. My predecessor in this position, Bill Rossner, had been an American liaison with Mexican officials. One evening he invited us to his home where we met a number of influential persons: Dean Navin of the University of San Diego School of Law; Ralph Limón, Mexican liaison, California; José Ortiz of the US Highway Patrol; US attorney Daniel Henry; and Mrs. Francisco Jiménez, who was involved in maquiladoras (border industries) in Baja California. I also met with Luis Leyva, commander of the Tijuana International Airport, and Enrique Peniche.

Tuna Embargo

Another consular responsibility was the protection of American property overseas. For years, US fishermen have had problems concerning tuna boats in Mexican waters. On July 20, 1983, a US tuna boat, *Laurie Ann*, of San Pedro, California, was seized near Point Eugenia. Mexican officials claimed that the boat had been seized in Ensenada for having fished tuna illegally in Mexican waters. This was another "tuna war" crisis. The United States did not recognize Mexico's 200 mile, off shore limit for migratory tuna. Because of past seizures, the United States had imposed an embargo on Mexican tuna.

Our Consulate General in Tijuana was pressured to try to obtain the early release of the *Laurie Ann*. My office had daily communication with the embassy on this matter. It absorbed most of my time. Charles Finan, Fisheries Attaché at the embassy in Mexico City, briefed us on US policy toward Mexico regarding the seizure of tuna boats. Finan especially referred to the March, 1983, San José agreement signed by Costa Rica, Panama and the United States.

For weeks disagreement over the *Laurie Ann* continued to exist between the office of Fisheries and Customs in Ensenada. We dispatched vice consul Lynn Allison to Ensenada to monitor the situation. She kept in touch with me by telephone and I, in turn, spoke with Mr. Finan. President Miguel de la Madrid visited Baja California in August while the *Laurie Ann* case was still in limbo. It was obvious to us at the consulate that the Mexican Foreign Ministry was not in a hurry to give the green light to resolve the tuna boat incident.

It was not until August 12 that I learned of a private agreement between the San Pedro Fishing cooperatives and the Mexican government regarding the *Laurie Ann* case. According to Mexican officials, the release of the ship could take place only upon payment of a \$20,000 fine. David Ojeda Ochoa (former mayor of Ensenada) was helpful at all times during this crisis. He never let the tuna boat seizure affect our good relations with the mayor's office in Ensenada.

On August 2 there was a Los Angeles class action suit (Feldman vs the State Department) on the part of some US attorneys' attempts to secure quick issuance of nonimmigrant visas for their clients at the consulate in Tijuana. During this same period, Auxiliary Bishop Gilberto Chávez, of San Diego, called to request a special waiver for a Mexican musical group to tour California. Early on, in my tour of duty in Tijuana, I became acquainted with Monsignor Juan José Posadas, Catholic Bishop of Tijuana, who later became a Cardinal in Guadalajara, and was assassinated in 1994. I also met his successor, Bishop Emilio Berlie Belauzaran (now serving in the Merida, Yucatan diocese), who was very interested in self help groups, and he pointed out to me how advanced we were in the United States in developing these groups.

Consul Chavez had replaced Lloyd DeWitt, who retired from the Foreign Service as chief of the Consular section. Bob and I had lunch with Captain Vaught, who headed the San Diego Shore Patrol Service. Vaught was Navy Commander at 32nd Street Headquarters. At that meeting, we went over some of our consular projects and discussed ways of improving our liaison with the US Navy when Navy personnel encountered problems in Mexico. On another occasion Jerry Sipes invited me to meet at the US Navy Shore Patrol office. When US service personnel were involved in incidents in Tijuana, the Shore Patrol was notified right away. Consular officers did not normally handle such cases and so were able to concentrate on US tourists in distress.

We also sent a consular officer to Tecate, a small town about an hour's drive east of Tijuana, to look after US tourists during the Pamplonada, a short lived endeavor meant to replicate the traditional running of the bulls at Pamplona, Spain. Due to accidents and differing attitudes of Americans toward the event, it received negative publicity in the US media.

Tijuana-San Diego Press

As chief of American Citizens and Protection Services, I often had to cope with an occasional invasion of the press at the Consulate. On August 22, 1983, reporters came to my office, seeking information on the investigation of alleged mistreatment by Mexican prison officials of a US citizen jailed in Tijuana. I told my vice consuls working on the case that we had to visit the prisoner and obtain firsthand testimony before notifying Washington as to whether there had been any mistreatment.

One week later, I encountered another case that created an uproar in the San Diego press. On August 31 I attended a court hearing in downtown Tijuana involving Mrs. Clague, a US citizen who was a prisoner in Tijuana. She was destitute, elderly, and sick. Congressman Duncan Hunter, who was interested in her case, sent Bob Medina to the hearing. No case received more press attention on both sides of the border than this case. Jeannette De Wyze of the *San Diego Reader* interviewed me in my office, and I informed her of the situation and told her what we could do.

The Consulate General informs the family of the prisoner's condition, and whether legal assistance has been provided. It also explains the status of a given case. We were routinely able to inform, to facilitate, to get medicine and mail to the prisoners, and to visit them at will. We could usually talk to the press after we had informed the special Consular Services in the State Department in Washington. In some politically sensitive cases, we would refer the press to the Public Affairs Office of the US Embassy in Mexico City. Contact with the press was taken seriously, as we were official spokespeople for the US government abroad. Any statement on issues, such as tourist visas, treatment of US citizens, pending immigration legislation, the Simpson-Rodino Amnesty Bill, and border issues such as the stationing of military personnel, was to be dealt with discretion as it affected US political policy.

In early September of 1983, I was in Mexicali to attend an International Editors' Conference on border issues. It was chaired by Roberto de la Madrid, Governor of Baja California, and was attended by newspaper editors from Hermosillo, Ciudad Juarez, Mexicali, Tijuana, El Paso, Calexico, and El Centro. The open debate covered matters affecting the border, such as immigration, the environment, health, and culture. During receptions at the Luzern Hotel and the Holiday Inn, we socialized with the press editors and Baja California officials. I joined the editors on a visit to the Mexicali Fine Arts Museum to see a historical exhibit of the State of Baja California. I was also invited to the Tijuana Press Club, El Nido del Aguila (the Eagle's Nest), and met their founder and President J. Alberto Rosales, who made me an honorary member. During the lunch I spoke on my experiences in the Foreign Service.

Reagan in La Paz, Baja, California

We were very busy in the consulate, preparing for President Reagan's second visit to our consular district. There were many contacts to be made by Security and communication personnel. On August 14, President Reagan met with President Miguel de la Madrid in La Paz, Baja California Sur. Some token agreements were signed by both presidents to improve pollution control and expand commerce.

Visit by the Director General of the Foreign Service

Among the many US officials visiting Tijuana was Joan Clark, director general of the Foreign Service. Counselor for Consular Affairs Larry Lane of the embassy was with Director General Clark, who expressed an interest in staff problems as well as those of their dependents. I was glad to see her succeed Diego Asencio, who worked with me in Panama, as assistant secretary of state for consular affairs when Diego was appointed ambassador to Brazil.

Receptions at Home

We attended many evening receptions with both American and Mexican families. From time to time, we had guests over for dinner. On April 8, 1982, we had one such dinner at home for Consul General Robert Ezelle; Consul Lloyd De Witt and his daughter; my mother, who was visiting us; and Lloyd's assistant, Senior Foreign Service National Virtudes.

Immigrant Visas

When my assignment with Citizens and Protection Services ended, I was adjudicating immigrant visas with Consul Steve Hobart, who was a veteran Foreign Service officer with wide experience in consular and political affairs. During this period, I met Professor David North, director of the Transcentury Foundation in Washington, DC. North came to speak about US immigration law and the Simpson-Rodino bill that had passed both Houses of Congress on May 19, 1983. He referred to demographic changes in the United States and said that many undocumented aliens who had worked in the fields would benefit from this legislation (popularly referred to as the Amnesty Bill). He raised the concern that some undocumented aliens were taking jobs from US citizens and permanent residents. We also had a visit by Dick Mann, chief of the Visa Department at the embassy in Mexico City.

One day I met Jorge Bustamante, director of the Colegio de Mexico in Tijuana, a well known research school that analyzes US-Mexican border issues. He showed me maps and statistics on undocumented aliens. His views on immigration differed from the official US position. He felt that undocumented Mexicans were badly needed in the agricultural industries of California, and that they actually contributed to the general well being and economy of California.

Baja California Politics

The PRI (Mexican majority party), had won heavily in the '83 Baja election. Licenciado Xicotencatl Leyva Mortera was elected governor of Baja California Norte, and René Treviño became the mayor of Tijuana. The exception was in Ensenada, where former Mayor David Ojeda Ochoa, who had switched from the PRI to the PRD (left of center ticket) had won by a wide margin against PRI candidate Swain Chávez. On September 24, 1983, voters in Baja also elected 13 local deputies. The number of these representatives is proportionate according to the population of each state in Mexico. In the Mexican Senate, there is one senator from each of the 32 Mexican states.

Mayor elect Ojeda came to see me on October 19, and we talked at length about the need to expand the exporting and shipping potential of the port of Ensenada. The consul general attended the oath of office ceremony by Leyva Mortera as Governor of Baja California.

President Reagan was challenged by the Soviets when a 747 Korean jetliner was shot down, and the confrontation caused a deterioration in US-Soviet relations and some disruption at the Port of Los Angeles. Dock workers in Los Angeles refused to unload a Soviet freighter, in protest against the downing of the Korean airliner. The Soviet ship was finally diverted from Los Angeles to Ensenada, Baja California where Mexican dock workers unloaded it.

On October 1, Governor Roberto de la Madrid gave his last State of the State address in Mexicali. There were protests in front of the governor's office, due to the frustration of many people who were unable to find adequate housing.

Extra Security due to Beirut Disaster

On October 23, 1983, we got word that a US Marine barracks in Beirut had been demolished by a car bomb, killing more than 200. We immediately tightened security at the consulate general with extra guards posted around the clock. We were instructed by Washington to increase vigilance for dependents as well, and to take special precautions. We were told not to go home by the same route every day. This bombing was worse than the April 18 bombing of our embassy, in Beirut, which had killed 63. In spite of the loss of American lives, Marines were kept in the area until February 26, 1984.

Grenada

The day after the attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut, President Reagan sent in US troops to Grenada to secure safety for American citizens there. The island of Grenada had been dominated by the Soviet-backed left wing in Cuba and Nicaragua. The leftist government in Grenada had destabilized the free nations of the Caribbean. It was not until November 3 and 8 that we experienced some negative repercussions, when Mexicans demonstrated at the Consulate General building in protest over the US invasion of Grenada. Those of us in the Foreign Service felt that the rescue of American citizens stranded in Grenada justified the president's actions.

Dependents' Life in the Foreign Service

There are ups and downs in the career life of Foreign Service dependents. It was a breakthrough in the early 1970s when dependent spouses were allowed to seek employment overseas. Because of our proximity to San Diego, Maïté was able to secure employment at the US Naval Supply Center there. The job gave her experience in US government work. When I retired from the service, she was able to continue working there.

It was not easy for us both to work. Tijuana was a demanding assignment because of the many social obligations in the evenings. It required much discipline to keep our separate working

schedules. Each morning I took Maïté to the US side of the border, where the trolley took her to downtown San Diego. Rebecca attended Hilltop High School in Chula Vista, just north of the border. We were fortunate in that the consulate had arranged for a van to pick up dependent children at their homes in Tijuana. But the arrangement restricted Rebecca's extracurricular activities, since the van picked her up at a certain hour in Chula Vista. In retrospect, I believe Rebecca could have benefitted from some afterschool activities to develop her future. But, overall, life in the Foreign Service offers exceptional cultural benefits. The Tijuana assignment offered stateside job opportunities and schools. In our case, Maïté's work offered her some financial freedom to travel to France to visit her family who depended on her for moral support.

Nomination to Caracas

On March 23, 1984, I received a cable from the US State Department, nominating me as consul in charge of citizens' interests at the US Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela. We had just celebrated Rebecca's 18th birthday with a good friend, Billie Johnson, and my mother.

It was not until April 10 that I decided that I would retire from the Foreign Service, effective July, 1984. I therefore requested a cancellation of my assignment to Caracas.

The last months were spent saying good bye to friends in Baja California. Mrs. Fierro was one of those who called me to express her gratitude for my service to the Folkloric children's group in Tijuana.

On May 18, we had a briefing by Michael Shol, deputy director of the Office of Policy Planning on Central American policies.

Five days later, I had dinner with Lic. López of the University of Baja California.

On June 8, I was asked to chair a lecture by Dr. Stephen Mumm of the University of Colorado on the political aspects of ecology. There were also many inquiries concerning the proposed Mazzoli Immigration Bill in Congress.

Then June 29, 1984, the staff hosted a farewell reception for Consul General Ezelle and me.

WILLIAM B. COBB, JR. Transportation and Communications Officer Mexico City (1968-1969)

William B. Cobb, Jr. was born in North Carolina in 1924. He graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1943 and completed a year in Princeton University after that. Mr. Cobb joined the Foreign Service in 1945. His career included positions in Nicaragua, Cuba, the Philippines, Bolivia, Spain,

Martinique, Sweden, British Guyana, Mexico, and Washington, DC. Mr. Cobb was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1990.

Q: Then going out of there did you have your assignment in timely fashion for Mexico.

COBB: One rarely gets one's assignment out of war college in a timely fashion. One has to work on it one's self. I was offered the job working as George Landau's deputy on Spain and Portugal. I thanked George but said I had an opportunity to go to Mexico and that although it was not one of the top jobs, for the sake of the wife and children, education and everything else, I would rather go abroad than to stay here at the time. I knew something about George too [laughter] I knew that he was a very demanding task master. So I was an FSO-3 and was assigned to a FSO-3 job in Mexico City as the transportation and communications officer in the economics section. The economic section had five or six specialized officers. There was a minerals officer, a fisheries officer, transportation and communications officer, fiscal officer and I think a general economic officer all under the leadership of the economic counselor, who at the time was Gardner Ainsworth.

The reason the job was interesting was that this was the time we were told to broaden our cones [professional specialties], so to speak, and to get ahead in the Foreign Service, officers should have economic experience as well as political experience.

Q: This was one of the swings back towards good general officers.

COBB: That is right. I had accumulated a lot of political experience and had little or no economic experience, though while I was in Sweden I was acting commercial attaché for six months. There were nine US scheduled airlines at the time flying to Mexico and the number of flights they could operate was limited to X-number per week by agreement with the Mexicans. They had pledged to allow unlimited flights after date-X if we would agree to restricted flights up to then. It was my job to make sure that the Mexicans lived up to their side of the agreement on date-X and allow the US carriers to determine the number of flights, or the market to determine, rather than be limited to three flights a week or two flights a week, or the like. We were able to do this. I had very close relations with the director general of civil aviation and spent hours with him talking about the virtues of the free market system and the fact that the charter market system was different than the scheduled market. I urged Mexico to allow charters to come in also. The US-Mexican aviation relations were then and have continued to be satisfactory. Before that time it had required presidential intervention every time there was a negotiation. Harry Truman had to intervene, Eisenhower had to intervene, Kennedy had to intervene, to resolve the conflict between the interests of the country that had two airlines serving the United States and the interests of the country that had nine serving Mexico. In these days aviation negotiations were not a matter of public record and public concern the way they are today. I was assistant chief of aviation negotiations responsible for an area. Our instructions in a negotiation were signed off on by the assistant secretary for the economic bureau and who was operating under the delegated authority from the secretary. We were charged with defending the status quo because under the status quo the US carriers had a very satisfactory economic position in most of the countries around the world. Other countries would come in and say that they were dissatisfied with the

bilateral treaty and want to change it ...

Q: You were in the middle of your description of the procedure for improving aviation negotiations. You might tell how you prepared yourself for that.

COBB: I think I got the job because my bio in the register [[Biographic Register](#)] said that I worked for an aircraft manufacturer.

Q: You had been inspecting engine parts.

COBB: I was presumed to know something about the parts of an aircraft, at any event. In my general political experience in negotiations one gets negotiation experience. In Mexico I had negotiated a treaty to change radio frequencies, AM and FM, to avoid interference with each other, I assisted significantly with that and I was known to the telecommunications and transportation sections of the Department because of that success in Mexico.

Q: We are back in the Department now? We sort of skipped lightly over your Mexico assignment. You did not say much about that.

COBB: Let's go back to Mexico. I was a FAA liaison officer in Mexico. FAA had officers stationed around the world, but they were prepared to accept me in Mexico as their liaison officer so I worked very closely with the FAA regional office in Fort Worth. They would send down people to see me to discuss problems they had with Mexican airports, or with the inspection of Mexican aircraft. The FAA approved the facilities of Mexicana as "approved facilities" for the repair of airline engines and aircraft. They would have to come down regularly to be sure the books were up-to-date; that there were no slip-ups. We had very good relations with the airline. I went on the FAA inspection flights of all the airports of Mexico on two occasions. We would get in a small aircraft and go to every airport in the country to make sure it had a windsock, that the lights were working at the ends of the airport, that the radio was on the proper frequency.

Q: This is an awful quick way to learn the subject.

COBB: We had some interesting experiences. Once one of my FAA colleagues did not return to his hotel room in Puerto Vallarta one night. We did not know where he was and we were due to leave at 11 the next morning. We checked the hotel room and he had not spent the night in it. So his other colleague and I decided we had to go look for him. We went into town and walked around the seafront in Puerto Vallarta, which was a little town at the time, and asked if anybody had seen a man of a certain stature, a certain height, black hair, etc, etc, and an American. They said, "Yes, we saw him, he was down at the bar last night with a girl until about one o'clock and then they left." We said to ourselves, "God knows where he is now." We asked if they knew who the girl was? They said, "Oh, yes, here she is now at the bar." We spoke to her and asked what became of her boyfriend of last night. She said, "Well, he was so drunk that we put him out to get some fresh air, I don't know what happened to him thereafter." We decided that we had better go see the chief of police. We went around to the police and asked if there was an American there? The police said, "Yes, we picked one up this morning on the seawall, he was stone drunk. We did

not know what to do with him so we just brought him in here. He is right over here." We looked and what we saw was a coffin with candles at each end of it. We sort of took a deep breath and went in. Here was this poor American FAA inspector huddled in a cell sobering up staring at the coffin. We got him out of jail, apologized for the disruption he had caused, thanked the jailer for putting him up for the night. We put him on the plane and took him back to the States.

Q: Sometimes first time travelers do this sort of thing. Sometimes experienced travelers do the same.

COBB: I don't think this man had ever been outside the States before.

Q: You said that you also had telecommunications responsibility which is a pretty complicated subject.

COBB: It is a complicated subject. You could always depend on the Department to send you down an expert if you needed one. Occasionally I would need an expert and get one. The Director General of Telecommunications in Mexico was well known up here, and there was a good feeling between the telecommunications office and the Mexican telecommunications office. They built a telecommunications tower while I was there and our biggest concern was whether or not the satellite that was put for the Olympics would work to carry the transmissions from Mexico during the Olympics of 1968. The first satellite went up and did not work, but they were able to use a different satellite. At that time COMSAT was established and INTELSAT and the Mexicans played a prominent role in the establishment of INTELSAT. They had to be nursed along to join in because they felt it was impinging on their sovereignty. At the same time the Mexicans established a network of ground stations to provide domestic communications from satellites. This was early in the game. There were not many ground stations at the time. The Mexicans realized that this was a way of saving money if they could depend on satellites and were quite anxious to do so.

Q: That has revolutionized communications around the world. Who were the senior officers there. Was Robert McBride there?

COBB: Bob McBride had not arrived between the time I was assigned to Mexico which was in June and the time I arrived in August or September. Tony Freeman was ambassador. Tony and Phyllis were both militant Democrats and he resigned when the administration changed and the new president was elected. Then Bob McBride came soon thereafter. Henry Dearborn was the DCM. McBride was a very fine ambassador. He was a shy man, a man whose word was 24 karat gold, he knew what was going on in the embassy and he conducted a good embassy. He may have killed himself in doing so.

Q: He was a good man. Then you had an economic counselor?

COBB: Gardner Ainsworth was the economic counselor and he was followed by Dorothy Jester, who was a former cultural officer who had gotten into the economic/commercial cone and became economic counselor. Jack Kubisch was the DCM much of the time under McBride. He

established very good relations with Henry Kissinger, something that Mr. McBride did not have.

I had very good aviation connections and still do, and aviation was the life blood of Mexican tourism. I was able to help the Mexicans a great deal because I knew what the published sources of information were in this country - air traffic between this country and Mexico and the US and other countries in the world. The Mexicans had no idea what was available and so I was able to get the public record and help them in their plans for penetrating the US market more effectively.

Well, I could not break into this. So I decided to reverse it. I would see if there was any opportunity to help Americans to appreciate other countries so I wrote to a friend of mine in the Mexican tourist office and said I am about to retire and that perhaps you might be able to use my services to stimulate more Americans to visit Mexico, especially in Washington where there is a big association community which is always looking for a place to have a convention that is attractive and competitively priced. I got a response from him saying, yes, we are interested, make us an offer. So I offered to work for them. We reached a satisfactory arrangement.

Q: Essentially you established a Mexican Tourist Bureau? None existed before?

COBB: Yes there was one that was operated by the Mexican Ministry of Tourism, down on Farragut Square. It was largely a front office operation. They did not do much for people other than hand out brochures. My job was to cultivate the association community and stimulate meetings and actual business. Also I had to evaluate critically the importance of the various travel agencies in town with reference to Mexican travel so we would know whom to invite to come to Mexico and who the top twenty-five agents were, who was producing the business and what airlines were they producing for, and the like. So I worked very closely with the airlines and their government relations vice presidents. It was a new departure for Mexico. I was the only American running a Mexican tourist office. It caused some comment in the Mexican embassy. People wondered why. Some of my employees would come to me and say they were having difficulty with the Mexican embassy, some want to know why you are the head of the office. I asked for instructions as to how I should reply to that? They said that Mr. Aleman had appointed me and if they wanted to discuss the matter he was available. That was the end of it.

Q: You did that for eight years?

COBB: Yes, then I ran a little association called the Association of Travel Marketing Executives for a couple of years. It was an association I helped establish when I was working for the Mexicans.

Q: These were essentially travel agents?

COBB: No, these were people who represented destinations and or the vice presidents of the various airlines. We did not have ticket sellers as such. It was an individual member organization, not an organization of organizations. There is something called the Travel and

Tourism Research Association in which I had been active, and was on the national board, but that was an organization made up of other organizations. My little one was a private member organization. We had an annual convention and published a monthly newsletter. It is still going but I am no longer very active.

J. PHILLIP MCLEAN
Special/Staff Assistant, Latin America, ARA
Washington DC (1968-1969)

Mr. McLean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and was educated at Seattle University and the University of Indiana. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. A Latin American specialist, his service in the State Department in Washington and abroad, primarily concerned Latin American Affairs. His foreign posts were Brasilia, Edinburgh, Panama City, La Paz, Milan and Bogota, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington Mr. McLean held positions dealing with Latin American Affairs, including that of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America. Mr. McLean was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: When one talks about Latin America, one always ends up going from Central America down. What about Mexico? Did Mexico come up? It's really our major concern, but it seems to be treated almost as something outside the Latin American sphere as sort of on its own.

McLEAN: I think at this point that was really very true. We didn't have a formal AID program with Mexico, and we didn't have a large military presence, so the major actors, major agencies, working on Latin America didn't have a large presence in Latin America. The exception, of course, is the CIA, which did have a presence and did have a role, probably in some ways a more significant role than it had in some other countries. But in the agency discussions, it did not become a big issue, which seems strange from this point of view, because so many things were going on. There was lots of economic activity going on. There were lots of consular activities, important things, going on, but it wouldn't rise up and become a major issue, as I say, in part because the agencies that dealt with Latin America weren't in fact pushing it.

Q: Each agency almost had its own thing. I mean, for example, from what I understand--I've never served there--you have their foreign affairs establishment which essentially has a sort of an anti-American policy where you have the CIA and their intelligence operation getting along very nicely, thank you, and the FBI and other groups. They all kind of do their thing, and it's almost without anybody really controlling it or really caring to control it because it works.

McLEAN: No, I think that's right. It was certainly true in the Inter-American Bureau that it was a strange disconnect. There was even a disconnect in the budget of the Inter-American Bureau, the ARA Bureau. We had an enormous rise in our budget. When I took a look at it, what happened? Oh, we were given money to build a dam, to build irrigation systems, all on the Mexican border,

but it was in effect domestic money. It wasn't from the foreign policy account or the foreign relations account. The State Department had a man who was working on building irrigation systems all along the border, and yet he was almost not related to the rest of us. That was very true throughout this particular period. Later on Mexico becomes much more central, certainly by the time you get to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and things, but even before NAFTA you begin to sense something's going on on our border that we're going to have to pull together. But only in the days of the interagency regional groups did you have this sense of pulling together policies from all agencies and the discipline of the ambassador and the Bureau and the State Department. It was the only time I ever saw that really come together in the same way. The chaos of Washington trying to stay on top of what other agencies are doing in various countries, I think, was greater before that, and it certainly was true in recent years that the State Department always has to play catch-up and doesn't have quite the power that it did in the days when it was much more on top of budgets and things. But Mexico was one that always escaped that control or that discipline, and the embassies I don't think ever really had, from my observation, full knowledge of what was going on by the U.S. Government in their countries.

STANLEY I. GRAND
Alliance for Progress, USAID
Washington, DC (1968-1970)

Stanley I. Grand was born in New York City in 1920. He obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin and joined USAID in 1945 after a two-year tour with the U.S. Army. Mr. Grand's career included positions in Washington, DC, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina. The interview with Mr. Grand was conducted in 1992 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

GRAND: This is probably useful in indicating how you get things done under the AID program. This was right at the beginning of the Alliance for Progress. Kennedy had decided to visit Mexico City and we had been working on a loan which was designed to transfer land to Mexican peasants. It was a complicated loan and required a lot of input on the part of the Mexican government in terms of legal changes, etc. It was a loan that was taking and would take a long time to develop. When Kennedy announced his trip down there we decided that since the Alliance was the big thing in terms of a lending program that was going to accomplish important social changes, it would be a nice thing if he could have a loan signing ceremony. This loan was the only thing in sight.

I went down there with a lawyer, who later became the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs at the State Department, and decided that what we would do was sign the loan, create a loan agreement. But in order to meet our legislative requirements, which require that you have a feasible object in hand before you could possibly sign a loan agreement, we put into the implementation of the loan all of the work that should have been done before the loan was signed. So after the loan was signed with a great deal of fanfare in Mexico City, we then sent to the Mexican government what they expected namely the first implementation letter which

contained all of the conditions precedent to the disbursement of the loan.

Now all of these conditions were the requirements that should have been met before even signing the loan, but that was the way of getting around the legal restraints. The Mexicans knew this was going to happen and we knew it was going to happen. But there were some people in the White House who simply didn't really understand what we had done.

Two or three months later, Dick Goodwin, who was in the White House and handling the Alliance, a job he deserved since he was the one who first coined this phrase, called and wanted to know when we were going to make some money available under this loan. I said, "Probably not for a year or two." He screamed and yelled, "This is bureaucracy." I said, "Dick, you have to understand what happened here. This loan could not be made legally until certain things have been accomplished in Mexico. It sometimes takes a long time for us to do things and even longer for the Mexicans to do things especially if you're trying to make some radical changes. Normally what you would do is wait until these conditions have been met and then you make the loan. But what we did here, since we wanted to have a loan for the President to sign, is to put all these conditions in the loan as conditions precedent to disbursement. When they are met then we will begin to disperse. I don't expect a nickel of this is going to be disbursed for at least a year to two. It was a politically timed loan so that the President could do something spectacular during his visit." I think Dick Goodwin would get furious if you ever called him naive, but in this case he certainly was.

In most countries, with the exception of Mexico, Catholicism is the official religion of the country. When you have civilian governments that is sort of down played.

ROBERT THEODORE CURRAN
Press Attaché
Mexico (1968-1970)

Robert Theodore Curran was born in New York in 1931. He received his bachelor's degree from Haverford College and his master's degree from Columbia University. During Mr. Curran's career he had positions in Germany, Jordan, Yemen, Mexico, Afghanistan, and Morocco. Mr. Curran was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 1998.

CURRAN: Well, to begin the story slightly before the beginning, I was finishing my assignment as a special assistant to Leonard Marks in the various White House incarnations and went to language school in preparation for my assignment as Press Attaché in Mexico City with USIA. While I was in language school, my hat's off, by the way, to that program. It's one of the best language programs I've ever taken, I was pulled out of school twice, both times to go to Mexico City to help the embassy there with two eruptions. One was the Black Power eruption during the

'68 Olympics in Mexico City, and the second one was a very serious student uprising, which ended with, I don't know, at least dozens of students being killed by the security police, who at that time were under the direction of Echeverria, who eventually became President of Mexico.

So I had had several kind of introductory chapters, when I arrived for service in Mexico in January of 1969.

Q: Why don't we talk about your excursions first, because they predate your going, don't they?

CURRAN: That's right.

Q: Do you want to explain what the Black Power problem was and what the dates were when you went there, and the next one was the student one.

CURRAN: The Olympics were in late October, early November, in Mexico City.

Q: 1968.

CURRAN: In 1968. And at that time there was a serious eruption of African-American feeling about their relationship with the American government, and it manifested itself in a movement, under various names, but it was characterized by a slogan "Black Power." And two of the leading sprinters on the U.S. team who won medals at the medals ceremony had their right hands in black gloves. Instead of holding their hands over their hearts during the American National Anthem, they raised their right fist in the air. And it caused actually in the perspective of time rather an unnecessary fuss. But the embassy in Mexico City was without a press attaché, and the chargé, a wonderful man named Henry Dearborn, was very, very nervous about handling this issue. And so USIS plucked me out of language school - I think it was about a week, maybe 10 days - and it was good for two reasons. I got to practice my at that time rather primitive Spanish, and secondly, it gave me a chance to look the post over. And I thought that would be it for interruption, but then in I think early December, the Tlatelolco riot took place on the central square and I was called back again to spend another 10 days helping the embassy deal with what was essentially, really, a domestic internal problem, and most of what I did was tell them to stop commenting on it officially. [Note: Events relating to the Tlatelolco incident are still not clear. Mexico has consistently maintained it was a "minor" matter.]

Q: Tell who to stop commenting?

CURRAN: The embassy community. I mean it really wasn't embassy business. There was a tendency on the U.S. media side to color this as a threat and an anti-government uprising - which it wasn't.

Q: New boy on the block there, what were you picking up from our political reporters and all that? Did they see this as maybe something that might change the ruling structure of Mexico at the time, or did they see it just as another blip?

CURRAN: I'd like to answer your question by going to my paper now, or my notes here. It's a

very good question, very pertinent, and actually, the answer to it relates to my whole assignment there. Before I went there, some iconoclastic friends of mine, particularly Ted Eliot, whom I later would work for, told me that when I went to Latin America I should watch out for the “cucaracha circuit,” or the “cucaracha mafia.” And what he meant by that was there was a generation or maybe two generations of Foreign Service officers who had served pretty much their whole tours and lives in Latin America, and they tended to be, in current terminology, very, very conservative and identify maybe not so much with U.S. foreign policy as with the interests of the ruling elites of Latin America. And this was particularly true in Mexico. When I got to the mission I found that easily 50 percent of the senior officers had Spanish-speaking, *Latina*, wives, and everybody was bilingual in Spanish and very cliquish. And it was hard for them to accept having a non-Spanish background person, particularly without my family there - because my kids were finishing school - and I thought this attitude also reflected rather badly on the way we handled certain problems. Black Power was one. There was a lot of resentment among the American officers that these, quote, “uppity” athletes would have ruined a nice event by making the Black Power demonstration, and many of them, and particularly those on the CIA side in the Political Section in Mexico were quite inclined to see the Tlatelolco incident as sort of an incipient communist uprising, and it was something that the conservative side and the Mexican government were pleased to encourage our people to report. In my first two brief visits, I didn’t get into the middle of the politics too much. I did go back and talk to some people in Mexico and talked to people in the university world whom I thought were generally more balanced in terms of how they looked at Mexico and how we treated Mexico over the years. And of course, I did a lot of reading. I don’t want to be too superficial, but I think it’s correct to say that in 1969 the “First Families of Mexico,” the title of a book about Mexico at that time, was still pretty correct. There were about 20 families who held oligarchic power in Mexico, a very, very wealthy group of people, who controlled the PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which was the ruling party. There was no really effective opposition at all. And that, with the military, keeping a pretty tight lid on what was happening. The media were right under the government’s thumb. There was only one newspaper down in Mexico which dared, if you could use that word, to occasionally disagree with America and the Mexican establishment. It was a newspaper called *Excelsior*, and it was run by quite an interesting person called Julio Sherer García, whom I got to know quite well as the months went on.

So to answer your question, it was a rather different environment than I was used to with people who had much deeper roots in the society and - to put it bluntly - much deeper interests in the society in a way that was not helpful to the conduct of American foreign policy. I was just (in 1999) reading the Johnson book by Beschloss about taking power, that Johnson, when he saw the situation - or when someone got to him on the situation - in Latin American, he determined in his Presidency to begin to change that and several people who came to Mexico City were clearly bearing the Johnson stamp of making Mexico more of a partner and less of a protégé of the United States. President Johnson was very impatient when he perceived that bureaucracy was hindering what he wanted to do. While I was still working for Leonard Marks, President Johnson was on a trip to El Paso, where there’s a bridge over the Rio Grande. And looking down from that bridge you can see a set of islands in the river, really sand bars. These “islands” had been the subject of intense debate between the lawyers in Mexico and the lawyers in the United States for years, if not decades. One of the things on Johnson’s long agenda was to discuss with President

Díaz Ordaz, and they had a wonderful lunch on the bridge - I think it's called Friendship Bridge. I might add that the bag carriers feasted with the eyes only! President Johnson was feeling very relaxed after this lunch, which had - I don't know whether they drank tequila, but they certainly drank wine. And as they were getting up from lunch, President Díaz Ordaz gestured to the islands and said, you know, "Señor Presidente, this is really a difficult problem for us." And Lyndon Johnson said, "Well, what's the problem?" Díaz Ordaz started to give him an explanation of the islands moving and with the river currents and that the Mexicans felt deeply about this land and so on and so on. So Lyndon Johnson in my presence said, "Well, I guess you all want these little bits of land, is that right?" And Díaz Ordaz said, "Yes, that's it." LBJ said, "Well, you got it." And I watched the lawyers on the American side just about jump off the bridge. Ten years of work down the river! Anyway, Johnson, to his credit, was really trying to change the whole U.S. attitude, and I was fortunate, I think, to be present at a time when one saw other results. One of the real terrific moves LBS made was to send a man named Bob McBride, a fluent, actually bilingual, speaker of Spanish, as career ambassador to Mexico City. And he was the active representative of Johnson's policy and, in my opinion, very effective.

Mexico City - it's hard to believe if you've been there recently - in the late '60s was quite a livable place. There are 20 million now in the area there were only eight million then. Very livable, very friendly city, very nice to foreigners, including Americans, or *gringos*. Terrific things to see, a fabulous, gorgeous anthropological museum; great archeological sites - Teotihuacán and Tula and Tlaxa and so on and so on. Wonderful provincial towns, great air service, good roads. The rhetoric of society was very socialist. There was a lot of talking about "the people" and "the workers" and "socialism" and so on, but it was all rhetoric and all for public consumption, and the real business of the country was conducted over the financial pages. It was a paradox, and I think that part of the troubles the Mexicans are seeing now is that the people who were the underside of the paradox, if you will, the PAN people, the have-nots were shut out of the establishment. These folks, at least slightly more liberal than the 1969-1970 incumbents, have now become a viable opposition, and a lot of the things that were not argued about or, at least, certainly not argued about publicly in the late '60s are now being very much brought out on the table.

Because my family didn't join me until the summer of 1969, I stayed in various abodes till they arrived. For most of the first six months, I lived with the representative of something called the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), a marvelous irreverent guy named John Michel. The IESC was and is still is a fascinating concept which uses AID financing to a large extent. What they do in all countries they serve is to send expert retired business executives to industries that need help. And my favorite example is the Mexican cracker industry that had asked for help. IESC sent down a wonderful Jewish cracker maker from New York. As I remember at the time, there were only about 10 really major cracker bakers in Mexico. And he arrived at nine o'clock at night, and I was meeting him. Michel talked me into meeting a lot of his guests because my Spanish was beginning to pick up a little bit. Of course, I was his houseguest, so it was a little hard to refuse. So I went to the airport with the Spanish business people in the cracker monopoly, and we met this gent. I don't remember his name anymore; he was about five feet tall and about five feet around and he was just a walking dynamo. He bounced off the airplane - the Mexicans began telling him that he'd go to his hotel and then he'd have the weekend off and then they'd

see him Monday, and he said, "Nothing doing. I'm going right now to the factory." And he went to the main factory that night, and he walked through the factory at midnight. The Mexicans said, "Well, you know, it's our time to go home." And he said, "So go home already." And he continued his walk around the factory, taking notes. We stayed there till two or three in the morning. He was back there at nine in the morning, and in about two weeks he drew up a blueprint for modernizing their plant and he left as abruptly as he came. A terrific AID project, in my view.

I think probably the thing that impressed me the most about working in the U.S. mission in Mexico City, in addition to the fascinating and complex country we were supposed to be interrelating with, was the role that the CIA station was playing in the embassy. And I guess I had my most serious disagreements with that group of people, mostly because they insisted on characterizing any media person who had an independent point of view as someone who was a "leftist." And that would be kind of a theoretical disagreement except that the CIA evaluations of people found their way into visa files. And somebody who tried to get a visa to go to the United States would find himself denied. And I began to hear about this and particularly about some very important media people who were getting their visas denied to travel to the U.S. It was kind of a losing battle until Ambassador McBride arrived, and then he began to take a personal interest in some of these cases and we were able to turn that around, including Julio Sherer Garcia, whom we got a USIA Leader Grant to go to the States, and if I say so myself, he came back a changed person, not only because he felt like he was welcomed to the States, but also he got a real view of what America is all about, and it wasn't the stereotype he was seeing in the atmosphere in Mexico.

Another sort of interesting facet of the time in Mexico was that the Russians and especially the KGB obviously had their eye on me from Yemen and perhaps from my German days, so that I was sought out by the KGB fairly early in my assignment and talked to generally - you know, they were very friendly - and taken to a few lunches and so on. Of course, I reported every contact I had to the Political Section. But when my wife arrived during the summer we were at a very large cocktail party, and a fellow with a Russian accent walked up to her and he said, "Well, Mrs. Curran, how do you like Mexico City?" And she said, "I don't think we've met." And he said, "I'm Igor..." something or other, "and I'm from the Russian embassy." She said, "Well, let me tell you a little bit about where I've been." He said, "Oh, I know all about where you've been." They were really "clever and subtle."

I was very, very pleased, as I said, with the Spanish language training. It was extraordinarily helpful to me, both in finding my way in the embassy and because of my Spanish, Ambassador McBride started using me a lot on his own agenda, so I got really an exposure to Mexico in a fairly brief period of time. I would say that the American policy under McBride was to enhance the partnership of Mexico with the United States, to try to downsize or at least reduce the pressure of the bilateral disputes we were having and try to begin to get a handle on our border problems. And what Ambassador McBride did to implement this was invite lots of prominent Americans, very high level Americans, to come to Mexico; and also travel a great deal himself. And there was a major Mexican industrialist - I think it was one of the Alemáns - that McBride had known for years. He was even a former President, Miguel Alemán. He heard that McBride

wanted to get around the country, and he said, "Well, why don't you just use my airplane whenever you want to?" And McBride, after consulting State, decided there was nothing he could do to try to influence us - he had all the money he needed - so we did use the plane - a Lear jet - and it was a tremendous asset for the ambassador to be able to get around the country. I was able to make several trips with him, and it was really fun.

And I thought that rather than go into a lot of personal anecdotes, I might describe several of the high level visits, which I think pretty much were designed and were successful in carrying out the American objectives.

I might say parenthetically, my family, my wife and two children arrived in the summer. Sara and Diana fitted successfully in to the school system and both had good school years. They were still young enough to be able to do that.

I guess the first big visit was Nelson Rockefeller and his wife, Happy. It was after his tenure as governor in New York.

And as everybody probably knows, Rockefeller had been very active in Latin American foreign policy since the 1940s, and the pretext for his visit in 1969 was a really extraordinary spat over tomato exports from Mexico to the United States. Mexicans grow what they call a green tomato, which I guess is used in a lot of canned products and pizzas. But the way the agriculture treaties were developed at that time, they could only export them at certain times of year and if there were only a certain number of American green tomatoes on the market. It was very arcane. And through some kind of administrative glitch - or maybe it wasn't a glitch - several trainloads of green tomatoes got stopped at the border, and it bankrupted some marginal Mexican businesses. It turned out that the Florida tomato business, pulling wheels and strings in Washington, had been behind this railroad stoppage. And Mexico was very, very upset, and Rockefeller came down with Happy to talk to the Mexicans.

I don't know whether you've had anything to do with those two Rockefellers. I've been lucky in my life to meet a lot of unusual and wonderful Americans, and they were certainly near the top. He was so personable, it was really quite incredible, and he had a marvelous knack of meeting a person once and, at least for the next couple of days, remembering names and something about them. I found out later that he was dyslexic and had developed this technique because he couldn't read, but he had an unbelievable memory. And Mrs. Rockefeller, Happy Rockefeller, was very personable. We put them up in one of the nicest hotels there, and I was with the ambassador, and the governor was asked, "Well, how's the room?" "It seems very nice," and he looked around a little bit more. "Well, is there anything we can do?" "Just a minute." And he checked his whole suite out personally, and then he came back. He said, "Yes, there's one thing missing." We looked really startled. He said, "I love Oreo cookies, and so I'm going to need a supply of Oreo cookies." That was his only vice.

Q: How about his staff, because at one point Rockefeller was sent around Latin America by President Nixon. -and when he went around, I've had people talk about this thing saying the staff was a pain in the neck, particularly those who were in Brazil and all that.

CURRAN: Right.

Q: How about on this one?

CURRAN: Well, they had a fellow with them whose first name was Joe - and I'm not going to be able to remember his family name - who was the chief pain in the neck. And he was Rockefeller's flak. And he was constantly tearing around trying to get the right pictures and the right people to pose with the governor and get the governor's face on the front pages and so on. But I think they weren't much trouble in Mexico City, first of all, because they were on the front pages anyway, and Rockefeller spoke fluent Spanish, and they all fell in love with Happy. So, you know, I don't think there's anything he could do to enhance the profile of them; plus, McBride ran everything himself.

Q: This was also the thing. I think that other places they tried to bypass the embassy staff and do things until things got bad and then all of a sudden they'd run in and say, "You've got to fix it." That type of thing.

CURRAN: Ambassador McBride was very adroit at preempting that kind of thing. And one thing your friends didn't mention to you, that there was a funny rotund little man who came down with Rockefeller with a very heavy German accent, and none of us could figure out what on earth he was doing there. But he went right back to Washington.

Q: Ha, ha. This was-

CURRAN: Henry the K.

Q: Henry Kissinger.

CURRAN: His accent was so - I'm sure we've all heard it now - but when you first heard it and you heard he was a Harvard professor, you could hardly believe it. But he's a person of great charm, and he was, of course, a protégé of the Rockefellers and he was very well behaved on this trip.

The next visitor is Richard Nixon.

Q: Let's talk about the Nixon visit first, and then I'll have some questions.

CURRAN: Okay, the next visitor was Richard Nixon himself, and Rockefeller apparently went back and said, "Well, you can really help the policy of better partnership, and so on, by dedicating a bridge over the Rio Grande from Del Rio. (You may recall I had advanced the trip.). After Johnson, it was my first contact with the next president. I thought it might be interesting to just say a few words about the difference. First of all, President Nixon in - it must have been - the summer of '69, was very correct and very professional and very attentive to staff people - he didn't like the State Department much, but I think that was because of the Alger Hiss business.

He was very easy to be around, very thoughtful, very good. The one time where I sensed that there was an unusual and perhaps very self-conscious facet to his personality was preparing for the part bridging ceremony to exchange *abrazos*, or 'embraces,' with President Díaz Ordaz. President Nixon was very, very nervous about this, and I was called upon to rehearse with him, and it was very clear that it was almost written on his cuff was, you know, "You put your left arm on..." and so on. And we rehearsed it five or six times, and he did it perfectly.

We were talking about the contrast between President Johnson's staff, which I had worked with from '66 to '67/68, to the Nixon staff that I met in the course of President Nixon's visit to dedicate the Amistad Dam. And the contrast to the Johnson staff, who seemed to work together as a team and get along with one another pretty well, the tensions between the senior Nixon staff people were quite evident, not only in terms of if one person told you to do something, you might have a Haldeman come along and say, "Well, what did Chapin say? Well, I don't want you to do it that way; you do it this way." And then someone else comes along and says, "What did Haldeman say?" "Well, don't do it." It was very hard to work in that environment. And the short man with the German accent was back. Again, he seemed to play a very minor role, but he was certainly around. Mrs. Nixon struck me as being on the point of a nervous or physical breakdown. She was a two-dimensional figure at that time. I never heard her say a word.

Having said all this, Nixon was very, very good with the Mexicans and went through the *abrazos* flawlessly and said all the right things and followed his briefing book to the letter and made the Mexicans feel very, very good indeed about the event. It was hot as the devil there. It was high 90s and Nixon looked like he'd just stepped out of a refrigerator the whole time. I don't know how he did it. No sweating like the Kennedy debates.

The next major visitor had a connection with one of the innumerable drug conferences that we had with the Mexicans, where - just not to overstate this, but it always seems to me that we say, "I wish you'd stop letting people export drugs to the U.S.," and they say, "Well, why don't you stop your people from using them?" And it's a real dialogue of the deaf. But anyway, it's gone on for quite a long time now.

Elliott Richardson was the next visitor and he was an extraordinary human being. He and his wife and his party, and his chief aide was a man named Wilmott Hastings were really a joy to work with, the whole group of them.

Q: *He was at that time-*

CURRAN: Under Secretary of State, before he went over to the Justice Department. Elliott Richardson wanted to hang out with the embassy staff, including the McBrides, and we did, but they also had serious discussions with the Mexicans, and Elliott - he didn't speak any Spanish, and I don't know if you've ever been around him - you have to focus. He doesn't speak English, I mean, he speaks English, but he doesn't speak English very clearly. He has a kind of Brahmin drawl, which I think he may even do deliberately. You have to listen very carefully to be sure you understand what he's saying. And I think the Mexicans loved him, you know, loved his *persona*, and he was just elliptical enough so that he made them feel good, but I don't think we got a lot

done. But anyway, we had two or three days serious discussion on agriculture, drugs, etc., and then on Saturday night there was an absolutely super splendiferous dinner put on by the Mexicans. The party, as is the case in Latin American and the Spanish cultures, went on till about one or two o'clock in the morning, and I think some of us in the embassy party were thinking it would be nice to grab a little sleep. But Richardson said, "Well, what do you do in Mexico City at one in the morning?" And off we went, and we partied till about four, and then they got back to the airplane at seven. Of course, we all had to be there to say goodbye. Again, McBride was very clever at orchestrating this visit so that the Mexicans felt that Richardson was coming to them to seek their help and their consultation.

And then there was a series of visits which happened a little bit with McBride's encouragement but also by accident were three extraordinary theatrical people - John Wayne, Raquel Welch, and Gina Lollobrigida. And actually, you know, you would have thought, well, this is pretty frothy, but the ambassador cleverly organized a series of parties particularly with the media potentates and most especially with the Escáraga family - the old gentleman, Emilio Escáraga, I think, was the founder of the empire, quadrillionaire, hugely rich man, with a son a little younger than I was - and they ran a series of parties around the country including a party in Acapulco on the Escáraga yacht. And John Wayne - I won't attempt to imitate him - with that wonderful cowboy drawl took me aside and said, "I want you to find out what this boat cost. I bet it cost three million bucks." So anyway, I tiptoed around and I asked the Escáraga son, you know, just generally speaking, "How do you maintain an operation like this." He said, "Well, the ship itself cost \$15 million, and it's about" - I can't remember - a million a month or something like that, because it had the crew and God knows what else. So I reported back to John Wayne that his estimate was a little low, and he said, "Well, I guess I'll have to wait till next Christmas."

But they were really good sports, John Wayne and Raquel Welch and Gina Lollobrigida, and they really put on a good show and were good soldiers and went to endless dinners and parties and, again, made a big hit and gave the Mexicans the feeling that someone, the Americans, were really taking them seriously, not just the actors, but a whole panoply of visitors.

Q: I've got a number of things that I wonder if you'd comment on.

CURRAN: Sure.

Q: One is while you were there, dealing with the Foreign Ministry - I've never served in Latin America - my understanding is the Foreign Ministry has always been sort of tossed to the left and they make great anti-American statements - and of course, Vietnam was big at that time - whereas really the business of Mexico and the United States, the CIA and the FBI have very close relations with the-

CURRAN: And the ambassador at that time.

Q: With the United States. That goes on, but the Foreign Ministry goes off on its own thing, and it's sort of like a bit of raw meat that they toss to the left. Did you get that feeling at all?

CURRAN: Well, let me redescribe the paradigm as I saw it. It sort of fits what you said. In McBride's era, he dealt directly with the President, and the President had - I don't know what you'd call him - a senior Minister of Information named Fernando Garza, who was assigned to work with me. The other group you didn't describe along with the intelligence people and the Justice Department people were the American businesspeople. I mean, they all did their thing no matter what was going on, and I'm sure they still do. But the Foreign Ministry, I thought - if you wanted to say it frankly - was irrelevant to major bilateral matters. There was some consular stuff that went on, and it's funny, I don't remember especially being beaten up on by the Vietnam issue. What I do remember is tomatoes, and there was another issue on beef. Texan ranchers complained that Mexico was exporting too much of this lean beef that's used for McDonald's hamburgers - you mix it with fat and that's what you eat when you're eating a McDonald's hamburger. But I don't remember much about Vietnam.

Q: *What about Cuba?*

CURRAN: Well, that's a good question, and the Mexicans had two hang-ups at that time, as far as the U.S. was concerned. One was they insisted on maintaining good relations with Fidel Castro, which caused many in Washington to fume, and the other thing was they had a really serious hang-up about the Catholic church, and vice versa. And if we heard anything from the Mexicans or if we had sort of a *contretemps* with the Mexicans about anything, it was the Cuba policy. And McBride steered this off to a siding. I think as a matter of fact that got put in the embassy political section and the Foreign Ministry, and they debated one another and hurled beautifully crafted lightning bolts at one another, but it wasn't done in the public domain.

I neglected to mention to you that the greatest visit we had - in fact, maybe it's the biggest visit I've ever been involved with - was when the Apollo 11 astronauts came. Their first foreign visit after going to the moon was in Mexico City, and McBride was really thrilled. We met Armstrong, Aldren, and Collins with wives at the airport. It took us from 10:00 am to 3:00 p.m. to get to a luncheon at the Presidential Palace, a press conference at five, dinner at the residence at 9 or a later hour. I've never seen a crowd like that. I think all eight million in the city were there - not unfriendly, tremendously excited and thrilled. It was the astronauts' first visit, thank God for us, because they got the same treatment everywhere they went, and of course, it was enormously fatiguing. But they were wonderful, and again, it just set up this tremendous feeling of coincidence and good feeling between the two countries.

Q: *What about dealing with the intellectuals and the students?*

CURRAN: Well, USIS was very concerned about this area and we had a very effective cultural attaché - Gaylan Caldwell - and an influential binational center program in Mexico, one of the best I've ever seen; and for people who aren't familiar with the binational center, I might just say a few words about that.

They were set up in the '30s, again I think, as a result of the Rockefeller incarnation, when he was working with Roosevelt.

Q: *Part of the Good Neighbor Policy.*

CURRAN: The Good Neighbor Policy. And the way a binational center worked was you had a board of directors of Mexicans and usually Americans, some English, and they would basically fund the setting of a library and an English teaching facility and a lecture center in various towns. And then we assigned USIS officers, called branch public affairs officers, to work with the binational centers to try to get to students and ordinary citizens below the level of this upper crust that one tried to deal with in Mexico City. And complementing that was a very nice exchange program, scholarships to the United States, both outgoing college students and incoming Fulbright teachers coming to Mexico.

Q: Did you find, though, that there was a sort of a solid Marxist intellectual group that spent most of its time sitting around talking about the colossus to the north and that sort of thing, particularly within the universities and all?

CURRAN: The public affairs officer, George Rylance, set up a number of important university allowances. The most important partnership was in a town called Hermosillo in the northwest. Of course, we had lots of contacts with the Mexican National University. Let's recall the Mexican National University had 25 or 30 thousand students, and most of them were getting *licenciado* degrees so they could go into business. Maybe there were three or four hundred radicals who talked out loud about Marx and poor Mexico, you know, "So far from God, so close to the United States." And of course, the great leftist tradition in art - Diego Rivera as an example - represented a group that was generally anti-American. But I have to tell you that, aside from my early encounters with the media, who were attacking the embassy and the new kind of ideas in the embassy as "leftist" because they were probably trying to pander to the owners of the right-wing press, we didn't run into much "leftist" flak at all. And in fact, efforts to get visas for some of the media who were on the CIA's blacklist - I don't want to personalize this, but anyway - the ambassador's help in kind of getting rid of the blacklist for people who had unconventional opinions resulted in many of these so-called "leftists" getting to the U.S., and of course that's the most effective way to demolish the negative stereotypes of somebody who's uninformed.

Q: It's always been this peculiar thing. I was in Yugoslavia during the little war with Iran and a whole of years; really the real threat is not a communist coming to the United States to us, it's to the communist movement. Turn 'em [them] loose.

CURRAN: That's right.

Q: What about immigration, or not immigration but illegal immigration and all that? Did that crop up on you?

CURRAN: Yes, and I want to now turn to some visits I made with Ambassador McBride particularly in the northern and western part of the country which addressed this issue. Let me start with Tijuana, which is the town right next to San Diego. Perhaps you've been there, but if you ever want to see in microcosm the problem we have with emigration/immigration, that's it. Here you have a very modern Mexican city on the border of a very vibrant American city. If you had been parachuted from the moon on either side of the border, it was almost impossible to tell

where you were. Everyone was bilingual with a bias towards Spanish. This is 20-30 years ago. The pressure on the Consulate on the visa side - and this you would appreciate because you've worked in this area - is that I think all these officers were handling between 600 and 700 interviews a day, required just by the volume, which meant that they were making decisions basically in maybe a minute or two minutes. I don't know how many minutes that translates into, but anyway, they just worked flat-out eight hours a day just looking at "Miguel" and trying to decide whether he should get a visa or not. And in effect, many of the Mexicans didn't. So what happened was that they pushed their way over the line one way or another, and in those days we didn't have very adequate border coverage, so they just slipped through across the river beds and into the U.S. And yes, it was a big issue, and the states weren't able to deal with it very well. The only difference was it didn't have the volume it does now. It was very frustrating.

The second big issue was the salt content of the Colorado River by the time it got down to Mexico, having wound its way through a series of irrigated farmlands in the Southwest, where it was put onto fields and then leached back out to the river. Each time the salt content was higher and higher. And in a dry year at the headwater of the Colorado, there was less and less water to use. Whatever water was flowing was virtually unusable by the time it got to Mexico. And that was a cause of great Mexican anger.

The border industries were getting going, and I don't think I was too conscious of the feeling in the United States about the great sucking of jobs across the border, but what you could see, as McBride went through these various communities from San Diego over to Brownsville on the Rio Grande, was, to put it directly, the exploitative nature of the situation. You had people making automobile engines earning maybe 50 cents to a dollar an hour, whereas union scale a mile away was, whatever, \$10 or \$15 or \$20 an hour. And it's very disruptive and difficult, and it's the same thing with Nike sneakers now being made in China and all kinds of other products. And we saw that at the ground floor, and I don't think anybody sees any solution to that. As long as you have, quote, "free trade," it's hard to tell somebody in another country that their workers, who think 50 cents or a dollar an hour is terrific pay - it's hard to tell them to stop doing that.

And a third area that I worked on a little bit more intensively because of my USIS and VOA background was the signal interference between the transmitters on both sides of the border. In those days it was mostly radio, although beginning to be a television problem. Interestingly enough, the Mexican television relays were microwave at that time, so they weren't subject to broadband interference, but the radio stations were subject to it, and one of the things Ambassador McBride did was set up a group to try to negotiate various umbrellas or footprints of the various radio stations to minimize interference.

You asked about cultural exchange. I used to go up to Chihuahua to meet with student groups. Chihuahua is in Sonora, and it's really back country Mexico, serious ranching country. And the first time I went there, I, kind of naively I guess, got to the hotel at about 8 o'clock at night and thought I'd go out and get a beer and a hamburger, and I went to what looked like a pub - it had swinging doors and quite a noise coming from inside, sounded very cheery. Anyway, I walked in with my Western suit. It was a cowboy bar, and I walked in and it was just like a western. The whole place just quieted down. So I went to the bar and everybody just quieted and looked at me.

I ordered a beer, drank it as fast as I could, and left. As I walked out the door the noise level built back up again. I never felt so strange in my life, not even in the Middle East. But those interior towns are really fascinating. Taxco, great old silver town; San Miguel de Allende, an artists' center. My wife and I stayed in a hacienda there where the owner was one of the "leftists" you're talking about. We would call him an East Side New York liberal, you know, inveighing against American imperialism and so on and then running a wonderful business, taking American business - kind of a salon socialist, if you want.

I really think that what I took out of Mexico was a terrific respect for diplomats who, like McBride and his deputy, Jack Kubisch - did you ever run into him - did so much personally to embrace their professional roles.

Q: Kubisch was an ambassador to Greece.

CURRAN: Right. He and his wife, Connie, were a tremendous complement to the McBrides and between them gave every Mexican they met - and I think the Mexican staff in the embassy - the feeling that they really respected Mexico, and they used the resources they had to reinforce American objectives and constantly reinforce them. I think it began to worry me that some of my State and, indeed, USIA colleagues resented the fact that "traditional" diplomacy was being overtaken by what they saw as a more superficial approach to solving international problems. I'm going to have more to say about that as I work through my S/S and Personnel incarnations and then into my final USIA job as area director and then on to Morocco as DCM.

But I think in a way it's a long-term problem for the "formal" Foreign Service. I'm not sure young officers are trained, many of them - maybe I'm wrong about this - but I think that if you insist on wrapping the letter of the law and regulation around yourself when you go overseas and particularly if you're a political or economic officer or, needless to say, a public affairs or cultural affairs officer, you're not serving your country well. When these major political figures come along - the Richardsons, the Nixons, the Rockefellers, and so on - and you say, "Well, I'd like to be involved in this visit, but I have to finish my report on such and such," or "This isn't part of my job description - I can't work after five o'clock," somebody's missing something. And I know I'm regarded as somebody who, you know, went too far in the personal diplomacy way, and maybe I'm not the best judge of this, but I have written an article about this subject I'll be happy to have everybody look up in the *Foreign Service Journal*. I really believe that somewhere in the '60s-'70s-'80s, the Foreign Service kind of missed the boat on how to interact between politics, culture, and jobs. And now it's even more complicated as we try to satisfy the many constituencies - 435 of them in the Congress that are all thinking they can stick their oar into foreign policy.

I did write a note to Frank Shakespeare, who was then director of USIA, at the end of my stay in Mexico, and a couple of things I mentioned which I now think were pretty prescient. One was I said I thought that representational funds were hopelessly inadequate. That's no big discovery to any Foreign Service officer. But I'm bemused that when Emilio Escáraga took me to lunch with four or five other people, and I saw with great shock that the total bill was \$300. But, of course when you knew that, I think, our total USIS representational funding for a year in Mexico was

\$1000 - and that's for the whole country - in fact, nobody had anything but the Public Affairs officer, so \$300 for lunch was an eye popper.

I also thought that we were overdoing it on staff in posts and not thinking enough about things like television, trips for journalists and so on and building up a knowledgeable infrastructure. I'm not sure I was right about that, but anyway, again, I didn't think we were really thinking about the local people equation well enough.

And the last thing I said in the memo to Shakespeare was that I thought that our senior officers in Latin America just couldn't be allowed to stay in Latin America for 15 or 20 years. They simply had to have an excursion assignment to find out about the real world. I think I was really right about that.

ROBERT E. SERVICE
Political Officer
Mexico City (1968-1971)

Robert E. Service was born in Peiping, China in February of 1937. He studied in Oberlin College and later pursued his studies at Princeton University and Stanford University. In 1961, Mr. Service entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Nicaragua, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Spain, Argentina, and Paraguay. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

SERVICE: I went to Mexico City. I was a political officer.

Q: *You were in Mexico City from 1968 to 1971 as a political officer.*

SERVICE: Political officer. Internal political reporting.

Q: *When you got there in 1968, how would you describe the political situation in Mexico? Then, how would you describe the relationship between the United States and Mexico at that time?*

SERVICE: Mexico has a very special political system, had in those days. It was a one-party-dominant system. Supposedly it was leftist, revolutionary and progressive, but in fact, the years of rule by one party, non-democratically, had led to a great deal of disaffection for the regime, particularly among the young people, as well as by the left. The PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) governments ruled by very strict measures of control. Everyone knew all this had to change sometime, but nobody knew when. The role of the internal affairs political officer was to try to identify and project the incipient trends which were eventually going to change the way Mexico was governed. Relations with the U.S. were quite good, although there was a lot of rhetoric negative to the west. The Embassy view, and that of most observers, was that Mexican governments used foreign policy issues and anti-U.S. rhetoric to mollify the left within Mexico.

It was a way of distracting attention from internal failures and shortcomings.

When I arrived in July, 1968, there was considerable ferment in student and leftist circles. The Olympics were scheduled for October. The students and left more generally decided that this provided an opportunity to force concessions out of the government. I don't recall at this point what their demands were. I'm sure there were some specific demands, but underlying them was disillusionment with a revolution that had become increasingly conservative over the years, that was viewed as being controlled by the wealthy, that was corrupt, and that gave little more than lip service to democracy. And, of course, they assumed the worst of U.S. policy. This was 1968, don't forget, and student activism was very much in fashion. It had started in the U.S. in the mid-1960s and then picked up with the opposition to the Vietnam War. There has been Paris earlier that year. And there were the events in Prague.

Beginning in July there were a number of marches staged by students and leftist groups. Finally, in early October I believe, there was a major confrontation at a place called Tlatelolco in the Plaza de Tres Culturas. That is where the Foreign Ministry was. With the Olympics due to start shortly, the government apparently decided to crush the movement. Shooting started and a good many people were killed. Nobody, to this day, has an official figure, but most think at least 200 died, most of whom were students. That was a major issue and event in world news. And the result was what the government wanted. There were no more marches or demonstrations.

Q: Were you there when the shooting at Tlatelolco took place?

SERVICE: I was in Mexico City, but not at the Plaza that day. I had been there about three months when it happened.

Q: Usually, when you are the police shooting your own students, this is often considered as bad as it gets. How did the Mexican Government get away with this?

SERVICE: They had been getting away with it for a long time. What was new, and perhaps important for the future, was that this time those killed were not from the lowest groupings in the society. In the past, when the Government had used heavy repression, it had usually been against peasants or poorer workers. When you start shooting down students, you are getting into the middle-class, to some extent. I don't know where exactly the students came from, but it seemed to indicate a degree of disaffection which perhaps hadn't existed before, or at least not so openly. That was in 1968, after the student movements in the U.S. and Europe. It was just before the Tupamaros in Uruguay and far left movements in Argentina and Chile started to attract public attention. It was something that was happening worldwide, and Mexico was a small piece of it.

Q: It is really interesting, because even in the worst of times, in Paris, and throughout Europe, 1968 was the year of the students. Basically, students weren't being shot. In fact, when we accidentally shot some students at Kent State, about two years later, it really was a culmination of our involvement in Vietnam.

SERVICE: Old ways die hard. Supposedly the government of Mexico was behind the killing of

45 people, fairly recently, down in Chiapas. They went into a town and killed 45 people. Same tactics, thirty years later. Of course, the what happens is much more visible today. The whole world knows about it. Thirty years ago nobody would have known about it.

Q: How did our Embassy react to this? We are talking about the 1968 time.

SERVICE: This was before the human rights emphasis in our policy which really came in with Carter. As I said, what happened at Tlatelolco was nothing new. The scale was greater and the fact that it involved primarily students was perhaps a novelty, but basically the U.S. Government continued to do business as usual. I don't remember if the Embassy even put out a statement? Nowadays, we certainly would. There would be something put out in Washington and probably something down there. In 1968 we were still very much in the mode of "you don't meddle in internal matters."

Q: Wasn't Echeverría the Minister of Interior or something at this point?

SERVICE: Yes, Luis Echeverría. He was Interior Minister at the time of Tlatelolco.

Q: Didn't Tlatelolco mark him as somebody to watch out for or be concerned about?

SERVICE: I think it did. In preceding decades there had been a certain tradition that the Interior Minister would move up to be president. That continued to be true in Echeverría's case and I think that his role in what happened at Tlatelolco contributed to making it so. In the PRI at that time there was still a bonus for forcefulness and for decisive action. Then, too, the Interior Minister, because he controlled the intelligence services, knew where skeletons were buried. It was a position of great power, probably still is. Didn't you see in the paper, yesterday or today, the article about eavesdropping and taps and whatnot, and records kept on people.

One of my jobs was to speculate about who would be the next president. I think the fact that Echeverría he had put himself on the line to stop the student movement gave him a leg up to be the next President.

Q: Going back to this Olympic thing, who was the President?

SERVICE: When I got there it was Díaz Ordaz, who had been president since 1964. He was not a very charismatic or physically attractive person. But he was not one of the more corrupt presidents either.

Q: You were looking at the opposition parties. This was in 1968 to 1971. Was it considered an exercise in futility? I mean, looking at something that was sort of kept on the sideline? How did we feel about it?

SERVICE: I think it was looked at as inevitable that someday Mexico would have a more democratic system, but no one knew when. In other words, it was not a waste of time to get to know and analyze the main opposition party, even though nobody in the Embassy or in

Washington thought that they were going to take power anytime in the foreseeable future.

Q: Was a difference seen between the PAN [Partido Acción Nacional] and the PRI?

SERVICE: The PAN was center right, the PRI center left. The PAN was not anti-Catholic while the PRI, in theory at least, continued to be anti-clerical. The PRI was corrupt, if only because it had been in power for so long. The PAN was viewed as being reformist and relatively honest, but of course had had very little temptation. I think it had won one or two city governments along the border, but not much else at that time. Of course, most of these things are the differences which come in part from one being in power, or not being in power. You're never quite sure what is going to happen if the roles change.

Q: Did you have quite a ready reception to the leadership of PAN?

SERVICE: Yes and no. They had an office downtown with maybe one or two people in it. My main contact was a person by the name of González Schmal, if I remember correctly. The head of the party lived in the north, somewhere along the border, where the PAN had had its few electoral successes.

I, personally, and maybe the Embassy, looked in a friendly manner on the PAN simply because its members seemed to say many of the right thing. They hadn't had a chance to prove that they were hypocritical, whereas the PRI had. The fact is, it was then a fairly conservative party, not necessarily with the right solutions to Mexico's problems. But it did offer the possibility of an alternation of power. It was seen as a necessary piece of the puzzle which would become stronger with time.

Q: Did you get involved at all in defending America's role in Vietnam or with Cuba? Was this something that came up all the time?

SERVICE: Yes, sure. Not daily, but with enough frequency that we knew there were always going to be those two questions if you went out in public situations.

Q: I never served in Mexico, but there seems to be this great cooperation on so many things with Mexico, across the border and all, sort of a Ministry to Department type of thing. The one place where there was a great diversion . . . it was almost as though it really doesn't make any difference, this is where we will show our independence, was on foreign policy. Is this something we thought that the Foreign Ministry viewed as sort of preserving the leftist image of the Revolution, or something?

SERVICE: Yes, I think we had that feeling at the time. That was the sop you gave to your left wing supporters, of which there were a significant number. It was relatively easy because it didn't affect vital, day-to-day, interests of the party or its more influential supporters. It was more symbolic than substantive, since Mexico at that time did not play a large international role. We at the Embassy sort of shrugged and tried to convince our Mexican interlocutors that some of their positions didn't really make much sense in terms of their own stated ideals and aspirations, but

few were persuaded.

Q: Did you ever have the feeling that you were dealing with a state that in some ways was comparable to some of the states that we were opposed to, the East Bloc, anything like that, as far as government control?

SERVICE: Sure. You had that feeling. The Government of Mexico was very arbitrary with its own people quite often. It professed one thing and practiced another. Even so, and although I had not been in the Eastern Bloc or any communist country at that time, I assume there was still much more freedom of all types in Mexico than there was there. Most important from our own policy perspective, they were generally supportive on bilateral issues, although not so much with respect to multilateral matters.

Q: How did Cuba loom in our relationship there? Was it a problem? Was there a big Cuban presence in Mexico City?

SERVICE: There was an Embassy of course, and we watched it closely, with the help of the Mexicans. I don't recall a large non-official Cuban community. Most Cubans who fled Castro's Cuba wanted to get to the U.S., not stay in Mexico. Many of those who were pro-Castro had gone back. Obviously, the U.S. government was interested in who was going to Cuba, and coming from there, and there were arrangements for facilitating that, but I was not involved.

Q: Who were our Ambassadors when you were there?

SERVICE: When I first got there in 1968, Fulton (Tony) Freeman was the ambassador. He soon retired.

Q: He was an old Latin American hand, wasn't he?

SERVICE: Yes, and a Chinese hand of sorts. He also spent time in Europe. He was somebody my family had known for a long time. He was followed by Robert McBride. He was still there when I left.

Q: How did he fit in with the scene?

SERVICE: McBride was seen as very European. He grew up in Europe and his father was a businessman. He spoke very good Spanish, very good French. I associated him with the European-type diplomat in our service, rather than the more relaxed Latin Americanist. He was rather stiff, austere, but a kindly person if you could get beneath the shell.

Q: How did Fulton Freeman operate?

SERVICE: Freeman was a very outgoing person. He was a musician, a golfer, a champion badminton player. He liked people and liked to be sociable. He had a heart attack which slowed him down a little bit. I was in Personnel at the time. Another Ambassador by the name of Tello,

wanted to be the Ambassador to Mexico. He kept calling up to see how he was, hoping perhaps that Tony would have to retire. McBride was quite the opposite. McBride was a Europeanist. He was very quiet, subdued. Two totally different styles. If I had to guess, I would say that Freeman came across better with the Mexicans than McBride did.

Q: Did you feel in the political section, sort of through osmosis, from the Ambassador down, any change with the advent of the Nixon administration as dealing with our policy and Mexico?

SERVICE: The main change we felt, those of us on the ground, was with respect to narcotics. Narcotics suddenly became a very big issue. Soon after Nixon became President, we mounted something called Operation Intercept at the border, which resulted in tremendously long lines to get across the border, because our law enforcement people had decided to make a serious check of all vehicles. This created great distress among Mexicans and Americans on the border. We agreed to sit down with the Mexicans and try to work out improved cooperation between the two countries. I was the State officer at the Embassy assigned to that task. I spent about six weeks with somebody from Customs, somebody from the Bureau of Alcohol and Drugs (George Gaffney), as it was then called. We worked out an agreement. Later, Nixon came down to Puerto Vallarta and met with Díaz Ordaz. I was involved with Mitchell, Haldemann, and Ehrlichman, and sat in on their meetings with their Mexican counterparts. I think that Egil (Bud) Krogh was also there. The main topic was narcotics. On a lighter note, I joined John and Martha Mitchell for drinks one evening at the house they were staying in. I think they both had martinis. When we walked to the bus to go to the hotel for dinner, I held Martha's arm.

Q: What was your feeling toward the Mexican approach to narcotics then? Was this before the, big money and the really corrupting influence came in, or was it already a problem?

SERVICE: It was already a problem, but we were not sure what could be done about it. I suppose our feeling was it was that it was very difficult for Mexico to control what went on within its borders because of the poverty and the prevalence of corruption. There was also an attitude on the part of the Mexicans, rarely openly expressed, that it was okay to profit at the expense of the Americans. In retrospect, the elevation of drugs to a high place on the bilateral agenda was probably important in forcing the Mexicans to come to grips with the problems of their own governance, the lack of real democracy and accountability, the shortcomings of the courts, etc. But at the time it probably was unrealistic to expect a high degree of effectiveness against drugs. It doesn't mean you don't try. But, you don't go in feeling very optimistic.

Q: Was there a problem in the fact that at a small level, we had quite a few Americans in jail for dealing or carrying narcotics? We are not talking about big dealers, but we are talking about all of them. So, middle-class sons and daughters of Americans were caught up in jail. Was this an inhibitor as far as pushing any anti-drug program at that time?

SERVICE: I don't remember that. I don't know how many Americans were in jail in Mexico at that time. I don't remember it being raised in our internal discussions. Our marching orders were to do whatever we could to get them, the Mexicans, to take more effective action, to provide greater cooperation in the battle against drugs.

Q: As a political officer, what was your impression of the faculty and the students at the University? These are always little worlds of their own, aren't they, in Latin America?

SERVICE: I didn't have much first-hand contact with them. My impression was that they were standard Latin American leftists of that period. You had to get beyond UNAM, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, to the Colegio de México to find serious scholars by our definition. It was a private institution, or quasi-private, geared more toward graduates. There were a few others that were more business or technology oriented that also turned out good graduates. Much later in my career I came across an explanation for why most Latin American university students are leftist. When there are few books and other resources, it is hard to amass learning piece by piece, perhaps eventually arriving at a coherent opinion or hypothesis. But you don't need much infrastructure to imagine how the world works or what are the real reasons behind events. There is a great temptation to start with the theory and make reality conform.

Q: In so many countries, universities seem to get taken over by Marxists who get the enthusiastic support of their students until the students graduate. They immediately turn around and become good, solid capitalists, or the equivalent thereof. Did we devote much time and effort to the universities when you were there?

SERVICE: Mexico City is such a big place. UNAM such a huge place. I'm not sure we devoted very much resources to it. I'm sure that USIS [United States Information Service] had some programs to try to get our view of the world in there, but they were probably a drop in the bucket compared to the size and the structure. Unlike some of the smaller places I have served, where access was easier, I don't remember much effort to get close to the universities in Mexico. Maybe we figured they were too tough a nut to crack. Or, as you suggest, that most would eventually become more conservative.

Q: It was a write-off?

SERVICE: It was a write-off in the sense that this is a phase many Latin American students go through and eventually most become less critical of the U.S., and more critical of their own institutions and leaders.

Q: Were we seeing a division between Mexico City and its neutrality and the northern provinces? Was Mexico a divided country in how it viewed the U.S.?

SERVICE: Yes, there was some of that. The north being more influenced by the U.S., and the U.S. example of democracy and how the government doesn't always have to be corrupt. Businesses also have responsibilities, not simply to get contracts, but to do something for the country. We found more of that in the northern tier than elsewhere. There was also a division between Mexico City and the rest of the country. The head and the body kind of thing -- the outside being much poorer than the center, and therefore having different interests and outlook.

Q: Were we looking at all, or just as political reporters, the southern part of Mexico? I think

Chiapas now is a major thing. Was that area almost closed off? Well, not closed off, but not a place we paid much attention to?

SERVICE: Chiapas didn't come up as I remember, but Yucatan did. There was a lot of labor unrest during the late 1960s in Yucatan. I remember writing reports on the background of that unrest and what caused it. This was an area where there were a lot of henequen plantations. We had a consulate in Merida. We weren't really in a position to do much more than observe and report. We had stopped our AID program in Mexico before I got there. We had what is called a residual program. There was somebody there tying up the loose ends.

Q: Did you feel that the Embassy was a loose coalition of powers? I mean, you would be doing your reporting and all, and you would have the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], and the Water Commission, Social Security, all sort of doing their thing. It was more a conglomerate rather than a unity.

SERVICE: To a certain extent, although, I don't remember that as the dominant feeling. By-and-large we got along pretty well. We communicated internally pretty well. We socialized together. There were no serious institutional antagonisms that I can recall, none that I was involved in. The law enforcement agencies sometimes fight among themselves as much as they do against the common enemy. Customs and what later became DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency] have long been notorious for that. So, too, the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and FBI. I don't know if it is time overtaking memories, but most of my recollections of internal strife come from later in my career, not from Mexico. Our relations with Mexico were so extensive even then that there may have been enough turf for everybody to have his piece.

Q: How did you go about your job?

SERVICE: Probably in a too-bookish a manner. I read a lot. I would read newspapers and magazines, and things like that. I read a lot of the U.S. academic publications on Mexico. I even got in the habit of, at one point, putting footnotes in the reports, which I'm sure wasn't appreciated by Washington. It was still the days where most of our reporting was by dispatch. By then we called them airgrams. Unlike telegrams, they didn't have the same sense of urgency. They could be rather lengthy, although I don't think mine ever got into the 30 or 40 page category. I would take a problem, such as the guerrilla movements in Chihuahua and Guerrero, and read everything I could find on it, and do an all-you-ever-wanted-to-know piece about those places and their problems.

Of course, you had to do a certain amount of spot reporting too. You had to keep up with what was in the press that day. I would get those out of the way by 10:00 or 11:00 a.m., whatever was in the paper, or something that was heard overnight. Then, I would spend the rest of the day working on these larger pieces. The one I enjoyed particularly and I may have mentioned it before, had its origins in a suggestion by one of my contacts that I read a book on the style of Mexicans, Mexican politicians. It was a fascinating book. I wrote a paper on the mentality of apparatchik in Mexico. I would like to read that paper again. In those days, I never kept copies of what I wrote, and it may still be too early for it to be declassified.

History has always interested me, and I would show off that knowledge from time to time. One morning I went into the Ambassador's staff meeting -- this must have been 1970 or 1971 -- and announced "This is the 50th anniversary of having no successful coups in Mexico." I think the last one was in 1921 or so.

Q: How did you find Mexican politicians? Were they the same breed of cat as American politicians, when you got to know them?

SERVICE: I can't say that I really got to know any important ones very well. I knew some of the younger, would-be politicians. They did not seem all that different from me, from other Americans my age. Of course I am not a politician. I would say, in general, Mexican politicians are less open than their American counterparts. At least they were in that age. So much depended on position and contacts within the party, much less on personal popularity and ability to go out and convince people. Everyone was looking over his shoulder, to some extent.

Q: Well, it was closer to the Communist system in that. It is not just Communist, but there are other systems where the voting list and the candidate list are controlled. That's how you move ahead.

SERVICE: Or move back. And of course there is a lot of corruption. This was one of the main ways to make enough money for a reasonable lifestyle if you were a moderate-to-poor Mexican.

Q: I remember each time a President would retire, it was sort of horrifying to hear of these self-made millionaires all of a sudden going off to a hacienda. Did the corruption...

SERVICE: That was business as usual. We have had a good bit of it in this country until fairly recently.

Q: You were there when the changeover between Johnson and Nixon occurred. Johnson was a Texan, and really had a very close feeling toward the Mexicans. I think more than most Presidents. We had the Vietnam War. What was your impression of how Johnson was perceived?

SERVICE: I got there at the very tail end of the Johnson presidency. I don't remember him being perceived in any particular way by the Mexicans. Of course he had been badly hurt by the Vietnam War and decided not to run in 1968. I don't think the Mexicans spent much time reminiscing or talking about their great friend, Lyndon Johnson. I think they were just waiting to see who the next president would be.

Q: What was the feeling toward Nixon? Nixon was coming out of the almost-radical right, of the Republican party, but he was from California, which was always connected to Mexico. Did you get any feel for it, or did anybody care?

SERVICE: I think the more sophisticated Mexicans knew enough to know that labels don't necessarily mean very much, particularly because our interests are so intertwined. I recall that

Nixon had had his honeymoon in Mexico many years before. There was a good publicity blurb on that aspect. I think it was basically: "We got along with Eisenhower, we got along with other Republicans, we can probably get along with this one." I think there was a little bit of "I told you so," when we got to what was called Operation Intercept, about six months into the Nixon period. As I already mentioned, it pretty much closed down the border. It created all sorts of a brouhaha and unhappiness until a new level of cooperation was worked out. I was at Puerto Vallarta when Nixon came down. This must have been in 1970. The presidential meeting was uneventful. There were no particular frictions or unhappiness. Everybody smiled in the right places. There weren't any crowds of demonstrators. Of course Puerto Vallarta is not the easiest place to get to. It may have been attractive as a meeting place for that reason. There is only one road in and the same road back out.

Q: Apart from drugs, were there any other issues that we were concerned about during this time?

SERVICE: Mexico's good relations with Cuba were sort of a continuing mild irritant, but I think we probably also felt an advantage in it, too, because through the Mexicans, we were able to obtain information on Cuba that might not have been that easily available otherwise. There was some risk to the Mexican government, because all the Mexican security forces didn't necessarily agree with the public stance toward Cuba, so you got some feedback out of that. Of the border issues, I think the land question was largely resolved a little bit before I got there. There was an agreement over the Chamezal, which gave back a piece of land to the Mexicans. The Rio Grande had shifted its course many years before, putting a small piece of land that had been theirs on our side of the river. Water was a continuing problem because of scarcity. How much water each country gets, and its quality.

Q: As a Political Officer what you were dealing with was, in a way, remote from the daily substance of our relations. There was so much back and forth across the border. Towns on both sides had all sorts of relations, and all that. Here we are trying to play the great game of diplomacy. The real action was almost happening despite it.

SERVICE: Yes. Political sections are normally divided into the external affair's side and the internal affairs side. I was the internal. The external did what embassies do in most places. You go into the Foreign Ministry with your notes, and try to get them to support our position on this or that. I was on the internal side, and it was almost as academic as it was diplomatic. I was sort of sitting there, looking at a system which had a lot of impressive accomplishments to its name but was running out of steam. The questions were: How would it evolve? How quickly? And What did this mean for our interests and relations? I knew that not very much was going to happen during my time, so I could be sort of above it all.

Q: So you kept an eye on the PRI. That is basically where everything was coming from anyway.

SERVICE: Nothing was going to go very far without the PRI signing on and then controlling it.

Q: Were you, by any chance, around when Kissinger had his famous meeting down in Mexico

City where he discovered . . . it was a hemispheric meeting of our chiefs of mission and he came out of there saying that none of the people even know what NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] is. He was mad as hell.

SERVICE: No, that was later.

Q: *It must have been later because that's when he was Secretary of State.*

SERVICE: Kissinger said, "Let's get the Latin Americanists out of Latin America, and let's get officers from other areas in." There was brief flurry and then personnel practices gradually returned to what they had been previously. The person who was the Deputy Chief of Mission, while I was there, the second one, was Jack Kubisch. He profited from Kissinger's unhappiness and from what he did about it. Kubisch went off to be DCM in Paris and then, at a later date, our ambassador in Greece.

ROBERT S. PASTORINO
Economic/Commercial Officer
Mexico (1969-1971)

Deputy Director of Mexican Affairs
Washington D.C. (1979-1982)

Economic/ Political Counselor
Mexico (1983-1986)

Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico (1989-1991)

Robert S. Pastorino was born in San Francisco in 1949. His career included positions in Caracas, Lisbon, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, and an ambassadorship to Santo Domingo. Ambassador Pastorino was interviewed by David Fischer and Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1998.

PASTORINO: During the summer of 1969 we received a telegram assigning us to the Consulate General in Hermosillo, Mexico. I loved Mexico and was excited upon getting the posting, but I must admit I had to look at a map to find exactly where Hermosillo was located, which turned out to be close to California, only 180 miles south of Nogales, Arizona. But for us Californians, Mexico was Ensenada (where I had spent my honeymoon) and Tijuana. So, we went home to San Francisco on home leave, and after six weeks drove to Hermosillo.

Q: *How long were you in Hermosillo?*

PASTORINO: We were there from the middle of 1969 to the middle of 1971. I was the

Economic/Commercial Officer. It was a Consulate General at that time with eight American officers, including a Branch Public Affairs Officer, and perhaps twenty or more local employees. The Consular function was the highest priority, including the welfare and protection of wayward Americans. The Post issued both immigrant and non-immigrant visas to Mexicans, as well as border crossing cards, called *micas* on the border.

Welfare and protection became a big part of my job, because we had an officer that didn't want to visit prisons and get involved in the criminal stuff; as a result I was assigned to do most of it, mostly because I was a man and was the most junior officer. Of the eight of us Americans in the Con Gen, six were female and two were male. The Consul General was John Barfield, another real professional, if a little unorthodox, but a great teacher and a great judge of human character, especially with regard to politicians. Being the lowest ranking officer in the Consulate General, I had the wonderful opportunity to do a little of everything. In fact, when Barfield left the Post for short periods of time, I was nominally in charge because the other officers did not want the responsibility and were interested only in consular affairs.

Hermosillo was a city of 180,000 people, the capital of the State of Sonora, one of the richest states in Mexico. In fact, Sonora was the agricultural breadbasket of Mexico in the '60s and '70s, and was also rich in mining, fisheries, and tourism. US investment was large and important. Sonora had a pronounced democratic element, often at odds with Mexico City. In fact, when I served there, the Mayor of Hermosillo was from the opposition PAN Party, one of only two important cities in the whole country not run by the PRI, which still won 99% of the elections in Mexico.

Mexico, at that time was still a very "*macho*" society although less than now so it was hard for females to do some of the jobs. However, the Branch Public Affairs Officer, Diane Stanley, did a fabulous job in every way. She performed every one of her duties splendidly, sometimes in the face of obstinate *machismo*. Once she and I took a "moon rock" around Sonora to exhibit it. I remember well that the only person who wouldn't deal with her, even after two years, was Eduardo Healy, the publisher of the largest Sonoran newspaper, *El Imparcial*. She won over every other "*macho*" in the Consular District, which included all of the State of Sonora, and parts of Baja California Norte, and the already drug-infested state of Sinaloa.

Q: I was in Personnel during this time, and there was a tendency to put ladies of certain age, who had elderly mothers in these border posts because they had to be close to their families. So it wasn't a very healthy way of staffing these posts?

PASTORINO: Not really. We had two of those. But, let me point out that Hermosillo was not strictly a border post. It is about 180 miles south of the border, as I noted above. Actually, I was the person who helped close the original border post in Sonora, the Consulate in Nogales, shortly after the Consulate General was established in Hermosillo. The transfer was not completely consummated immediately because one of the Arizona Senators (Senator Carl Hayden, who had been in the Congress since Arizona's statehood) considered Nogales his personal overseas post and refused to accept its final closure. In fact, within days of his death the Post was closed definitively.

At that time, there was a policy of closing the posts right on the border, such as Cd. Juarez, Nogales, and Tijuana, which were not state capitals, and moving the Posts inland to the capital. Some of the border posts really did not have the political or economic importance of the capitals and it was thought that more important work could be done in the more important city, such as Chihuahua City. But the welfare and protection interest was strong on the border and most jailed Americans got into trouble on the border. Thus, for a time we had a system of two consulates within 200 miles of one another in the same State.

To put things into perspective, we also had a male employee who performed way below standards. He arrived several months after I did, and his performance created a real controversy in Sonora, and the later repercussions really taught me a lesson: Always keep the boss informed, especially when he is new, so that he doesn't get sandbagged.

When Barfield was transferred, this particular employee, a Consular Officer was the acting Consul General. He was totally ignorant of the political situation but wanted to make policy. First, he decreed that no Sonorans should get student visas to study in the US because he didn't think it was fair for US taxpayers to pay the bill. But, then he really stepped over the bounds when he refused a visa to the Governor's brother on the grounds the brother might become a public charge in the US. The Governor's private secretary, Virgilio Rios, one of my best contacts, called me and told me the Governor (Don Faustino Felix Serna) was furious. I hadn't known about the visa refusal but I did know that the brother owned one of Sonora's largest banks. I informed the Acting Consul General of this, but he was not swayed and refused to issue the visa. The State Protocol Secretary then came to see me in tears about the visa rejection. Still, the Acting Consul General wouldn't budge. Finally, I think I issued the visa, and was declared *persona non grata* in the Consulate General; I was not allowed out of the economic part of the Office, so that I couldn't "meddle" in consular affairs.

That was the situation when Elmer Yelton, the new Consul General, arrived. As part of his orientation, I arranged that he would meet the Sonoran State Legislature in a special session. Diane and I accompanied Mr. Yelton, and all went well, until one of the Sonora State Deputies, a PRI member who was a teacher, brought up the issue of the refused visa. It turned out she had also been refused a visa. Yelton was of course taken aback and offered to look into the situation.

As soon as we got outside of the Chamber of Deputies he expressed his great dismay about the fact that I had not informed him of the situation, especially since it affected the Governor of the State, and leaders of the PRI party. I remember stammering that I didn't feel comfortable about ratting on the Acting Consul General. That of course carried no weight, as it shouldn't have. The only good part of this story is that the offending US officer was removed within weeks from Hermosillo. Of course, and you won't believe this, he was transferred to another Mexican Post, where he could carry on his myopic, anti-Mexican attitude.

Anyway, for me, Hermosillo was a great opportunity because of the variety of tasks which I could perform; in reality there was not much commercial work to do. Anybody in Sonora who wanted to buy something went to Arizona. So we really didn't need a Commercial Officer. I remember one exception to that rule. The elected leader of one of the largest, most efficient

Sonoran collective farms (the famous *ejidos*), was a Communist so he could not visit the John Deere showroom in Tucson. But, he was so well known and the *ejido* had such a good credit rating that the John Deere people would go to Nogales, Sonora to do business with him.

But, there was a lot of economic reporting to do and I loved that. Remember I came from the pavements of San Francisco and except for a few months in Italy, I was not a rural or agricultural person. I hardly knew the difference between wheat and cotton. But, I came to enjoy visiting the big agricultural farms and *ejidos* in Sonora and Sinaloa, talking to the owners about the crops, and their prospects, which I then could report to Washington.

As I noted the Consul General was a man named John Barfield. John had married a *Sonorense* (a person from Sonora), and he knew everyone in the state, and everyone knew him. I had always had an interest in politics and political affairs, and John let me do whatever I wanted on the political side. To this day, some of the very good contacts that I met in Sonora are now at high levels of the Mexican government. I met them when we were both young, and we proceeded up the career chain simultaneously.

For instance, I met a great young man named Leonel Arguelles when he was a student leader in Sonora and then head of the PRI Youth. Later, he was a member of the Sonora State Legislature and a small-town Mayor when I was a political officer in Mexico City. Finally, when I was DCM at the Embassy, Leonel was a Federal Congressman and then an Undersecretary of Agriculture. Much of my knowledge of the PRI and the Mexican political system came from those days in Hermosillo.

Barfield also understood and promoted the need for Embassy and Consulate officials to get out and meet the people in order to keep abreast of events. We used to joke that he carried this to the extreme by marrying into the society. Actually, Consuelo Barfield was a wonderful lady and a big help to us. That political experience which I gained from Sonoran politics also created the story that I made my career by always being correct on my Mexican political electoral predictions. I was correct more than a dozen times on the Mexican elections, not really so difficult because I always picked the PRI and the PRI almost always won; they always won at the Presidential level. All joking aside, some pundits have publicly buried the PRI many times over the past twenty years. It still hasn't happened! It was from Hermosillo that I sent an electoral cable which gained some notice in the Embassy because it had a catchy title: "From Bacadeuchi to Yecora, the PRI Sweeps". I had in fact visited everything in between those two hamlets.

Q: Did we have any concern, or did you have any concern about the fact that the PRI seemed to win these elections no matter what?

PASTORINO: No, no concern at all. Why should we have? It was Mexico, not the United States. Continued PRI rule meant stability, a political stability most of the rest of Latin America did not have. How many other countries have had no revolutions between 1920 and today? And it was the Mexican system, that is the way they did it. Our job was to maintain relations on a good operational level and avoid any threats to the US national interest, not to intervene in their affairs.

I knew the system and its participants so well, that I was asked one night to go to PRI headquarters and help mark electoral ballots. I had followed Luis Echeverria's 1970 political campaign in Sonora, actually traveling one day with his team. Echeverria had no opposition, the PAN having pulled out, and he won a huge majority of the votes. Unfortunately, headquarters in Mexico City wanted a certain number of votes from Sonora. And they wanted the actual marked ballots, which kept many people up all night since the official desired total count was many thousand above the actual voters.

I was asked to help out when I called some of my PRI friends to congratulate them on the victory and they told me they had a big problem. I asked, "what's your problem? You got ninety-five percent of the vote". He said, "we didn't get enough votes". I said, "what do you mean you didn't get enough votes, the people voted?" "Mexico City has sent us a quota", he said, "They want two hundred thousand votes and we're several thousand votes short." I said, "how many people voted?" He said, "a hundred fifty thousand." "Well, then how can you have two hundred thousand?" "That doesn't matter". He said, "we're going to stay up all night and mark ballots". I said, "Why do you have to do that, why not just send in a tally?" "Because we have to open all the ballot boxes in Mexico City in ten days. We've got the Army waiting, the General's here, and he's going to take the ballot boxes on the airplane, and they have to be opened in front of the Congress. Someone wants to be able to count every ballot." I said good luck and stayed home that night.

My opinion of the PRI, which hasn't changed too much to this day, is that they have maintained political stability in Mexico. They have always had their conservatives, which today are called dinosaurs, their Neanderthals. But they have also had their moderates and their leftists. Within the party, there was a significant amount of democracy. If a Mexican wanted to change policy, you could do it from within the party. If you want examples of that political change, just compare Diaz Ordaz to Echeverria. Or, compare Lopez Portillo to Salinas. Or Lazaro Cardenas and Miguel Aleman, all of whom followed closely each other as President.

Mexico has gone back and forth, from left to right in economic policy, as well as in its degree of anti-Americanism, or Mexican nationalism. The PRI modernized Mexico. The PRI accounted for three or four major economic miracles. The PRI brought political stability to the country. As far as the U.S. was concerned on a geo-strategic basis, would the U.S. have been better off with an unfriendly southern neighbor where we had to deploy twenty divisions of troops, or a neighbor that was involved in a civil war on our border? That point often won the argument. For the U.S. national interest, the highest priority in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s was to have a stable southern border.

Q: Well back to the time you were there,, was there any feeling that Sonora and the rest of the area was a different world than that from what you were hearing from Mexico City?

PASTORINO: Yes, no question about it. I can sum it up in one word "Chilangos". Most Sonorenses think the people from Mexico City are "Chilangos." "Chilango" has several interpretations and can be very derogatory. It comes from the word the Indians used for sandals

like *huaraches*.

So yes, I knew there was a difference. When I later went to Mexico City to work in the Embassy I had to relearn a lot about what I thought about Mexico. The difference was that Sonorans were independent, better educated, with a higher standard of living. They also had a much different attitude toward Americans, They were much more pro-American, for the most part. They had their Communists and leftists. When I arrived in Hermosillo, the Sonora University Campus was occupied by the Army because the leftists had shut it down with a violent strike. The army sent in helicopters to occupy the campus. Every day I read the Sonoran newspapers in the morning and I had a daily subscription to *El Excelsior* from Mexico City which was the national daily, and which arrived in Hermosillo in the afternoon. I could compare on a daily basis what I knew was happening and what I read about Sonora from the Mexico City press. The differences were at times astounding.

Q: We're trying to capture the full spectrum of this. Could you talk about some of your consular cases. Everybody has consular stories, but I'd like to hear some and how we dealt with them at the time, and how we did things.

PASTORINO: The biggest responsibility was the welfare and protection of Americans. Most of my time in Hermosillo, we had a more than one hundred American prisoners in the state penitentiary in Hermosillo. It was a three hundred year old building that had been a fort during the revolution; it had been used for torture, and still was a pretty dreary, nasty, tough place. Today, it is a fascinating museum about the history of Sonora. I don't believe the US prisoners were tortured but they were not treated well. The jail was run by the inmates, the trustees, and a prisoner had to pay for food and even decent cells. If you couldn't pay anything, you got no more than a cot and bread and water. On the other hand, if you could pay you could get very nice accommodations.

I'll relate one of the cases I remember best. Normally, the Consulate would not be told immediately when a new American was arrested; but for some reason, I got a call one night from a man named Durazo, who was also known as "El Negro Durazo", who was later the infamous, hated, corrupt Mexico City police chief, under Lopez Portillo. Anyway, Durazo telephoned me, he was the Sonora State Prosecutor at that time, and I went to the District Attorney's office to see the new prisoner. He had just been picked up, within the last two hours. He was an older American, and I could tell from my experience, that clearly he was a professional trafficker, not just the normal student going down to Mexico to buy some marijuana and take it back to Los Angeles for his own use.

I talked to him. I told him I was the Vice Consul, that I could help him get a lawyer, and that the Mexicans would be very tough on him because John Mitchell, the US Attorney General under Nixon, was demanding that the Mexican put drug traffickers in jail and throw the key away. I told him I would get him a lawyer and that he shouldn't sign anything. His response was, more or less, "I don't need any advice. I only want you to do one thing for me. Out in the truck are two cases of scotch. I want you to get those cases of scotch, bring them to me, and I'll pass them out. I'll be out by tomorrow morning". I retorted "I don't think that's going to work, but it's up to you".

I told him again not to sign anything. I asked him if he spoke Spanish. He said no. I said don't sign anything and I left. I didn't hear anything for several days.

About three days later, I received a call from the penitentiary, saying the same American wanted to talk to me. I went over and met him in the warden's office. I asked him what was going on. He said, "well, they threw me in jail and they won't let me out. I gave them all the scotch and it didn't do any good". I asked what he was being held for officially. He said trafficking! I asked what they found. He said 100 kilos of marijuana in the truck. I asked whether the lawyer had come to talk to him. He said, "yeah, but kind of late". I asked why. He said because he had already signed a paper. I asked what the paper said. He said he didn't know because he couldn't read it but that he had signed it because they said they would let him go. I asked if he knew now what he had signed. He said, "It says I'm guilty of trafficking 100 kilos of marijuana". I said, "well there's nothing we can do".

I did not get emotionally hung up on most of these cases. In a few I did. In most cases, I said the Consulate would find a lawyer, and that Americans are entitled to the same treatment in the prison and legal system as Mexican prisoners. I had to tell them that the Consulate could not get them out, and no, I could not call President Echeverria, and no, I didn't think Richard Nixon would call Echeverria either. The common belief among the prisoners, especially when first apprehended was that the Consul could always get you out of trouble in a foreign country. I would tell them I would see them once a month or whenever they needed me. I told them they could buy better quarters and food if they had the money, and I would bring them the money over if it was sent to the Consulate. I could not be much more forthcoming.

Back to the prisoner I described above, I saw him on and off for the next two years. He once invited me to his cell to smoke marijuana with him. He had bought a double cell on two floors, and had a carpet, a hi-fi system, and paintings on the walls. He had a suite. Mexicans allowed girls to come in once a week if the prisoners could afford them. That American stayed at least two years. He had all the money he needed, all the drugs he wanted. Fran and I went back to visit the Museum (former Penitentiary) last year and it was a weird sensation.

Many of the prisoners were college students; I remember one from Stanford. They would come to Guaymas or Kino Bay in order to buy some dope and bring back a few grams for personal use or maybe even less. The student from Stanford was caught trying to cross the border at Nogales and they threw him into the penitentiary. He was finally released after about one year. I got to know him fairly well and when his wife came to see him, she stayed with us once. I remember when he was finally released, I went to pick him up with his wife. We came back to my house and opened a bottle of champagne and then went out to dinner. Then, he quickly left Mexico, probably forfeiting his bail.

Another horrendous case demonstrated that the US Government was not always consistent. A man and woman, unmarried, both older and mature, were picked up in Nogales for possession of drugs. He was probably the trafficker. She turned out to be a nymphomaniac and his girlfriend. They were locked up in the Nogales jail. He was on the men's side, she was on the women's side. He was selling her services to the men on his side. And, it appeared they both began to

enjoy it there. Then one day we received a cable from a US Senator from New York, a Republican. This woman was the daughter of the President of one of the biggest New York insurance companies. This Senator decided he was going to get her out; that John Mitchell owed him a political debt to get her out. The lengthy jailing lasted about three months while we tried to get her released. I had to move to Nogales to keep close to this case. She didn't want to leave without her boyfriend and nobody in Washington or New York cared about him.

We were getting cables instructing me to go see her, make her comfortable, tell her we'll do everything we can, but don't try and force the Mexicans to release her. That would be against policy. Finally her lawyer came up with a legal solution. The lawyer determined that in Mexico nymphomania is a sickness. The lawyer prepared the legal documents and convinced the Judge she should be released because she was ill, and not a criminal. Finally, they let her go. To me, this was the height of inconsistency.

There were lots of other experiences. The waters of the Gulf of California, at Kino Bay on the Sonora side of the Gulf, are very rough and dangerous. The Colorado River flows in with a heavy current in certain seasons and the Pacific Ocean tide comes in with a contrary current, both meeting near Shark Island (Isla Tiburon). This creates whirlpools and eddies which can capsize and sink boats, especially when they are overloaded and operated by inexperienced crewmen.

One day I got a report that a boat with seventeen Americans was lost in these dangerous waters. I had to go out to Kino Bay (about 50 miles from Hermosillo) and become part of the search and rescue operation. I had a close friend of mine who knew the area better than anyone. He was a fisherman and ran a restaurant out there. We consulted him when the boat could not be found. He studied the tides and the water patterns and determined where the remains of the boat would be found. After about five days a human arm was found, almost in the exact location that he described, but the remains of the boat and the rest of the bodies were never found.

Q: With the Americans that were in jail, were you able to make any representations that had any effect about maltreatment of Americans?

PASTORINO: Sometimes, with regard to prison treatment, or the legal process, yes. Not very often with regard to releases. For instance, once I received a call at the Consulate from one of the better-known, higher paid prostitutes in Hermosillo. My assistant knew of her reputation and asked me discreetly why she was calling me. "What's going on?" he asked. After I took care of his inquiry and telling my wife (so she didn't hear it from somewhere else), I went to see the prisoner and got him admitted to the infirmary. Evidently, he could not pay for the treatment so he was not admitted. He then told me that the guards (trustees) had purposely broken his arm because he could not pay off his debts to them; they actually held him down and broke the arm to teach him a lesson. This was one example of the power of the trustee/guards; even the warden was afraid of them. I personally almost never entered into the cell-blocks myself; I would meet the prisoners in the warden's office.

The prison was also notorious for having drugs inside and readily available. One day, the warden noticed that the baseballs which were hit outside of the prison exercise yard into the street were

always retrieved by the same prisoner when thrown back. Upon closer inspection it turned out that the balls thrown back had been hollowed out and filled with marijuana. In another case, it was discovered that wooden tables that were manufactured in the prison were being returned; you guessed it, the table legs were hollow and filled with marijuana upon their return.

At times, I would go to the Mexican authorities to ask on the prisoners' behalf how much the bail would be. Under the Mexican system, if you paid enough bail, you would often be released, no matter what you might have done. It was expected that the prisoner would jump bail immediately and go to the US, forfeiting the bail to whichever Mexican official had collected it. Jumping bail did not make the Mexicans unhappy in most cases. Someone made some money. The Mexican authorities were excellent at calculating how much a prisoner could afford or how much he could borrow from his family or friends. It would take them five minutes to figure it out and then the judge would set the bail a little higher, in order to squeeze a little bit more. At times, I would work with the lawyer to get the bail lowered. Sometimes it worked; other times it didn't.

But I never marched in to demand that the Warden or Governor release an American prisoner. At times, this job could be a little schizophrenic, in that the US official policy was that the Mexicans should convict the Americans, lock them up, and throw the key away, this as a warning to potential traffickers. On the other hand, the consular officials were also charged with protecting the American citizens.

I learned a lot about how the Mexican legal system worked in actual practice. What I had to learn was the reality of the system, and how to work within it. Regardless of the ethics or morality of it, it was Mexico's system. For instance, once I helped a frantic US Government (not State Department) official get his valuable house trailer out of Mexico which he had brought into the country illegally by not getting a permit. When he was ready to depart, the Mexican vehicular authorities asked for the permit, and told him he couldn't have his RV without paying a hefty fine. Someone recognized a great opportunity for a bribe or *mordida*.

I resolved the problem by arranging a very quiet meeting in the major Nogales hotel for the US official and the Chief of the Motor Vehicle Division, letting the American know what the appropriate payment would be. He begged me to do it for him, or at least accompany him, but I didn't want that direct involvement, so I waited outside. All went well, the official left Mexico with his precious trailer. I found out later why the Motor Vehicle Director always had a brand new car when he invited me to lunch; it had been confiscated or stolen, often from Americans, and he was using it. Much later in my career I worked on a bilateral agreement with Mexico for the identification and return of American stolen vehicles.

Before leaving the Hermosillo assignment, I should mention some personal matters which are very important in a foreign assignment to the successful carrying out of one's duties. Living overseas makes the foreign service job much different from domestic jobs. The handling and management of everyday problems is all-important to a successful assignment.

For instance, usually FSO housing is relatively nice, and always paid for by the Government, either directly, or in those days through an allowance passed on by the Officer to the landlord.

Upon arriving in Hermosillo, we were assigned a house which had been leased by the Consulate, but we had to negotiate with the landlord. The house was in working class neighborhood, the only Consulate residence not in the Petit District where the millionaires lived. Our neighborhood had its advantages in that we met working class Sonorenses, and lived next to the tortilla factory, which made the delicious Sonoran wheat tortillas, and the grilled, goat meat restaurant.

On the other hand, the landlord was a SOB and my wife had to have an extraordinary amount of patience to deal with him. The house, which is a clinic today, had a 1920s wiring system which frequently blew the fuses when one used the 1960s appliances. Well, the landlord refused to fix or replace the circuit breaker. One day as the temperature reached 110 degrees Fahrenheit, and our son Steve was very ill, I had to replace 16 fuses in one afternoon, but still the breaker wouldn't hold. Finally, the Doctor ordered us to move to a motel with air conditioning. The landlord's response? He accused my wife of being a bad tenant by bringing termites to the house. We should have lifted his visa!!

Before leaving this assignment, I must note that Hermosillo was one of my favorite assignments. I learned many things, grew to love Mexico, became known as a Mexican expert, and we made some great friends. In fact, we were serenaded by the Consulate staff and a group of Mariachis at 2:00AM on the morning of our departure. Of course, we had to get up out of bed and invite them in for refreshments. Later that morning, I drove north through the desert from Hermosillo to Nogales, shedding more than one tear.

Deputy Director for Mexican Affairs (1979-1982)

Q: So you went back to Washington and became the Deputy Director for Mexican Affairs?

PASTORINO: Right. Ted Briggs was named Director for Mexican Affairs. I was in Colombia on a three year assignment when he was named. Ted told me he had never worked on Mexico and he knew I had some experience there, as well as the trade and commercial experience, which was very important in our US-Mexican bilateral relations. He asked me to go with him when the Deputy Director slot opened up.

I was happy to do it; in fact, I was ecstatic about the opportunity. We had been in Colombia for two years, it was long enough. I was ready to go home to Washington after five years overseas. Getting to work on Mexican Affairs was perfect. Ted Briggs was so professional, and I knew that he would be a great boss. He became a very close friend. His wife, Sally, is the most wonderful person in the world. It was a perfect assignment to get me back to Washington to really figure out how Washington works. Ted told me that he knew the politics and the State Department and he wanted me to know the policy.

So we went back. I served three years as the Deputy Director. Ted left after two years and I then served with a man named Frank Crigler, who later had an interesting career history.

I was Deputy Director, although at times I thought I was Acting Director in that Ted gave me great leeway on many issues. With regard to the whole economic side, the trade side, the

financial and commercial, I had a major role. On the political side I also had tremendous inputs. I knew Mexico from school days in California, and from my assignment in Hermosillo.

It was a unique assignment in that in addition to having a US Ambassador in Mexico, first former Wisconsin Governor Patrick Lucey, and then Julian Nava, President Carter created the office of the Special Coordinator for Mexican Affairs, which had Ambassadorial rank. Carter appointed as Special Coordinator former Congressman Robert Krueger from Texas, who was a brilliant scholar, businessman, and a recognized expert on gas and energy issues. He was from central Texas and a Democrat. He'd attended Duke and Cambridge. Of course, at that time energy, especially the natural gas trade, was a serious U.S./Mexican issue. Bob Krueger was recognized in the Congress as an energy expert; he had chaired the subcommittee. His family was in the farming and automobile business in New Braunfels, Texas. The Krueger family was a long-standing traditional, central Texan family with a German background in a German community. He had been a leader of the Texas Democratic Party and there are still Krueger protégées in Texas politics.

Meanwhile, Governor Lucey already had been US Ambassador in Mexico for two years and the Mexicans were often confused, although in all frankness, they frequently took advantage of the dual Ambassadorial situation to appeal to one when the other wouldn't help. Lobbyists in Washington did the same thing.

Once President Reagan took office, he named Jack Gavin as Ambassador. Ambassador Gavin was an outstanding all-around person. A political appointment, he had clear credentials for dealing with Mexico. He was a Mexican American on his mother's side (she was a Sonorense from Sonora), he spoke perfect Spanish and all of its dialects, and had a Master's Degree from Stanford in Latin America economics. Of course, he was also well known as a film actor, which unfortunately typed him for many people as a lightweight and ill prepared for one of the most important diplomatic posts in the world, especially liberals who didn't want to look any further than his acting background. In addition, he had been the President of the Screen Actors Guild, replacing Ronald Reagan. If you ever had an Ambassador who could tell you that he or she could pick up the phone and call Ron, Ambassador Gavin could do it, and he did it very effectively.

During my first year working on the "Mexican Desk", although it was actually an Office in itself (ARA/MEX), meaning it was responsible for only one country, as opposed for instance to Central American Affairs which covered seven countries, there was also the Special Coordinator's Office. This unique situation made the ARA/MEX Director position very interesting, complex, and delicate, always trying to balance between the regular State Department bureaucracy, and the interests of the Coordinator's Office, which was actually on paper located in the White House. Bob Krueger sat in the White House, but his staff sat with us in the State Department. In total, the combined Office of Mexican Affairs/Coordinator's staff numbered more than fifteen persons at times, probably the most number of people working on one country at that time.

The whole day to day operation at State was run by Ted Briggs as Director, who was also Deputy Coordinator. Ambassador Krueger's staff included a media person, an immigration expert, an economist, who was an expert on the Mexican economy, a political expert, and two or three others. All of the people were talented, most with Hispanic names like Cervantes and Flores, and while they didn't know the State Department, they did know a lot about Mexico, domestic politics, and the situation along the Mexico/Texas border. Ted Briggs had a big job, which he partially turned over to me, in making this hybrid office operate efficiently in order to help formulate and carry out our Mexican policy.

Q: What were some of the issues? You talk about energy and immigration, but just tick off what were the three or four major policy issues?

PASTORINO: Well, given it was Mexico, there were actually nine or ten major ones. There was the whole overall relationship and how to manage it, both from a process and from a substance point of view. How should Mexican government and the U.S. government interrelate given their history and the fact that each Government suspected the other. I learned that process can be more important than the problem. Without having the right forum to talk to one another, not much gets done. And both countries were very jealous of their sovereign and individual prerogatives, and never let the other one forget it. The presidents did not like one another and there were continual clashes of policy.

Q: Who was the Mexican President?

PASTORINO: The Mexican President was Luis Echeverria Alvarez, then Lopez Portillo. Echeverria was a leftist, although not a Marxist, who thought he was, and was perceived by many, as a God in Mexico, which meant he ranked far above the President of the United States or any other American that might be sent to Mexico. At the time of Echeverria, I would note that our Ambassador was Patrick Lucy, a political appointee not nearly as well versed in Mexico and things Mexican nor in Mexican-American relations. Lucy never did learn to speak Spanish.

To get at the process issue, we created the first of the US-Mexican Binational Commissions, comprised of about seven or eight subcommittees, each responsible for an issue or set of issues.

There was of course the Border Committee. The border had a myriad of controversial, sensitive, everyday issues which could never be solved, only managed. There was the issue of where border crossing should be built, how they should be operated, how should crossings of people and goods be controlled, etc. There was crime along the border, the environment, tourism, visas and passports, etc. There was the relationship between the border communities which was both very cordial at times, and at the same time, very competitive, especially when there was an election on one side or on the other. Border politicians used to love to make foreign policy, or at least criticize it. There were a bunch of cheap-shot artists, on both sides.

You had the relationship of Tijuana and San Diego, where Tijuana was a totally Mexican

community trying to interact with the small Mexican -American community of San Ysidro, the actual border post located right on the border, and the huge Anglo community of San Diego, located 20 miles away. There were lots of Mexicans in San Diego but they didn't have much influence. This relationship was different from the "*Los Dos Laredos*" or "*Los Ambos Nogales*". Nuevo Laredo is on the Mexican side with Laredo in Texas, a similar situation at Nogales; both often had Mexican-American Mayors and other officials. The latter two were generally very good relationships. Then there was the El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua situation. El Paso is Anglo-Mexican mixed. And you had the smaller communities: Eagle Pass, Ojinaga, Agua Prieta/Douglas, Brownsville, San Luis Rio Colorado, Columbus, and many, many more, most of which I visited at one time or another, often to work on diplomatic cross-border problems. So you had all these border problems. The one thing in common was that there were large populations which interacted on a daily basis.

You also had the whole gamut of economic, trade, commercial and financial issues. This included trade negotiations, where the Mexicans were accused of dumping or subsidizing their exports to the US, thus jeopardizing US jobs, according to many Americans. Those same Americans did not recognize that cheaper products from Mexico lowered the cost of living in the US. I negotiated several of these issues, and in fact we signed agreements on some of them such as tomato trade, intellectual property rights, and other generic trade issues. Long before the NAFTA, the US and Mexico were negotiating trade agreements. They were complex given the huge amounts of trade and investment, the tremendous economic interests involved on both sides, both having substantial access to their governments, and the tremendous disparity in the size and quality of the two economies.

You had the problem of American investment in Mexico. Where could you invest? What was the treatment of the investment? What special conditions might be posed by the Government of Mexico? What types of investments were encouraged and desired, and which ones were approved? How were the workers to be treated, and what was the relationship between the US headquarters and the Mexican subsidiary? And did the rules change and what were the repercussions of those changes? It was still the beginning of the maquiladora program, operating under the special Mexican legislation that allowed them to be a hundred percent (100%) foreign owned, and which allowed them to act fairly independently, especially in not having to pay certain tariffs and duties.

There seemed always to be less corruption with regard to the maquiladoras (also known as assembly plants, where US components were sent to Mexico to be assembled and then returned to the US) within the Mexican Government. The maquiladoras seemed to be a good deal for both: jobs and salaries in Mexico; and cheaper costs for US manufacturers, allowing them to better compete internationally.

There was the whole tourism issue. American tourists were sometimes treated badly in Mexico and constantly complained to the U.S. Government. The simple answer would have been to put on a travel warning, which would have seriously harmed the Mexican economy, given the fact that tourism was its second biggest earner of foreign exchange. And, a travel

warning would have been perceived as “unfriendly” to Mexico, even if it was protecting American tourists.

The issue of crime in Mexico and how it involved tourists or Americans who went down there to deal in drugs was always on the front burner. In fact, it became much more important as the cultivation and production of drugs for export to the US increased. I believe we already had a Bilateral Commission sub-committee on criminal activity, an issue which was so sensitive because it involves both country's sovereignty.

There was the energy issue. What right did the US have to utilize Mexican energy resources? The US clearly was running out of energy resources and had become a major world importer of oil. Mexico also had huge natural gas reserves, both off-shore and onshore, which could be easily transported for use to the US, if legal and political issues on both sides could be resolved. The Mexicans, of course, treated energy as just another product, wanting to receive the highest price possible without giving long-term price or supply guarantees. On the other hand, who wants to build a multi-million dollar pipeline without any assurance there would be gas to flow through it and its distribution network. Both sides of course never forgot the oil exploitation early in the century and the oil nationalization by the Mexicans in the 1930s. Certainly, there was no shortage of politicians or nationalists to keep reminding us of the history. Of course, if you don't have a market for the energy products (Mexico's market was much too small), it doesn't make much sense to develop energy reserves or produce products. So both sides needed the other, but it was hard work getting to solutions. That was a tremendous issue.

We had the whole consular-immigration issue, separate from the day to day border issues. What should be the US immigration policy, and how would it and should it effect Mexico which was one of the largest, most important sources of immigration, both legal and illegal. We had had the Bracero program, which had been phased out by LBJ in the sixties. We had a very special consular/immigration document which was the border crossing card, the famous "*mica*", unique to Mexico, and all important to daily life along the border. Many Mexicans living on the border possessed the "*mica*" which they had had for thirty years; it allowed them to cross the border daily with no hassle to work or shop. We got more and more restrictive in issuing them. It was only supposed to be issued to Mexicans who lived on the border so they could come across the work, shop, get their hair done, and visit. The border crossing card allowed them technically to come no more than fifty miles into the US for no more than three days. No Mexican wanted to recognize the limits of fifty miles or three days. Some thought they had a God-given right to the "*mica*", or to other types of visas for that matter, not understanding that it was not an obligation of the US to issue border crossing cards. And, to complicate it a little more, Mexicans in Mexico City didn't understand why they couldn't have a border crossing card.

You had the whole Mexican domestic political issue, which we tried to stay out of as much as possible, but were always dragged into it, by both Mexicans and Americans, each advocating one position or another. Some people early on began to call me the "PRIista" in the State Department, the representative of the PRI. I personally thought that the long political stability

in Mexico was good for the United States. I also didn't think we had a right to be trying to affect human rights issues in Mexico. Mexican political stability had avoided a Cuba, and all its unrest and failed policies. We sure didn't want guerrillas running around Mexico or another civil war. If the vehicle necessary to maintain that stability was the "Partido Revolucionario Institucional-PRI", and the Mexicans chose it, that was their choice and we should recognize and respect that, and above all not interfere with it.

At that time there was not much local opposition. There were a few guerrillas running around in the mountains once in a while, and the government and the PRI took care of them quickly. There were several political parties but they had little power or support. There were no human rights investigators to figure out how Mexico controlled the disloyal opposition. I knew how it was done. I knew that when a bus went over the cliff in Guerrero, carrying the guerrilla leader Lucio Cabanas with it into the deep gorge, it probably wasn't because the driver fell asleep. But that's how Mexico handled their problems, and I considered that was Mexico's business. But we still had to answer to academics, the media, people in the State Department, US busybodies who had no business interfering, and Mexicans living in the US. They would continually ask how the system worked, and why didn't somebody fix it? So that was another issue. Those are the main issues.

Q: You know though, we've always had this very strange relationship with Mexico. On the one hand as you said this is a big office, you have fifteen people working and yet on the other hand, Mexico has always been seen somehow as a distant second cousin which we confront only when there are problems. What was the attitude of the Desk? Did you have trouble getting Mexico on the top of the policy agenda?

PASTORINO: No, because there were some serious issues. Also, we had an advocate in the White House. That was Krueger during my first year. Krueger's basic job was to get issues with Mexico in front of the President. The rest of my time of the Desk was with Jack Gavin as the Ambassador to Mexico and when he thought an issue should be raised to the President, it got raised to the President. It might not always get treated in the State Department with as much priority as the White House gave it. Of course, it was more difficult to get Congress to deal with the issues.

Ted Briggs did a masterful job of staying on the good side of the 7th Floor at the Department as well as on the good side of the White House. So Ted was the person who had to walk the tightrope of personalities and bureaucracies. I stayed out of that part of it almost completely, although I had to be prepared when he was absent. I worked a lot on policy, where I was always heavily involved, trying to balance US domestic and political interests. There were times when I could go to meetings in the Department Economic Bureau or the Consular Bureau and I would put on my Krueger hat, telling the group what the "White House wanted to do." In many cases that was enough to carry the day.

I didn't find it difficult to espouse those policy positions, except that the process might take two hours if I were working in the normal Desk office, but it would take considerably more time to get both the necessary White House and ARA approval for a position. I also had to

worry about other US Government agencies which Ambassador Krueger on paper was supposed to coordinate. Some of these agencies resented State's role.

A key State Department person in this complicated policy process was the then State Assistant Secretary for Latin America, who was Bill Bowdler. Bowdler had tremendous confidence in Ted, and normally just wanted Ted to brief him on what was going on, which Ted could do at the regular ARA staff meetings. So for a time, we had real power in State, but at the same time more than one master. There were times when I would brief the Assistant Secretary at six thirty in the morning or eleven o'clock at night so that he would never be surprised by events.

When Reagan took power, the Assistant Secretary became Tom Enders. Enders was not as willing to sit back and depend on Briggs and the Mexican Desk. (Krueger of course left when Reagan came into power and there was no more Office of the Coordinator.) Tom Enders wanted to run our Mexican policy which put him into direct confrontation with Jack Gavin in Mexico City. And when Ted Briggs was transferred, Frank Crigler became Office Director and Enders' point man, especially in relation to Gavin in the rivalry to run the policy.

As a Foreign Service Officer on the Desk, my role was to get the policy papers moved and to get the operational things done; prepare and clear the briefing papers; talking to the Congressman; taking care of Mrs. Smith of Iowa if something happened to her kid in Mexico; make sure the Embassy was informed on policy developments and Washington desires; etc. It always involved informing several parties and making sure they all approved of actions and that all the agencies agreed on policy.

Q: Yes, but I don't think you can talk about the Mexican Desk without talking about the Gavin-Crigler fight.

PASTORINO: All right, I was and still am friends of both. I admire Jack Gavin very much. He always looked out for my career and offered to help me. I didn't need it but it was very much appreciated. Frank Crigler was a consummate professional. Brilliant guy. Very strong willed and he and Enders thought that ARA ought to run US Mexican policy and tell the Embassy what to do. It became a clash of wills and personalities. Jack Gavin wanted to get things done and didn't see why he had to defer to, or go through, and sometimes be delayed by the bureaucracy (in this case the Desk or the Assistant Secretary). He also was impatient with the often slow reaction of the State Department. Remember, Jack Gavin could go directly to the White House; an Ambassador does represent the President and Jack Gavin and the right relationship with President.

Gavin was very serious about helping to formulate and then carry out US policy. It was Ronald Reagan's policy, and Gavin wanted to implement it, and quickly. Reagan policy was to make sure US interests were served, while keeping up the best possible relationship with the Mexicans.

Q: There was no effort in those days, I mean in terms of trying to introduce market reforms,

privatization?

PASTORINO: We talked about market reform and private market capitalism but we did not try to force it. We were interested in our businesses and that they be allowed to operate. We also wanted an open Mexican market, being a large and lucrative one for US firms, which were the logical ones to supply it with every type of goods and services. Jack Gavin was a private sector guy, and understood clearly that State-run economies didn't really work. He may have talked about privatization but it was not an official policy. That was considered the Mexican's business. I personally thought that's the way it should be.

What was important to Gavin was the constant criticism of the US by the Mexican Government and media, often as a knee-jerk response to anything the US did, or as a good nationalistic tool in local politics; in any case the US was a wonderful scapegoat, for everyone, including the PRI. Well, the Mexican statements were clearly heard by Americans, both official and unofficial; and many of the agencies took the Mexicans at their word when they criticized us in unfriendly terms. Many of these Americans did not want to turn the other cheek, or didn't understand some of the real reasons for the constant carping. The criticism made cooperation difficult.

Ambassador Gavin ultimately made it clear to the Mexicans that they could not have it both ways if they wanted "the mature relationship," a relationship which they constantly demanded of the US. They wanted to be equals, very understandable, but not all Mexicans wanted the responsibility or obligations of equality. The Embassy made it clear that the US would feel free to criticize the Government of Mexico when criticized. Or on the other hand, there could be a situation in which neither side criticized the other.

Of course, Ambassador Gavin was the principal Embassy spokesman, always at the mercy of the press, which often misquoted him to make a bigger story. Being fluent in Spanish, and being Mexican-American and understanding the Mexican mentality, his criticism hit home. Of course, most Mexicans were not willing to be criticized and gave it back, many calling for him to be fired, or declared *persona non grata*. Needless to say, the Mexican criticism didn't really stop but the Gavin policy did make many Mexicans begin to understand better what a mature relationship should be.

Q: What were some of the policy issues? You described the broad range of policy issues we face but there wasn't any single, massive thing where there were differences, were there?

PASTORINO: No. They were not major, substantive issues. There were differences in how to present them to the Mexican Government, how to negotiate, how to express our positions publicly. Gavin always wanted to be firmer and wanted to press more strongly for our interests. As I noted above, he also didn't want to have the US Government constantly have to accept the often unwarranted criticism, while always wanting to "hold the US tongue," for fear of insulting Mexican policy.

As I began to say above, when we criticized the Mexicans, it increased the tension. It

increased the amount of sparks. We ended up criticizing each other much more. That would drive the State Department up the wall. Gavin would make a calm, completely factual statement, and State Department would ask why he had to say it that way. Then of course, the State Department briefer would have to make a response. And, he obviously couldn't repudiate Gavin, for both diplomatic and policy reasons, and for local domestic political reasons. Not with Gavin's prestige in the White House.

There was the process problem, which at times was as simple as using the right channels. Ambassador Gavin illustrated what he thought was the correct channel when, coming back to Washington for consultations, he went to see the President, the White House, or the NSC first, and then he went to see State Department, often telling them of a new policy.

I remember when he used to come to Washington. Actually, at the earliest moment, I was put in charge of the process of preparing then Ambassador-designate Gavin for the confirmation process. I took him around for his pre-confirmation hearings and many of his preparatory meetings within the Administration. I quizzed him the night before on the questions he might get during the confirmation hearing. I was the one who asked him, "Mr. Ambassador, you're an actor. What makes you think you can be an Ambassador." He rehearsed it the night before. He said disarmingly with a smile: "Congressman, if you'd seen any of my movies, you'd know I wasn't an actor." And sure enough one of the senators asked him the question.

So there was that kind of a clash. There was actually a time when the State Department and Embassy Mexico City just about broke relations. There was almost no contact for a short period of time. There were orders given on both sides not to talk to the other. I thought this was kind of silly and I had a close friend in the Embassy who was Gavin's Executive Assistant, that person being Don Lyman, which presented another complication. Don had been a State Department employee, a brilliant Foreign Service Officer, who had resigned. Gavin had taken him to Mexico City as his Executive Assistant, given Don's tremendous knowledge of the State Department and of U.S.-Mexican Affairs. Lyman could be very direct in his dealings, and was anxious to carry out the Ambassador's instructions, which caused some serious problems between him and the Foreign Service personnel in the Embassy (some of who were loath to recognize Gavin's credentials and position).

There were about ten days in which Don and I were the only communication channel and both of us were under instructions that the Department and Embassy shouldn't be consulting. I remember I would go home sometimes and call Don and he would go home and call back. One day Crigler asked me how I knew something that had gone on in the Embassy and I got caught. The communication crisis died out after a few days.

Actually, with respect to US-Mexican relations, the whole time I was on the Desk, we were in the mode of damage control. We never made tremendous, successful breakthroughs as we did later when Bush and Salinas were the Presidents. My time on the Desk was a period when you worked hard to control the damage, not let relations deteriorate. I used to ask myself at night: "what good did I do today". To keep from being totally frustrated, I had to remind myself that we had controlled the situation, or limited damage during the day, and that made

me feel better. That was just the way the relationship was.

Q: But you know, when I was in Washington at the Department, I had a guy in my carpool who I think was in the Economic Bureau, but he spent most of his career working on the Mexican tomato. I knew more about Mexican tomato negotiations than I ever cared to know. But it always struck me that this was a unique relationship in that micro managed issues such as tomatoes which would rarely pop up in U.S. -French or U.S.-Japanese relations I suppose.

PASTORINO: And that was the guts of many of these economic issues. When I talked about economic issues, I didn't mention very many. There were dozens of these kinds of issues, it is hard to remember all of them today, although some of them existed for many years. Fishing problems involving shrimp and turtles; and dolphins being caught accidentally by US tuna boats, or even more bizarrely, canned tuna eaten by Americans which may have been caught in nets that also captured dolphins. This latter of course led to a long boycott of Mexican tuna; you can imagine how that boycott along with the special labeling requirements affected the Mexican Government which was trying to improve the Mexican economy through increased exports and employment.

There were all kinds of fruit and vegetable issues, including diseases which might affect the US agricultural sector but were interpreted by Mexicans as protectionist efforts by the US to keep Mexican products out of the market. There was mango infestation, but only in some parts of Mexico, so we had to determine how to isolate the infected areas, which could have caused the disease to spread to US mango producers, especially those in Orange County, California. Newcastle's disease affected chickens, which were a major Mexican export, so we had to protect US chicken producers. It was always difficult to convince the Mexicans that some of these protections were for sanitary, health, and technical reasons. They of course saw it has protectionism.

One of the most controversial, difficult, and time-consuming problems was that of the tomatoes. We had tomato wars and the Mexicans burned tomatoes on Mexican highways to protest US treatment. Both Governments were heavily involved even though most of the production, transportation, processing, distribution, financing, and retailing was done by the private sector. Florida tomato growers, suffering from Mexican competition in the winter, when Mexico's growing season could produce tremendous quantities of high quality tomatoes for export, relied on the US Government for support. The Mexican growers of course appealed to Mexico City to protect them against "Uncle Sam."

Mexican vine-ripened tomatoes were and are better than those grown in Florida. Mexican tomatoes are grown differently. Mexican tomatoes were allowed to ripen on the vine so that all the flavor is produced before harvesting. Florida tomatoes, for a lot of reasons, mostly labor costs, were picked while still green and then gassed. They turned just as red and looked just as pretty but I think had a little less flavor.

Florida came to the Agriculture, Commerce and the State Departments with the most

outlandish proposals on how to protect themselves from the competition. One idea was a legal marketing order in which any imported tomatoes would have to be square, so they could fit perfectly in a square box. Or, they could only enter at certain times, but not in the winter season so as not to compete with Florida.

The US Government had to listen to these people. We had a whole series of negotiations with the Mexicans on how to regulate the trade. We also had tremendous negotiations with the Florida tomato growers long before we talked to the Mexicans. Remember we belonged to the GATT and there were certain trade provisions which must be respected. One of the reasons I went so often to Mexico was on these kinds of negotiations. Intrinsically, being a free-trader, I believed it was better to try and negotiate it out rather than just raise import barriers. I didn't want to stop the flow of tomatoes, it would be bad for the US consumer (raising prices through limited supply), and against our own and international trade regulations.

On the other hand, I didn't want to see Americans in Florida go broke. We gave the Floridians good advice many, many years before they finally took it: sell the tomato fields in Daytona and Palm Beach and put up condos and you'll make much more money. But, many of the Florida growers had been in business for many years; they were family holdings; they were profitable; and most did not want to be property developers. But, many of them have since gone into the condo business.

We used to negotiate with the Mexicans to try and resolve a crisis before it became it extreme, and led to a serious deterioration in the US-Mexican relationship. This was a severe problem which may have only involved a few Americans directly but they were Americans and the crisis threatened to spill over into other issues. We constantly debated among ourselves whether to treat problems individually on their own merits, or to discuss the problems as a package, thus permitted trade-offs between the various issues.

As US Government officials, we had to be cognizant of the perception of anti-trust problems. The growers, for instance, really had to limit collaboration among themselves or there could be the appearance of price fixing. The US Government had to be careful of being caught between the various interest groups, given there were US groups allied to the Mexicans, border shippers, for instance, or consumers' groups. We had to be very cautious on how we talked to our own tomato growers. We couldn't include our tomato growers in the same room with the Mexican tomato growers at the same time because of trade restraint considerations. One time, I was actually warned not to talk to a tomato grower alone, even in the bathroom because it might be construed as illegal. I do remember though thinking about how interesting the actual substance of the dispute was: the size of tomatoes, either 13x15, or 6x9; how many would fit in a box; the difference between cherry tomatoes and red ones. All minutia, but extremely relevant to the negotiations.

Q: But the minutia, many outsiders don't realize that that is the substance of our policy.

PASTORINO: Exactly, it's minutia but it's not minutia. Most of these issues we didn't really

ever resolve. We put them off. Which meant that the negotiations were continuous. We negotiated many agreements; I even helped to sign some. But, many lasted only one season, and the problem came up in a slightly different guise the next season, with a new marketing order, a countervailing case instead of a dumping case, etc.

My first real introduction to trade negotiations was tomatoes. It was US interests (the Floridians) that brought a dumping case against the Mexicans because they claimed the Mexicans were dumping their tomatoes in the US market, thus getting an unfair trade advantage. In this case, we developed about nine possible formulas on how to prove whether it was dumping or not, and if so, at what levels so that anti-dumping duties could be levied on the product. And these formulas came up with levels of dumping anywhere between zero and twenty five or thirty percent. So according to the legal process, there had to be a preliminary finding which was done by the bureaucrats. And the bureaucrats determined that there was a preliminary finding of dumping of about fifteen percent.

At this time Governor Lucey was the Ambassador, President Carter was in the White House and a Herbert Kahn was the anti-inflation czar. The tomato dispute and its conclusion were important in that it taught me a very interesting lesson about trade policy and politics. The case finally came down to a final determination: will dumping be found or not? The determination reached the highest levels of the White House and the case became at least partially domestic and political in addition to an international trade issue.

I remember I went and briefed the NSC and I was in meetings day after day with Commerce and Agriculture. Which of the formulas was the correct one and how and when should it be used? (The difference in formulas involved different production costs, financing channels and costs, shelf life of goods subject to spoilage (perishability), shipping times, etc., all of which were treated only vaguely or not at all under the dumping regulations, but all of which could be interpreted or construed as unfair trade practices.)

Just two or three days before the determination had to be published (in fact, the determination was already written but without specific numbers as to the level and possible duties), Ambassador Lucey came up to Washington. We went to a meeting with Mr. Kahn, the inflation czar, and then Lucey went to meet with President Carter. One afternoon late, Ambassador Lucey telephoned the Desk. He told us there would be no finding of dumping, giving me the formula that was to be used. Anti-dumping duties would have increased tomato prices to US consumers, and that would increase the already high inflation rates in the US, thus harming the US consumer. And that's how that trade dispute was solved in favor of the US consumer and in this case also in favor of the interests of Mexican tomato growers.

I think that last fact probably illustrated one of the things I learned during my period as Deputy Director. I learned a great deal about how Washington really operates. State had relationships with all the other agencies, especially US Customs, INS, DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency], Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture, the NSC, the Labor Department, etc. I also learned there should be a close relationship between the Department at the Desk level and academia. Academia can provide background information, precedents, and

expertise, although they are usually woefully behind the times. That is what they like to get from the US Government, up-to-date information.

I also learned that the Desk should really be the key spot in the State Department for a country, the spot through which everything should be filtered. No decisions are made definitively on the Desk nor are policies ultimately decided upon, but it must be a primary input into policy making. A good Desk officer should have his hands on every issue and in every pie. He should spend much of his time outside the State Department, relating to local and domestic interests involving his or her country, as well as constantly talking to the Hill, to the media, and to academia.

Q: To what degree did Mexican-Americans try to exert pressure? Were they an effective lobby group or not?

PASTORINO: They tried to a great extent but they were not very effective. With regard to the Mexican Embassy, in those days they thought they should only talk to the Secretary of State and the President. They did not deal with Congress, partially because the Mexican Congress was a rubber stamp. They certainly did not want the U.S. Embassy dealing with any Mexican interest group except the Foreign Ministry in Mexico. So they did not want to be seen in the US as dealing with anyone but the State Department and the White House.

Some pressure was brought by Mexican-American groups like LULAC, which is still in existence, and MALDEF, as well as local Mexican-American office holders. The year the Mexican Coordinator position existed, Krueger and the Office attracted these people in great numbers. Actually, that was part of his job, to be in contact with these people. Most of these groups voted heavily Democratic.

However, it was also true that Mexican-Americans historically have not voted in large numbers. Mexicans didn't become citizens readily. Even when they did, they didn't vote. So they could not bring as much electoral power to bear as they might have. Krueger, as a Congressman, probably had very few Mexican-American voters in his district. Of course, there were a few powerful Mexican-American Congressmen or those who represented districts with lots of voters, who had real influence in the Congress and in the White House, Kiki de la Garza being one of them. He was extremely effective in taking care of the concerns of his constituents, many of those concerns involving US-Mexican relations. Another was Alberto Bustamante of Texas.

So there was some pressure but it was not very effective. But the pressures were something I thought we should be cognizant of, and respond to. They should not be ignored. And, I wanted to know everything there was to know about Mexican-American relations. I wanted to be as knowledgeable as possible; I thought it was my job. These interest groups could tell you what was going on, especially on the border. You had to take into consideration what they were saying and they often provided information that no one else could or would provide.

Q: Ok, anything else you want to say about the assignment as Deputy Director for Mexican

Affairs.

PASTORINO: Only that I once helped Ambassador Krueger teach President Carter how to give and receive an *abrazo*, a big Mexican hug. Carter was going to Mexico for a meeting with Lopez Portillo and Mexican protocol ordained a big, public *abrazo*. Some around President Carter were worried about how that would look on US television, being hugged by another man. In the actual situation, President Carter pulled it off expertly and I never heard of any backlash. I only mention this to illustrate the number of diverse things I did on the Desk. Another was to greet and welcome to Washington the new Mexican Ambassador at that time, Don Bernardo Sepulveda (of whom we will hear much more later in the narrative). Finally, I spent one whole Sunday afternoon trying to convince Kennedy Airport to allow the flaky Mrs. Lopez Portillo's car on to the tarmac so she could carry her New York shopping and poodle back to the Mexican Presidential plane.

Economic/Political Counselor (1983-1986)

Q: Mexico was not considered a hardship post?

PASTORINO: No it wasn't. For me it was like going home. I had already served in Mexico, I'd been on the Mexican Desk; I knew everyone in the Embassy, I knew how the Embassy worked and I knew the issues. And, I knew Ambassador Gavin.

Q: It didn't hurt that Gavin had asked you to come down?

PASTORINO: Gavin had asked for me. My friend Don Lyman was leaving and that situation had calmed down, although it would not have seriously affected me. It was a perfect assignment. The DCM, John Ferch, I knew very well. So it was good. I don't remember worrying about what anyone else, especially State Personnel, thought about it. I don't think it harmed my career.

Q: What was Mexico like in those days?

PASTORINO: Mexico was then ending the Lopez-Portillo Administration, and entering into the six year term (*sexenio*) of Miguel De La Madrid. It was still run totally by the PRI. It was still peaceful. The oil boom was on. It was growing in population at a tremendous rate, and the economy was booming. Mexico City was still the political, geographical, and cultural center of the country. Some people found it a difficult place to live then, and in certain aspects, traffic, noise, congestion, smog, it was; but today in 1999 it's far more difficult. During this second period of mine in Mexico, 1985/1986, Mexico City was still peaceful. It had smog but there was little crime. I rode all over the city in those little yellow VW cabs which are now off limits, according to the State Department. I walked the city day and night. It was a fascinating city for business, entertainment, history, archeology, social activity, sports. The World Cup was there in 1986.

As part of my job I traveled all over the country. I made speeches, Ambassador Gavin sending me out to speak frequently. The Ambassador and I actually had a bet who would see each one of the thirty-two states of Mexico first; I won the bet. Of course, US-Mexican relations were still

difficult and had to be managed carefully. The issues were the same. Overall, it was a relatively easy assignment. It was a bit frustrating, knowing we were not going to have a major policy breakthrough with the Mexicans. I felt comfortable in that I knew what I was doing in all policy areas, probably better than almost anyone else in the Embassy, given my long experience on Mexico. The only untoward thing was the earthquake.

Q: Tell me about that, where were you when it struck?

PASTORINO: I was in the Embassy in my office at 7:30 AM in the morning. I was one of the few people in the building. The marine guards of course were there. The building shook like hell. Since I'd gone through earthquakes in San Francisco, and the big one in Caracas in our first assignment, I wasn't scared or nervous. It shook for thirty or forty seconds. I let it shake (what else could I do) and when it stopped I decided to leave the building, have a cup of coffee for twenty minutes, and then go back to work. I took the stairs down to the lobby, and went across the street to the Sheraton Hotel. I didn't notice any great panic and couldn't see any damaged buildings on that block.

I went back inside the Embassy and upstairs to my fourth floor office after the twenty minutes like I had planned. But then I began to see the destruction from the windows and we began to get reports that parts of the city had been seriously damaged, with many major buildings downed. I was lucky in that the phones were still working and I called home and found that my family and the house were unharmed. The phone system failed almost completely shortly thereafter.

It turned out I was in charge of the Embassy. Ambassador Gavin was on his way to Europe on vacation and Deputy Chief of Mission Morris Busby was in Northern Mexico on fisheries negotiations. They had left me in charge of the Mission but Washington didn't know that.

Anyway, I came back into the Embassy at about eight o'clock. The security officer came in. Together we walked throughout the building, inspecting it for damage. The Embassy didn't open until nine o'clock so there was nobody there. We ascertained quickly that there was no damage. The Embassy is built on a set of floating water tanks, which sit on the mushy, old lake bottom. It was built and designed by Mexican architects and there was really no damage. The only thing we found was one slight crack on the back stairway, and we weren't sure it hadn't been there before the quake. We went down to the sub-basement to where the tanks are and we went on the roof which held all the communications gear. There was a little shed to cover some of the more sensitive equipment and everything looked perfect. So, we opened the Embassy.

I had been officially appointed by the DCM when he left, to be in charge. The Ambassador was to get on a plane that morning in Washington to go to Europe on his home leave. So the DCM/Charge officially appointed me. The Administrative Counselor, Doug Watson, a tremendous help and calming influence, came in at 9:00AM and we had to decide what to do.

The first thing, the highest priority, was to determine that all of the Embassy people were safe, that all official American personnel were safe. The Embassy had a telephone network, in which everyone calls everyone else in a certain order. We hurried through the calling because we knew

the phone system in Mexico City was progressively failing as the central exchanges were literally falling down. Ultimately, most of the exchanges were badly damaged or destroyed. But early that morning, some lines were still open.

I got on the phone about 10:00 AM, when we found out everyone was okay, and tried to call Washington and tell the State Department that the American and Mexican Embassy personnel were unharmed. That took some doing because I couldn't get through readily. Finally, after some trying, some genius in our Communications section patched me through to Washington through Louisiana, and Atlanta. I told the State Department Operations Center that I was speaking on behalf of the Charge and that the American staff was fine. I asked them to please alert all of our families that we were okay, because phone communications from Mexico City would be problematical. I then assured the American staff, all of whom had come to work, that their families were being informed and we shouldn't be tying up the few Embassy lines that might still be operative. I really caught hell for that from the staff later because the Department neglected to tell anyone or inform our families. Even my own sister and aged father in San Francisco weren't sure of our condition for two days. At that time, all the lines went dead.

Within the next couple hours, we made sure the local Mexican staff was ok. Most of them came in to the Embassy to work. I was amazed. Some of them came from homes that were damaged. As far as we knew, no staff person's home or structure collapsed and no staff person was hurt badly.

Doug Watson suggested that I call everyone together at about eleven o'clock in the big, Embassy central patio. To this day, Embassy people remember that event and the talk I gave. To this day I can't remember a word I said. But, people said I calmly addressed the group, telling them what had happened as best we could determine. Some people said later that I was too calm and didn't appear very sympathetic. Maybe that was because I had been through many earthquakes before, including one just as serious. I told the Mexican employees they could return home, if they thought it was necessary. I told them we would need them in the Embassy, but their personal considerations were clearly more important.

Most Mexicans actually stayed to work that day. Many stayed till midnight, and for long hours on the days thereafter. Only one American staffer refused to come in. A sad commentary. We found out later, he had spent the day at the Ambassador's residence at the swimming pool. I couldn't do anything about it even when I found out because he was a special appointee of the Ambassador. Anyway, what was so starkly true was that of the hundred and fifty Americans, one hundred and forty nine came to work.

Q: When did you know how bad the earthquake was? Could you see damage?

PASTORINO: At this time, early in the morning, people were coming into the Embassy and telling us. Then I went onto the roof and I could see buildings collapsed within two or three blocks. I really got my appreciation for the damage at eleven o'clock that night. I went to the airport to meet the Charge d'Affaires, Morris Busby, who was returning from Northern Mexico. Then I went back to the airport at three AM to meet Ambassador Gavin.

I took advantage to ask the chauffeur to go through various neighborhoods where we heard there was great damage. The most vivid memories of that night were of the Mexican people digging frantically in the piles of rubble, with no lights, no electricity, and no help from the government. The digging went on amid continuing screams from within the fallen buildings. They were digging with their hands, or small shovels, but with no heavy equipment, by the light of automobile headlights. Soup kitchens were set up by the people to keep the diggers working. A lot of people were saved that night by the digging, survivors being dug out minute by minute. Then I took Gavin through some of these neighborhoods. I think we actually got out in several places. It was the only time no one paid much attention to the American Ambassador. They were busy digging; it was dark. Gavin, who is very compassionate about these things, really felt the tragedy. It turned out later that one of his close friends, Placido Domingo, lost some his family in a collapse of a twenty five story building. He and Connie Gavin did a tremendous amount of fund-raising and charity work then and later in helping the victims.

So that morning of the quake, we determined that everyone was fine; the building was Okay. Then about noon, I left the Embassy to go find the Mexican Foreign Minister and tell them that we were okay and we're ready to help.

I found Bernardo Sepulveda, whom I had known when I was on the Mexican Desk and he was the Mexican Ambassador in Washington. I found him sitting in the front of the beautiful, renowned Foreign Ministry Building in Tlatelolco; it had been badly damaged and evacuated. I told him the US Embassy and it personnel we're okay, and ready to help. His words almost verbatim were: "Well, thank you. When we need help, we'll call you. We don't need help." Of course, he didn't fully realize the extent of the damage, but I think it was a knee-jerk Mexican reaction saying we don't need the help of the *gringos*.

Then, I couldn't contact Washington again for another four or five hours.

Q: You didn't have in those days a tac-sat phone?

PASTORINO: We did not. But we received right away, that same day, an offer from AT&T to send in a whole satellite telephone unit. In fact, it had plenty of extra lines for Mexican use. The Mexicans refused to let that unit enter for several days because of "technical" reasons; I think they were worried about control of communications. Sporadically throughout the next few days, we got a hold of Washington. So I was never sure when I would be able to talk with them. Upon his return, Ambassador Gavin asked if I would remain in charge of several of the tasks that had to be carried out.

There wasn't a lot to do during the first day. We dealt with all the American citizens who came through and wanted to tell their families they were all right. Of course, we couldn't send any messages the first day; we had them write one sentence telegrams, which we promised to send to the State Department. We set up tables outside of the front of the Embassy on the Reforma.

Q: How many Americans were living in Mexico City?

PASTORINO: We probably had twenty five thousand resident Americans and many, many American tourists. It was autumn, September. So there was probably one hundred thousand tourists. And neither one of these figures probably counted Mexican-Americans or Mexicans that have family in the States. So I don't know exactly, but we had twenty five thousand officially registered. We had to take care of them. We had to worry about the American School, the American Hospital, and other American institutions. And we began to prepare cables about the situation. In the beginning we prepared sit-reps on an hourly basis. We weren't even sure they would be able to be sent the first couple of days.

Of course, the US television networks were telling the US about the situation, and as usual it was vastly overblown, probably unnecessarily scarring American with friends or relatives in Mexico City. I remember Dan Rather telling the world that Mexico City was completely destroyed. Of course, he wasn't there that first night, and was reporting the disaster based on pictures from a few neighborhoods.

As for me, I was frequently told that I remained fairly calm the whole time. The momentum carried me; there were things that had to be done. Every minute, people came into my office to ask about a myriad of subjects, both personal and professional. The Embassy had ten or twelve other physical facilities around the city. We had the Marines Residence, the Military Cemetery, the Defense Attaché's Office, our military people at the Mexican Defense University. We had dozens of calls and cables coming in from the Consulates, from all over Mexico.

We also have to remember that there was a major aftershock thirty six hours later, about seven o'clock at night the next day. I stayed in the Embassy the day and night of the first quake until about 4:00 AM. I think I went home at 4:00AM and came back at 6:00 AM. I didn't think that was very strange. I don't remember feeling sorry for myself. It was my job.

So I was in the Embassy the next night at six or seven o'clock when the major aftershock came. That one wiped out much of the remaining communications and then collapsed many buildings that had been severely damaged the day before. The aftershock was almost as strong as the original quake and may have done even more damage outside of the City than the original shock had done.

What the aftershock did was make many people really panic. A lot of people hadn't panicked the first day; the aftershock though brought many to the edge of desperation. What could one do to stop the quakes? It did more damage to some of the Embassy's residences, fortunately, not mine. I remember the back wall of my secretary's apartment just fell out into the back yard. If she wanted to go to sleep it would have been in view of the elements. This created a wonderful story that Mary D'Adam was living with her boss; in actuality she came to live with me and my family for three weeks and I could tell the whole world that I was living with my secretary.

That second night I was in the Embassy until one or two in the morning. But I was more at ease because Ambassador Gavin and Busby were both back. I think that on the second day shipments were already beginning to come in from the States. The airport runways were thought to be damaged on the first day. The control tower operation was down so the airport was closed. By the

second day I think it could take airplanes because the runways were indeed not damaged. As you know, Mexico City airport is very close to the downtown, and thus very close to much of the damage. In fact, some of the neighborhoods close to it were badly damaged.

Americans are very generous and they immediately began to collect and provide goods to load up airplanes. Usually it was items that were needed, but sometimes Americans rush to clean out their basements and send whatever is available, and then they feel good and take a tax break. Most of the items were legitimately needed, although during the first few days even the Mexicans didn't really understand the extent of the damage and what was needed for relief. As grand and as wonderful most Mexicans were during those first few days, digging in the rubble, supplying food and water, taking people in, etc., some in Mexican customs reverted to form. They were holding some relief shipments because they wanted the *mordida*, the payoff. I think it was on day three that Ambassador Gavin sent me to the airport to see if we could get certain goods released. I don't think I succeeded and he had to go to the Foreign Secretary, and finally to President de la Madrid. On the other hand, on one of the first days, I called a Congressman in Los Angeles and asked him not to send a plane load of supplies, because they were not things that were needed.

What was especially needed was machinery to cut through the concrete reinforcing rods, oxygen, the sniffer dogs to search for survivors, tents, heavy machinery to move some of the rubble, lighting systems, and communications gear. One of the things that was most important were inflatable bladders for water. The water system was destroyed in much of the City. This is a City and urban area of twenty million people in the valley, of which seven or eight million people were directly affected by the loss of services; the loss of electricity, water, sewage facilities, all of which began to cause disease problems. Problems were compounded because the Government disaster relief office was destroyed and several of the largest hospitals collapsed during the first day, including the Juarez General Hospital where I went with the Ambassador three days later while they were still rescuing survivors, although each hour the number of corpses rose and survivors dropped. The deaths were so numerous that they had to use the baseball stadium as an outdoor morgue. They needed that much space to lay out the corpses.

Q: How many Americans were killed, do you know?

PASTORINO: No official Americans and just a few American citizens. The number of Mexicans who perished is still controversial and probably will never be known for certain. I believe it was thirty or forty thousand. Ambassador Gavin was taken up in a helicopter the day after the quake to survey the damage in order to get a sense of the assistance that would be needed. He landed and said to the press that he thought there might be more than twenty thousand deaths. To this day, the Mexicans say it was less than 20,000. They were perturbed at the Ambassador's estimate for some reason, but I am convinced the real total was closer to his estimate. Of course, the Mexicans refused to accept his figure.

I remember many stories about heroism during those next few days. One is of two American Embassy officials who attempted to save lives of people caught in downed buildings. A DEA official and a Foreign Service Officer happened to be downtown in a hotel for a breakfast meeting when the quake struck. These two guys heard screams and dove in to the flooded

basement waters of the severely damaged hotel trying to save drowning hotel guests. There were American guests at this hotel and one of the officials actually pulled out bodies.

I also remember some cases where overwork and exhaustion caused Embassy people to almost crack. Many worked most of the first 72 hours straight, either in the Embassy or outside. One threatened to jump off the balcony because of some issue. We convinced him not to; another small task accomplished. But for the most part, American government officials acted with great courage. But, the greatest credit goes to the thousands of Mexicans that dug those first few days, saving hundreds of people.

The next ten days sort of run together. We made contact with the Government and began to deliver the required assistance. We worked to get it distributed to the right places. We were constantly working on crises in trying to get one or another type of equipment. One night at eleven o'clock I went to a meeting of the dog team handlers. The French handlers, the Americans, and several other groups couldn't decide which dogs should go to which piles to seek survivors. There was actually a rivalry, even though there was plenty of rubble to go around. So I had to try and mediate.

Then, I'll never forget, one of the American dogs escaped. Because of the type of work and the rubble, the dogs could only work at sniffing for about two hours or something like that. Well, one of the American dogs escaped from the Embassy pen. Of course, these dogs, each and every one of them, were invaluable given their talents and extensive training and we had ten people out looking for this dog. People said he was stolen or the Mexicans killed him. He just escaped and we found him.

I remember we let every American, tourist or resident, come to the Embassy and write a one page telegram. I remember doing up the format. You had one sentence. I am so-and-so and I'm ok. This is the address to send it to. We couldn't allow too much more detail because of the difficulty of transmission and the number of telegrams, and then we couldn't send them by the regular cable system because it was down. We had to put thousands of telegrams in a huge sack and have them carried to Laredo to be sent out from there. It was a Foreign Service Officer who had to load these sacks and take an airplane at night.

I remember there was a big deal when we brought down to Mexican City an American company to implode buildings. Some of these buildings were ready to fall down and they were dangerous. There was a huge controversy. "Here come the Americans to blow up our Mexican buildings". Would it work? We had to give the Mayor of Mexico City a video presentation of how the implosions were done in the US. Almost always no smoke, no dust, and every brick falls right where it's supposed to. But, we did worry that it wouldn't go right and we'd kill some Mexicans standing and gawking. The first implosions were the biggest event of the week. I remember helping develop a security plan of where to put the police lines to keep the people an appropriate distance away. The event was televised nationwide, and in those parts of Mexico City which had electricity. I am sure the implosions, which were successful, saved many lives. That was due to a tremendous effort on part of Embassy people to coordinate the activity, efforts which of course were invisible to the outside.

I remember going to the National Children's Hospital, which was badly damaged and partially collapsed. We put on masks for obvious reasons, this being the fourth day. There was a television crew on hand when the rescuers carried out two little babies, maybe four days old, who'd survived for four days. Part of the success of some of the rescues was due to a new development: a television micro-camera which could be slipped down into the rubble and could transmit back to the surface signs of life. I think the Mexico City disaster was one of the first uses of this technology.

Q: Let me interrupt because I get the sense here that throughout this whole conversation, the earthquake and the aftermath didn't do much to cement good Mexican-U.S. relations.

PASTORINO: Between the Governments it probably didn't. But the Mexican people recognized how much the Americans helped by sending assistance and helping in the reconstruction. Later, the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico City, led by John Bruton, collected large sums of money and rebuilt schools. I had the great honor to cut the ribbon at one project where I went with Henry Cisneros and Bob Krueger because San Antonio, where Cisneros was the Mayor, donated the money to rebuild a school.

Connie Gavin set up a foundation, very quickly, within a month, and collected money to bring kids that were badly maimed for re-constructive surgery in Los Angeles. That continued for five years. You could see the appreciation of the families of these children as they went to the airport to welcome their children back.

Q: How were U.S.-Mexican relations during that period? Again, what you are describing is pretty prickly.

PASTORINO: It was difficult. Ambassador Gavin had to go to De La Madrid on some issues in order that we could help effectively. And, even when Presidential orders were given, they were sometimes not followed, or could not be followed. As I noted above, the Navy Secretariat, which was in charge of disaster relief, was destroyed on the morning of the quake. Even if it had not been destroyed, it didn't have much equipment and expertise. A lot of countries don't plan for earthquake. Mexico certainly did not plan for earthquakes. I hear bad things about how San Francisco plans or doesn't plan for earthquakes. I later briefed the San Francisco emergency committee on the need for being prepared. Of course, this was a huge quake, and one in which no one would have been adequately prepared.

There were hundreds of Americans who went to Mexico to help: fire brigades, structural engineers, dog handlers, nurses, communications people, and disaster relief specialists of all kinds. AID sent many of them because it was in charge of our disaster relief at that time. Most of these people interacted with Mexican lower level government officials and with the Mexican population. Ambassador Gavin went to see Placido Domingo and his relatives for instance at a building that was destroyed so he could console surviving family members. I knew that many Embassy people took in Mexicans and donated things and sympathized. So, it may be that people to people relations were actually improved. Individual, private American were given awards by

the Mexican Government. During the San Francisco earthquake in 1989 the Mexican Government responded immediately by offering to send some of the now well trained digging teams to help. Incredibly, the authorities were going to refuse until I told the Governor's Office of the stupidity and gross insensitivity of a rejection.

Q: Beyond the earthquake, how were U.S.-Mexican relations at this time?

PASTORINO: They were still difficult. It was not yet the glory days of Carlos Salinas. De La Madrid was far less corrupt than Lopez-Portillo, was not a populist, and not an enemy of the US. But he was also trapped by the system and he could not radically change policy, as Salinas was to do later. De La Madrid will become an almost forgotten Mexican President. He was not charismatic in the Mexican political sense and came across as very meek. It is true that he began some of the policies that were to free up the economy, reducing the overwhelming role of the State. Even the first steps of political opening domestically came from, the De La Madrid Administration, but all were very small steps, very tentative changes.

The Embassy's relations with De La Madrid were very good. He received Ambassador Gavin. We were beginning to talk about NAFTA at that time but it didn't progress. We did some small trade agreements, especially in the area of intellectual property rights. Trade went up; investments went up; the maquiladora program continued. We began to bug the Mexicans on human rights.

The people who were digging in the rubble after the earthquake soon became activist community groups who opposed and ignored the Government. They saw the government didn't help them after the earthquake so they tried to help themselves. They formed themselves into political interest groups, almost all outside the PRI, and tried to empower themselves. Most of them were quickly taken over, co-opted, by one group or another but they did have a taste of more power, at least for a short time. The PRI as a party was actually fairly slow in attracting these groups. The leftists took over most of them.. But the leftists couldn't carry these groups very far. They didn't have the resources.

These community groups did leave the legacy that the people could organize themselves, that it could be done, if only for brief moments. The feeling that if something were going to be done, this could be a model. Some of the opposition parties utilized these people. And, after the earthquake the US began to talk to some of these groups and to Mexico more about human rights, democracy and economic opening, etc.

Q: But U.S. policy during this period was relatively comfortable with the idea of Mexico as a one party state? Stability was our policy objective rather than democracy and whatever? How closely tied were we to the oligarchies around Mexico, group of a hundred whatever they're called in Monterey?

PASTORINO: First of all, the Embassy and the US Government was not closely tied either formally or informally with the oligarchies. Neither was the Mexican Government tied very closely to US policy; they certainly didn't follow our policy prescriptions very often. Sure they

sold oil to the US but they needed the market and we needed the oil, and continuous, uninterrupted sales were in their interest. Those sales do not somehow mean control or pressure, as the conspiracy theorists like to imagine, always without any proof or evidence that can not be interpreted exactly the opposite from their interpretation. And, in many cases they had their facts demonstrably wrong. It is up to the conspiracy theorists to prove their conspiracies, especially since they have been so consistently wrong.

American business was closely tied to business in Mexico, but not only the oligarchs. They owned some of it, but for instance they did not own or have any control, formally or informally, over the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), or PEMEX [Mexican Petroleum], two of the large Mexican companies. Even then, Mexican small and medium sized business was growing and expanding, competing with the traditional Mexican oligarchies. We should ask ourselves, "What part of the US was tied to what part of Mexican business". Some American business was very closely tied to the oligarchy because they had joint investments with the large Mexican companies and financial groups. Also, large Mexican firms were selling to the U.S. and had ties to the US purchasers.

But there were many other groups on both sides of the border who were tied together. For instance, the beginning of Mexican human rights groups or the border activist groups were actively tied to groups in the US. Was that okay? Or, was that somehow US control of Mexico? These types of relationships, and ties, have always been part of the US-Mexican relationship. They were not acting politically, they were not influencing US policy; or were they? There have always been educational ties between universities. Not much influence on policy formation from these relationships, but lots of noise and criticism, rarely very constructive.

Were we tied to the oligarchy? Yes, in some ways. The American Chamber of Commerce was an influential one in Mexico, but certainly not the Mexican economic/financial czar, as some still paint it. Some in the Chamber might have wished that be the case, but clearly it wasn't, which anyone with minimal analysis could see. The American Ambassador was the Honorary President of the Chamber; I was one of the Honorary Vice Presidents. I helped to make the policy of the American Chamber. There was nothing wrong with that. It was supporting American business.

Did we have relations with the political opposition. Yes. I knew and met with PANistas, leftists, including Marxists, Cardenistas, labor leaders, etc. I was not the only one in the Embassy that knew and met with all parts of the political spectrum. Just to leave the correct impression, I also knew and met with the PRI, the Government, and even some of those known as the oligarchs, or even the dinosaurs.

One of the stories I relate was the time I came back to the US, either when I was economic or political counselor. I came to the US on a Government program with a politician named Adolfo Aguilar Zinser. Adolfo was a radical leftist, but a brilliant, dedicated young man who was the epitome of the peaceful opposition; he became a good friend. We toured several University campuses and Chambers of Commerce in Ohio for several days, doing what became debates on US-Mexican relations. He had not yet then been elected to any office because he was on the outs with the PRI, and he couldn't get elected even as the legitimate opposition.

We went around to college campuses for three days, debating Mexican-American relations. I later knew Adolfo when he was kidnapped and severely beaten and held for three days in Mexico City. Aguilar Zinser today is a Senator for the Green Party from Mexico City. So we had contacts with those people. Incidentally, if I remember correctly, he won all the debates on the campuses, and I did pretty well in those at the Chambers of Commerce.

I knew Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and his people in those days, so that when Ambassador Negroponte came to Mexico five years later and wanted to meet the opposition, I hosted a breakfast in my residence, privately, with Cardenas and his aides. Actually, I met many of the opposition when they were still members of the PRI and in high places in the Government, especially in the Foreign Secretariat, the *Cancilleria*. In fact, I dealt daily with some of them on issues such as Central America, the Manzanillo initiative by Mexico to start peace talks, and many United Nations issues, to say nothing of bilateral issues.

Having served in Hermosillo, Sonora, a hotbed of the more conservative PAN, I knew many of these people when they came to Mexico City ten years later. In fact, when I served in Hermosillo, I knew and worked with a PAN Mayor in the city. When we negotiated with the Sinaloan tomato growers, their President was the man who later became a PAN candidate for the Presidency, Manuel Clothier.

So we had contacts with all sides, but, as diplomats and US Government officials, we used whatever influence we had with the government. Although, and here's the great misunderstanding, we didn't influence Mexican policy that much. On some issues we did get what we wanted, which was in the interest of the US and Americans. We didn't get the Mexicans to do everything we wanted.

No, they never joined OPEC. That was a major US victory, and had a role in stabilizing world oil prices. We made it very clear to Mexico that if they joined OPEC, it would no longer get trade preferences in the largest market in the world. That's the US law whether one likes it or not, approved by the US Congress, and signed by the US President. And, I was representing the US people and Government and not Amnesty International, or some do-gooder group, with its own selfish, self-centered ends. Mexico never joined OPEC. They did however abide by many of OPEC's pricing decisions. But they made those pricing decisions based on Mexican concerns, and never did threaten to embargo oil shipments to the US. Whose interest would that have helped? Also, contrary to what some theorists may believe, I never did go to Echeverria to tell him who to select as the next Mexican President. If I had, I sure wouldn't have said Jose Lopez Portillo.

On the drug issue, we used to have to argue vehemently to convince the Mexicans to do what we thought was needed to stop drugs and drug trafficking. I will say right here that drug production is wrong, and more importantly, harmful to the US. That is the bottom line and I make no apologies for following that policy. To do otherwise would have been to disregard the law and ignore US policy interests, and I would defy critics of this policy to justify their seeming support for the drug producers and traffickers, where ever they are, be it in Humboldt County California,

Culiacan, Sinaloa, or Cali and Medellin, Colombia. But, we never convinced the Mexicans to cooperate fully; that was probably impossible to do. They did not see it as a high priority of their own. At that time the narcotics business was not hurting them. (That came to change drastically.)

During this assignment I did very little on the drug problems. I could talk about them and I did with Mexicans. I knew Colombia, I had lived in Bogota and I saw the narco-traffickers and dopers take over whole parts of the country and look at Colombia now, or even five years ago. Now teetering again on the edge of chaos and civil war, much of it controlled by the unholy alliance of the narcos and the Marxist guerrillas. Both are despicable groups, no matter what some of their ideological or other supporters might want us to believe. Even five years later in the late eighties, when we really knew what happened in Colombia, we could not convince Mexicans that this was going to happen to them.

I also knew the narcotics situation from having lived in Northern Mexico. One of my responsibilities for commercial work was the state of Sinaloa, one of the first Mexican marijuana and poppy production areas. Between my Colombia experience and having seen what was happening in Sinaloa, I could tell the Mexicans what would happen to large parts of the country.

I also knew about the supposed heroes, for instance, Rafael Caro Quintero who had a major drug production area in Caborca, Northern Sonora, and who became a minor hero to some Mexicans because of his wealth; they even wrote ballads (*corridos*) about him. He was nothing but another gangster. For each child he gave a desk to in a badly supplied elementary school around Caborca, he probably addicted ten Mexican kids who saw their lives ruined.

Ambassador Gavin had some success in alerting people to the threat by going public, but we couldn't get much more cooperation, except in certain cases. For instance, when the Guadalajara drug cartels kidnapped, tortured, and killed the DEA Agent Kiki Camarena, the US Embassy and US Government put great pressure on the Mexicans to find Camarena, attempt to save him, or at least apprehend the killers. Mexican cooperation was greatly lacking during and after the kidnapping, although we did get them to search finally and find the body. In fact, a Jalisco state-owned helicopter probably carried the agent from Guadalajara to the farm nearby where he was tortured and killed. One of the kidnappers hid out in Mexico City near the Embassy and was not apprehended; some say he was allowed to escape, after the Government was alerted to his location. He later escaped to Honduras. As we shall see later, he finally paid for his crime and still is languishing in a Florida jail.

And there was the case of the Mexican medical doctor who participated in the torture by reviving Kiki Camarena before he could die, so he could be tortured further. Later the Mexican Government and its allies went to court in the US to get the obscene doctor returned to Mexico from the US where he had been imprisoned after have been lured to the US and detained. In what was a great travesty of justice, he was returned to Mexico by a US judge, where of course, he was released, probably to carry on his torture of others. I had little part in the developments surrounding the Camarena killing. I had met him on my trips to Guadalajara. Finally, I had to accompany the Ambassador to Calexico for his funeral with his family. One of my most difficult Foreign Service experiences, but worth it to honor a great American hero. And, before we

snicker, Kiki Camarena was a DEA agent formally and officially invited to Mexico by the Mexican Government to work on the drug problem. This was no covert operation; it was a joint US-Mexican program.

Q: How much did you travel around during that time as Economic Counselor?

PASTORINO: I traveled extensively. I went out of the Embassy and out of Mexico City to observe the economic situation, to make speeches, to visit with business people, and to talk with Mexicans in all parts of society. We had lots of consulates at that time: Merida, Guadalajara, Mazatlan, Hermosillo, Monterey, Laredo, Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, and Matamoros. There was ample reason to go out to visit them. I was student of US-Mexican affairs, I had a responsibility to be knowledgeable, and I wanted to see everything.

For instance I visited Chiapas on the Mexican/Guatemala border. I visited the refugee camps that the United Nations established in the lake region close to the frontier to house Guatemalans fleeing the violence and civil war. They were beautiful lakes and the camps were well organized and managed, with the refugees getting good treatment. In fact, Mexican rural farmers complained because the refugees had services, such as potable water and electricity, which they themselves did not yet have. I toured the camps because we had heard that they were being used as sanctuaries, rest and recuperation areas, for the Marxist guerrillas. I spent several days there, traveling by small plane and jeep, so I saw that part of Chiapas, where the current rebellion is taking place. I wonder how many of the current “experts” on Chiapas have ever been to Tapachula, Tuxtla Gutierrez, or the remote rural areas near the frontier, or to the Blue Lakes, or to the Bonampak area. I have actually spent the night with the Lacandon Indians in the heart of the Chiapas jungle.

Q: But what about the widely held view that people stayed in the Embassy? Or did the Embassy people get outside of Mexico City?

PASTORINO: Many people spent most of their time in Mexico City or at the beach resorts. The Embassy did have an organized program to send Vice Consuls outside of Mexico City to provide consular services on a regular basis. But, in some cases the trips were canceled, and when some of the officers went, they were only interested in consular affairs. As DCM later, I tried to install a program, where they would also report on other developments in the consular district, some of which they heard about during their regular business. The only need was to write down their impressions of what people told them: what were the new businesses? what was the labor situation? why did so many people want visas? I didn't care if it was an Administrative section officer going to Guanajuato, he or she could report on what was going on. I don't think it was a totally successful program. Many people didn't really care, or understand what was going on in Mexico; they were just there to do their own assignment and nothing more.

On the other hand, there were a lot of us who did care and did travel. I remember the AID Director, a wonderful, hard working officer, Sam Taylor. Sam knew that country like the back of his hand; he knew it so well, he could go sit in a plaza in Zacatecas, or Tlaxcala and know many people and he could tell you what was happening in the area. He could tell you where the best

restaurant was in that town and he could tell you where the lumber mill was; and he almost assuredly knew the owners of both.

Sam was basically a one man American AID mission, who was probably four days out of five on the road. Sam was a close advisor of Ambassador Gavin; the Ambassador listened to him because of his extensive knowledge of Mexico and the Mexicans. Sam, I must also point out, was one of the heroes of the earthquake disaster relief effort, receiving a large bonus for his efforts. Our AID program was small, without large investments. It involved small amounts of money for population programs, technical assistance for health, normal disaster relief, and start-up assistance for small investments, such as printing shops, cooperatives, small factories and foundries, etc. The AID program often gave us an entree into a sector or state Government that we might not otherwise have had.

Another great traveler was the Treasury Attaché, Jack Sweeney, the person who at that time probably knew more about Mexico than anyone else in the Embassy. He was expert not only on financial and commercial affairs; Jack knew a lot about everything in Mexico and was an invaluable Embassy asset, something which even the most jaded State Department Officer had to recognize. And Jack knew everyone in the political and economic area. Most importantly, they were usually often anxious to share their information and concerns with him. So a lot of people did travel. The Ambassador traveled a lot which was good, but his travel was more restricted. He could not go to the places that other officers could.

Q: One last quick question. Did we develop in the State Department a cadre of Mexican experts as opposed to people who were Latin American experts. Are there people, were there people in the eighties who as you had, made Mexico their primary focus?

PASTORINO: No. I think I was probably the exception to the rule; I did make Mexico my primary focus. As you know, I had three assignments in the country and two other assignments in Washington dealing completely with or in part with Mexico, not including what I did at the Pentagon and the NSC, where Mexico was part of my Hemisphere-wide portfolio. I can count myself as being one of the most knowledgeable, maybe not the smartest, but most knowledgeable about what's happened in Mexico and what was going on while I was there.

By being a member of the joint Border Commission established to investigate frontier crime, especially killings of illegal immigrants trying to cross into the US, often by the “polleros” who they paid to guide them, I learned about that aspect of relations. I accompanied INS and Border Patrol officers at night in helicopters over Otay Mesa (in the US) with night, hearing seeking visual equipment, and was actually involved in the detaining of illegal immigrants.

With respect to economics, as Economic Counselor, Ambassador Gavin informally made me the head of the Economic Team in the Embassy, which included the Commercial Counselor, the Treasury Attaché, the AID Director, the Agricultural Attaché, and at times even the Labor Attaché. It was an informal appointment because I was actually outranked by some of the other components of the Team, who were appointments of their respective agencies. And, in fact, a formal appointment was not necessary; the job basically was to coordinate, motivate and assure

cooperation between the disparate agencies. But, the task gave me great experience in coordinating the various interests and agencies.

As further evidence of broad experience, after one year as Economic Counselor, Ambassador Gavin asked me to head the Political Section. When the State Department balked at this unorthodox personnel assignment, at least partially because someone wanted to stop the political appointee (Gavin), the Ambassador threatened to call the White House. Of course, he didn't have to actually make the call; State quickly backed down. Anyway, I think that at that time I was one of the few persons in the whole Foreign Service to have held both the Economic and Political Counselor positions in an Embassy as large and as important as Mexico City.

As you can probably tell, I love Mexico and Mexicans, but they can be very difficult to get along with, both personally and in a policy sense. Mexico City was not and is not an easy place in which to live. I think we now have tours limited to two years. While I may understand some of the reasons, short assignments are not good for US Mexican policy. It is hard to do a good job in only two years. It takes newcomers at least one year to gain a rudimentary understanding of the place, and more importantly how to operate there. So, we didn't and still don't have a cadre. And, we suffered. We have new people come in and then we have to train them all over again. They don't know the history.

In the Embassy right now, there are probably not ten people who can name half of the President's of Mexico since 1940. And have never met even one of them. Or, who can tell you that there have been two or three economic miracles. They think there's only one because they're going through it. Or, that have never been to Chiapas. And it's too bad. The only silver lining is that we bring new people in who look at the issues a little bit differently.

DCM (1989-1991)

Q: Okay, so then it was off to Mexico. So you finally made it. You really were a Mexican specialist. By the way, let me ask you were you seen as Mr. Mexico?

PASTORINO: I was not seen as Mr. Mexico but I think I was recognized as someone to talk to in order to learn about Mexico, about the issues and especially about the history of the issues. I knew for a fact that there were not many people who had served twice before in Mexico, including in the interior and on the border, and had worked several years in Washington on US-Mexican relations and issues. I had worked on almost every issue: politics, trade, economics, welfare and protection of Americans, the drug war, the border, finance, cultural activities, etc.

Anyway, returning to Mexico was a little like going home. I arrived only days after Ambassador John Negroponte. We moved temporarily into the DCM's house on a main street in Lomas de Chapultepec. It was a nice house but too noisy and we quickly decided to move out and find another house. Fran searched diligently, looking at two dozen houses, and finally found one in a good location (in Lomas de Chapultepec, not far from the Embassy) that was the right size and was great for entertaining. The kids went into the American School, where I had been on the School Board. So it was an easy transition basically. Two of the children, Stephen and Susan,

came with us.

Working for Negroponte was not difficult. We had a very good relationship. Actually, as I shall relate this was one of the best assignments that I had from the substantive point of view. There were lots of issues (no new ones) and lots of opportunity to run the Embassy and the Consulates. Our diplomatic complex in Mexico City and the rest of the country was one of the biggest US Missions so I was kept busy. And, we lived well, in spite of the noise, congestion and pollution of Mexico City, which in my opinion, is still one of the world's great cities.

Q: I should ask you what years was this?

PASTORINO: This was 1989 through 1991, the beginning of the George Bush administration. Again I would say that working for the Ambassador was easy and very pleasurable. I probably knew a bit more about Mexico then he did when we arrived. But Ambassador Negroponte was a very quick study. During the first year, I'd say he came to me for advice. After that he didn't need that kind of advice nearly as much. He allowed me to run the Embassy to a large degree. He gave me a say and input on everything. He turned over much of the drug program to me, the whole law enforcement thing. He also gave me a large role on everything economic and again I visited every corner of the country, especially visiting and supervising the Consulates.

I remember that we didn't have many policy differences. I did make one mistake in the beginning. Within days he called a meeting of the whole staff in the Embassy patio where he introduced me and I spoke to the Mexican staff as old friends; in fact, we had gone through a lot together during the earthquake and its aftermath. I mentioned those days, and I think there was some feeling I might be trying to upstage him. But, I think that went away quickly.

The issues were the same. The drug enforcement operations were more intense, larger and more complicated. There was more growing of heroin and marijuana in Mexico, more processing, and much more trafficking through Mexico from South America. Also money laundering became a major problem. Also, as the drug business grew, corruption grew and became more pervasive so it was difficult to know who one could trust and work with. Whatever you did in Mexico you had to worry about whether they were working with you or against you. I often feared I might give important intelligence to the wrong people who might use it for their own ends.

Some of the economic issues were the same, always close to becoming serious trade or investment disputes, and they threatened to become more serious as trade continued to increase significantly. One of the first things we did was help Mexico again restructure the debt. I had begun to work on the debt restructuring at the NSC. Actually, during the transition in the US, I had met at the Watergate Hotel with the Mexican Secretary of Finance and then worked through the NSC to cooperate with the private bankers on an ultimate settlement of the private debt which of course impacted on the official debt of Mexico. In fact, a couple of memos which I wrote had significant impact on the settlement and the ultimate debt rescheduling and restructuring, both public and private.

Trade was an issue as always, with the minutia of individual disputes on mangoes, tomatoes,

steel, concrete, etc. But then President Salinas came to us and suggested we do the free trade agreement, a suggestion of Ronald Reagan many years before, which the Mexicans before Salinas had scoffed at. I remember the evening the Ambassador came back from a meeting with President Salinas and told me that Salinas had proposed what became the NAFTA. I was quite surprised, hoping that we were hearing Salinas correctly and that it was not another Mexican tactic. But, at the same time the Mexican Ambassador was proposing the same thing in Washington. It was an exciting cable that we sent that night to Washington. While the NAFTA negotiations started slowly, and much of it was done by USTR, this broad trade issue became preeminent. One of the first things I did was coordinate a cable to Washington analyzing what the Mexicans would ask for and what the US objectives should be. It was not such a difficult cable since we had been living these tendentious trade issues for years. It took almost two years to get the negotiations going, given the need for Congressional consultations, consultations with business and industry, and internal US Government coordination.

The border was an issue as always. Violence on the border. Who perpetrated the violence? What was the cause of the illegal immigration? How to stop the illegal entry into the US with the Mexicans refusing to cooperate when we really needed their assistance. Then there was always the question of who was at fault when the illegal aliens were killed crossing the frontier, sometimes dying of thirst in the desert, drowning, or getting lost. Often these tragedies were caused by the *polleros*, the Mexicans who guided them. Several illegal aliens were actually killed by their Mexican guides, far more than by the Border Patrol, which incidentally has one of the most difficult jobs in the world.

Consular issues were the same. There was always a long line at the Embassy and the Consulates for visas, everyone thinking the US had an obligation to give a visa to anyone who applied, regardless of US legislation and law. The line caused unseemly traffic jams in front to the Embassy, and fraud was of course prevalent amongst the applicants. There was even more welfare and protection of American citizens, which the consular people had to carry out without messing up US-Mexican relations. If I remember correctly, there were still eight Consulates, at least four of them were large Consulates General, larger than many Embassies. I think I had to review the annual performance reports of all nine Consuls and Consuls General, meaning that I had to visit them (a pleasure usually) and keep apprised of what each Consulate was doing and how they were doing it.

What many people told me would be a major problem for me turned out to be exactly the opposite. People warned me about Mrs. Negroponte, who people thought would be the real DCM, thus making it impossible for me to do my job. I guess this may happen at times in the Foreign Service. Diana Negroponte was, and is, a wonderful, intelligent person. She was a well-known Washington trade lawyer, who was very expert on the sometimes changing and always arcane trade law. I was in Mexico to help run the whole economic, trade, finance area and to run the Embassy. Would we clash in any way?

She's very strong willed and people thought I would be number three in the Embassy. I said let's not worry about it. We had no problems, but great understandings. When it came to running the official residence and all that, Diana told me and the Administrative Counselor, Tom Fitzpatrick,

a wonderful guy, what she wanted and I went along. On trade issues, we worked together very well as a team. She went out and made speeches, but we always coordinated on them; we consulted. On at least one occasion I substituted for her when she couldn't appear.

So it was two years which I enjoyed, the family enjoyed. I got to do all the things that DCM's get to do. I was Honorary Vice President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico. I received what I considered a singular honor when I was asked to become an Honorary VP upon my return to Mexico because normally at that time only the Ambassador and Economic Counselor were asked. But, they asked me back. With my economic background, I was an asset on their Board and so it was partially in their interest. But for me it was still a great honor. Some of our closest friends in Mexico came from the Chamber, the Brutons, the Jordans, the Donnellys, and many more.

Again, I was on the Board of the American school. I made the commencement address when our son Stephen graduated, together with the then Mexican Secretary of Agriculture. I got all the opportunities I needed to tour the country by speaking all over Mexico. I usually tried to get invited to speak on a Friday so that I could enjoy a weekend in Guanajuato, or Acapulco, or Hermosillo, or Chiapas, or Merida.

So I saw the country and knew people everywhere. Number one, it was a great assignment from the personal point of view. Number two, I had a real role and I had something to give and I continued to play a key factor in running policy.

And, three, it was finally a much more constructive assignment, given our cooperation with President Salinas on many important issues. Salinas wanted to cooperate. He didn't have the usual hang-ups about the Gringos. Although born in Mexico City, his family was from Northern Mexico, in Monterey, and he knew the US, including Texas, which was of course George Bush's home.

The two Presidents understood and appreciated each other and were able to carry out the historic NAFTA agreement which promised to, and in fact has benefitted both sides, regardless of the opinions of the critics, many of who study only parts of NAFTA, usually the parts they don't like, rather than the global impact of it. As I have mentioned, in all my previous assignments in Mexico we were always running to catch up, to do damage control. At the end of the day if we saved ourselves from a further crisis I thought that was great progress or achievement. In this assignment, as Deputy Chief of Mission, we did a lot of constructive things. We began the negotiations on NAFTA, restructured the debt, and made a lot of progress setting up things on the border.

Q: George Shultz once told me people ask him what were the most seminal events when he was Secretary of State. He laughs, he says a lot of people think that when the Berlin Wall came down that was a moment of history for me. But, it was when Mexico decided to privatize its telephone company.

PASTORINO: I agree totally with Secretary Shultz, although I would also emphasize the

NAFTA Agreement. We had a role in the privatization. We had a brilliant guy as Treasury Attaché, Jack Sweeney. Jack and I served together several times between Mexico and Colombia. Jack had the confidence of the Secretary and Under Secretary of Treasury. Jack knew Mexico because he'd been there in private and public sector capacity for twelve years. He always knew what was going on in the Finance Ministry, which ran much of the privatization effort. The head of privatization had been a long time friend and his wife worked for our tiny AID mission. So we knew what was going on. Of course, Salinas didn't need a lot of advice. He knew what he wanted. He was an economist. He was a planner. And he made money hand over fist for Mexico from the sales of the inefficient public companies. There is still some privatization to take place in Mexico, but Mexico was one of the world leaders in this field. Many countries have copied Mexico.

Q: But what made Salinas break the mold? Was it Mexico's dire economic condition? He really was the seminal of both economic and political change.

PASTORINO: The ground was first tilled somewhat by President Miguel De La Madrid. De La Madrid chose Salinas, who had been in his Cabinet as an undersecretary of planning and then Secretary. They were both technocrats and basically free market kind of people. They could see that the old system was not working. They could also see that the world was changing. They had to be more competitive.

I think Salinas looked at the whole issue from the economic side; basically how to make Mexico more competitive when globalization became the norm. And, he realized he was sitting at the door of the biggest, most lucrative market in the world, the US, so why not take advantage. He supported free trade, and privatization, and freer flow of capital and investment resources because it would force Mexico to become competitive. And, he understood that some would suffer in the process, just as under NAFTA both Mexican and US companies had to either compete, give up, or change. Salinas also came to the conclusion that the old PRI system was not working as well as it had for seventy years and had to be reformed, or democratized. As you can imagine there was tremendous opposition to that. De La Madrid made small moves but Salinas made the earthshaking ones, both economically as well as politically, for instance when he chose Luis Donaldo Colosio to succeed him.

Q: Were you in Mexico when Colosio was killed?

PASTORINO: No. By then I was in the Dominican Republic as Ambassador. But, I had known Colosio and he would have made a great Mexican President. Of course, he was a Sonorense, and he would have been good for Mexico and good for US-Mexican relations. His killing was a real tragedy.

Q: Were you in Mexico for the elections for Salinas?

PASTORINO: No. For Salinas' election I was at the NSC. I think I already talked about that, when some advisors didn't think he would take office, and that we shouldn't support him.

I had always understood that US-Mexican relations wouldn't be stable and easy. They can't be and shouldn't be. There will never be a great love affair between us. Our two countries and peoples are different. We Americans are many types of people, some close to Mexico, such as the Hispanics, and some vastly different. We must be careful to think about who or what Americans are. Some of the US, such as Texas and California, is much more like Mexico than is Boston and Michigan. They'll never be a great love affair because economic conditions are different, cultures and backgrounds are different.

But I thought our relations under Presidents Bush and Salinas were very constructive. Salinas knew what we wanted. He didn't have hang-ups about appearing to be doing our bidding because basically he was doing his own bidding. He thought what he was doing for Mexico, privatization, restructuring, opening up the economy, lowering the tariffs, encouraging foreign investments were good for Mexico. Previously foreign investment was encouraged in Mexico as long as it stayed within very limited parameters, not threatening Mexican firms. Salinas could see that this policy and attitude was not going to attract all the foreign investment that was needed. He opened up Mexico to foreign investment and modern technology, and it was not only US investment.

Salinas faced a major problem, given an economy like Mexico's, so large and diversified, and controlled in some sectors in almost medieval, or oligarchic ways; he couldn't turn it around in only six years. Mexico does have the benefit of a six year Presidential term but major changes take many years. It will take another couple of administrations, assuming that Mexico continues on the policy that Salinas carried out and which Zedillo is more or less implementing.

Q: What's the relationship between an American Ambassador like Negroponte and a President like Salinas in terms of is there really access, was he called over occasionally for a really hair down straight forward discussion? Was it formal relationship?

PASTORINO: It was formal, but it was close and constructive. President Salinas understood who the Ambassador represented and what the policies were that he was carrying out. Anytime the Ambassador wanted a meeting he got it. Of course, the Mexican President is a very busy man and still has to make sure that he's not perceived as taking guidance from the Americans. We worked through the Chief of Staff of the President, a man named Pepe Cordoba, who was somewhat equivalent to our NSC advisor, although he also worked on domestic policy. Many of the things that we talked about, we went over with Pepe Cordoba. The Ambassador also did not want to go the Palace all the time either. He didn't want it to look like he was going over there to give instructions. Plus, we did much of our daily business with the Foreign Secretariat, the famous *Cancilleria*. Just as Ambassador Petriccioli (perhaps a distant cousin of mine) in Washington did not drop in on George Bush daily, but rather dealt on a daily basis with the State Department, we did likewise.

I tell one great story. The bane of our existence as usual, and as it had often been, was the *Cancilleria*, the Secretariat of the Foreign Relations. Many of its officers and diplomats, some of whom were brilliant and dedicated, were educated at the leftist National University of Mexico City, the infamous UNAM, with its 400,000 students, many of whom spent very little time on campus, but all got a large dose of anti-Americanism. The Secretary of Foreign Relations, Javier

Solana, was not anti-American but he didn't really deal directly with U.S.-Mexican relations. That was left to a career diplomat, Gonzalez Galvez, who was the Under Secretary. He was a gentleman, and a scholar but very suspicious of the United States.

For years and years, we had tried to get Mexico to vote with us or at least abstain in the UN on resolutions condemning human rights violations in Cuba. In 1990, we decided we were really going to change Mexico's vote this time. The situation was different now, with Salinas and Pepe Cordoba at the Presidential Palace.

When it came time for the vote, the Ambassador was out of the country but I knew what the instructions were. I went over the Foreign Ministry and asked for their support on the vote, knowing full well what the answer would be. As I had expected, I was sort of diplomatically thrown out of the Foreign Ministry, but in a gentlemanly manner.

So, I went back to the Embassy and called Mr. Cordoba. I went to see him, made the talking points, and said we really would like the Mexican support. Sure enough the next morning at the UN, the Mexicans abstained on the resolution, making history. That afternoon I was called over to the *Cancilleria* and royally chewed out. They knew what I had done and told me they didn't like it. I had planned that they should be talking with Mr. Cordoba, because as I understood it, he had made the decision. That was the end of that meeting. The Mexican vote may not have been because I was so persuasive; it was because the Mexicans decided they wanted to get along with us. They didn't see it in their interest to create little squabbles.

The access we had to the President allowed us to do things like this.

On NAFTA, we didn't work with the Foreign Ministry. We had our own contacts through the Secretariat of Commerce and Trade, through Cordoba, and through the Treasury and other Secretariats. But we did spend an extraordinary amount of time keeping the Foreign Ministry informed and at least apparently involved. The two countries created a series of joint commissions and the Foreign Ministry was always included. But much of the real work was done with the other agencies. I don't doubt that if the *Cancilleria* would have been the NAFTA policy maker, we wouldn't have a NAFTA, even today; we would probably still be negotiating it.

Q: I was going to ask a question about whether or not people in the Embassy, particularly from domestic agencies or people not imbued with the spirit of the Foreign Service, were always denigrating Mexico, the air is dirty, those lazy Mexicans, and all those kinds of stereotypes, was that prevalent? was that a problem?

PASTORINO: There was some of that, but it was not prominent. At least I don't remember it. It didn't give us a lot of problems. A couple reasons why. For some people it was their second or third time in Mexico. A lot of these agencies' foreign components aren't very large so they go back to the same place for follow-up assignments, and they become better acquainted with the country.

Many of the staff were Mexican-Americans, especially from the other agencies, who knew how

to get along with Mexicans, so that ameliorated the tendency in some ways. Clearly, Mexico is not the easiest place to live, but one learns to live there; many learn to love it. The Mexicans are charming and many of the differences are just policy differences, and nothing more. We could argue all day, but become close personal friends after work, or at the beach, or on the weekends.

Finally, one could easily go to Cuernavaca or Oaxaca or San Antonio or San Diego and get out of the smog and congestion. A weekend in the US was easy, not like what I imagine it would have been from Angola, or Burma, or for that matter, even from Portugal, where we stayed three full years without going home because of the cost. So you didn't live in Mexico for very long without getting back to the States or at least outside of Mexico City.

The U.S. government supplied housing in the best parts of the city, with security. The U.S. Embassy had a commissary, which was a small, one stop store at the Embassy complex on the Reforma. I thought the prices were higher in the Commissary for many items than outside on the Mexican economy. The Commissary Association actually made money hand over fist. We had so much money at times we couldn't decide how to invest it. The American School was pretty good, with a campus better than many urban US high schools. It had a pool, a gymnasium, and a football field with teams playing both American football and soccer. All the services you needed were there in Mexico City. There was a British hospital that could do almost anything you could get done in Houston. I didn't think it was difficult living. Depending on when you lived in Mexico, it was either cheaper or more expensive depending on what was happening to the peso.

We had in some ways more problems in the Consulates, which were more isolated if they were not the border ones, and didn't have all of the services provided by the Embassy. The assignments for many people were not as interesting as those in Mexico City, most of them being straight consular jobs. I really don't remember too many morale problems, although I did have to face the domestic dispute and violence problems, some non-traditional sexual relationships, and others. There was one corruption problem within the Embassy in which several articles of furniture disappeared and I didn't catch it.

Q: How about the issue of security? Did you feel threatened? Was security a major issue in the Embassy?

PASTORINO: It was an important issue. We had two or three people on the security staff. We had bomb threats. The worst security problem I remember involved a car bomb that had been placed on the side street between the Embassy and the Sheraton Hotel. I believe Mexican security discovered the suspicious looking vehicle and informed the Embassy Security Officer. He called me and for some dumb reason I went outside with him to check the vehicle. I stood there while the Mexican police disarmed the bomb. I thought about that later and marveled at what Deputy Chiefs of Mission are expected to do. Seriously though, it was large enough to have done serious damage to that side of the Embassy housing the Ambassador's and DCM's suites.

We frequently had demonstrations in front of the Embassy, usually, but not always, directed against the US Government. The Embassy fronted on the Reforma, one of Mexico's main thoroughfares, also known as the Mexican Champs-Elysées. We had an agreement with the

Mexican police that they would keep the people across the sidewalk, across an adjoining, narrow, lateral street and a grassy area in front of the Embassy, a distance of about forty feet. The Embassy was usually a key place for demonstrations. No matter where the demonstration might have started, the marchers almost always found a route and reason to stop in front of the Embassy.

I can remember once having to go out to the front of the Embassy, just inside the locked front gate, to accept a petition from a group of rowdy demonstrators and then tell them we wouldn't be able to honor it. I think on that occasion someone proceeded to throw a bottle and broke one window. That's the worst damage we ever had. I guess that also was a good job for the DCM. I didn't mind doing it. I probably argued with them verbally as best I could, knowing I would never win an argument. I had tried that once before in the heart of the National University (UNAM) when I had been invited from Washington to speak about strategic materials. I evidently did so well in that debate that the Marxist Professor ended the class when it looked like I might convince some of the students that what he described as the "invasion" of Grenada was really the "liberation" of Grenada.

Personal security was beginning to become a problem at that time. But, not nearly as bad as I understand the situation is now in 1999, when one is not supposed to even ride in taxi cabs, not even the little, cheap VW ones with the missing front seat which used to take me all over Mexico City. But houses had bars and gates and people were told to be careful. Most people had at least a rudimentary knowledge of Spanish. In fact, some of the other agencies who sent their people overseas like Customs and INS looked for people who could speak Spanish. So that eased some of the security problem because the language facility can make one more aware of his situation and better able to cope.

A major problem was petty corruption, especially with such incidents as the police pulling you over and wanting a bribe. I remember one time Fran was pulled over, right on the Reforma about twelve blocks from the Embassy. She was driving our own car with diplomatic license plates. The policeman charged her with doing something and expected a bribe. It would only have been five or ten dollars, but rightfully, she got on her high horse and refused to pay. Her excuse that her husband worked at the Embassy didn't faze the policeman in the slightest, who reiterated to her that she would have to pay or go to jail, the standard line. She said "fine, let's go to the Embassy. Do you want to drive the car or want me to follow you?" He told her it would be bad if she went to jail. She said, "let's go to the Embassy and find out". Fifteen minutes of discussion later he got fed up and sent her on her way. I'm sure he then stopped the next two cars who were probably easier targets. I'll bet that happened on Friday afternoon, which was a bad time with the police because they needed extra money for the weekend.

In my own personal case, Mexico being so large, no one knew who the Deputy Chief of Mission was. Ambassador Negroponte had lots of security, as he should have had. But as DCM, I only had a driver. I'm not sure we even had a guard on the house. I often took the *peseros* (jitneys) to work and often, even as DCM, took taxis because they were faster than the large, chauffeur driven vehicle. I would jump into one of the little yellow taxis. Since I knew the City very well, and I knew the best routes, I could go anywhere dirt cheap, so cheap I wouldn't even turn in the

vouchers. I did all kinds of political and economic homework on the way, talking to the taxi drivers, and getting to know the residents of Mexico City. So I don't remember security as a big problem for me.

When discussing Mexico and US-Mexican relations, I may be a little bit biased now since I think of Mexico as a second home. One of the biggest problems I had personally while serving there was to make sure I was not taking a policy bias towards Mexico. I obviously never said then what I would say now publicly, that Mexico is my second country. I would never say that then for obvious reasons. I would often second guess myself and give myself a pep talk on not taking the Mexican side. Although I thought I knew better than most people that often what's good for Mexico is good the U.S., and visa versa because the two countries are so closely tied, I was careful and disciplined.

Q: How about the Consular posts? Mexico is a country that attracts enormous amounts of American tourists and American residents for that matter. Was there a problem of people getting killed? My mother for example died in Mexico. We got very nice treatment from the Consulate in Guadalajara. That kind of thing.

PASTORINO: Many Americans died in Mexico, almost all from natural causes, a few from accidents, very few from crimes, although the latter received all the publicity. These things happen to tourists and expatriates living in Mexico. Especially to older, retired people living in places like Lake de Chapala and Cuernavaca and in Baja California. But this was a problem that was manageable. This was a problem that happens in whatever country, it just happens more in Mexico.

There are also circumstances when Americans are unfamiliar with Mexico and can get into trouble. You have a criminal element in Mexico as everywhere which sometimes preys on Americans. You of course have retired people who live in Mexico because it is relatively cheap and they sometimes don't take very good care of themselves. We had a network of eight or nine Consulates, we had Consular agents all over the country.

So, there were problems but I don't remember that they very often got raised up to the country team level. I remember a couple cases where American citizens were killed or disappeared at the hand of the drug traffickers. There was at least one tragic case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Two young religious proselytizers knocked on the wrong door in Guadalajara; it was the residence of the drug traffickers and these two young people seemed suspicious; they ended up dead.

I was interested in the Consulates and Consular activities because it is one of the sections that gets closest to the host country and knows a lot about the country. During my time in Mexico, we were lucky to have excellent Consuls General in Mexico City and conscientious principal officers in the Consulates General and Consulates. While in Mexico City, I tried to keep track of what was going on in Consular Affairs that was part of the DCM's job. I frequently walked around the Consular Section in the Embassy, probably everyday, paying special attention to the Junior Officers who usually spent their first assignment in the foreign service in a Consular

Section, given the overwhelming demand overseas for visas to the US. General oversight of these young officers also was part of the DCM's tasks, and I took it seriously.

I was also all over the country visiting the consulates and I probably visited every Consular agent. And I wasn't shy about picking up the phone and calling. I did this because I also wanted to know what was going on politically and economically outside of Mexico City in addition to the consular issues. I never got on the phone just to discuss one issue.

One of the Consular issues I got involved in was Consular closures. During one regular budget cutting exercise, mandated by Washington, Ambassador Negroponte decided that rather than the time-honored strategy of cutting every budget item in the whole budget by a little, it might make sense to make some big cuts, eliminating whole programs, but saving the rest from being nibbled at, making all of them less efficient. One of those big cuts was to be the complete closure of the Consulate General in Guadalajara. I saw great risk in this, given the number of Americans there, the probable Mexican reaction (anger at being slighted), and the fact it was one of the largest and oldest US Consulates anywhere in the world. It was located in an important part of Mexico, the State of Jalisco. I agreed with the Ambassador's overall concept, a few big cuts rather than a lot of nibbles. But, I was scared of the Guadalajara closure.

I had one idea myself: end the management of the American Battle Monuments Cemetery in Mexico City. Very few people, even those living in Mexico City, knew about it or ever visited it. We could have saved \$200,000 annually. Wow!! what a mistake! I learned a quick lesson, because the Department and Congress jumped all over us. It took me about five minutes to rescind that recommended budget cut. I actually learned another lesson. The Cemetery was a beautiful place hidden in Mexico City which is peaceful and so symbolically important given the graves of the US soldiers who died in the Mexican War. I was ashamed because as well as I thought I knew Mexico, I had never visited it previously. Anyway, it is still there and we are still managing it; I suspect that will be the case for a long time.

Getting back to Guadalajara, the Ambassador decided to just close down Guadalajara. I suggested we shouldn't do it. He took into consideration my concerns, especially about reaction in the US. He understood very well that concern and decided we would only do it if the Department, which could gauge US opinion on the matter, would back us up. We got on the phone to the Assistant Secretary for Administration who guaranteed us Department support. So we went ahead.

The Ambassador sent me to Guadalajara to break the news to the Governor of Jalisco, to the Chamber, to the Consulate General, and most importantly as it turned out, to the American community. I did and the firestorm hit immediately. When I say firestorm, I mean it was all over the press. The Governor castigated the US and immediately complained to President Salinas. More importantly, all those retired Americans in Guadalajara and Lake de Chapala, and all those employed at companies like IBM in Guadalajara, complained bitterly to Washington, most to their Congressmen through an organized, and gigantic, letter-writing campaign. I'm not sure who their Congressmen really were, but they wrote thousands of letters and every single letter arrived promptly in Washington.

One of the leaders of the campaign was a wonderful, elderly American, Adolph Horn, of the American Chamber. He had owned the best ice cream company in Mexico and upon selling it had retired in Guadalajara. But it was a very active retirement. Everyone knew and loved Adolph, and he knew everyone in the Guadalajara Consular District, which also was comprised of several Mexican states in addition to Jalisco.

We knew about the letter writing campaign of course and after a couple of weeks I checked with Washington to see the reaction. The Desk told me that State Department people had actually privately told the Hill that State was not supporting the closure; in fact they were saying it was a “crazy” idea. So much for our guarantee from the Department. As I remember, the Ambassador didn’t quit easily and he sent me back to Guadalajara to talk to the people and figure out how to close the place, or at least reduce its size in a manner satisfactory to everyone.

To the Ambassador’s credit, and given State’s mandate to reduce the budget, the idea was not totally bad in a budget sense. We were talking about twelve or fourteen State Department employees, another twenty or twenty-five if you count DEA and the other agencies, plus probably seventy-five or a hundred Mexican national employees. And there were significant infrastructure costs in the buildings, communications, logistics, national employees, etc. So I went back out to Guadalajara and made the rounds of the interested parties; the idea was even more poorly received on the second trip.

The long and the short of it is that we had to give in; in the end we reduced it minimally and so had to nibble at the rest of the budget. I went back a third time and explained to everyone that we were not going to close it after all, only reduce it slightly.

Q: But this goes to the point. I have seen this happen and certainly in the times since you and I have been retired. What’s the role of Consulates today? I mean a lot of Ambassadors sitting in the capital sit there and say we don’t really need so and so out there. You’ve served in a Consulate and I’ve served in a Consulate. How valuable do you think they are?

PASTORINO: I think we need them badly, but a somewhat different type of Consulate, one that responds more to US needs and less to the host country’s needs. I think Consulates are very valuable but I would operate them differently, given the always present budgetary considerations.

Those operations which the host country needs, like visas, should be centralized and concentrated in a few large Consulates General. We shouldn’t have to be obligated to respond to every visa request over and over again, despite refusals of obviously ineligible applicants. We shouldn’t have to guarantee response so quickly to applicants. And, we should return to the concept that no applicant has a right to a US visa; it is a privilege granted by the US and should be granted on our terms. If the applicants can afford to go the U.S., they can afford to go to Mexico City or one of the big Consulates General on the border for their visas. Or use the mails. That would save lots of money in infrastructure and personnel costs. So, I would scope downward the non-immigrant and immigrant visa side, while staying within the overall parameters of US legislation which permits and welcomes foreigners to visit the US.

A lot of the passport and social security operations overseas you can be scaled down through new technology and better communications. If you need a passport, send it to the Embassy. The welfare and protection function is still needed because Americans need help, even if they have committed crimes, but that assistance doesn't necessarily have to be so quick or frequent. US citizens leaving the US should be warned about Mexican laws and the possibility that Americans will be jailed. And, importantly, the US should have a presence in the politically and economically sensitive areas of many countries.

Presence is most important in Mexico but it must be just as important in other countries that I don't know as well. I conceived of another type of consular operation and actually submitted it to the Department for consideration in Mexico but it would have worked in other countries as well. I went back to a concept we had used decades earlier, a one-person, Special Purpose Post. Ultimately, the concept was shot down for two reasons. It smacked too much of the CIA, and the bureaucracy didn't like it, I think because it would have cut some jobs.

My idea was to create a corps of a few well-rounded officers, who could live and function independently of a large supporting staff. Locate him or her in a sensitive place, a state capital, a community with a large US business or residential presence, or near a conflictive area, such as Chiapas, for instance. Give him a car and a house and a visa kit for emergencies.

His basic constituency would be the American community, and as importantly, the Governor, or the military commander, and other host country leaders. He or she can closely follow the economic and political situation, and would be there on site should a major emergency occur. Make the investment in the Special Consul and the operation as small as possible which then could be moved easily should the area decline in importance and priority. I even listed some of the places where a special purpose post would be very helpful in Mexico: Oaxaca, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Veracruz, and Tampico, for instance. Taking Oaxaca as an example, we had a Consular Agent, who happened to be in business. The agent had no idea what was happening in Oaxaca; I knew because I called a couple time to get some local political information. He did not have an inkling. He was really only interested in selling his artisan goods.

We had another guy like that, in Chiapas. Chiapas was particularly important. In Chiapas we had a Consular Agent who was an anthropologist I think. Didn't live in the capital. Lived out in San Cristobal de las Casas. Wonderful person at anthropology or sociology who had the Indians' interests uppermost in his mind. But, I sure couldn't call him to see what the Governor was up to, or would there be a strike in the U.S.-Mexican fruit-fly production plant.

I got a cable back from State in response to my suggestions. The Department began to correct my idea, expanding on it. The special person post will need a communicator! Won't it need a secretary and clerical staff? What about secure communications? Obviously the consul needs a chauffeur and a bodyguard. And, you can't expect the consul to give visas, he will need a vice-consul. All of a sudden, we were back to a regular Consulate, over-staffed, with a large, permanent infrastructure. I dropped the concept.

One more thing about the Consulates. Often we did not have the right people there. Many were too narrowly focused on consular issues, ignoring everything else, or were there for other reasons, such as family or health. They were there, especially in Mexico, for personal reasons, usually because it was close to the US. In one case, one of the worst cases of dereliction of duty I ever ran into, the Consul was there as punishment for a previous performance. Even Consuls General on occasion were uninterested in the political situation, or in providing representation, or in knowing the leadership and power brokers in his or her district. Unfortunately, sometimes Consul General slots were reserved for Consular Cone people, who might have been excellent consular officers but lacked skills in the other areas necessary to perform adequately.

Q: One last question on Mexico and maybe in general about the career. Did you engage in mentoring young officers? Was mentoring a big part of your job? Did you deal with junior officers much?

PASTORINO: Yes, I dealt with them to a great extent. I thought it was one of my most important tasks, especially as DCM, and I enjoyed it immensely. I am beginning to read about Ambassadorial appointments of people who I might have helped sometime early in their career. I didn't really consider it mentoring in a formal sense, in that I didn't call them in and say let's have a class. I talked frequently to the Junior Officers because I wanted to know what they doing, how they were doing it, what were their aspirations. This might have been even more important in Mexico, which was a visa mill, which all Junior Officers had to endure for two years at the beginning of their careers. The US Government had made an investment in these young officers and the boredom and tediousness of visa work truncated many careers at an early stage. The Junior Officers, in my experience, were extraordinary. I thought they were just top notch. But, I could see these people's enthusiasm deteriorating, rotting on the vine, as all they did all day was visas. No matter how we tried to arrange things, they ended up doing visas, sitting at the visa window all day listening to the same falsehoods and going over the same fraudulent documents, being charged by US law to determine truth from falsehood in 2-3 minutes. Rotation within the consular section, or between it and other Embassy sections often was for too short a period, or was not carried out, because there was always too much demand on the visa line.

I tried to alleviate this. Frequently, when I went to the Consulates or to make speeches or official visits, I would take a junior officer from the Embassy. At times the Consul General in Mexico City would be a little bit perturbed because it meant he wasn't getting two hundred visas done that day. But I thought it was wonderful training. I was never surprised, after my first experiences that junior officers knew what was going on. I used to encourage them, or bug them, to report what they were hearing on the visa line, or in their other contacts with host country nationals.

I always saw to it that young officers visiting the Embassy from the Consulates attended Embassy meetings. I worked hard on developing and implementing rotations which were as fair and as frequent as possible. I did this because I had had a wonderful Ambassador my first assignment, Maurice Bernbaum. He saw to it that junior officers did a little bit of everything, thus learning about how the Embassy and the Foreign Service really operated. It goes without saying, of course, that young officers are the future of the American Foreign Service.

I found that almost all junior officers were amenable to the rotation and diverse tasks. They wanted to do more. I remember one case in Mexico that a visa officer on the visa line asked the right type of questions about financial remittances to and from the US, such that she did a report which was so impressive, she was asked to brief Congressional staff on the findings.

Another Junior Officer, this one in the Dominican Republic, came up with valuable intelligence and prepared a briefing book about drug dealing in San Francisco de Macoris, a center for the drug trafficking gangs moving between the DR and New York. I suggested that the intelligence guide be used when interviewing applicants from San Francisco de Macoris, an idea some mid-level officers said was stupid because it took too much time. Unfortunately, I saw some cases where middle level consular officers didn't want their junior officers "wasting time", traveling with the Ambassador, or carrying out non-consular functions. These middle-level officers were jealous of the time spent, or in some cases, felt overshadowed by young officers performing tasks they themselves couldn't or wouldn't.

JACK B. KUBISCH
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico City (1969-1971)

Ambassador Jack B. Kubisch was born in Missouri in 1921. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947, serving at two posts, Brazil and France, before resigning to take a position in private industry for 10 years, from 1951 to 1961. He re-entered the Foreign Service as a senior officer, serving in Brazil, Mexico, France, Washington, DC, and as ambassador to Greece. Ambassador Kubisch was interviewed by Dr. Henry E. Mattox in 1989.

Q: Okay, let's go back to Mexico. Now, Mexico is equally large, as Paris. Who was the ambassador in Mexico at the time?

KUBISCH: His name was Robert McBride.

Q: Careerist.

KUBISCH: Careerist. And a very fine ambassador.

Q: What areas of responsibility did he devolve upon you as DCM?

KUBISCH: Ambassador McBride had served himself, just before going to Mexico, as ambassador in Zaire, and had also been, as I recall, the minister or deputy chief of mission in Madrid, Spain and in Paris, France. So he knew the role very well that a DCM should play and what the role of an ambassador should be.

Basically, what he did, was to allow me during my two years as his deputy, to serve as the chief

operating officer of the embassy. I really ran the embassy and all the sections and divisions of it, and supervised the 19 consulates, under his overall policy, guidance, and supervision.

It's a position, as you know, that is comparable perhaps to being an executive officer in the Navy on a ship, or executive vice-president or chief operating officer of a large corporation. So when I arrived there, he allowed me to take over those responsibilities. I learned a great deal from him and how to carry them out.

Q: What did he reserve to himself?

KUBISCH: He reserved to himself the following: He handled all cabinet level contacts. He dealt personally with the Foreign Minister of Mexico and other cabinet level officers. He also dealt with the President of Mexico.

He gave overall policy guidance to me and he would review with me the most important activities of the embassy. I would usually meet with him twice a day, the first thing in the morning, after we had read the overnight messages and news, and then again at the end of the day. There was a steady stream of messages out of the embassy, and there were hundreds and hundreds of them going back and forth with Washington every month, and maybe dozens or scores every day. I would usually reserve one, or two, or three, of those to go over with him at the end of the day, for his information and approval.

Q: Before they went out?

KUBISCH: Before they went out. Usually one, or two, or three, if he were in town.

Q: Did you have precise guidelines for the sections of the embassy as to what they could resolve on their own, for example, signing off cables and what must be bucked up to you?

KUBISCH: Pretty well, yes. Occasionally there would be a misunderstanding, but no often. I met with all the counselors of the embassy and section chiefs daily. Either as a group or, on those days when one or more of them was not present at the group meeting, I would be in close touch with them by phone or otherwise. They would come to my office or I would go to theirs. So there was not much room for misunderstanding on levels of responsibility.

Q: Well, this was the early '70s.

KUBISCH: Actually the late '60s, '69 to '71, I was in Mexico.

Q: '69 to '71, Mexico, yes. What were one or two of the major issues facing the United States in Mexico at that time?

KUBISCH: Well, one that hit me between the eyes right after my arrival there was something called Operation Intercept. I was assigned to Mexico, as I recall, in August of '69 and arrived there just as the United States Government virtually closed the border between Mexico and the United States of about a thousand miles as a result of a program designed in the United States to

try and stop the flow of marijuana and other drugs coming into the United States from Mexico.

This was done without advance notice to the Government of Mexico or to the American Embassy in Mexico City. It was a program designed by a task force in Washington, following President Nixon coming to office in January of '69. The head of it was the Deputy Attorney General, Richard Kleindienst. Others on it were the Commissioner of Customs, Myles Ambrose, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement, Eugene Rossides, the head of the Drug Enforcement Agency, and others.

They decided that this was a serious problem that needed to be addressed, that we needed more energetic cooperation from Mexico, and were unsatisfied with the amount of cooperation they were getting. They decided to embark on a program that would bring about a very grave slowdown of passage of personnel and automobiles between the two countries and to get the Government of Mexico's attention so they would cooperate.

Q: The reaction of the Government of Mexico initially was to the embassy I take it?

KUBISCH: It was. And through the Mexican Embassy in Washington to the highest levels of the U.S. Government, and it was one of outrage.

Q: Well, I imagine that's in the reporting on the record. This wouldn't be in the reporting, however, how did you deal with it in the embassy? How did Ambassador McBride cope with it?

KUBISCH: After some days of discussions back and forth between Ambassador McBride, and me, and Mexican government officials, and in Washington, it was decided to set up a joint task force with a Mexican government component and a U.S. government component, to address the issues and to try and develop some recommendations to the two governments to deal with the problems. Those two task forces were chaired by me as the minister and deputy chief of mission in our embassy in Mexico and by a senior officer in the Mexican Department of Justice. And we met morning, noon, and night, for about six or eight weeks to deal with the issues.

The results of our deliberations and negotiations are available now, and the program came to be known as Operation Cooperation, Operation Cooperation, instead of Operation Intercept.

Q: Other major issues while you were in Mexico at this senior level?

KUBISCH: There were many, many issues. There is no country in the world, I suppose, with which we have a broader range of interaction, negotiations and discussions than with the government of Mexico. But I think it might be preferable to move on to other things.

When I was Assistant Secretary of State, our Consul General in Guadalajara, Mexico was kidnapped. The kidnappers had him in custody in Mexico. This must have been in early the summer of 1973. The Consul General's name was Terrence Leonhardy. Our Chargé in Mexico at

the time was Robert Dean, and our Ambassador was Bob McBride, who was absent from the country, as I recall.

I set up a crisis management task force in Washington, where we have, as you know, in the State Department, a half a dozen offices in the Operations Center that are specifically designed for managing a crisis. We got six or eight people up there, kept open lines of communication to Mexico both secure and open; and the various people dealt with the crisis and gave guidance. As it turned out in this case the kidnappers got in touch with the Mexican Government and asked for a ransom, the equivalent of about two million dollars, for Consul General Leonhardy. They also asked for the release of 15 prisoners from jail, that were colleagues and friends of theirs that the Mexican Government was holding. Also a plane to transport those 15 and the kidnappers, themselves, to Havana. There were some other demands.

The Mexican Government got in touch with our Embassy Chargé, and said, "What should we do?" The Chargé got in touch with our task force managing the crisis in Washington to ask what he should say. The Secretary of State at the time--must have been in '73, because William Rogers was Secretary-- would stick his head in every couple of hours to see what was happening. It took several days to resolve the crisis.

Q: When the Mexicans asked what should we do, what did you respond?

KUBISCH: I believe I can remember. The issue was basically this. The Mexican Government did not want Consul General Leonhardy murdered. Obviously, our personnel, his family and friends, and the U.S. Government didn't want him murdered either.

Q: That goes without saying.

KUBISCH: That all goes without saying. On the other hand, the policy of the United States Government at that time was not to accede to the demands of terrorists and not to negotiate with terrorists. To give in to their demands would automatically, according to this line of thinking, endanger other Americans and American officials all over the world.

So it became a real dilemma, and our Chargé didn't know what to do, what to say to the Mexican Government. The instructions we gave to the Chargé, that I gave to him personally, really sort of walked a narrow line because there was no way that the Secretary of State and the U.S. Government would countenance direct U.S. negotiations with the terrorists or accede to their demands.

We told the Mexican Government what our policy was and that we did not negotiate and did not accede to such demands, but we stopped short of telling them what they should do. Our Chargé handled it in such a way that the Mexican Government did negotiate with the terrorists over a period over several days and obtained the release of Consul General Leonhardy. They gave in to some of the demands of the kidnappers, but not all, and the U.S. Government policy, as such, was not ruptured.

Q: There may have been some oral counseling involved?

KUBISCH: Yes, as I recall, there was.

Q: I've seen exactly this in another country, handled that way.

KUBISCH: It's a terrible dilemma for the officer in charge of the crisis to try to resolve because the pulls in all directions are very heavy.

ROBERT HOPPER
Rotation Officer
Monterrey (1969-1971)

Mr. Hopper was born and raised in California and educated at the University of Southern California and New York University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1969 he was first assigned to Monterrey, Mexico. He subsequently served in Rome and London as Political/Military Officer and in Washington, D.C., where his assignments concerned primarily West European political and military matters. Mr. Hopper was also a Legislative Fellow on Capitol Hill and held a senior position at the Department's Foreign Service Institute. Mr. Hopper was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2002.

Q: Yes. But Monterrey is not quite on the border.

HOPPER: No, it's not quite on the border and it was actually a wonderful assignment. It was proof of a theory I would hear over and over again that oftentimes the jobs that you don't think you want can be very interesting and good. And I enjoyed Monterrey. But that was how they did it. It was the Department experimenting with trying to be a little more open and not really knowing how to do it. But I think that was the model that was followed. No matter how explicit they got, it was that negotiating with the employee, sort of setting limits, but not really knowing totally what the universe was. Also, with our class, the same thing happened on pay rates. When we sat down, we found out that there was a wide variance in starting pay among those with the same experiences. And it was like some technicians felt that the money was theirs and that they were going to get a bonus if they could bring somebody in as an 8 Step-10 or 1; whatever the lowest was. And other technicians had the view, "No, let's honor their experience." We talked to one another and complained, and they redid that. It was like we were told that we were the first class that had ever talked amongst ourselves about what the pay levels were and about their experiences, and that, until then, the Department had assumed that it could divide and conquer, and that since gentlemen didn't talk about what they were being paid, no one would ever catch them out. And they got caught. They established rules at that point that actually made it fairer.

Q: Had you had prior experience with Spanish or any other language before coming in, or did you come in very much as a language probationer, in effect?

HOPPER: I was a probationer, but I grew up in an ethnic town; the harbor of Los Angeles. We had twenty percent Italian, twenty percent varieties of Yugoslav, twenty percent Mexican, so there were lots of languages spoken. I spoke a little bit of Spanish for a long time. In fact, I was made the mentor, adviser, and interpreter to a Costa Rican immigrant in the fifth grade in my elementary school. So I'd had these experiences and I had gone to Brazil as an exchange student after high school and so spoke a little bit of Portuguese. I joke that I learned more Portuguese in six weeks living in Brazil and that it took college six semesters to make me forget it all. I spoke a little bit of some romance languages.

Q: Let me ask other question about before you came in. In 1967 you took the oath, then went on leave without pay until you actually came in, in June of '69. Was there any pressure from the Department during that period to come in sooner, or were they content? I don't exactly understand why they wanted you to be on the rolls and then do basically nothing, as far as they were concerned, for two years.

HOPPER: They had positions and no money. They wanted to lock in and encumber the positions.

Q: So they didn't lose the positions?

HOPPER: Right. And I never felt a moment or ounce of pressure to come in until...they had always figured that I was going to do three years of graduate work; somewhere on some calendar from the get-go, I was penciled in for that June of '69 class. I did start to get pressure in the spring of '69 to not try to stay and write my dissertation, but to come in.

Q: So you came in, had Spanish language training, and went off to Monterrey? To issue visas?

HOPPER: Yes. I was in the immigrant visa section and there were five of us on the line at most times. The training then was scattered in the various buildings in Rosslyn. It was before there was a CONGEN (Consulate General) Rosslyn. The training for the consulate work was very academic. You studied the manuals and you took a test on the law. If you were a good student it was really easy, but you got no practice whatsoever at simulating interviews or any interpersonal skills.

Monterrey was a good learning pool; five people on the line, there were three of us who were brand new and two who had had some experience. I was paired with a senior or a mid-level officer who sort of showed me the ropes. But it was interesting; it was clear very quickly that there were two approaches to how to do immigrant visas. One was to assume that they were all lying to you and that your job was utterly to catch the liars and not let the people into the U.S. (United States). The other -especially in Mexico - was that they were all going to walk in anyway and that your job was to help expedite the process, if they had any equities and were okay and you were eventually going to do it, you should do it right away rather than string it out and use up all the resources. It was very hard to reconcile those two approaches because they both were based on a law and reality. So I felt sorry for the applicants at times, in that depending upon who interviewed them, they either got someone who felt they were in law enforcement and were trying to catch perjurers, or practical people who were trying to get them through.

Q: Who knew they were going to go through anyway, some other way?

HOPPER: Yes, and that was the other great frustration for everyone, including the head of the visa section who had worked at far-flung places. It was his first time in Mexico. He felt it was just so unfair that he had turned down so many Indonesians and Portuguese who couldn't swim the Pacific or the Atlantic, and why were these Mexicans able to thumb their noses at us and just walk across after we told them no. But they could.

Q: When you came in, you came in as a political cone officer or was this before cones?

HOPPER: There were no cones, but there were expectations. I was a political officer but there was no cone and I was told that it could easily be ten years before I'd be able to work in a real political job and that it might make sense, if I really wanted to get ahead, to consider specializing in consular, administration, or economic and commercial work. I ended up in Monterrey - there wasn't a political section. There was a large commercial section and after doing eighteen months of doing immigrant visa interviews, I did move up for the last year as the junior economic commercial officer and I actually liked it. I was quite content. There was a good job opening in the economic section in Yaounde and I used every ounce of influence - which wasn't very much - that I could muster to try to get there. After establishing I had some credentials and was okay at the work, the head of personnel on the economic side at State and the person at Commerce offered a deal. The deal I was offered was that there was some process to become an economic specialist and that if I would agree to be an economic-commercial officer and give up any prospects and hopes of political work, they would let me go to Yaounde. I wanted to be a political officer. I was happy to go do the economic and commercial work, but I didn't accept that deal.

Q: It probably would've involved going to the six month economic course or the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) perhaps.

HOPPER: Yes, something. It was fascinating, because that was a point in my life when I was interested in going to Africa. I was very much interested in going to a hardship post that had big differential and where it might be easier to take care of little kids. I probably had three places on my list that would've met that criteria and none of them came through. Instead, the Department asked me to come back to Washington and be the staff assistant in either EUR (Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs) or ARA (Bureau of Inter-American Affairs). I talked to people and I talked to a friend who was actually the staff assistant in ARA at the time and learned that they were going through a somewhat dysfunctional period, so I picked the EUR job and came back and did that.

Q: Let me ask you, before you get to that, just a little bit more about the commercial work in Monterrey, and also who was the principal officer of the consulate general. Was it mostly economic reporting or were you helping American businessmen - exporters? What sort of work did you do?

HOPPER: It was mostly helping new-to-market firms do commercial work. Doing the reports were very sector specific on opportunities. We set up little visiting trade fairs, but there was no macroeconomic reporting at all involved. I also was the political officer in that when I arrived, the consul general was on sick leave. Later he came back, and then left. Then we got a new consul general who had been the executive director in the Bureau of African Affairs. I think he's still around. I think I saw him a couple of months ago. He had been one of the first administrative officers designated to get an embassy. He had been named the ambassador someplace in central Africa, and in his medical exam they found a tumor in his lung and he couldn't get a medical clearance. So, after some delay and hesitation, he was sent to Monterrey, because he could go up to San Antonio and places like that for medical treatment. So, he knew nothing about Latin America, didn't care about politics, didn't care much about the economics and was taking care of himself. It gave the rest of us a lot of scope for doing things. It was a period when there was a lot of left-wing turmoil in Mexico. It was after the Olympic problems of '68. The new Echeverria government was very difficult to work with. There were guerrilla movements in the north. There would be roadblocks out on the road quite frequently; and we'd see these fifteen-year-old Indians with sub-machine guns checking the papers. It was kind of spooky.

I had one episode. We had a legal attaché, an FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) person in Monterrey, into whose possession came a threat letter against me. It named me personally, identified my car, identified where I lived, identified my family, and said that in the name of one of the left-wing terror groups, they were going to get me because I had been insensitive to the needs of the working people and had turned down a bunch of visas. And they actually foolishly identified a case and so the FBI and the Mexican police went and interviewed the person named and found out that somebody who had been connected to the consulate was actually getting money to help people get visas. It turned out not to be a real physical threat, but it was kind of scary for a couple of days.

Q: So this was related to your work in the visa section. You did some political work; traveled around the consular district and talked to people?

HOPPER: A little bit. Basically, the politics of the district was in Monterrey. It was a major state capital, and there was a lot of turmoil in the university. As a recent academic, I knew some people at the university, so I followed the turmoil and did some reporting. It was all in my spare time because I had other things to do. About the second week there, I began to keep files on political things so I was able to volunteer to do it; it was a lot of fun. From Monterrey you'd do the reporting; and you'd send it down to Mexico City. Then, they would decide what to send in and a couple of weeks later in reading the classified stuff, you would see what they had included, if anything. But I did all of that.

Q: Did you do much work other than that with the embassy in Mexico City, or was it pretty much confined to the consulate general in Monterrey?

HOPPER: We were under pretty close guidance from Mexico City; we would talk to them a lot. From buying a ladder to reporting, it was all filtered through Mexico City. I also had a period where I got to be the acting administrative officer. That let me see more about how a consulate

worked than I ordinarily would have. At that point, if we needed to spend more than \$50 at a time, we had to get clearance from Mexico City. It was really, really stupid.

In some ways, if anybody listens or reads this, they're going to wonder why I stayed because I had a lot of experiences at the very beginning that could've led to cynicism and concern.

When I filled in for the administrative officer, I discovered that he was a retired army colonel who had come in at lateral entry because we had shortages in the administrative field, and he was a protégé of a senior congressman who supervised the State Department. After a while, it was clear that he had been brought in because we were building a new building in Monterrey and we sometimes think that it's only third-world people who are corrupt. Well, the construction company that had the contract to build our building built a number of buildings throughout Central America and Mexico and they actually were in cahoots with the congressman and the congressman helped supervise the projects. It turned out that our military expert administrative officer never interviewed or visited the site and when the construction company people came in for their progress reports, they would just meet with the administrative secretary, sign something and go away. So, when I became the acting administrative officer, I made them meet with me and I actually did what I thought you were supposed to do to supervise the thing. The colonel got well very quickly and came back. So I went back to the commercial section. It was distressing to see that strange things could take place even within the U.S. structure. That congressman did get caught and was reprimanded. I won't give his name because I didn't know every detail and I've found after a while that some things you hear aren't exactly as you think they might have been.

Q: But overall, your experience there for two and a half years was positive enough that you didn't quit.

HOPPER: Yes, it was actually very interesting and the Mexican people in Nuevo Leon were so wonderful. So open. If you're ever going to run into people who you would expect to be anti-American, they were them. They had Texans coming down and vomiting on them every weekend and treating them quite badly, and they took it in stride. They humored them and they saw it as money in the bank, and money in the bank mattered to them. They saw that they were treated even worse by Mexico City than they were by Texas or Washington, and they wanted their options. It was very educational to watch people jockeying to create space knowing that we were part of their calculation. They were nice, and I was able to save money. It was fun. I got a range of experiences and there were positive changes.

The day we arrived at work in Monterrey, I went to meet the acting consul general with my wife. He told us, "So glad you're here. We're really short-handed. Mexican National Day is Tuesday and we'd really appreciate if you could bring two dozen hard-boiled eggs for the reception." I said, "Listen, we're in a hotel," and he said, "Oh you can figure out how to do it," and I said, "Well sure, what time does the party start?" He said, "Oh, you're not invited to the reception. Just have your wife bring the hard-boiled eggs around to the back kitchen door." Incredibly we did it. Then we complained: my wife wrote some letters to some friends. The women's group organized around issues like that, and she was part of the group that organized, and then protested; within six months there were new rules.

Q: That was in Monterrey or that was in...

HOPPER: That was worldwide. It was fascinating. It was easy to see that the senior wives - it was all like a fraternity initiation - had done the hard-boiled eggs at places where they didn't get to do anything, and I'm sure that they didn't like it, but they put up with it, and now that it was their turn to get help from the junior wives found these uppity left-wing hippy women weren't going to take it. It must've been shocking. I give my wife's generation incredible credit for putting their foot down. They changed the system of being able to get two people for the price of one. My very first efficiency report had a confidential section where they talked very explicitly about my wife's role, and I was lucky as Carol was just a wonderful unpaid partner. I got better reports because she was my partner. But it was a strange process.

At the time, my hair was the same length that it is now. However, in 1969 that was considered to be long hair in the Foreign Service, and at my first efficiency review with my boss, we're going along and he's really pleased with my work and all of a sudden he starts agonizing. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "Bob, I don't know what to do." I said, "What do you mean?" "I don't know what to say about your hair." I said, "What do you mean 'say about my hair'?" He said, "Well, you have long hair." I said, "Yes, so what?" He said, "Well, if I don't mention it, the boss is going to think I am not perceptive and this is an important factor." I said, "Look, please let me know. Is my hair getting in the way of my visa interviews and my work?" "Oh no, no. You're wonderful." I said, "I don't get it." He said, "Well, it's not typical Foreign Service," and I said, "Look, I don't care. If you feel you need to write about it, you write about it, but it sure doesn't seem relevant to me." In the end, he chose not to mention it.

Q: We were talking about your image as a hippy, anti-Vietnam, anti-government, internal person at your first evaluation. Let me ask you something kind of in a different area; you've talked about the construction of a new office building. I assume the purpose of that was to anticipate expansion, enlargement, because we were now adding DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) and the drug trafficking culture that was coming, or was it simply to replace an old decrepit building?

HOPPER: We rented the second and third floors of a downtown office building that was on a very noisy, busy street where the local authorities complained that our visa lines were blocking business. There was no place to park; it had become untenable. So we were mainly moving to be a little bit out of sight, but also to have more space. We were also getting two Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD), predecessors to DEA, who were coming to establish the first office at that time. They did arrive right after we moved into the new space. They were the only expansion at the time. So, actually, the building that was built, while just barely big enough for them, was foolishly small and had no growth room. And I understand that that has caused problems since. But I think the move was made for us to be more secure and for our location to be less of a public relations problem. It also meant that because we got away from restaurants, we couldn't stay in touch so well. We were in a suburb and so there were real downsides to moving.

I got to be the action officer responsible for the move, which was my first experience with a

special project. Eventually, I came to see that it was a lot like a SECSTATE (Secretary of State) visit or a CODEL (Congressional Delegation); you just had to do a lot of things, choreographed in a tight period of time. I actually enjoyed doing that. We moved over a weekend and it went very well. I gained some confidence in how I could help though I'd had no managerial experience. My father had been a businessman; I'd watched businesses being run my whole life, but I had never actually done it and hadn't wanted to do it. But I found I enjoyed helping to choreograph a complex activity.

Q: Coordinate and make sure...

HOPPER: That everybody is pitching in and doing what needed to be done. That was fun.

Q: Do you have anything else to say about the first tour in Monterrey from 1970 to '72?

HOPPER: It was actually a post that had enough going on that I was able to get a range of experience and figure out how I wanted to proceed.

We also were inspected, and having an inspection was interesting. I still remember my interview with a fairly senior inspector going over what did I want to do. He had been an ambassador in South Asia and had served a lot in the Middle East. He tried to get me to switch my regional expertise and consider working on Arab-Israeli Middle East issues. It actually made me think in policy terms about what problems did I want to work on. I sort of made the decision at that point, in a strange way. I had worked with lots of Middle Eastern students at USC. We had a big oil and public administrations building. I had five or six very good Saudi Arabian friends. And then, like anyone who's growing up in New York and Los Angeles, I had lots of good Jewish friends who had very strong views on Israel. The perception I had was that this is going to be a very, very hard problem to solve. Their hatreds and the feelings behind both sides were such that the room for compromise just didn't seem very obvious to me and that whenever you tried to talk about a middle ground, you just found that all you did was make enemies. I decided there was nothing I could do as I had no intrinsic skills and I didn't speak the language. And I said, "Nope. I don't want to work on those problems. Not going to go there," and I consistently followed that for the rest of my career, though that part of the world follows you in whatever you're working on. In my European work, I ended up doing Arab-Israeli things off and on, whether I wanted to or not.

SALLY SHELTON-COLBY

Professor

Mexico City (1969-1971)

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Latin America Bureau

Washington, DC (1977-1979)

Ambassador Sally Shelton-Colby was born in Texas and graduated from the University of Missouri and later from Johns Hopkins University. She worked for

Senator Bentsen for two years after which she joined the Latin America Bureau in 1977. Ambassador Shelton-Colby's career included positions in Mexico, Washington DC, Grenada, and Barbados. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

SHELTON-COLBY: In any event, after I left, after I did the Fulbright, which I had to cut short, I went to live in Mexico where I lived from '69 to '71. I was teaching (substitute for a Mexican professor) at two universities in Mexico: the Ibero-American University and the National Autonomous University of Mexico, a course on Vietnam at UNAM, and a course on U.S. foreign policy at the Ibero-Americana.

During the period that I lived in Mexico, I had a very interesting experience, which really has, I would have to say, shaped the rest of my life and perhaps contributed in large part to my being named ambassador at a fairly young age. I married a Mexican politician, whom I had met at SAIS. My husband was very much involved in politics. He had worked for President López Mateos.

Q: He was part of the PRI.

SHELTON-COLBY: Yes. His entire family was in politics. His father was a general in the Mexican Army. The marriage was unsuccessful, but from a professional point of view it was absolutely fascinating, because I had an experience which most foreigners don't ever get to have, and that is, I had a bird's eye view into the inner workings of the Mexican political system. Coming in and out of my parents-in-law's house were many of the politicians who are in office today, as very young people at the time. We constantly had Mexican military officers in and out of the house, because of my father-in-law. And my husband's family was a supernationalistic, anti-American family. Now this was very hard for me as a young woman who went there without speaking Spanish, although I had French and Italian, and I began to pick Spanish up very quickly. But it was very difficult. It was really, really, really rough and perhaps contributed to the breakdown of the very brief marriage. But I learned Spanish quickly. I learned to understand the way Mexicans think about themselves and about the United States. Mexico has a very unique culture. Perhaps that could be said about most cultures, but Mexico is very special in many, many ways. And they have their hangups about the United States.

Q: Oh, yes.

SHELTON-COLBY: (I'm trying to be diplomatic, as you can see.) And I was immersed in it. And this was, of course, at the height of our involvement in Vietnam, which exacerbated some of the anti-American tendencies in Mexico. I learned an enormous amount about how Mexicans think about the United States and their particular relationship with the United States.

After two years, I left and came back to the United States, and was very fortunate to get a job, almost sight- unseen, with Senator Lloyd Bentsen.

Q: Before we get into that, I'd like to go back to the Mexican experience, because I think this was

very important. Were you teaching Americans who came down?

SHELTON-COLBY: No, I was teaching Mexicans.

Q: How did you approach them, discussing American foreign policy? Because it seems in many ways, from my other interviews and all, that there is a remarkable, really, integration of the economy between the United States and Mexico, which just doesn't have anything to do with formal relations. It's there. And there is much more interchange, you might say, people-to-people, economy-to-economy.

SHELTON-COLBY: Yes, there is.

Q: But when you get to something particularly in the field of foreign affairs, Mexico, almost even more than, say, the French, has taken delight in going the opposite way from the United States, for whatever purpose. This must have been a very interesting atmosphere. Could you talk a bit about your dealings with the...

SHELTON-COLBY: Well, to the extent that I can remember, yes, I'd be happy to. Today, of course, all that is changing. I mean, increasingly, U.S.-Mexican interests are coinciding, and I think will continue to do so in the 1990s. But this was twenty years ago and a very, very, difficult period. And, of course, again, it was exacerbated by Vietnam. I don't know what I can tell you beyond what has already been written in a voluminous number of books on the subject. But the whole society seemed to be permeated with anti-Americanism.

Now there are really two Mexicos. There is the Mexico of the north and the Mexico of the center and south. The Mexico of the north has always been much more oriented towards the United States, much more focused on the economic links, much more interested in a closer political relationship with the United States, much more culturally attuned to the United States than the central part of Mexico, which is, of course, where Mexico City is.

It's almost, as I say, as though there were two Mexicos. But I was teaching in Mexico City, and, of course, the UNAM has traditionally been a kind of hotbed of anti-U.S. sentiment. And it was very tough (a) to be an American, and (b) to be teaching U.S. foreign policy.

For example, I remember that my Mexican students could be...I mean, it's almost trite to say this, but sometimes even trite statements need to be repeated. There was constantly a mind set that the United States was out to keep the rest of the world repressed, poor, and under their control, and that went in spades for the developing countries. And you simply could not reason with these students. You could not argue specifically that there were security problems, that there were areas in which there were threats to democracy, that there were threats to Western economic systems, coming from either the Soviets or the Chinese. The Mexican students simply did not accept those arguments.

Of course, they tended to argue that Vietnam was nothing but a civil war, and that if the U.S. and others would just pull out, then they would peaceably settle their differences and everyone would

live happily ever after. I mean, this, remember, was '69-'70 when I taught the course on Vietnam. (Technically it was Indochina, but Vietnam was all I ever taught.) And, you know, this is not the first time that you will have heard these kinds of arguments, but to face them every day in class...I don't even remember, I guess I taught three times a week, it was tough. I felt I made, frankly, no headway in trying to overcome some of these mind sets. And there was also a mind set that the negotiations were never taken seriously by the United States; the only priority we put was on the military, the military priority.

You could not have a dialogue with these students. I felt I was talking at them rather than talking with them.

Q: Was this coming from the professors, too?

SHELTON-COLBY: Yes, very much, very much, yes. And from the politicians. I mean, it was everywhere in Mexico.

Q: Looking at it at that time, was this Marxist or was this Mexicanist?

SHELTON-COLBY: It was Mexicanist, although I think there were some people that were very far left on the political spectrum. I would not go so far, however, to say that people had any particular soft spots in their heart for the Chinese and for the Soviets. I think it was more anti-American than it was pro-communism.

Q: How about Cuba at the time? Here was a non-democracy if there ever was a non-democracy. Could they deal with...?

SHELTON-COLBY: Well, I didn't really get into Cuba in my course. But certainly, just during the time that I was living in Mexico, there was a feeling that the problems of Cuba were caused by U.S. policy, particularly by the blockade, and that if we just gave Fidel a fair hearing, we would be able to resolve our differences, and Cuba, of course, was the future of Latin America. I didn't believe it then, and I don't believe it now. But that was the mind set, and it was very difficult to live and work in this kind of atmosphere.

Q: But it also gave you, in a way, a mind set, or at least a feel for this area.

SHELTON-COLBY: That's right, it gave me a feel for the kind of thinking that I would have to deal with years later when I was in the U.S. government. It was a tough learning experience, but it was an extremely useful one.

Q: Also, really, the intractability of certain problems.

SHELTON-COLBY: That's right, exactly, of certain ideas and certain individuals.

Q: How did you come to move over to the Executive Branch?

SHELTON-COLBY: Because of Texas contiguity to Mexico, and because of my own personal interest in Mexico and having lived in Mexico at that time and having acquired Spanish, I kept an eye on Mexico during those years. From time to time, the Senator would go to Mexico and he'd meet with the president or governors, or he'd meet with them when they would come here. Interestingly, we would complain during those years of how closed the Mexican economy was. It was very difficult for his Texas constituents to be able to penetrate the Mexican market, because of very high tariffs and a whole plethora of non-tariff barriers. It's changed dramatically since then.

* * *

Q: Sally, we were talking about your, particularly Central American, disputes there, while you were the deputy assistant secretary in American Republics Affairs. I wonder if we could talk now about sort of the area of your particular expertise and one that's of major importance to the United States, always has been but never seems to get the attention, that is, our relations with Mexico. How did you see it at the time, and what were the problems, and how did we deal with them?

SHELTON-COLBY: The thing that struck me the most about that part of the job was the multiplicity of actors involved in the process of shaping U.S. policy towards Mexico. I frequently felt as though I had very limited or sometimes virtually no control over U.S. policy towards the region because of the other interests: drugs, pollution was beginning to be an issue at that time, crime. I can go on and on.

Q: Immigration.

SHELTON-COLBY: Immigration, of course, always. And, you know, stoppages along the border, backups along the border that affected both the movement of people as well as of goods. Then, of course, there was, on the international side, the constant difficulties we had with the Mexican government that consistently took a position quite different from that of the United States in international organizations and was trying to assert its voice as a spokesman for the non-aligned. Therefore, there were inevitably tensions on issues beyond issues in the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. It was the one country in the region, other than Nicaragua, that really was able to capture high-level attention, including the vice president and the president, as well as the secretary of state, of course.

Q: Well, let's get the detail; the detail is important. And we're particularly looking at it from your perspective, your vantage point. Maybe talk about some of, particularly, the problems that came up. Why don't we first talk about the foreign relations aspect in the United Nations and all. Hadn't we by this point reached the point of saying, "Look, this is one area where the Mexican government can stick it to the gringo and vote against us. Just leave it at that. Say that the Mexicans will always be the Mexicans, and forget it, don't waste our ammunition?" Or did we feel that way?

SHELTON-COLBY: I think we very much felt that way. But the Carter Administration took office with a priority to try to work on the U.S.-Mexico relationship and try to get over the tensions that had historically pervaded the relationship. In fact, the Carter Administration even named an ambassador-at-large (he had the rank of ambassador) former Congressman Bob Krueger from Texas, to be the point person on Mexico for the Administration.

Q: By the way, when you say the Carter Administration did this, renowned in the Foreign Service as one of the big disasters of ambassadorial appointments was the Carter appointment of Ambassador Lucey to Mexico. He was a defeated candidate from Minnesota or someplace like that, so I mean...

SHELTON-COLBY: Wisconsin.

Q: Not that personally there was any problem, but he just didn't bring anything to that post.

SHELTON-COLBY: I don't think I'll comment on individual Carmelite ambassadorial appointments.

Q: But it doesn't show a seriousness there. I mean, why did you have a special ambassador?

SHELTON-COLBY: Well, that was the president's decision; I was not involved in taking it, and I wouldn't presume to try to look into the president's mind and figure out why he appointed whom he did. As I say, I think I'll decline to comment on ambassadorial appointments.

Q: Okay. Well, anyway. But you say there was this...

SHELTON-COLBY: There was a priority to work on the U.S.-Mexico relationship. Carter had something of a special interest in Latin America, and Mexico is obviously by far the most important country in Latin America for us. Originally, the idea was to put that job in the White House in order to push the bureaucracy more easily. But Secretary Vance opposed putting it in the White House. So the job was put in the State Department, which meant that Krueger did not have the authority to crack bureaucratic heads together and get issues resolved. He should have been above the bureaucracy in the White House.

I think the idea of the creation of that post, of putting it where it was, was not successful in really trying to facilitate the decision-making process in the U.S. to be more responsive to some of the concerns that the Mexicans had which we perceived as legitimate.

But, be that as it may, we really did not succeed in significantly improving the relationship with the Mexicans. I think there were two reasons for that.

Number one, I think it was the wrong Mexican Administration. I think that the policy objective was impossible to have achieved because of the nature of the Mexican Administration.

Q: Which president and Administration was that?

SHELTON-COLBY: It was President López Portillo. Echeverría was before. Echeverría was from '70 to '76, and then came López Portillo. Like Echeverría, López Portillo was committed to a policy of standing up to the United States on every possible issue. It proved to be impossible to develop a relationship of better understanding between the two governments, because I don't think López Portillo wanted a smoother, less tense relationship. I think both his own individual mind set as well as the politics in Mexico at that time argued for a position of, frankly, relative hostility towards the United States.

Q: Also, wasn't there a feeling at that time, because of the oil business, that Mexico could really do it on its own? Or did that come later on?

SHELTON-COLBY: It was about '77 when major oil finds began to be discovered, and it was really later, in '78, '79, and '80, that the big spending actually began. The fields had been discovered in the mid-'70s but were kept quiet. It was in '77 when the Mexicans made a decision to start spending and borrowing money.

So that was part of it, but even if oil had not been found let's remember that this antagonistic attitude towards the United States predated López Portillo. In that sense, he was very much the successor to Echeverría, with whom we had a perfectly terrible bilateral relationship. Echeverría, I like and I see from time to time, because I think it's important to talk to all possible elements in the political spectrum. I need to remind myself every now and again that there are people in Mexico still who think like Echeverría, even though he is very much in the minority now. He's a very decent person on an individual basis, but not friendly to the United States. Nothing we can do is ever the right thing, from his perspective.

So I think, frankly, we made a mistake in even making any kind of an effort, because I think there was not a predisposition in the political structure in Mexico to accept some more positive efforts from the United States. As you say, Mexico was really beginning to feel its oats in terms of 'We've got money, and, you know, we've made it.'

Secondly, some mistakes were made by individuals with regard to Mexico which really made the policy objective of improving the relationship that much more unlikely.

Q: Could you go into...

SHELTON-COLBY: For example, the public mistake that Carter made when he went to Mexico and began talking about his having Montezuma's Revenge. That was unbearably tacky, if not vulgar, to even talk about having diarrhea. But then in the country where Montezuma came from, to talk about it was an unbelievable diplomatic gaffe. That was one example. I think some of the people who had direct dealings with the Mexicans...not all of them, because some got along quite well with the Mexicans, but others didn't. Some of the people involved didn't know Mexico, didn't speak Spanish, did not understand the culture and the mind set. And some of these people did not have as much clout in the White House as they said.

Q: Well, the ambassador wasn't part of the power structure.

SHELTON-COLBY: The ambassador's role in Mexico is critical. No matter what the State Department's telling you to do, if an ambassador has clout in the White House, he or she can circumvent the bureaucracy and go straight to the president, the vice president, or the national security advisor and say, "We really ought to be doing X," when the bureaucracy is dragging its feet or saying do Y or Z, or whatever. I certainly don't argue that every ambassador everywhere in the world needs to have active clout in the White House, but in the case of Mexico and Canada, and a handful of other countries as well, I think it's really very important to have the ear of the President.

Q: Because there are so many other factors going on. The State Department in many ways plays not a major...

SHELTON-COLBY: That's right, it plays a fairly minimal role. I think there are two reasons why I make this argument.

Number one is because Mexico, obviously, is a neighbor, and we have all kinds of very important interests in a cooperative relationship with Mexico.

Secondly, the point I was making when I first began this part of the discussion, there are so many disparate interests, and therefore bureaucratic actors, and the State Department's piece of the action is relatively modest. As other actors, in no particular order of priority, you've got the Departments of Defense, Treasury, Justice, Commerce, Agriculture, Interior and the Special Trade Representatives.

Q: Justice.

SHELTON-COLBY: I cannot name a part of the U.S. government that does not have some role with regard to Mexico.

Q: Just balancing it off, when you think of the Department of Justice, immigration is far more important than Mexico's UN votes to the State Department.

SHELTON-COLBY: I think so.

Q: And there are so many other areas.

SHELTON-COLBY: Of course, not to mention that you've got the international financial institutions, although they were less of an actor then than they are today. I remember once, to my great surprise, I even found that what was then HEW, the old Health, Education, and Welfare, now HHS, had some interest in some issue, though I forget now what it was.

Therefore, when you have a plethora of interests, and as a consequence, a plethora of

bureaucratic actors, sometimes you have serious conflict within the U.S. bureaucracy. Therefore, it really is important to have an ambassador who can go over the heads of the bureaucracy to the White House and argue his view--rightly or wrongly--of the U.S. national interest. Particularly if you've got a situation where the secretary of state, the deputy secretary of state, and maybe even the under secretary for political affairs are all distracted on other issues and you can't get the bureaucracy to resolve an issue, then if you can go to the White House, you can get some movement.

So that's why I argue that it's really a mistake to send someone to Mexico who does not have influence in the White House.

Q: I might add, just for the record, and this is strictly my impression, I've never served there, that Governor Lucey arrived and did not have much clout in the White House, but he also sort of surrounded himself with his own little palace guard. He sort of separated himself from the normal embassy structure, which helped compound part of the problem. But maybe it was insoluble.

SHELTON-COLBY: However, a man named James Baker has done that, and he's been a pretty successful secretary of state.

Q: So far. But that's secretary of state, and he has access to the White House. Well, on Mexico, what problems engaged you the most?

SHELTON-COLBY: Immigration, drugs, environmental issues, crime along the border. Occasionally, abuse of Mexicans working in the United States, and other human rights abuses. Then, of course, there were always the votes at the UN. And then, of course, there was always a constant interchange of people: Vance, Mondale, and Carter visited, etc. And therefore there were all the unending preparations for these trips.

At one point, before he traveled to Mexico, Mondale asked me to come over to the White House, because I had known him from Senate days when I worked for Bentsen. He pointed to the briefing book from the State Department, which was about eight inches thick.

Q: Eight inches thick; it looks like the unabridged dictionary.

SHELTON-COLBY: He said, "Sally, can you tell me what's in there?" It was too much for him to read. Now I had been involved in putting it together and I think I was probably the person responsible for it. I have worked on the preparation of any number of other briefing books, and I don't like the process of providing briefing books. I don't think it's efficient; I don't think it works. I think they are too long. It would have taken the vice president of the United States hours to have gone through that briefing book. Also, I think that sometimes the issues are written in a way that is hard for the consumer of the product to understand what the issue is all about.

Q: This isn't a minor...I might say...

SHELTON-COLBY: It's a problem of getting clearance through the bureaucracy.

Q: This is not a minor problem.

SHELTON-COLBY: It's not a minor problem.

Q: Because when the vice president or president goes down, the briefing book is often supposed to be the person proclaiming the policy. And this is a theme that comes up again and again.

SHELTON-COLBY: But you've heard it before?

Q: For the people who come from outside sort of the bureaucracy, they look at these things. Is there any way of solving this? I mean, were you able to go through and say, okay, look, this isn't going to be read?

SHELTON-COLBY: I didn't even open the briefing book. I just briefed him orally. Maybe he read it as well, I don't know. But if I were the vice president, I probably would not have had the time to tackle a six- to eight-inch-high briefing book, particularly if someone who is reasonably knowledgeable about Mexico could orally brief me and outline what the issues were, in a fair and objective and honest way. I tried very hard to do this, though I might have put somewhat of an ARA slant on the issues. I always felt it was very important, in briefing senior official, either in the White House or the State Department to make it very clear that there were other U.S. government interests beyond ARA's. Some of my colleagues, though, have had a very different philosophy; they've only pushed the position of their particular bureau. I have never felt that was really fair. I think it's really important for senior officers to know that there are other people in the U.S. government who think differently about a given issue, as opposed to pushing only my bureau's point of view. I'll certainly argue my bureau's point of view, though I'll certainly argue my bureau's point of view.

Economic issues were not so important at the time. That is obviously what dominates the relationship now, but trade and debt issues were nonexistent or limited, so the non-economic issues were paramount.

Q: Simpson-Mazzoli was an immigration reform bill, which gave special assistance to the Mexican problem.

SHELTON-COLBY: What it does is impose penalties on employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens. But it has not had any appreciable effect; the level of illegal migration is as high today as it was before Simpson-Mazzoli was passed. So you can argue as to whether we benefit. I happen to think we benefit as a country from migration.

Q: All right, let's look at this just for a minute.

SHELTON-COLBY: And, of course, fisheries issues always, too.

Q: Well, this immigration at that time, what was the State Department's attitude? Obviously, this

thing was always annoying the Mexicans. Other than mobilizing our Army and putting across the border, there wasn't an awful lot we could do about it.

SHELTON-COLBY: That's exactly right.

Q: But you have the Justice Department having to deal with this thing through the Immigration Service, other people who were talking about let's get tough and all this.

SHELTON-COLBY: People in the Congress especially.

Q: People in the Congress. When you were there, what was the State Department line on this?

SHELTON-COLBY: It was a moveable feast; it changed frequently. I would synthesize a very complex situation, to the best of my recollection, by saying that ARA realized that there were growing pressures from both the Executive and the Congress to pass legislation which would attempt to control illegal immigration. The Mexicans were dead set against our doing that. We were trying to figure out a way of being responsive to the pressures from within our own government, yet somehow keeping it as palatable as possible for the Mexicans. In other words, we were going to do something, the Mexicans were not going to like it, so how to do something which would annoy the Mexicans as little as possible. That was basically it; it was a damage control operation.

Now we also had difficulty understanding the Mexican position. Ambassador Lucey, myself, and others, asked Mexican government officials, "What is your position on migration?" We never got a clear, official position. In private conversations, they would say, "We really don't want you to do anything. We need to continue to let our people move across the border." But in terms of an official position, they never had one.

Q: Well, from a practical point of view, what could you say--Yes, we want to keep people from leaving our country?

SHELTON-COLBY: I recognize their dilemma. There was little that they could say. But yet, as a U.S. government official, it was galling to try to write a memo or attend a meeting on this issue inside the U.S. government and not be able to articulate the official Mexican position. And when we would try to say to the Mexicans, "All right, you're worried about our passing Simpson-Mazzoli. What would you like? In a perfect world, what would your objective be on immigration?" They wouldn't say anything, or it would be so vague and garbled we wouldn't understand their objectives.

Mexicans in that era were very difficult to deal with; they were very prickly. Whatever we wanted, they were likely to say no. It was a contentious relationship. Not in a military context, obviously, but just in terms of being able to protect whatever U.S. interest we felt needed to be protected, or in terms of achieving whatever policy objective was at issue.

Happily, Mexico is very different today. You can do business with Mexico (as Prime Minister

Thatcher said about Gorbachev). It is very much changed. It is a country that is really quite cooperative with us on a whole range of issues, from extradition to economic issues.

LOUIS P. GOELZ
Consular Officer
Mexico City (1969-1972)

Principal Officer
Mexicali-Laredo (1972-1973)

Louis P. Goelz was born in Philadelphia in 1927. After serving in the military, he graduated from La Salle College and Georgetown University. Mr. Goelz joined the Foreign Service in 1955. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Peru, Hong Kong, Brazil, Mexico, Iran, and Korea. Mr. Goelz retired from the Foreign Service in 1992. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

GOELZ: From Belem I went to Mexico City in 1969.

Q: *What were you doing there?*

GOELZ: I was doing everything except visas. I was in charge of all the consular work except visas. Visas were a section, and I had American citizen services, and passports, and federal benefits and all the other good things that we do abroad.

Q: *What about the American citizen services? This was the height of the drug scene. I mean particularly for the young people here.*

GOELZ: During that particular period of time, I was there from '69 to '72 in Mexico City, the number of Americans who were arrested just mushroomed--a lot of it because of the drug problem. We really wound up with an awful lot of Americans in jail, and it was as I say during that particular period of time is when it all started. We had to sort out activities, and establish relations with various officials in the Mexican government so that we could take care of our people.

Q: *Did you find yourself in this situation that so many consular officers have where, on one hand we have a very strong anti-drug stance--we pushed other governments to take a strong stand on it-- but then as a consular officer you are sort of the advocate in a way of the American in jail.*

GOELZ: That's it. You are there to represent and to assist the Americans who are in difficulties regardless of what the difficulty is. Some junior officers get to the point where they, you know, all this is a drugs, or he's involved in sex cons, we're not going to do anything for him. You can't do that. Every American deserves your assistance. In Mexico City during that particular period of time, we had an extremely strong DEA unit, and a very strong man in charge of it.

Q: This was Defense...

GOELZ: No, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and his favorite saying was, "I put them in jail, and Goelz gets them out."

Q: Well, there's almost a built-in conflict isn't there between the...

GOELZ: It's not really a conflict, it's just that his emphasis was on one part of the problem, mine was on the other. But there's room for both, and there had to be. There just had to be room for both.

Q: Were there any problems of that had to be resolved? I mean was DEA asking you to not mess with this case?

GOELZ: No, we had very little of their trying to influence anything on the case line. The one thing that I wanted more of was information from them when they heard about Americans in jail. Now, an American could be picked up and they'd know about it, but they might not tell us about it until the Mexicans got around to telling us, and by that time God knows what happened to the poor guy who got arrested.

Q: What were the pressures on you, because later on this got to be quite a problem for our embassy. The fact that we had so many Americans in there and they were being maltreated, and the claim was that the embassy wasn't doing anything about it--in the beginning it hit the sons and daughters of the middle and upper classes.

GOELZ: Exactly. Americans were becoming aware of the situation they never knew existed before. We had an awful lot of congressional interest, of course. Americans tend to scream at their congressmen, and their congressmen tend to scream at us when we're abroad. But there was a lot. I was there at the time when it started building up, it got to be a lot worse after I left there.

Q: Was there much you could do for them?

GOELZ: No, of course not. You can get them lawyers, you can make sure they're treated fairly and taken care of. We used to take them books, and stuff...

Q: Peanut butter?

GOELZ: Sometimes. In Mexico City there is a large American colony and some of those people would help a lot with prisoners. I can remember somebody who needed a pair of shoes; we got him shoes. I know another person who broke his dental plate, and the American Benevolent Society took care of his dental plate for him. We had to be able to have access to these groups, and to be able to work with them in helping our people in jail. And I think we did a pretty good job on that score.

Q: As an aside, because of the Mexican thing, you had sort of the parallel office to the Visa Office and you must have been getting officers who were coming off from the visa side. What was your impression of how visa work was affecting these young officers?

GOELZ: In Mexico City it was at that time, and I guess it probably still is, one of the world's largest non-immigrant mill and those kids used to be on the line sometimes all day long handling two to three hundred cases, as many as they could be pushed into doing, and for long periods of time. After I got there a new Consul General came in, the head of the visa section and myself and we all got together and established a policy where nobody would be on the non-immigrant visa line for more than six months at a time. We worked out a policy where they served for six months, and then they transferred into either immigrant visas, or upstairs with us. And we tried to rotate them, one, so they would be well trained; two, also to break this business because when I got there there were some officers who had been a year or more on the visa line doing this day in and day out, and they were on the verge.

Q: Did you get any feel for what was the attitude of the officers towards the Mexican applicants? I mean, the longer they're on there, did hardening set in?

GOELZ: Well, junior officers, especially in those days, I met so many of them who find that they're able to make decisions that they would never be able to make in any other circumstance, and to me they were sort of playing God. You know, "This is a nice person, so therefore he gets a visa." "This person isn't so nice," or, "he doesn't dress well, we don't want him in the States." That kind of thing that you have to interpret the law, that's what you're there for. There is an immigration law and it tells you who is qualified, and who is not. If they qualify, they get a visa whether you like them or not. But so many of the junior officers get to a point where they figure they're the giver of all visas, etc. Some go one way, giving everybody a visa, others go the other way, they don't want to give any visas.

Q: Again, we'll come to this later on, but at the time did you see how these problems were managed? As a second echelon of the supervisors. Were they able to catch this sort of thing?

GOELZ: As I say, the one thing we did do making it so nobody had to serve more than six months at a time in the non-immigrant visa field--revolutionalized the place--and people had a goal, I'm going in today but six months from now I'm out. Others had gotten there, and gone in, and had no prospects of getting out within two years. So things like that were a big help. Mexico City has this problem because they have so many visa applications, and so many junior officers. At smaller posts you have to make sure they have something else to do, they're responsible for some sort of economic or political reporting, or something of the sort. There's a certain topic that's assigned to them that they can research and do, and they have to be given the time and the opportunity to go out... They need something besides just visas.

Q: Then you spent a short time as the Principal Officer in Mexicali from '72 to '73?

GOELZ: I was sent to Mexicali to close it. And I did. I closed the post while I was up there--I was only there about 8-10 months. I closed that post and then moved over to become Principal

Officer in Nuevo Laredo.

Q: In Nuevo Laredo, what were your principal occupations there?

GOELZ: Admin. That was the post that brought everything into the embassy into Mexico City for all of our posts abroad. It was very important, and still is a very important post as far as Mexico City is concerned. I happened to be available so they put me into it. It has the usual run of consular work, but the consular district at that time was not much larger than the city of Nuevo Laredo. It had been founded a number of years ago, and I guess it was involved primarily with shipping, the railroad entry point, and this type of thing.

Q: It's the entry point for Mexico City, getting clearances and that sort of thing.

GOELZ: Yes, and shipping things down, and getting stuff back up and all. It's usually an administrative post but they gave it to me.

SUZANNE SEKERAK BUTCHER
Consular Officer
Guadalajara (1970-1971)

Born in 1948 and raised in Pennsylvania, Mrs. Butcher was educated at Allegheny College and American University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, she had assignments in Venezuela, Poland, Mexico, and Canada, where she served variously as Political and Consular Officer. Her Washington assignments included Policy Planning, Cultural Affairs, Staff Secretariat, International Organizations, and Scientific and Environment Affairs. Mrs. Butcher also served on Capital Hill as Assistant to Congressman Solarz. Mrs. Butcher was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: You were in Guadalajara from when to when?

BUTCHER: November 1970 until May 1971.

Q: What was Guadalajara like at that time?

BUTCHER: It was great. It was a big city without being the capital. I was doing American Citizen Services. There was a huge number of elderly Americans living there. There were three American Citizen Services officers, plus a Social Security rep. One was the deaths officer. I did passports and citizenship, and I was the veterans affairs officer. We had a large visa section, where I helped sometimes. There was an admin officer and also a second-tour officer who was the catch-all political, economic, everything officer who did anything substantive that came up, with the Consul General. I loved the city. I loved going down to the market. To me, it was a big city, a foreign city.

Q: Drugs weren't a big thing yet. Who was Consul General?

BUTCHER: Bill Connett. We had an FBI rep, but no DEA.

Q: Was there any junior training or was it, "get out there and do the job?"

BUTCHER: It was very much, "get out there and do the job." The other two American Citizen Services officers were helpful, also the Mexican employees.

Q: Guadalajara was and I guess still is a place where a tremendous number of Americans have gone to settle, usually on retirement. What was your impression of that community?

BUTCHER: The people I dealt with were mostly the people who had problems. I didn't have a whole lot of happy people out there, except when I could make a positive citizenship finding. I ended up dealing with the veterans who had problems, the disabled veterans who needed medical services and vets who were having a hard time getting their education benefits from the VA. We had a wonderful woman at the hospital. We would work together in getting the guys in wheelchairs what they needed. The VA was very frustrating.

Q: Did you have any feel for Mexican authorities?

BUTCHER: It was my first exposure to Latin American university politics. I began to realize there was a lot of crookedness going on.

Q: What was your husband to be, at that time, up to?

BUTCHER: After four months on the Venezuela desk, he was getting ready to study Spanish to go to Caracas, Venezuela.

Q: How did you figure things would work out? I'm talking about before things worked out.

BUTCHER: Well, I was expecting to have to resign, although we kind of knew by then that things couldn't go on this way. We thought that we would give it a shot and ask for a transfer. But, we weren't expecting a clear change of policy. The Director General held a meeting January 23, 1971 and announced it. Larry was going to lunch and there was a poster in the elevator saying the Director General is going to speak on the future of women in the Foreign Service. So, he went. There was a clear change in policy, but then, just a couple weeks later, Sheldon Krys, who was the Executive Director of ARA...

Q: I know Sheldon. I have interviewed Sheldon.

BUTCHER: I have heard so many people who have such a good, warm feeling about Sheldon Krys, from how he dealt with the hostage families. My experience with him was not good. He said, "Well, I suppose young love must run in its course, but the needs of the service..." He was

not for the change of policy at all and wasn't going to do anything to get Larry and me together. What actually happened was, Larry went to lunch with Bob Chavez, who was assigned to go to Caracas later that spring. He said, "Bob, how would you like to go to Guadalajara, instead?" John Day in Personnel agreed to switch the assignment, and I came back in May, and Larry and I were married in July and went to Caracas. Bob went to Guadalajara and met his wife and we all "lived happily ever after." I did have the feeling when I was in Guadalajara, the guys I worked with were great guys but they didn't really expect me to be a serious officer because I was a young woman.

Q: Of course, there was this feeling, and it wasn't completely without reason. It wasn't even a rule, it was a custom, that there would be a resignation. It was terribly male chauvinistic but you kind of looked at somebody and said, "Is she marriageable or not?" If she was "marriageable," it was almost a write-off.

BUTCHER: Maybe there wasn't a written rule, but they wouldn't transfer you together, so there might as well have been.

Q: It was a mind set that has changed considerably.

BUTCHER: It took time.

JOHN ALLEN CUSHING
English Language Teacher
Mexico (1970-1971)

Mr. Cushing was born in New York City and raised in New York and Hawaii. He graduated from Reed College and continued studies at a variety of institutions in the US and abroad. After service in the Peace Corps, he held a number of positions as English language instructor before joining the Foreign Service in 1988. Mr. Cushing served abroad, variously as Consular, Political, Economic or Public Affairs Officer, in the Dominican Republic, Korea, Benin, Papua New Guinea, and Trinidad & Tobago. In Washington, Mr. Cushing served as Korean Desk Officer. Mr. Cushing was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

CUSHING: Then I got a master's of arts in teaching from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. It was an offshoot of the Experiment in International Living so I did a one year's master's program which included a home stay and teaching in Mexico. At that point I learned Spanish.

Q: Compare and contrast Mexico and Korea.

CUSHING: Mexico was a little more laid back. The thing I noticed there was they had a very balanced view of how much you should work and how much you should relax. Korea was

striving to catch up or to, well, at first just to rebuild from the war, I suppose. It was a very hard scrabble society when I was there in Peace Corps so I guess the central unit was the family and you know, maybe your classmates or something but essentially it was every man for himself. You had to work really hard. You had to study hard. The farmers worked hard, the people in the factories worked hard, the soldiers trained hard. There is something about having a cold winter that keeps your mind focused on your work whereas in Mexico, they were nice people. They were pretty laid back.

Q: Where was your school?

CUSHING: I did a home stay in San Luis Potosi and then I taught for a couple of months in Orizaba. San Luis Potosi is north of Mexico City. Orizaba is southeast of Mexico City, between Puebla and Veracruz.

Q: How did you find the students?

CUSHING: Pretty good. I was teaching at a private academy, an English academy so the students were all motivated to study. They had all paid their own money to go and study there. It was OK.

H. FREEMAN MATTHEWS, JR.
Political Counselor
Mexico City (1970-1973)

H. Freeman Matthews, Jr. was born in Bogota, Colombia in 1927 during his father's tour there in the Foreign Service. While growing up, his family also lived in Cuba, France, and Spain. He enrolled at Princeton University, but his graduation date was pushed back because of his service in the Korean War. After graduation, he went to work for the State Department in 1952. In addition to serving in Mexico, Mr. Matthews served in Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Vietnam, Egypt, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

MATTHEWS: After 6 years in Vietnam, I finally escaped to Mexico City. That was a bit of a fight too because I was only an FSO-3 at this point. I think the job in Mexico City as Political Counselor was an FSO-1 job.

Q: It certainly would be.

MATTHEWS: Bob McBride, who had been in Madrid when I was there, went on to Paris as DCM. He was the new Ambassador to Mexico and he'd taken a liking to us and also to Nancy, my wife. Anyway, he pressed very hard to have me go to Mexico City and eventually won.

I didn't quite realize it at the time but it caused quite a stink because there were lots of old ARA

hands who had their eyes on that job. They thought it was disgraceful this outsider got it, but I had a wonderful three years in Mexico City.

Q: '70 to '73. First place, could you describe how Robert McBride operated as Ambassador?

MATTHEWS: He was a very professional ambassador, he had an excellent sense of humor. He tended to have firm opinions about people, both people working on the staff and local citizens. As far as the people on the staff were concerned, he tended to believe that they were going to be good people unless he found out otherwise. Once he found out otherwise then you were in real trouble. But he generally tended to be very fair and to be supportive.

As far as Mexicans were concerned, he liked the Mexicans, and had a number of good friends. I think that he probably tended to cultivate the wealthier upper class Mexicans to the, not to the exclusion, but to the detriment of contacts with lower level people in and outside the government.

He ran a very good Embassy, there was no doubt who was in charge. His DCMs were Jack Kubisch first and then Bob Dean. Bob McBride, I think, was a very popular Ambassador there. He could give the impression of being aloof but in fact he was a very caring man and those who got to know him really appreciated him. Jackie McBride was a charming, entertaining woman but she could also be rather imperious and demanding when she wanted. Among other things, they both felt that when people were invited to the residence, they were there to work, they weren't there to enjoy the party. There were several occasions on which Mrs. McBride made that pretty clear.

She and my wife got along very well indeed, and that helped smooth things along. We had a wonderful time there with them. I think it was partly the relationship between the wives, but anyway, Nancy and I did a fair amount of traveling around the country with the McBrides, as well as with the USIA Public Affairs Counselor, George Rylance and his wife, Betty. The 6 of us plus the Ambassador's aide would travel around the country, primarily because McBride wanted to see what was happening in the countryside, and of course it was useful to us too to have this opportunity.

McBride had Mexican government protection. He had very tough special agents that were assigned to him and they traveled all over. In many places, they made things easier because if we needed a reservation for dinner in some place, these guys made sure that we got it. I remember the chief agent was named Inocencio and it was certainly a misnomer. He was maybe the least innocent looking fellow you ever saw; he was a really tough looking man. They were very good.

We had a great time. The other people in the Embassy were also nice. It was my first job really, at least abroad, of running a large section. I was the Political Counselor and ran the political section. We had some very good people there working with me.

Q: First place, what were the major issues during this '70 to '73 period in Mexico?

MATTHEWS: The major issue that I spent a majority of my time on was the old problem of the salinity of the Colorado River. This was a very complicated issue that I learned more and more about as time went on. It basically had to do with the fact that we were meeting the requirements of the 1944 Water Treaty with Mexico in terms of quantity-a million and a half acre-feet of water a year out of the Colorado River. But the treaty said nothing about the quality of the water and the United States was, I think, very much at fault in delivering poor water to Mexico and doing so deliberately.

We built a dam at Yuma, Arizona to direct the run-off water from some of the agricultural districts, particularly one in Arizona called the Welton Mohawk Irrigation District, which had very saline water. We built a separate canal so that that water did not go back into the Colorado River to pollute the water that was being used elsewhere on the US border. But it went straight to the Mexican border at Yuma and then on into Mexico as part of the water deliveries. So the result was that Mexico got quite poor water.

Another problem had been that when the Water Treaty was agreed to in 1944, one and a half million acre-feet of water was very easily met by the US side because there had been a number of years when there had been a lot of snow packed up in the mountains and the US needs were a lot lower. So a million and a half acre-feet of water didn't seem all that much. But by 1970, for primarily irrigation reasons but also, for climatic reasons, there was less water going into the river. US uses had increased and therefore we could not afford, at least from the standpoint of the 7 basin states that used the water, we couldn't afford to give Mexico any more than the one and a half million acre-feet.

So they got exactly what they were entitled to and no more and a good bit of the water was this run-off that was not good. So they had a legitimate complaint but it became a very difficult technical and political issue. The International Boundary and Water Commission, with the Commissioners being in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez on the US and Mexico side, were very much involved in it. They attempted to resolve it but they got nowhere.

It became a very heavy political issue between the two countries, especially because, just before I got to Mexico, before McBride and I got there, we had signed the final agreement of the Boundary Treaty to settle the famous Chamizal boundary dispute near Ciudad Juárez and El Paso that came about because the Rio Grande does not stay in its banks and keeps shifting. That issue had been resolved and that left the water issue as the major issue between the two countries, although there were also pollution problems and other things along the border.

So I spent a lot of time working on the things that had to do with the border issues.

Q: When you say you dealt with the border issue, but in a way I can see something like this would be so completely out of the State Department's hands. One, more than anything else that's local politics, it's Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, the whole thing. Water of course is the guts of what the West was interested in. That reflects in Washington with very powerful Senators and all this. Then you have a Water Commission. I mean, what could you do?

MATTHEWS: It was a fascinating job, unlike any other I think in the Foreign Service, there was so much US domestic political angle to it. We of course were not setting policy, we were making recommendations, trying to find ways to get these things resolved. We were reporting on what the Mexican Foreign Office was saying about it, trying to keep an eye on what the Mexican Boundary Commissioner was saying, up in El Paso.

We had a lot of close dealings with the US Commissioner, a wonderful man named Joseph Friedkin, who served many years as US Boundary and Water Commissioner. A very expert technical guy but he had diplomatic skills in the sense that he was always very straightforward and he would establish a very clear working relationship with his opposite number, the Mexican Commissioner.

But our job in the embassy was to report the pressures that were being exerted by the Mexican government, not just the Foreign Office but also the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources, which is what their water department is called.

Then finally, because this effort went on the whole time I was there, President Nixon appointed Herbert Brownell, former Attorney General, as his Special Representative to come down and try to reach an agreement to resolve the water problem. And he came and I spent a lot of time with Brownell, who turned out to be a very interesting, very decent human being.

We traveled together up to the Mexicali Valley which is where the major complaints were, that's where the Colorado River water came down in to Mexico. In fact the Colorado River no longer reached the Gulf of California because it's all dried up; the water is all used.

We took a bus trip up through the Mexicali Valley and every time we came to a crossroads there'd be farmers--the Mexican government had laid this on there--there'd be farmers out there showing this white earth with all the salt in it and poor old Brownell would have to get off the bus. He'd stand there and these farmers would harangue him about the terrible water, we can't grow our tomatoes, this is terrible and so on. This was an all day trip through the Mexicali Valley and all these irate farmers harassing us.

We had a number of negotiations with the two Commissioners and with the Mexican foreign ministry and with the Secretariat of the Hydraulic Resources and Brownell. He came back and forth several times. He did a lot of negotiating back in Washington with Senators from the border states. Eventually we reached an agreement on what we could do, which essentially involved the US government agreeing to set a water quality standard. We would try to provide water no worse than the water that came out of, Lake Powell, and it involved our agreeing to build an enormous desalinization plant in Yuma, Arizona so that the water delivered to Mexico was of decent quality.

And that's how it was resolved and I think that plant has finally come on-line. Another thing that helped was that the climate changed and we got more snow packed up in the mountains so there was more water coming down.

I think the issue is still a hot one with the seven basin states because in the meantime, something called the Central Arizona Project has come on-line. That means a further increase in the use of water by Arizona, water that had been allocated to Arizona under the seven basin state compact up until then was going to California but was agreed to be rightfully water due to Arizona. And Arizona put this enormous agricultural project on-line and now California is really short of water and that's why there is all this talk is of trying to take water from the Columbia River down to Southern California. So the issue of water in the West is still very active.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Mexican authorities. First, what was your impression of their Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

MATTHEWS: Very interesting because they were, in a sense, maybe more anti-American than most of the Mexican people were. I don't mean this in a sense that they were viciously anti-American and pro-Soviet. They had an acute sense of the importance of their own sovereignty. Of course the US over the years has trampled on their sovereignty with a fair amount of impunity. I think the Mexican foreign ministry felt they had to be alert all the time to anything that the US was doing that might be a problem for their sovereignty.

I remember one of the issues that came up was remote sensing from our satellites, with the idea that the satellites were going overhead, and they were taking remote sensing pictures of the whole earth. The embassy was instructed to reach an agreement with the Mexicans on providing the Mexican government with satellite photographs of their land. And I think primarily it was a no-cost thing to them but we simply wanted to know what areas they most liked and what kinds of infrared and so forth.

The Mexican foreign office was just outraged that the United States was taking pictures of their sovereign country. It took a lot of explaining that we were doing this to the Soviet Union too, to everybody. It wasn't an attempt to be invasive, we were trying to be helpful. So in that sense, I think the Mexicans were very alert to anything that might suggest that we weren't being respectful of their rights.

We had a lot of other issues like fishery agreements, and I mentioned sanitation and pollution along the border. When we first got there also, this was the period when Mr. Kleindienst was Deputy Attorney General, and he started Operation Intercept--to catch Mexicans going into to the US with drugs. That caused a furor. At the border, we also had a big anti-narcotics program with DEA agents all over the country.

There were numerous efforts to try to get Mexican support on international issues at the UN. We spent a lot of time on that. They were not all that supportive.

Q: I would have thought, I mean I've heard this before, that the foreign ministry has always been the province of turning it over, you might say, to the leftist side, not necessarily Marxist, but to the leftist side sort of for the academics and all this. And this is where they put their people. The rest of the government is really a very pragmatic government and this is one that really doesn't cause much trouble. Because Mexico really doesn't have many foreign problems, it's their own

sandbox where they can play. But I would have thought too that the UN would be a wonderful place for Mexico to tweak the nose of Uncle Sam.

MATTHEWS: I think that's true, especially the people who dealt with UN affairs often were quite difficult. I think a lot of that was true.

Another issue that we spent a lot of time on was Cuba because the Mexicans were very much more friendly to Cuba than we thought was appropriate. We tried to work on that. Of course one of the major efforts of our sister agency there was targeting the Cubans and the Soviets and the Eastern Europeans and what they were up to.

Q: My impression is, from things that have come out, that the reason the CIA had very good relations in Mexico, I mean the intelligence agencies got along beautifully without maybe telling their superiors how well they were doing.

MATTHEWS: I think they did. We had a very good relationship. I think the relations between the political sections in Mexico City was probably the best of any place that I'd been. Although it was pretty good in Cairo too.

Q: Here you have a one-party system and today, March 24th, we've just had a tragedy where the candidate for PRI was assassinated. But what was your impression of the Mexican political situation and how as the Political Counselor did you deal with it and what were the interests?

MATTHEWS: We tried to keep track of what was going on in the PRI. We had a couple of excellent political reporters that worked on internal Mexican affairs, Bob Service notable among them. We tried to report on what was happening with the PRI. The opposition parties during the time that I was there were not very strong, were not very highly regarded. I don't think they had much popular support either.

There was no doubt that the PRI succeeded in winning elections throughout the country by fair means or foul, whatever was needed. I don't think the opposition was very strong against them. It was primarily the PAN, the right-wing party, and that didn't have a great deal of political support. The major influence of the opposition parties was to some extent, to keep the PRI somewhat honest in what they were trying to do.

While we were there I think there was some progress made in the greater openness of the party but it still was a one-party system. I think it's interesting that it's changing now, it's very clear that things have changed. Luis Echeverría was the President throughout the time that I was there. I think he became a disappointment to a lot of people. He turned out not to be as honest as we had hoped he would be.

One thing that did change, that we tried to work on, was population policy. Echeverría had come into office saying that--to govern is to populate--the more people the better. On a trip three years into his administration, he made a trip to Chile to visit Allende. His Secretary of Finance, who had been Ambassador to Washington, went on the plane with him.

The Mexican population people had worked very hard to provide the Secretary of Finance with some charts that showed what was happening to Echeverría's plans to increase productivity, increase land and agricultural products, increase health, etc., all sorts of different things. The charts showed what was happening because of the population explosion. It showed that it didn't matter what government money was put into these programs so long as the population kept increasing at the rate it was going, things were going to continue to get worse in Mexico.

The Minister of Finance, whose name was Hugo Margain, convinced Echeverría on this airplane trip to Chile and back, that he was going to have to change his policy. And he did, he turned it 180 degrees, so that Echeverría came out in support of population control. In fact, by the time we'd left, they had produced some very good cartoons that appeared on television, that made fun of Mexican machismo and the idea of more children.

I think this was a major development that we had some input from the Embassy. We helped the population come up with figures and that kind of thing. So that was a major change. In terms of other political events, this was a period when there were guerrillas in the state of Guerrero from time to time, causing disturbances. The Mexican government had some trouble trying to capture them and keep track of them because they could disappear into the hills pretty easily. This is more bandits than anything else, it was not like what has been happening in Chiapas in recent days.

One other event that happened while I was in Mexico was a kidnaping. Our Consul General in Guadalajara, Terry Leonhardy, was kidnaped on his way to the office one day. This was in 1973, the Spring of '73, just before I left. I was then sent down from the Embassy to Guadalajara to try to figure out how to get him back, what to do, how to coordinate this.

What happened was that the kidnappers first claimed that they were doing this for political purposes, to demonstrate that they wanted greater freedom, release of political prisoners, and so forth. But very soon it became apparent that really they were looking for money and they wanted a substantial amount. The only way that the kidnappers would communicate with either the government or us was through Leonhardy's wife in the residence, using the residence phone, and there was only one phone in there. So when I got to Guadalajara the first thing I did was to get the Governor to put in another telephone line so that we could have our own line running to the Embassy or to Washington to keep track; otherwise that other line would have been tied up.

There was a lot of back and forth. The Mexican government said eventually that--alright, we'll meet the demands of the kidnappers, we'll pay the money but we don't want it to appear that we're paying it; we want to leave it fuzzy as to who paid for it. So this was a very tense three days of phone calls back and forth between the kidnappers only to Mrs. Leonhardy. She was a remarkable woman, showed a lot of guts in trying to deal with this.

It was a really weird situation because the Consul General, from Monterrey, was also sent down to try and help out. Everybody ended up in the residence, nobody dared to leave because this was the only activity going on. And we kept getting messages back and forth from the kidnappers on

what they wanted and where this was going to happen, and we made attempts to make sure that Terry was still alive and put him on the phone a couple of times. So it was a pretty hairy three days or so.

When finally the Mexican government did agree to provide the money, it was wrapped in newspapers. The idea was that one of the local employees was to get on a bus and ride on the bus until some signal occurred and then he was to turn the money over to somebody on the bus who was to be identified somehow and then Terry was to be released later. This was all pretty tricky but it was the Mexican government's money.

Meantime from Washington, we kept getting instructions from, Bob Hurwitch who was Deputy Assistant Secretary in ARA. Hurwitch kept insisting that we could not negotiate with the terrorists and he went to the extent of suggesting, that we were not to allow the Mexicans to negotiate with them. Bob McBride by this time had gotten ill and wasn't there but Bob Dean, who was the DCM, was the Chargé in Mexico City. He kept telling Hurwitch, all right, do you want me to go in and tell the Mexican government they are not to make any effort to get him back? No, no, we don't want to do that, but you go on and tell them that we don't negotiate.

So Dean went in and told the Foreign Minister that we don't negotiate and their response was--do you want your man back or don't you? So this kept going back and forth, kind of silly arguments about whether we were negotiating or not. But eventually the Mexicans said, in effect, to hell with it. They went ahead and agreed to provide the money.

Sure enough after about three days, the money was turned over by this complicated business of riding around on a bus. Leonhardy suddenly appeared on some street corner and came back in not too much the worse for wear. That was my first direct experience with a kidnaping, and it was pretty dramatic. We finally did get him back but it was quite tricky because the kidnappers would talk to only Mrs. Leonhardy and only over that one phone line.

Q: What was your impression of Mexican officialdom that you had to deal with?

MATTHEWS: I think they're pretty competent people. The lower level, if you're talking about the police on the corner, there's the old problem that their pay is so low that they couldn't possibly survive so they have to get "mordidas" and that kind of thing. But the other people that I dealt with, were generally pretty competent people. Their diplomats, their technical people in the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources, the Boundary Water Commission people, they all, were pretty competent people. They were basically friendly too.

Q: Did you find that there was really much of a, I've heard today, I've never served in Mexico so I'm speaking from just hearsay, that sort of the ruling group in Mexico City has its own cast which is looking much more suspiciously on the United States and all this, El Norte. But when you get up to the whole border area, I mean this is a big, we're not just talking about border but into Monterrey and much of their industrial area there, that it's quite a different society and cast of mind.

MATTHEWS: I think that's entirely true. The area in Northern Mexico, as you say extends not just to the *maquiladoras* on the border but considerably farther south. There are so many more dealings with the United States and there are so much closer relationships. They are far more friendly and they are far less sensitive about this idea of their own sovereignty than the officials down in Mexico City.

But even down into Mexico City, there are lots and lots of people, particularly the wealthier people, who for any kind of medical problem would go to the States to get that taken care of. The shopping trips, continual movement back and forth between Mexico and the United States. And the strong feeling of relationships.

Q: Also for much higher education, that's where you go for graduate degree.

MATTHEWS: Lots and lots of people going to the US for education of one kind or another. I think in general the Mexican feeling about the United States was really a very positive one.

There were certainly leftists and some of the press especially, *Excelsior*, the most prominent Mexico City newspaper, was quite leftist. I think in general there was a very favorable view of the United States and a supportive view of the United States.

I haven't been back there since the fall of the Soviet Union. It'd be interesting to see what happened there because the Soviets were quite active in Mexico. They received some sympathy from the Mexicans.

Q: How did you deal with the Cuban problem? They were kind of for Castro and we were against Castro.

MATTHEWS: There wasn't much effort on our part to try to convince the Mexicans that they were wrong. From time to time when some egregious things that the Cubans had done would happen, we'd take great glee in pointing that out. I think most of the activity as far as the Cubans were concerned, the Embassy tried to keep an eye on what they were up to and to counter whatever propaganda they were trying to put forward.

Q: I take it that this was a period of time when the Nixon administration was not putting much emphasis on Mexico. It had lots of other fish to fry.

MATTHEWS: Well, I don't know. Nixon made a trip to Puerto Vallarta soon after I got there, about the first thing that happened, I guess. There was the Amistad Dam and all sorts of things, efforts that were made to try to be friendly to Mexico. But at the same time we had Kleindienst's Operation Intercept.

The other side of that was the effort that was made to try to resolve some of the boundary problems, especially water, such as the gesture of appointing Herbert Brownell, a close friend of Nixon, to come down to solve the water problem. So I think there were efforts on the part of the Nixon administration as to Henry Kissinger, I don't think that he thought that Latin America was

at the top of his list of priorities.

I don't think this is a apocryphal story. Kissinger came to Mexico for some meeting, and while he was there a telegram came in from Europe about MBFR. He couldn't find anybody on the delegation who had accompanied him or anybody down there who knew what the initials stood for, or anything about the issue of Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions. So he said, "The hell with these specialists, you people are too specialized."

Q: I heard that.

MATTHEWS: That's why the Department started the Global Outlook Program which is in turn how I ended up on the Egyptian desk.

Q: Were you there during the fall of Allende?

MATTHEWS: I don't think so, I left there in June of '73, I can't remember when Allende was, I think it was later.

Q: On the political section, how important were our consulates, from your point of view. They are obviously important for commercial purposes and for immigration purposes.

MATTHEWS: We got some useful information out of the consulates but I have to say, not a great deal. I'm sorry to see the reduction in the number of consulates in Mexico. I don't know what there are now, certainly a lot fewer than what there used to be.

In terms of the reporting that came in, I don't think there was a great deal of reporting. Most of the consulates were so busy dealing with consular problems that they didn't have a lot of time for that. But when we had a consular conference where they pulled all the Consuls General into a meeting; or if you traveled around the country and stopped in at the consulates, you often got pretty useful insights into what the thinking was in the area and what was going on politically. But in terms of reporting, I don't think there was much of great use to the embassy.

I think it's too bad to have a reduction of our presence, it reduces the impact that the United States has on a foreign country.

Q: On these ties, they often get lost when you just turn out these mega-consulates.

MATTHEWS: I think that's right.

Q: How about illegal immigration, did this play much of a role or cause problems for you?

MATTHEWS: I think it was an issue that the Mexicans felt torn about. In a sense they were kind of embarrassed that there were so many of their own citizens who preferred to abandon Mexico and go to the United States and all the implications that had for the fact that life in Mexico was not all that good. At the same time they were upset at the treatment that many of their citizens got

in the United States because they were illegal immigrants. They hated pictures of our immigration people, the border patrol, capturing Mexicans trying to swim the river and all that kind of thing.

So I think there was a dual view there and from time to time there would be protests about one thing or another that would happen with our people. But I think the basic view of the Mexicans was that so long as there was such a difference in the standard of living between the two countries, it was only natural that a lot of the Mexicans were going to try to get to the United States to have a better life.

I'm a great supporter of NAFTA and I think over time we're going to see some improvements.

Q: North America Free Trade Agreement.

MATTHEWS: I think over time this is going to have a major difference in improving the standard of living between the two countries. The fact is there are lots and lots of Mexicans down there who would like to come to this country. I think basically they make good citizens but the question is, how many of them do we want?

Operation Intercept of Mr. Kleindienst was, I think, basically an attempt to get the Mexican's attention, and to make them realize that we were serious about trying to do something about drugs. But the attitude among the immigration people and among the customs people became very anti-Mexican and, I think, unwarrantedly so.

We had the terrible experience that the daughter of the Foreign Minister, was twice body searched in Miami on her way to the States. She was subjected to very unpleasant treatment by the customs people. You can imagine the furor. Emilio Rabasa, who was the Foreign Minister, and was not particularly pro-American to begin with, when this happened, was even worse.

Q: So these were sort of brush fires that you would be...

MATTHEWS: There were a lot of brush fires. But it was a fascinating place and we made a lot of good friends there.

Q: So you left there when?

MATTHEWS: In 1973, in the Summer of '73, I came back and went into the senior seminar.

SAMUEL D. EATON
Policy Planning Staff, Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC (1970-1974)

Samuel D. Eaton attended Drew University in 1940 and served in the U.S. Army

Air Corps in 1943. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Bolivia, Brazil, Thailand, Peru, Spain, Ecuador, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

EATON: There is another event that occurred in this period of time that I think would be very interesting to people interested in a Foreign Service career and in foreign affairs. And this I describe as: The Exposure of a Foreign Service Officer to Domestic Politics.

President Echeverría of Mexico came to the United States and addressed the Joint Session of Congress. During his address, he said, "You're a great country. You can go to the moon, but you can't resolve a simple problem with your neighbor, which is the salinity of the Colorado River going into Mexico, which is damaging a large agricultural area of ours."

And, of course, he was right. This had been a problem that had been plaguing our relations for decades. The history of the problem was that there had been a treaty agreement in 1943, which allocated, under agreement with Mexico, a specified minimum quantity of water from the Colorado River to Mexico. And this assured that, despite all of the new development that went on in the Upper Colorado, Mexico would always get at least a minimum amount of water, which it needed for the irrigation of its agricultural lands.

It specified the quantity but did not specify the quality of the water. And this, particularly after the Second World War, became an issue, because the Colorado River area developed and, after the Second World War, in Arizona, a new irrigation district, called the Wellton Mohawk District, was opened to provide lands for returning veterans. This resulted in greater saline drainage into the Colorado River close to the Mexican border and increased the salinity of the water to the point that Mexican agriculture was damaged.

For a number of years, Mexican presidents raised this with American presidents: they raised it with Eisenhower, they raised it with Kennedy, they raised it with Johnson. And always the solutions were debated and partial remedies that were ineffective were put into effect.

It was a very difficult issue to deal with, because the water interests in the West were very well organized. And they were organized, as you may know, under a group called the Committee of Fourteen, which was a group of seven lawyers and seven engineers, one from each of the seven Colorado River Basin states. The Committee of Fourteen dealt with Colorado River water issues for the governors of the seven states. And those people knew every issue in great detail, and all the history, and they protected that water with all of their professional expertise.

And the bureaucrats from Washington, who were somewhat transient, could never match their expertise. And so, when each president was faced with this, he turned it over to the bureaucracy. And the bureaucracy got beaten down by the Committee of Fourteen to the point where the solutions that were offered were not solutions.

So President Nixon decided he wanted to deal with this problem when Echeverría made this speech to Congress, and he promised Echeverría that he would do so.

So he called Herbert Brownell, who had been attorney general when he was vice president under Eisenhower, and who had been Eisenhower's behind-the-scenes campaign manager, and whom he actually had asked to be his campaign manager but Brownell was otherwise occupied. At that time, Brownell had said, "I can't do this, but I'll be available to help on issues as they arise if you need me." So Nixon called him and said, "I have this problem, could you help me solve it?"

And so Brownell was appointed as his person to develop a response, and I was asked to be Brownell's staff person in Washington. Brownell would come to Washington one day a week, and I would have staff papers prepared, and we had an interagency group that would meet every Thursday.

The interagency group consisted of people from the Department of Interior, the Department of the Army, the Department of Agriculture, the State Department, the National Security Council, the Bureau of the Budget and so forth.

So we went about this in a very systematic manner. I did this full time. I had three people, a couple of secretaries, a staff aide, and somebody from the Department of Interior, in the office that I worked out of. We systematically reviewed all the options. We met with the Committee of Fourteen, we met with the governors of the Colorado River Basin states, and we went to Mexico and met with the Mexicans.

We tried to be very careful to consider every option. We even considered the rainmaking option or snowmaking option and decided against it (although the snowmakers and rainmakers guaranteed they could get more water), because we decided, in the first place, we could never prove that they had gotten more water from that, and, in the second place, if we did, some person might sue us--some people didn't want more water and they could sue us. We considered improved irrigation practices, all sorts of things. And we considered the argument made by the Bureau of the Budget that there was enough water, and that all we had to do was provide more water to Mexico, diluting what they were currently getting so the salinity would drop. We met from September to December. At the end of December, we sent a report to the president with our recommendations.

The report had two options. One was the Bureau of the Budget option, the OMB option, and that was to spend water from the various dams, because they insisted that there would be enough water indefinitely, and combine that with better irrigation practices. And the other was to spend dollars to build a desalinization plant (between three and four hundred million dollars) to treat the water out of the Wellton Mohawk District and thus reach a point where you could guarantee Mexico a certain quality of water.

We recommended the desalinization project, because we were certain that we could never get a political agreement to spending water. So we sent this report to the president with our recommendation. That was December 31; he had asked us to give him a recommendation in that time.

Weeks passed, months passed, we never heard anything. Brownell was occupied with other things. And then one day I got a call from the National Security accounting staff who said that Secretary of State Rogers is going to Mexico, and he has told us that he cannot go without a response to President Echeverría on this issue. We have been looking for your paper. We had trouble finding it, but we finally found it. It had gone forward to the president, with Kissinger supporting Brownell's recommendation, but it had been waylaid by the Office of Management and Budget, who had gotten to the president's doorkeeper, Haldeman. The Office of Management and Budget had gone behind our backs to him and told him to pigeonhole it, and he had pigeonholed it, and it had never gone to the president. But we have retrieved it and we are scheduling a meeting with Roy Ash, the head of the Office of Management and Budget, in two days, to discuss this (Brownell was in Iran), and could you come? Kissinger's out of the country, so it will be Brent Scowcroft, who was the deputy, yourself, Roy Ash, and John Sawhill, who was then in the Office of Management and Budget and later became energy czar and president of a New York university, who was the expert in this area.

So the four of us met for an hour and a half to discuss this paper. Roy Ash came from California and he knew about the issues, and he and Sawhill tried very hard to convince us that there was water available and we ought to spend water rather than money. Brent Scowcroft, of course, didn't have much background. But I said, "Well, fine--if you can deliver the Committee of Fourteen and the seven governors. But nobody can. And therefore if we're going to solve the problem, we only have one option politically." In the end, Ash agreed there was no other option. So he sent the recommendation on to the president, the president approved it and then he appointed Brownell as the negotiator with the Mexicans. So Brownell and I spent the next year going back and forth to Mexico, in continuous consultation with the Committee of Fourteen, negotiating with the Mexicans on the level of salinity that we would agree to and how we would achieve it. Well, we knew how we would achieve it in the meantime until the desalinization plant was completed.

We completed those negotiations successfully, and we got an agreement the Mexicans agreed to and the seven basin states agreed to, and we went out to San Clemente to report to the president. And there was going to be a press conference which Brownell was going to have afterwards, to announce the success of the negotiations; it was all choreographed.

Brownell and Scowcroft and I were to go in to see the president to report the success of the negotiations. So we were sitting there, and the president sent word out that he wanted to see Brownell alone. So Brent Scowcroft and I sat and waited. This was at twelve o'clock and the press conference was supposed to be at twelve-thirty.

At one-fifteen, Brownell came out, and we got into the car and rushed to the hotel where the press conference was going to be. And Brownell said, "Would you believe it, I'm with the president for an hour and fifteen minutes and we spent three minutes on the negotiations with Mexico. He's very preoccupied about what he's going to do with his vice president (Agnew), but, of course, he agrees with what we have done, and so I will announce it at the press conference."

But I go through all of this as an indication of something that Foreign Service people sometimes

don't fully appreciate and don't fully experience, and that is how much the domestic political considerations impinge on what we try to do.

Q: I know, particularly on things which move up to the higher levels. All of a sudden, there's a whole different agenda.

EATON: That was an extraordinarily interesting experience, the bureaucratic interplay as we went along--in the Office of Management and Budget; within the Department of Interior, the staff level of the Department of Interior supported our recommendations; the secretary of the interior told us to our face that he would support us and then did not, and all sorts of things like that--very interesting, fascinating.

DAVID E. ZWEIFEL
Political Officer
Mexico City (1970-1974)

Ambassador David E. Zweifel was born in Colorado in 1934. He received a bachelor's degree from Oregon State University and served abroad in the U.S. Navy for five years. Ambassador Zweifel joined the Foreign Service in 1962 and served in Brazil, Lebanon, Jordan, Mexico, Oman, Yemen, and Washington, DC. Ambassador Zweifel retired in 1995 and was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 1996.

ZWEIFEL: I decided that I wanted to go back to Latin America as a Political Officer. I was assigned to a political job in Mexico City.

Q: That's excellent. Did you take any Spanish language training before you went?

ZWEIFEL: I had a few weeks of an FSI program called "HILT" or High Intensity Language Transition. The thesis was that I would be able to retread my Portuguese, which was still very good, into Spanish. The program was moderately successful. I ended up with a decent command of Spanish, although my use of both that language and Portuguese were somewhat corrupted one by the other.

Q: So, you went there as a Political Officer?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. I also had interesting collateral portfolios in the Political Section. For example, I was the Embassy's Science Officer. That work grew to such an extent that, eventually, a very senior Science Officer, Andre Simonpietri, was assigned full time to the position. I was also Narcotics Coordinator at the Embassy. Again, as that problem burgeoned as a bilateral issue, a full-time position was created and an officer assigned specifically and exclusively to deal with the problems of interagency coordination.

Q: I hear there's a Section now on that.

ZWEIFEL: Yes.

Q: What were your problems? Did you have many problems?

ZWEIFEL: In a way, Mexico is one of the most fascinating of assignments an American Foreign Service Officer could wish for. I suppose the same could be said for service in Canada. Our immediate neighbors ipso facto have a unique status. You are not dealing just with foreign relations. Almost every issue also has a domestic component.

The major issues between the U.S. and Mexico at the time were, as they still are in many respects, illegal immigration, the trafficking of narcotics, economic cooperation. A particularly complex and important issue was that of the salinity of the Colorado River, again a problem that was as much a domestic one as it was of international relations.

Q: Tell us about activities on the other side: Soviet, Cuban, Chinese?

ZWEIFEL: Mexico maintained relations with Cuba after the rest of the OAS members had ostracized the Castro regime. That was a policy difference, a thorn in our bilateral relations with Mexico, although certainly within bounds. The Soviets were also extremely active in Mexico and had a very large Embassy there. Their primary target-even though in Mexico-was the U.S. We, in turn, devoted resources to trying to track what the Soviets were up to. It was a mutual wariness. The Chinese were less active in Mexico during that period.

Q: We had one of our officers, Terry Leonhardy, kidnapped while you were there.

ZWEIFEL: We had two such cases. Terry Leonhardy was kidnapped in Guadalajara where he was Consul General at the time. He was held for about a week or ten days, then released unharmed.

A more tragic case was that of John Patterson, a first tour consular officer serving in Hermosillo. The Consulate General there habitually closed down over the lunch hour. One day, John was seen leaving for lunch in the company of someone vaguely familiar, someone who had been around the office on occasion.

When the offices reopened after lunch, there was a strange note from John under the door saying, in essence, "Apparently I have been kidnapped"-not much more.

We had, at that time, a Legal Attaché at the Embassy, an FBI Officer who was able to work closely with Mexican law enforcement authorities. He was able to obtain the registries of all Americans who had stayed at hotels in Hermosillo for several days surrounding the incident. Those were run through FBI records files in Washington. Only one was a hit, that of a man named Billy Joe Keasy.

Next, the FBI put together a montage of perhaps a hundred photos of various men. This was shown to the local employee who had seen John leaving the office on the day of the kidnapping. This employee spent a lot of time going over the pictures, finally saying "well, it was either A or B" as he picked out two of the photos. It turned out that both were of Billy Joe Keasy, taken ten years apart.

Meanwhile, a legal wiretap had been placed on the telephone of our Consul General, Elmer Yelton. Through this means, we received the only subsequent contact from Patterson's captor. The caller purported to be a fellow victim and stated that a ransom would be required with details to follow. As it turned out, Patterson's wife was prepared, in principle, to meet such demands. In the meantime, the taped telephone conversation was played for Keasy's brother whose immediate reaction was "Oh, yeah, that's Billy Joe." His mother was a bit more circumspect, but the evidence was mounting.

By that time, the FBI had staked out both the water bed factory where Keasy was employed and his apartment. To make a long story shorter, he came back to the apartment one afternoon and was apprehended. Since the Mexicans had no particular interest in seeking his extradition for a crime against another American, the most serious charge that could be levied against Keasy was conspiracy to kidnap. That, even though it turned out that Patterson had been killed almost immediately after being taken captive.

Q: So he escaped?

ZWEIFEL: In a sense. After serving three years in prison, he presumably is again out on the street.

Q: Sad, sad, sad story. You were there when Secretary Rogers visited Mexico City. Did that have any consequences?

ZWEIFEL: Secretary Rogers was a fine person but, let's face it, overshadowed by Henry Kissinger who was then National Security Adviser in the White House. Rogers came to Latin America on what turned out to be his swan song. I think he did a fine job as Secretary. In relation to Mexico, some foreign policy problems had been more or less resolved, others were more intractable and of a continuing nature, only amenable to management rather than solution: the immigration issues, those related to narcotics, others which continue down to this day.

Q: Was terrorism a factor while you were there?

ZWEIFEL: I never felt that terrorism in Mexico was of the same magnitude as it was in the Middle East.

GILBERT J. DONAHUE
Vice Consul

Mexico (1971-1973)

Gilbert J. Donahue was born in Virginia in 1947. He received his bachelor's degree from American University in 1968. His career included positions in Mexico, Ivory Coast, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and Brazil. Mr. Donahue was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2000.

DONAHUE: In the end, I went to Mazatlan, Mexico, which was a totally different part of the world for me. I did have Spanish, but from years earlier, so I was able to get a short brush up at FSI and go out and enjoy Mexico. Up until now, that assignment was the closest I have lived to a beach, three blocks!

Q: You were in Mazatlan from when to when?

DONAHUE: September 1971 to August 1973.

Q: Where is Mazatlan and what was it like at the time?

DONAHUE: We no longer have a post there. It is a port on the Pacific coast of Mexico due east of the tip of Baja, California. It's south of Guaymas, which is on the Bay of California, and north of Puerto Vallarta, which is a resort that is better known, at least in this part of the country. At the time I was assigned, we had a post in Mazatlan because it was important to certain members of Congress. I think there had been an effort to close it in the 1950s and either it had closed and reopened or the effort had been fought. The post was certainly there and was even expanded while I was assigned there.

Q: Why would Congress be interested in this?

DONAHUE: I think there were congressmen who liked to go fishing. Mazatlan was well known on the West Coast as a center for sport fishing. During the time I was there, no congressmen visited, but we did have a visit by the Secretary of the Interior. We had a Foreign Service inspection in 1972 and the inspection went sport fishing.

Q: Who was the consul general – or was it a consulate?

DONAHUE: It was a consulate and the Consul was William Tienken, who subsequently became, and retired as, deputy principal officer in Tijuana, Mexico. He spent much of his career in Mexico.

Q: What were you doing?

DONAHUE: I was a vice consul and we did all kinds of consular work except citizenship and immigrant visas. So, about half of the day, usually in the morning, we took care of non-immigrant visas. Virtually all of the applicants were interviewed. Then in the afternoon, much of my time was spent on American citizen services. During the period that I was there, we had

about 30 or more American citizens in Mexico, mostly on drug charges. The reason the post expanded while I was there was the creation of the Drug Enforcement Agency [DEA]. It had been a rather small arm of the Border Patrol. With the importance of drug traffic, a separate agency was created and they needed to have an officer located in Mazatlan because the state capital, Culiacan, was a center for the drug traffic.

Q: Did you get involved in the drug business on the enforcement side or having to deal with the consequences of it?

DONAHUE: I really didn't. I think there were a couple of reasons. Even then, it was considered somewhat dangerous. People played for keeps. There were American agents who had a history of this in Mexico. But there had been some American agents who were literally on the firing line or had personal security problems because the drug lords were after them. So, the consul in charge of the post didn't want me to be directly involved. He would occasionally, on his travels around the district, pick up intelligence and he would find a way to transmit it to people in our embassy in Mexico City who were interested in that. I remember a couple of things. There was a strict prohibition from our ambassador, who was Robert McBride, against driving outside of the city on the highways after dark. It was not necessarily drug related. It was just general lawlessness and the possibility that people could come to harm. On one occasion, the consul was invited to a party at a ranch outside town. The owner or at least some of the people who were going to be there were reputed to be in the drug business. The Consul informed me that he was going to the party because he felt he had to. It was a kind of social obligation on his part. But he also wanted me to know where he was and to expect him back by a certain time. He would be coming back around midnight. I think he called me when he got back to town just to let me know he was all right. There was one occasion when I had to go out of the city at night on official business. Rather than drive myself, I got the consulate driver to take me. It was considered safer, but it was still a kind of unusual incident. I got a call very late in the evening from government people – I guess the police – in a town maybe 60 miles south of Mazatlan that there had been a really bad automobile accident involving an American couple and would I go down. By the time I got down there, the American man had died and his wife was very upset. I was able to spring her from the clutches of the police, get her back to Mazatlan and get her on her way back to the United States the next day rather than have her charged in the complicity of her husband's death. In those days, the Mexican government was very strict regarding an automobile accident in which blood had been drawn. It didn't even have to be death, but if somebody had shed blood as a result of an accident, the person who was driving was often held in jail.

Q: Did you have Americans in jail?

DONAHUE: Yes, we did. There were three major prisons in the consular district that had Americans. The federal prison in Mazatlan probably had the most at any given time. There would be between 10 and 15. Then there was a state prison in the state capital of Culiacan that had five to eight. There was another state in our district south of Mazatlan, the state of Nayarit. The capital, Tepic, had two or three Americans in its prison.

Q: How were they treated?

DONAHUE: Any prison is bad. The prison infrastructure, the prison conditions themselves, were certainly not modern and often not very clean and wouldn't be air-conditioned or anything. I'm sure it would have been quite uncomfortable much of the year. That having been said, FBI agents occasionally commented that American prisoners might be better off in Mexican prisons than in American ones because they would have more freedom in some respects in a Mexican prison. In many ways, they were able to make money. They were able to teach English. They could write letters. Most of the American prisoners were a little bit better educated than the average Mexican in the prison. So, they could do things and they often did to make enough money so that they could buy many of the things that they wanted. There were American prisoners who were able to have an air conditioner or TV or whatever creature comfort. Nevertheless, Mexicans had the advantage of being fluent in the language and knowing the system so they could take advantage of it better. Probably, they would be better able to orchestrate an escape. As it turns out, there were a couple of spectacular escapes from the Mazatlan prison during the time I was there, but it was a prison that also went through about three or four different wardens. It was sort of so-so run.

I'd like to relate a strange incident that illustrates the potential pitfalls facing a consular officer. During my assignment in Mazatlan, there were always a large number of American citizen prisoners at the Mexican Federal Prison in the city. They generated a lot of work, including correspondence with family, members of Congress, and lawyers. In addition, the consulate provided a funds transfer service. This activity required me to visit the prison at least once a week. That way, I was able to monitor the state of the prisoners' well being, which I dutifully reported to the Embassy on a regular basis. During one of my visits to Mexico City, I met the head of 20th Century Fox Studios in Mexico. He asked what the American prisoners did for entertainment. I told him that they might have access to a television, but that carried only Spanish-language broadcasts. There was no English-language media outlet available to them. On hearing that, the executive offered to provide me with a copy of a recently released U.S. film each month to show in the prison. He sent the film in a format that fit our consulate projector. I worked out with the prison warden to visit on a prearranged evening once a month to show the film to all prisoners. The Americans could enjoy the film in English and the Mexican prisoners could read the subtitles. This process took place over a period of about six months. Everyone was delighted with the opportunity to see a film, there had been no problems with the prisoners during the film evenings, and I was settling into a routine. I definitely had let my guard down.

Then, a month came when the 20th Century Fox film did not arrive from Mexico City on the appointed day. I called the company's office and they told me there had been a problem with the courier service or the plane, and they would send the film the next day.

I tried calling the prison several times that afternoon to inform the warden that I would not be going that night. However, I was never able to get through. By late afternoon, I realized there would be no way to get word to the warden unless I visited the prison myself, and it was not possible at that time, for some reason I don't recall. So, I thought I would either call him or visit first thing the next morning to arrange another date for the showing.

Well, you can imagine how surprised I was to hear the morning news: at 9:00 p.m. the previous evening, there had been a major prison break. Most of the prisoners who escaped were Mexicans, but some Americans had joined them as well. Apparently, they had overcome the guards, taken

the warden hostage, and walked out the front door of the prison! Then, some of the prisoners hopped a U.S.-bound train. That was the last I heard of those prisoners, and presumably they all eluded recapture. I really felt fortunate that the 20th Century Fox film had not arrived, as planned. Many thoughts raced through my mind of what might have happened to me if I had been there during the prison break. Obviously, the prison authorities, and their higher ups in Mexico City, determined that there would be no more American movies. I so informed 20th Century Fox, and sent back the movie whose delayed receipt had saved my day.

Q: How about while you were there, particularly at that local level, was bribery a real problem? Americans are pretty awkward in dealing with this.

DONAHUE: I think you're right. In general, Americans don't like to engage in bribery and young people probably wouldn't even have thought that this was possible and therefore would not have tried it. Many of the young people, most of the American prisoners, were under 30. Many of the young people were in prison for the very first time ever. They had not ever been in trouble with the law in the United States. They had also usually not traveled outside of the U.S. before. So, it was a dual problem for them.

Q: How was living there?

DONAHUE: Living in Mazatlan was very good. Its climate is very much like southern Florida, so it's quite pleasant in the wintertime, very hot and humid in the summer. I definitely needed an air conditioner in the summertime. I rented a house about three blocks from the beach and was able to enjoy the beach a lot. The city was very small, with only 100,000 people. There was a community of American retired people that would grow a little bit in the winter and shrink a little bit in the summer, but there were a number of people all year round and I knew a lot of them. There were almost no Americans my age. One of the challenges was to meet Mexicans my age. Mexican society then, perhaps even now, is somewhat more conservative than American society. Girls of good family would not readily go out on a date with one man. Many girls into their 20s until they got married continued to live with their family, so their family knew everything that they were doing and even if they didn't live with their family, Mazatlan was such a small place that you couldn't go anywhere that you wouldn't be recognized. So, people tended to date in groups. I did have Mexican friends where I'd know the guys and they would introduce me to girls and we would decide as a group to go someplace to dance or something. There were opportunities for social interaction but it was a very different type of thing than at that time in the United States. My concern was that if I really got serious with a Mexican girl, serious even to the point of a one-on-one date, the family would expect that it was more than that and I would be pressured into an engagement and marriage. I really wasn't interested in that type of thing, maybe because the pool of women in Mazatlan was so small, maybe because I was interested in other parts of the world besides just Mexico.

It so happened that I had a number of friends from my entry class in the FS who had been assigned in Mexico City. We would visit back and forth. Because we had a non-professional courier run every two weeks, about every six weeks, I would end up making a trip to Mexico City. It would involve at least one overnight. So, I was able to keep up with my friends that way.

On one occasion, we were out at a restaurant in Mexico City and there were some other non-procurement couriers from our posts in Mexico, one of whom ended up becoming my wife. So, I met my wife through just a chance encounter that way. She was an FSO in Guadalajara, Mexico, which was a post between Mazatlan and Mexico City. She had arrived at her post a few months after I arrived in Mazatlan, and we had mutual friends in Mexico City.

Q: Did you get married in Mexico?

DONAHUE: We didn't. It turned out my parents were living in Maryland at the time and my wife's parents were also living in Maryland. So, it made sense for us to come back to the United States and have our wedding here. We got married in the District, where both of our families were able to participate.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about about Mazatlan? Visa work? What was that? Mainly refusals?

DONAHUE: Undoubtedly, there were a lot of people applying for visas who were seeking to remain in the United States, and we had a number of programs then that made the border quite porous anyway. We had a bracero program where Mexican workers could legally go to the U.S., mostly California, to pick fruits and vegetables. We had a border crossing card that was good for life, as far as I recall. Once it was issued, it could be used in perpetuity. The idea was that it could not become an immigrant visa, but it was a convenience for people to go across the border almost at will. Many of our visa applicants were students or people going on vacation. There was a Mexican middle class then. It was in numbers rather small in Mazatlan. After I got married to my wife, I moved to Guadalajara to complete her tour. There was a much larger Mexican middle class in Guadalajara and many of them certainly could afford to vacation in the U.S. and they were good applicants. I think we were not overly concerned with fraud for visas in those days. When I was in Guadalajara, I was working in American citizen services and citizenship. We were somewhat more concerned about fraud with citizenship. There had been several generations of Americans living in Mexico and the laws changed a great deal over a few years in terms of the right of a mother to transmit citizenship to her child and so forth. So, we had to scrutinize those laws very carefully. Sometimes, fraudulent documents were submitted to back up citizenship claims.

Q: How did this work out going to Guadalajara? Was it at that point where your wife had to resign?

DONAHUE: About the time that we got married, the rule ended that a FS officer had to resign a commission to get married. So, neither my wife nor I had to go through that procedure. We had no guarantees that we would be assigned as a tandem couple, but it worked out for us.

I met my wife, Linda Louie Donahue, while on a nonprofessional courier run to Mexico City in the summer of 1972. She was doing a parallel run from her post, Guadalajara. We had mutual friends from our A-100 courses at FSI (we entered the State Department in the same year, 1971), but prior to our meeting in Mexico City we had not known each other. Our initial meeting was

followed by Linda's visiting me in Mazatlan and I visited her in Guadalajara. We did some traveling to tourist locations and then we decided we were more than friends. One problem loomed for us, however. At that time, a Foreign Service Officer who married a foreign national had to tender his (or her) resignation. It was up to the Department to accept it or not. Although there were many officers married to foreign nationals, the decision was made on a case-by-case basis. The situation for Foreign Service Officers marrying each other was a bit different: the female officer was expected to tender her resignation and usually it was accepted. This meant that a woman could have a Foreign Service career only if she swore off marriage. Indeed, most of the senior Foreign Service Officer women we knew in the Embassy in Mexico City had remained unmarried during their careers.

Fortunately for us, however, one of those women was on our side. This was Margaret Hussman, Consul General in Mexico City. She had had a long, successful career culminating in her Mexico City assignment. Although she had not married, she no longer accepted nonmarriage as a necessity. At that very time, the Department was also reviewing the policy and considering change. Ms. Hussman briefed us on the likely changes that would come out of Washington and she helped us determine a date for our wedding (which we did in Washington, along with a lot of State Department paperwork) to ensure that neither Linda nor I would be adversely affected by the marriage. Ms. Hussman also helped me get a short tour assignment in Guadalajara following our marriage so that we could both complete Linda's tour and arrange follow on assignments together. Linda and I were among the very first tandem couples in the State Department.

We have seen the Department become more, and then recently somewhat less, helpful with tandem assignments, as the number of tandems has continued to grow. Coupled with the closing of many posts and the shrinking of many embassies, especially some of the traditionally larger posts, it is becoming more of a strain on the system to accommodate tandem couples. We were very fortunate that we could always be posted together. We have seen officers who had to accept postings in different countries, and even continents, suffer problems in their relationships as a result. Early on, Linda and I decided we would emphasize our marriage and, when children came, our family, over taking the best choice of assignments aimed at furthering our career. We believe we made the best decision, but it is up to each tandem couple to decide.

As life in the United States increasingly assumes the normalcy of a working couple, it will continue to be challenges for the foreign affairs agencies to ensure that couples who wish to work and live together at the same post have those opportunities. My wife and I were able to find a fit with the State Department's own needs in our Chinese assignments. Since housing was so tight, the mission preferred working couples because it minimized the need for apartments. However, few posts have such limitations. In our experience, it appears the State Department has worked harder than some other agencies to accommodate working couples. The greatest difficulties seemed to befall colleagues who worked for different agencies, which have their own personnel systems and policies on foreign assignments.

One possible solution is to enter into more treaties with foreign countries to facilitate Foreign Service spouses' finding work on the economy. While the treaties we already have undoubtedly do help, the ease or difficulty of obtaining employment often has more to do with factors beyond

the U.S. Government's control, such as the state of the host country's economy and the likely discrimination against foreigners, even if they have the requisite language and other qualifications.

When I was transferred to Guadalajara, I expected that we would remain in that city for a fairly long time, maybe another two-year tour. But at that time, Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State and he wanted especially for junior officers to be transferred to other parts of the world and have a totally different kind of experience. He wanted to churn up the FS. He especially wanted people to change continents or regions and learn about issues on the other side of the world.

Q: This was the GLOP program.

DONAHUE: That's right.

MARY A. RYAN
Consular Officer
Mexico (1971-1973)

Mary A. Ryan was born in New York in 1940. She received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from St. John's University. Her career in the Foreign Service include positions in Italy, Honduras, Mexico, Ivory Coast, Sudan, and an ambassadorship to Swaziland. She was also a member of the Kuwaiti Task Force during the Gulf War. Ambassador Ryan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2003.

RYAN: Then I went off to Monterrey in a consular job.

Q: And you were there from '71 to '73. Monterrey, what was it like when you got there?

RYAN: Well, the consulate general was a very, very busy consulate post. Everybody – immigrants, non-immigrants, and protection work. Ed Dobbins was the consul general Mac Adams was the deputy principal officer. Our chief of the consular section was a most wonderful man, an FSO3 [now O-1] by the name of Denman Stanfield, who really taught me, just by being, just by the way he was and the way he ran that section, a lot about how to be a supervisor and how to be in charge. Because we worked like dogs, and there was just so much work and so much pressure. No matter how hard you worked there was always people left over at the end of the day, and so that meant they had to sleep in front of the consulate again that night and all. And he was just a lovely, lovely, lovely man. We would have coffee with him in the mornings, before the day started. He was always accessible. He would sometimes say, on Fridays or before Friday, "Leave at noon Friday. Go into the border. Take the weekend, get away." He was just terrific. And he knew everything. He knew everything, I thought. Everything. Everything about the law, everything about how to take care of Americans, everything that you could do and everything that you couldn't do for them. I didn't realize it, how much I'd learned from him, just by the way he

was.

Q: What did you do first?

RYAN: First I did immigrant visas. Then I did non-immigrant visas. And then for a year I ran the protection of American citizens.

Q: Let's talk first about immigrant visas. What were the patterns then?

RYAN: Well, then, it was the law then that if you had a baby born in the United States, that baby could take the whole family with him or her. So there was a lot of fraud in people saying that their babies were born in the United States when they were born in Mexico. There were certain midwives in Texas who would lie and create birth certificates for babies. But then there were a lot of babies who were born in the United States, parents who were migrants who had gotten across, undoubtedly illegally, to have their babies in the United States just to get to the United States.

That's when I first became aware of how exploited people like them were in our country, how exploited Mexicans were in the United States, by us. That definitely was what pushed me so hard when we were working so much on the temporary worker program and regularization at the beginning of the Bush Administration, because they would come, finally, they'd return to the country and with visas. They had been in the States illegally. I had one man who had been deported six times. They worked for practically nothing. They were taken advantage of terribly, in many cases by the growers and by the ranchers. Some ranchers were very nice. I got to be very, very friendly with one elderly gentleman from Texas, Mr. Seay. He would bring his employees down when it was their turn to come for their visas, and I got to know him because he came regularly. And I don't think he cheated them. But they were terribly cheated. They were paid next to nothing. They lived in these horrible shacks, and they had to pay for living, they had to pay for where they lived to the person who was employing them. And Mr. Seay told me once that the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] would call him. He lived in Floresville, Texas. They would tell him that they were going to raid his ranch, and when they were going to raid it – what day and what time. And then he would hide the illegals. It was such a sham. It was just so awful. I mean, either we have an immigration law or we don't. And if we have a law it should be enforced properly and if we don't have a law then we shouldn't pretend that we have a law. I remember being upset a lot and angry a lot.

They were different from the Italians. They were much more beaten-down, much meeker. The Italian immigrants, you sort of knew that their children were going to be anything their children wanted to be when they were American. But these people, they didn't have the same push or the same concept, and so you feared that their children were also going to do stoop labor. You worried about that. Now you can get an education, now you can do this, now you can do that – they didn't take to it the way the Italians did.

Q: There still seems to be the problem. At least maybe not quite the same, but from my observation – I've never dealt with it personally – but not using education and property

ownership as a way out. It seems to be it all gets poured back into the family; you stop education early in order to get a job. It seems to be the wrong formula for moving ahead.

RYAN: It's the wrong signal to send to people. And then it was very, very prevalent. And we had a lot of people that we had to delay giving them their visas for one reason or another. They didn't have proper forms or whatever. I remember one family saying that they had to go to the States because their baby was an American citizen. Their baby couldn't drink the water in Mexico. It was a little baby that's just like everybody else in the family, and here was this little child, but this was an American child, so this American child had to go back to the States. It was just so sweet. But they were very gentle people. Very good people.

Q: One of the problems with consular work is, young officers, vice consuls, for the first time in their lives, are up against people who are lying to them, or are giving them fraudulent documents. For some young Americans, they're just not used to this, and sometimes it affects them. They get overly legal and all. Did this make you cynical or your colleagues? Was this a problem you had to fight with?

RYAN: I think one of the problems in consular work, particularly doing it early in your career when you're young, as we used to be, is that you have so much power over people. And it should scare you, but it doesn't. Nobody should have that kind of power over people, when you don't really know what you're doing.

Q: You were seeming very...

RYAN: Not only do you get angry at the non-immigrants, the people who were lying about why they wanted to go to the States – because it was obvious that they wanted to go to the States because they wanted to get a job or they wanted to stay as long as they could. And with so many of them, every day we had that. I do remember being angry and annoyed. I don't remember my being so much, I mean you almost expected them to lie, because if they told you the truth, you'd never give them the visa. So they had to tell you a lie, but it was so transparent that it was annoying. Poor little souls would come in, dressed as campesinos, and tell you that they wanted to go to Disneyland. Well, good lord, they didn't have the money to go to Disneyland. They didn't have the money to get to the border, for heaven's sake. So, yes, I remember that.

And I also remember the pressure of, just the thought of the unrelenting numbers of them, and how full we were, even then. There were just two of us doing interviewing then. I was doing a couple of hundred interviews a day, at least. So you didn't have a lot of time to spend with them or be particularly nice to them. I think I said "Good morning" or "Good afternoon" but I don't think I said anything much else. And so you're soon just worn down. You're tired, you're under tremendous pressure. There are always Congressional correspondence about how, "Why did you refuse this person?" or "My constituent's brother didn't get a visa" or whatever. And that was annoying because they were supposed to know their law, after all; they were the ones who created it! So they should know why we were refusing visas. But part of it, I think, was being young; part of it is having so much power. Because if you gave the visa, you'd change their lives, and if you refuse, you also change their lives.

Q: When you're up against a clientele almost 90% or more should probably be being refused in your heart of hearts, maybe even more, and what do you do? Do you make sort of a mental compromise, and say, "Well, I'll refuse 70% and allow..."

RYAN: I never did that. Not consciously. Other people had told me, since I was in CA [Bureau of Consular Affairs], that they thought, well, you know, if I give him a visa, is he going to be a good citizen in the future? Can I take a chance on him? I never thought like that. I just thought I would issue to the people I thought I should issue to, and refuse the people I thought I should refuse. And our boss, Mr. Stanfield – some consular sections, I understand, post your refusal rate and all of that – he never did that. He would talk to us about what it was like. He wanted us to be polite, certainly. He didn't want us to be fighting or shouting or yelling at people, or anything like that. It was still the old days, where we sat at a counter, and we had the waiting room right there in front of us, and we would call them up and they would come up and it was completely open and exposed.

But I don't remember that, I mean, trying to have a certain percentage that I issued to or refused. I just tried to make the best decision I could in the less than a minute that you have to make a decision. I don't know that I was as nice to them as I always preached to the consular officers to be, you know, to look at their documents even though they were fraudulent, because they probably spent some money on them, and be nice to them and all of that. I don't know that I was particularly nice to them. But I never made fun of them or anything like that. But it was very hard work, because in many cases you did feel sorry for them. They're just this side of the border and everything's changed. You're lucky that you're born on our side of the border, and they're born on the other side, and it's ...

Q: Did you have any concern about your refusing cases that another officer might be accepting or not?

RYAN: No. We never thought like that. We didn't do that. I do remember once, the INS sent back one of those forms that they send when somebody that I had issued to [had cheated]. It was the only one I remember, but there must obviously have been others. But this one they said, when they took off his shoes, they found a Social Security card. And I remember thinking, "Wow, if I could have taken off his shoes, I would have found it too." So I didn't feel so bad, that I had issued to somebody who was obviously an intending immigrant.

I did have one man that I had refused, who come back to see me in my office. Not in the front of the waiting room. He was very angry, and he ripped off his belt, and I thought he was going to hit me with his belt, and he opened it, and hundred dollar bills fell out on the desk, all folded because they fit in his belt. I remember that, and I fled out of the office. Left him in the office with his hundred dollar bills, and ran down the hall to Mr. Stanfield's. "Stan, Stan, this man is trying to bribe me!" And Stan came in, and yelled at him, and threw him out. But that was the only time that anyone tried to buy a visa from me.

Q: What about protection and welfare, the type of work you didn't really care for?

RYAN: It was very hard in Mexico because anybody could get to Mexico. And they all came to Mexico, God help them. No wonder the Mexicans look down and hate us. Because it's one of the worst types of people who could drive to Mexico, who would, if they were in an accident would whip out a twenty dollar bill and visibly, openly try to bribe the policeman, because they knew that in Mexico a policeman took bribes. "So here's twenty bucks buddy, let me go." That kind of person, who always ended up in jail. And then you'd have to go and calm everybody down and do that. Lots of kids smuggling marijuana.

Q: This was at the height of ...

RYAN: Yes, it was awful. It was just awful. And I quite honestly always suspected that it was the same marijuana, bales of marijuana, that the Mexican police had somehow sold to these boys, and then arrested them for it. Because then they confiscated the marijuana, and then did it again. But it was awful, awful, all the time.

Once I had four people, young people, one young woman, arrested – they were flying, they had a plane – for smuggling marijuana. I had a long interview with them and the woman was very frightened of the Mexican police guards at the prison, as I think well she should be frightened of them, and I got their parents' names and everything. I called the parents and explained sort of what was going to happen. And of course it's always horrible. The parents are all upset, people crying and everything, yelling, all of that. And this one boy, young man, who was sort of the head of it, the pilot, was very relaxed about everything. And he said that none of what I was saying to him, and what I then subsequently told his parents, was going to happen. And sure enough, the next day they were gone. And so they had to have paid a tremendous amount of money to get out. Because they had them – they had the plane, they had the marijuana, they had everything. They were gone. One father called me back and denounced me for frightening them and lying about their son, and all sorts of things. But what I told them was true. They were smuggling dope, and they must have been making a great deal of money, because they did get out.

Most of them didn't. I remember going to Durango to visit one fellow, who was a very good-looking man, 26 years old, in prison for seven years, whose teeth were falling out because of the diet he had. His story, which could have been true, who knows, was that he had been hitchhiking, he was picked up by this car, the car was in an accident, marijuana was found in the car, the driver had been killed, and he was arrested. He never told us where his family was. He didn't want his family notified, and so he had no money to buy food, and he had to eat what the prison food was, and his teeth were falling out. That was before EMDA, the Emergency Medical and Dietary Assistance that we have now, and so we used to buy him vitamins out of our own pockets. But it was very sad. It was awful.

Q: What was your impression of the Mexican police authorities and all?

RYAN: I was in a constant state of rage with the Mexican police authorities, because they were very corrupt, they were very venal, and if there were an accident, you had to fly – risk your life to get there. Because if you didn't get there ahead of them, everything was gone. We had one

horrible accident where a car on a perfectly straight road – I have no idea what happened – went right into the side of a train. An elderly couple. That’s what they do. They drove right into the train. It was horrible. And the FSNs saw that on television and they told me, so I went there. And when I got there, everything was looted from the car. I think their relatives probably thought I stole things. Their relatives said, “I know she had a fur coat with her. I know she had this with her, I know he had that with him.” And it was just gone. Everything gone. It was awful, awful.

Q: Did you have much contact with Mexicans – I’m talking about social contacts – while you were in Monterrey?

RYAN: Well, no, because then, the married people in Monterrey loved Monterrey, and the single people all hated it, particularly the single women. And we were mostly women in the consular section, single women to boot. It was still early enough that they weren’t sure of us, they didn’t have women working and particularly living abroad, and going off without a man of any sort. And so they weren’t really sure of us. So the people we were friendly with, of course, were the FSNs, and we were very friendly with them. I’m still in touch with them thirty years later. But getting to know Mexicans, other than Mexicans connected with the consulate, it was very difficult. At least it was for us, then.

Q: I’m trying to capture the period. As a single woman, was it almost a no-no that you didn’t date nationals of the country you were in? I won’t say that there was a rule against it, but was this sort of, “Gee, I don’t want to get involved” or something like that? Was this a problem?

RYAN: No, I didn’t run into that so much being a problem. Because some people did go out with Italians or with Mexicans. I don’t remember that so much. For example, I went to Mass every day at the same church for the whole two years that I was there, and no one – other than nodding, and the kiss of peace and all of that – no one ever spoke to me. No one ever said, “Oh, you’re a foreigner here. What are you doing here?” or anything like that. I guess it was, you know, they just didn’t do it. And I don’t know that we would do it either. I don’t know that we would get so friendly with people that we meet in church either.

I didn’t enjoy Monterrey as a place. I made some very lasting friendships with people I worked with. Diane Dillard, for example, I met in Monterrey. And we’re friends to this minute. The FSNs I’m still in touch with. But there wasn’t very much to do there if you were single. Fortunately we all liked each other. But, you know, if you work all day with people and then you go out and socialize with them all night, it gets a little boring. So, you know, going out to the movies, going to dinner, all of that, it was okay, but after a while, it was sort of boring. And you would have liked other people to meet you, to get to know, but you just couldn’t. It wasn’t like that.

Q: Well, did you have a problem with people trying to get to know you, but the ulterior motive was visas or something like that?

RYAN: That was always the concern. I do remember applicants coming to my apartment where I lived. I had this little townhouse, in this little complex of seven townhouses. Most of the others

were kids who went to the technological university there. And people would come to it. That really enraged me. Don't come on my time for a visa! Come on your own. Come on the government's time if you want. I remember once our portero there saying to me ...

Q: This would be the doorman.

RYAN: The doorman. The handyman of the complex. The man who helped you hang pictures and did the little gardening, and things like that. Lovely man. I remember him saying to me, "I told my granddaughter that she should ask you for a visa, because I knew that you would get her one." And I thought, "Merciful heavens!" Thank God she didn't ask me, because the granddaughter would be only going to the States to get a job, and so it would be horrible. But thank God she didn't, and so I was never tested like that, where somebody that I really, really liked, that I wanted to do something for, asked me for something. I never had that, thank God.

JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
Consular/Political Officer
Mexico City (1971-1973)

Ambassador Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, D.C. as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: When you got to Mexico, who was the ambassador?

SULLIVAN: The ambassador was Robert McBride. I recently inspected The Congo, Kinshasa, and it reminded me that he had been ambassador to Congo Kinshasa back prior to that, probably in the late '60s.

Q: Did you get any feel for him or were you so far down the food chain that you didn't really?

SULLIVAN: I didn't have very much direct interaction, although I was invited to the large receptions. He was always pleasant, a little bit distant. I recall his wife being I guess I don't know the right word...sorrowful perhaps. In the course of the two years that we spent there, the rules changed and she no longer had junior wives like mine, in effect, reporting to her; they had been emancipated. So the system in which Mrs. McBride and the other senior spouses had paid their dues was ending.

Q: Well then, where did you work?

SULLIVAN: I worked six months in the non-immigrant visa section pushing out as many as 200 visa interviews a day; It was basically a machine process. People were pleasant. That was an observation point for me though because I had a few colleagues, like Mike Hancock, who came in as consular officers committed to consular work. The contrast between him and some of those people who had been “Wristonized”, the Foreign Service staff officers who spent their whole careers issuing non-immigrant visas with minimal chance of promotion, was dramatic. Many of the staff officers developed negative attitudes toward their work and the visa applicants. I would hear them complain that “these people are lying to me or I’m tired of what I am doing.” Many of the new officers who came in with me committed to a career in consular work had a much broader perspective on life and realized that these people coming before them were looking to change their lives for the better, whether they were telling the truth or not.

Q: You are at this desk or whatever; I guess it was a counter wasn’t it?

SULLIVAN: Counter yes.

Q: One, you see 500 Juan’s or whomever, how did you make up your mind?

SULLIVAN: Well doing 200 interviews a day in the six hours you would be at that counter, you really are making up your mind in the first instance based on their appearance.

Q: I’m told some people said they used to look at the hands.

SULLIVAN: I don’t recall looking at the hands but people walking up, you would notice their appearance. You would ask three or four questions and if they met your expectations, then you went ahead either issuing or not issuing. If the answer to my questions didn’t meet my expectations then I would continue the interview for perhaps a maximum of three or four minutes more; that’s all you could afford and then make a decision and move on.

Q: Did you find it hard because most people come up through the academic route really aren’t having to make these very important decisions and it’s hard to put a new guy or gal into this.

SULLIVAN: Right. I’d say the pressure of rapid-decision making process was difficult. It was not difficult in Mexico compared in other places, like Israel, because most Mexicans accepted the decision whichever way it went. In part that may have been mitigated by the fact that they had another alternative; they could cross the border illegally, if all else failed. But Mexicans didn’t resist, they didn’t complain, they didn’t cry in front of you. They maintained their stoic disposition and said thank you very much and left, but yes you would think about it a little bit as this was something that was affecting their lives, their whole future.

Q: How did you find your supervision?

SULLIVAN: Almost all of my immediate supervisors had come up through the staff route which was the predominant route for consular officers until the late ‘60s early ’70s. Some of them were good, professional, etc. Some of them had alcohol issues and it may have had something to do

with Mexico as well in that people who had problems with alcohol issues were kept close to home.

Q: I was in personnel at one point and Canada and Mexico had a disproportionate set of people with personnel problems because we didn't want to send them too far. Of course, this created...also London got loaded with.

SULLIVAN: The transport costs if they had to come home were relatively less.

Q: Well then after six months doing non-immigrant visas, what happened?

SULLIVAN: Then I worked in the American citizens services section and had a terrific supervisor Lou Goelz, who I think later became at least a consul general.

Q: Oh yes, actually Lou replaced me twice once in Seoul and once in Naples.

SULLIVAN: He was a delightful fellow, very knowledgeable and he also showed confidence in his people and let them do what they were capable of and encouraged his officers. So I was placed in a position called operations officer, which was anything that didn't fit neatly into a category of a death or arrest or a notarial case for which we had designated officers. So I would receive the people who were lost, the whereabouts cases, the people who were wandering the streets. It was a challenge sometimes. Some of them mentally unbalanced and having two or three of them at times even in my office together and trying to deal with that.

Q: The words of wisdom our consuls often have some of the best stories. Do you have any stories from that period?

SULLIVAN: Sure and some of them are not my proudest moments in that you would have a case of a fellow, probably in his 70s, retired, who comes in and says he has no money. The first thing is you don't hand him a bunch of money. You ask for his relative's contacts and you contacted his children. His children apparently have heard this story before and they were not particularly interested in shipping more money to him, I think we eventually squeezed a small amount of money out of them sufficient to get him a bus ticket. We were supposed to do was reach out to what is now HHS so they would receive them at the border.

Q: Health and Human Services.

SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q: I think it was the public health people.

SULLIVAN: But the reality was they worked forty hours a week, they weren't interested in doing anything on a weekend and if you had this problem on a Friday you were supposed to baby-sit people who did not want to be baby-sat over the weekend and then send them on up the road. Well I think we wound up babysitting this one fellow over the weekend, but then putting him on

a bus on Monday. At that point, he sold his bus ticket, got off the bus, took up drinking and carousing at the next stop with the remainder of his money. So a day later, hopefully in the next consular district, he was discovered again without money and had to be pushed on up to the border in stages.

Q: Did you find yourself involved in sort of confidence men and that type, people who were sort of milking Americans?

SULLIVAN: Well there were some terrible stories really and the worst circumstance would be if an American got into an automobile accident in Mexico. There was one terrible case in which a fellow was involved in an accident, his wife died and then he was being extorted by everybody in the system down in Vera Cruz state. By his account, somebody else had caused the accident. The person who caused the accident was a local person and therefore that person was exonerated and yet Mexican law required somebody to be held responsible for the death of the American's wife. Well, it was this American widower. We would put him in touch with the local lawyer who basically joined in extorting as much money as they could from him. The fellow spent at least the weekend in jail and eventually paid what was necessary to get out of there, and there was very little that we were able to do to help him in the corrupt system that was Mexico at the time.

Q: Did you get involved in prison visits?

SULLIVAN: I did, not a lot, because we had an arrests officer who mostly did that. But we used to cover Acapulco by periodic visits maybe once a month for a couple of days and there were inevitably some Americans in prison there usually for marijuana possession. The majority of them, I think, were fairly happy in prison because for a small amount of money they could still get that marijuana, they could have conjugal visits from whomever they wanted and spend a month or two there reasonably happily.

Q: I've heard people say and I don't know if this is during this period but movie actress Merle Oberon lived in Acapulco and was quite generous with trying to help Americans in trouble. I don't know if you ran across this?

SULLIVAN: I did not, no, no.

Q: Well you did this for a time then what?

SULLIVAN: Then I actually was moved, it was a formal rotational assignment and so I rotated out. Let me add one feature on Lou Goelz. Lou Goelz as I remember as terrific as he was and he gave me a good evaluation report, but as my fitness report was coming up he said, "Something I need to comment on is how your wife entertains. So could you invite me over to dinner." We did and that became part of the fitness report. I think that year was probably the last one in which spouses were rated in the employee's fitness report.

Q: Somebody looking at this up until the very early '70s wives were rated.

SULLIVAN: That's right. That fitness report by Lou would have probably been in about January 1972.

Q: Most of the time most of us said the wife is a wonderful support who entertains well even if they were falling down drunk. I mean what the hell are you going to say? Although I have seen at one point when I was in personnel I remember having to show somebody the same thing that she entertained too well, too many other gentlemen and all. Oh God, I had to show this report to the man and I mean this was...

SULLIVAN: Oh yeah and that used to be a confidential section.

Q: I did show that and he was rather stoic about it. I was very unhappy to have to do this. But anyway that was cut out although you might say that the situation didn't change because if the wife didn't help entertain it cut in, I mean they were expected to.

SULLIVAN: Oh yeah.

Q: And it continued basically although...

SULLIVAN: Well I don't know, hopefully not. I mean Lou to his credit I think really only did it as his obligation as a rater to have a feel for this and put this in. But in any case I then moved on after about a year in Mexico City into the political section and wound up working for a year in the political section. We had a pretty good group of people: Dave Zweifel, whom I'm in touch with today who was a middle grade officer there. Dick Teare was my immediate supervisor; they both went on to be ambassadors. Free Matthews was the section chief who was good but never quite lived up to his father's...

Q: His father was Doc Mathews.

SULLIVAN: He was H. Freeman Matthews, Jr. so I think his father must have been Freeman Matthews as well and was, I think, undersecretary in the late '40s.

Q: Well what were you doing?

SULLIVAN: I was mostly doing multilateral affairs, which meant going over to the foreign ministry and dealing on issues like China and whether the PRC should acquire a UN seat or whether the previous arrangement should continue.

Q: That was a battle we fought and fought and fought and lost.

SULLIVAN: Yes, that's right. I learned a lot. The person who I dealt with in the foreign ministry most frequently was the deputy director for international organizations, Sergio Gonzalez Galvez, who later went on to the most senior career position in the foreign ministry. He told me at one stage as I presented this demarche and pressed for a response, "I've taken note of your position and that's all I'll say at this point." So I learned the lesson that "take note of your position"

means “no way”.

Q: No way, well this is one of the hardest things in a lot of countries people don't say no. But our people come out from Washington and, for example, the Japanese will take this under serious advisement, which is again no way.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: Well did you find or did you get a feel for it I'm told that in the political complex in Mexican government the ministry of foreign affairs is the place where they put the Leftists, the people coming from the Left their because it didn't make a hell of a lot of difference whereas in matters dealing with law and order and all that the FBI and their people are very close, the CIA and all that. But the ministry has lots of fun with Cuba and all because again it's not of primary importance. Did you get that feeling?

SULLIVAN: The only thing I would add to that is that it is not just the foreign ministry, but the Mexican Government of the time's attitude toward international relations in general. That was epitomized by the fact that Echeverria had been minister of interior. Internally he was still very repressive, very controlling but on international issues he often took a very Leftist position advocating for a charter of economic rights and duties. His positions oftentimes were anti-American in public as well, but that was in part, due to the contradictions of the Mexican revolution, the revolution that had promised to work for the people. But certainly by the 1970s, he wasn't doing very much for the people and was putting a lot of the benefits in leaders' pockets instead.

Q: Yeah, did this work give you a good feel for political reporting and looking at another government was this giving you this feel for the profession?

SULLIVAN: Both of those things, in part because I had a good supervisor, Dick Teare, who, when I produced a forty-page airgram on student activity around the country, patiently worked it down to about a dozen manageable pages. So I learned how to edit and how to write better. So certainly that tradecraft and the learning the multilateral issues as well. Certainly on the multilateral issues in a country like Mexico, if there was a major issue to us, it was not me the third secretary going over and presenting the demarche that would have effect, it was the ambassador utilizing at that point the station chief as his contact to see the president personally in a private setting.

Q: He was very much a creature of that whole FBI, CIA law and order type.

SULLIVAN: Right, absolutely.

Q: By the way for somebody doing this I've interviewed Dick Teare so they can go to Dick's...he got involved in Australia and all of that.

SULLIVAN: He did, he spent, I think, the last ten years of his career in that area in Australia,

New Zealand and I forget where he was ambassador but somewhere in the Pacific.

Q: Well then how did you find social life there?

SULLIVAN: It was terrific, the Mexicans in general, notwithstanding students' often wearing anti-Americanism as a badge of honor, were friendly and approachable. Generally you could engage them and they are interested in engaging. Also, the diplomatic community was an active one. We developed a very close friendship with the Mexicans who were our landlords; he an architect and she a kindergarten teacher. We used to travel around the country with them and visited thirty of Mexico's thirty-two states. Rafael and Pilar were godparents of our first son, who was born in Mexico. I also met a USIS officer who became a my closest friend until his passing early this century.

Q: I think things have changed now because one has to be much more careful because essentially of banditry.

SULLIVAN: There were always risks, the sort of risks that I mentioned that the fellow who got in the auto accident. Bad things could happen; if you got in an auto accident you were at the mercy of the local justice system, local corruption, corrupt lawyers and everybody else. But if you are fortunate and careful, Mexico was a great place. You often had, even among Rafael, the fellow who was my landlord and "compadre", ambivalent attitudes toward the U.S. It was interesting that he had never visited the United States and never did visit. He had been educated in the Sorbonne for his graduate studies, so I think he probably had some anti-Americanism and the only other time I saw him outside of Mexico was while I was later serving in Portugal. He had been in Spain and at our invitation came over to Lisbon for a long weekend.

Q: At this time you were how old now about?

SULLIVAN: Let's see I came in at 26 and was 28 when I finished in Mexico.

Q: Did you feel part of the '60s generation and was there in a way sort of a gap between you and the more senior officers because this was sort of a dividing line don't trust anybody over the age of 30 and well this whole 60s thing.

SULLIVAN: I had a beard at the time and I guess I would have been considered suspect but you know I wasn't on the radical fringe either. I could always talk with anybody and so while there was probably some distance with my elders, it wasn't a huge distance and it wasn't a sharp divide there. I think we went over in the last discussion one of the classes prior to mine had had the split over Cambodia and many of them wrote a letter and really it was a major divide. I think from that point probably the Department began to deal a little bit more sensitively with younger officers and it wasn't quite as absolute a position as it may have been before.

CLARKE MCCURDY BRINTNALL

**Military Secretary, Joint U.S.-Mexico Military Commission
Norfolk, Virginia (1971-1974)**

**Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Affairs
Washington, DC (1978-1983)**

Brigadier General Clarke McCurdy Brintnall was born in Omaha, Nebraska. He attended Wentworth Military Academy and the University of Nebraska, but graduated from West Point in 1958. Though his bachelor's degree emphasized engineering, he also studied American history, diplomatic history, and Portuguese. General Brintnall served in Brazil, Panama, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

BRINTNALL: In Norfolk, Virginia [VA]. Following the six month course I was assigned to the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the Military Secretary to the US Delegation of the American Defense Board, the US Delegation to the Joint US-Brazil Defense Commission, and the Joint US-Mexico Military Commission.

Q: You were doing that from when to when?

BRINTNALL: 1971-1974.

Q: What were these two Brazilian and Mexican Missions?

BRINTNALL: They had been established during World War II. We have already discussed the counterpart military commission in Brazil. The Commissions gave the Brazilians and the Mexicans a direct line to the United States Government and our Armed Forces. They were established to oversee our military initiatives with these two key countries; Mexico because of its border and Brazil because of its resources, its industry and its relative proximity to Africa, the route from Recife in Brazil's Northeast and Dakar. Brazil was known as the springboard to Africa.

Q: Was the Mexican one just to make the Mexican feel happy as opposed to the Brazilian one which was much more of a working thing?

BRINTNALL: There was much more going on with Brazil, but the Mexican Commission was involved with the training equipping of the Mexican Air Force 202nd Squadron that went to the Pacific. By the time I arrived the two Washington Commissions were largely ceremonial.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Mexican military at this time? The Mexican military seems to be one that has maintained quite a low profile over the years as opposed to almost every other Latin American country.

BRINTNALL: That is true. There was never a military takeover. They were very modestly trained and equipped. We had good relations, but they were careful to maintain their distance.

They wanted to maintain their independence. They would not accept a military mission in Mexico. In fact, the US trainers for the 202nd Squadron were sent to Mexico in civilian clothes at the request of Mexico.

Q: Since the Mexican were sort of sitting out there, were they getting military training anywhere else? Because I mean after all, they hadn't been fighting a war and yet a bunch of other countries had been fighting a war and this is how you acquire knowledge...by going out to people who have been doing that sort of thing.

BRINTNALL: No. Not really. Our relations were generally good, and we did provide training and equipment, but it was on Mexican terms. Again, they wished to maintain their distance from the US. The issue of sovereignty was always paramount. The level of cooperation did not come close that we had with the Brazilians.

Q: Drugs, I take it, weren't the...we weren't thinking in terms of major military support for suppression of drugs at this point?

BRINTNALL: Not at that point. We were just beginning to look at it but it wasn't the issue that it was seven or eight years later.

Q: What about Mexico? It always comes up and yet it always seems to be a blank spot as far as...I mean we got all sorts of cooperation but when you talk about the military it is almost as though they were...was there anything going on with Mexico?

BRINTNALL: Not a lot. Mexico really didn't want to be seen as at all close to the United States. The responsibility for the conduct of military relations with Mexico lay not with the Southern Command but with our Continental Army, specifically the US Fifth Army in San Antonio, Texas. Remember that even in World War II, Mexico did not want to be seen as too close to the US. Of course, Mexico maintained good relations with Cuba and that was of concern to us. Nonetheless, we wished to maintain close military relations with Mexico.

Q: Was there a willingness to work with this or was there a certain reluctance on the part of the Department of Defense in getting involved into the messy business of drugs?

BRINTNALL: There was a reluctance.

Q: Same with the Brazilian military.

BRINTNALL: For different reasons though. We thought we should not take a major role because it took away from our primary mission. It took away from the war-fighting capability of our armed forces. Just like reluctance to place troops along the Mexican border to stop illegal

immigration. This is not something that should be done by military forces. Ideally, it would be done by Federal authorities working with the local police.

Q: Was there any talk about...you know every once in a while because of illegal migration particularly from the Mexican border, and of going through holes in the fence and all, the subject is raised, why don't we just put some troops down there? Was this during your time? Did you ever look at this?

BRINTNALL: Oh, this keeps coming up, but I believe it is feckless to think that we can seal our border with Mexico, or that we would even wish to do such a thing.

Q: A politician is always looking for a "quick-fix."

BRINTNALL: Absolutely. We can't seal our borders.

ROBERT A. STEVENSON
Country Director of Mexico
Washington, DC (1971-1974)

Ambassador Robert A. Stevenson was born in 1918 and graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1938 with a bachelor's degree in commerce. He subsequently joined the U.S. Navy Supply Corps in the Pacific Theater. Ambassador Stevenson's Foreign Service career included positions in Washington, DC, Germany, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, and an ambassadorship to Malawi. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: This period of late '61 or so, were there any problems in Mexico?

STEVENSON: No. We were annoyed with Mexico for not going along on a number of anti-Cuban actions that the rest of Latin America went along with, Mexico being the only exception. Somewhere near the end of that time, I can remember Secretary Rusk, either in a memo, or ascribed to him or something, that he had said that we had gone along with this, that we wanted Mexico to take that position. I was never aware of that. I always thought that we were really quite annoyed with the Mexicans and that our actions would have been much more effective, we felt, if the Mexicans had gone along with us, but they didn't. I thought maybe it was more hindsight, that we said, "Well, since they won't go along with us, let's see if we can't use the relationship and get something from them, somehow."

Q: Were you concerned with trying to persuade the Mexicans to join us on the anti-Cuban stand?

STEVENSON: No. I think by then we realized that you couldn't press the Mexicans. You could try to persuade them, but the worst thing you could do was try to put any pressure on them.

Q: They had their own political agenda, too.

STEVENSON: Yes, and we were well aware of it by then.

Q: We might as well go on to your next assignment. You came back to Washington in 1971, and you were country director for Mexico.

STEVENSON: Yes.

Q: Mexican-American relations have always been sort of troubled right from the beginning. We have so many joint interests, yet the countries are, in a way, so dissimilar.

STEVENSON: That's right.

Q: Unlike, say, with Canada, where we have problems, but there's much more of an easy meshing.

STEVENSON: That's right.

Q: Could you describe, in 1971, what the Mexican-American relationship was like?

STEVENSON: You're absolutely right in what you say. It wasn't tense, but there were strains in it. There were definitely strains in our relationship. The principal strain then, that seemed to overshadow all others, was the salinity of the Colorado River, from which, by treaty, they got a share of their irrigation water. Their water was getting saltier and saltier, and they were blaming the U.S. for it, and quite rightly so, because it was largely runoff from a certain project called the Wellton-Mohawk that was increasing the salinity in the water that was going to Mexico. They had increasing acreage going out of production because of salt damage.

Q: Were we disputing the claim that we were causing the problem?

STEVENSON: Well, yes, but not very hard, because most of us believed we were. But there was some evidence that the land they were irrigating would have salted up eventually, anyway, because some land will, you know. You irrigate it for a few years. It's happening in Egypt, too, I understand, from the Aswan water. You irrigate a few years and it brings the salt up to the surface. There was some of that. But there was no question but that the water was getting saltier and saltier that we were delivering to Mexico. So that was a thing that was on the front burner.

Emilio Rabasa was the Mexican Foreign Minister, a very likeable guy who had studied in the States and used to come up here and talk to Charlie Meyer. We could always talk to the Mexicans, that's for sure, and the Mexican ambassador, Juan José DeOllogui, and I became very good friends. They were always very frank, though, where they disagreed with us. The principal

area at that time was the salinity question. On drugs, they were cooperating pretty well.

Dick Kleindienst, the Attorney General who got in trouble, got along well with the Mexican Attorney General, and took a great interest in the drug problem. I went down with Kleindienst and a group from his shop to Ciudad Juárez for delivery of some planes to the Mexicans to help them in their effort to control marijuana and heroin at that time, poppy-growing and marijuana. The Mexicans had confiscated a huge pile of marijuana, a great heap of the stuff, and the culmination of the whole visit was going to be the burning of that pile.

We had a luncheon, and Kleindienst spoke to them, and spoke well. I had a lot of respect for Kleindienst. After the lunch, I heard this very nice trumpet playing in a mariachi band that had been playing for us, and the Mexicans were all kind of tittering and looking. I went over, and damn if there wasn't old Dick playing the trumpet in that mariachi band, playing it very well. It turned out that he'd grown up as a poor boy in Arizona and had learned to play trumpet and Mexican music. I thought at the time, God, he would have made a terrific ambassador to Latin America.

But anyway, we got to the marijuana. This is kind of a good story. I'll tell you this. We got to the marijuana, and it had been soaked in gasoline. I took a great whiff of it, and I thought, "Jesus! I'm going to get back pretty far." So I backed up about as far as I could get, and I was standing next to the governor of Chihuahua. They handed this torch to Kleindienst, and he marched up and tossed it on, and it went "WOOOMPH!" and singed off his eyebrows. (Laughter) Then it sent a great towering black column of smoke to the sky. As this happened, the governor of Chihuahua said, "*Ay! Como me da pena quemar todo eso!*" "Oh, how it pains me to burn all that!" (Laughter) He didn't know that somebody who knew Spanish was right there.

Then Kleindienst talked to the Mexicans. They were cheering him. He was giving them this clenched fist salute in response. I said, "Mr. Attorney General, I think you've been doing very well," but--

Q: *You're holding your fist in the air.*

STEVENSON: Like the communists.

Q: *Basically the communists' salute.*

STEVENSON: I said, "You're giving them the communists' salute."

"Oh, am I?" (Laughter)

I said, "That's the commie salute when you do this."

He said, "Thanks a lot," and meant it.

I liked Kleindienst. He was a very personable guy. I was sorry he got into trouble, because he was

a real self-made guy and very bright, very able.

I wanted to tell you about salinity, how that got settled, because we did settle the salinity thing. President Echeverría made a state visit to Nixon, just the way Salinas did to Bush. The principal thing he brought up was the salinity question. So we got a directive to do something about it. We talked it over in ARA. I think Jack Crimmins was Assistant Secretary. I know Bob Hurwitch was Deputy handling the Mexican area. It was decided to name a special negotiator, and they brought in old Brownell, Herb Brownell, who'd been attorney general under President Eisenhower. And what a nice old man he was, and what an able, true lawyer. God, he did a good job on that.

Before that, I had gone out and met with the Basin States Committee, which was a shrewd bunch of people from the basin states that have rights to the Colorado water. I must say they impressed the hell out of me, how able these state officials were when it came to their interest in water. They had some good people.

Q: Water is the name of the game in those states, more than anything else.

STEVENSON: It sure is. And they weren't inclined to give the Mexicans an inch, I must say. I kept saying, "We'll have to give the Mexicans some kind of water that relates in some reasonable way to the quality of water that our farmers get."

"Oh, no, we can't do that."

Well, Brownell kept working on it, and he was a savvy old boy. He kept working on it. In the end, the thing was settled, as I thought it would be, saying that the quality of Mexican water would have a direct relationship to the quality of water that our farmers get in the Imperial Valley, and it could be like 100 parts per million more salty. I think that's what it says, up to 100 parts per million saltier than the American water.

I went down to Mexico City before the Echeverría visit was set up, just before, and the Ambassador, McBride, asked me to a luncheon, and he had the Foreign Minister, Rabasa, there. I had hoped that they wouldn't bring up salinity when Echeverría visited the States, because we didn't know what the hell we were going to do. But Ambassador Bob McBride brought it up at the luncheon. Rabasa turned to me and gave me a great song and dance about what we were doing to the Mexicans with our salty water, really laid it on hard. Finally, I said to him, "Well, ever since the days of the pharaohs in Egypt, the man who is farther down the river gets dirtier or saltier water. That's historical." I didn't know this for sure at all. (Laughter) But I figured it might fly.

He said, "Well, yeah. Well, all right. All right." So that's when I was convinced that they would accept somewhat saltier water, as long as it had a direct relationship to the quality of water that our people were getting. That's the way it was ultimately solved. So salinity of the Colorado River water going to Mexico is no longer a problem. It's still a problem for us, in that the way we're doing this is by cutting this runoff from Welton-Mohawk with some good water. We're supposed to erect a desalinization plant to process this runoff from Welton-Mohawk, but I don't

think it's yet in operation.

Q: You mentioned how sometimes when there are these problems, in most state visits, there's usually one major question that often is brought up, where the two presidents of the country or king or whoever, will come up and say, "What about so and so?" And they will say, "Why don't we solve this thing?" And it does tend to bring things to a head and maybe get one or two things off the agenda that have been perking for many years.

STEVENSON: I agree with you, and that's exactly what happened on salinity. That's exactly what happened on the Chamizal dispute with Mexico. That was earlier, where this piece of land which the Colorado River had isolated when it altered its course, was left in dispute between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Tom Mann was Ambassador at the time in Mexico City. Then the Chamizal was settled. The Mexican president had come up and he had mentioned that. We more or less got a directive from the White House: "Let's see if we can settle this salinity thing. Let's get at it and settle it." And we did.

Q: Were there any other major problems that impacted on you?

STEVENSON: Yes. The immigration thing was very sensitive, the illegal part. The Mexicans have always had kind of a strange line, I think, on their "wetbacks." They don't, of course, call them that. They're the illegal Mexicans that come into this country. Namely, that we should treat them in some special way, as if they had some sort of a right to come into this country. So it's very difficult to talk to them about doing something about the illegal Mexicans. They haven't been uncooperative, but they haven't been cooperative either. In other words, they just haven't done anything to stop the illegals from coming over.

I went down with a fellow from the Department of Justice. He's now the dean of the law school at Cornell. His name escapes me for the moment, but he's a very able guy. He was a Deputy Attorney General. We went down to Mexico City and had a meeting with them on the illegals. The main point they made was, "Don't erect any sort of devices that you've developed in Vietnam along the border as detection devices. This would be wrong to introduce anything out of the Vietnam conflict with regard to this problem." I always thought that was kind of nonsensical, that we had every right to put up any sort of detection device we wanted to prevent illegals from coming in if it didn't hurt anybody. I think they were referring to infrared sensors.

Q: I think they did that, and also pressure sensors, too.

STEVENSON: Yes. That type of thing.

Q: Which we have now.

STEVENSON: Yes, that type of thing. They were very adamant about our not introducing the Vietnam techniques into that Mexican border problem. We did come up with some recommendations on the problem, which were pretty much all covered in this recent legislation about the amnesty and forgiving a certain number of them, then trying to tighten up the border.

I'm not so sanguine about what's going to happen.

Q: As a practical measure, to turn it around for the Mexicans, how can they say, "We're going to try to keep our people out"? It's our problem, not their problem.

STEVENSON: It keeps the pressure off them. And with their population growing at such a tremendous rate, you know, until Echeverría came along, and for the first half of his administration, they wouldn't hear of any family planning in Mexico. But by the last two years of Echeverría's term, he had agreed that they needed to introduce family planning. But it's that recent that they've had family planning in Mexico.

Q: At your level, were we thinking in terms of pushing family planning?

STEVENSON: No, no. No, we weren't. But some of us were mighty happy to see them get onto it. Echeverría was very interested in getting a lot of free scholarships for Mexican students in this country, and Bob McBride went along with the cockeyed, fanciful scheme that has never panned out and no longer exists. I worked untold hours on that, only to discover that we really didn't need a special scholarship scheme for Mexican students, because we had thousands of them studying here now under the present setup. We had literally thousands of Mexicans studying in U.S. universities.

Q: How did you find the embassy? Was it well staffed? The embassy and the consular posts.

STEVENSON: I didn't think we had a very good embassy in Mexico City. I didn't think they were as informed as they should have been. I thought they were too tied to their desks. They didn't get around the country. Mexico is a big country, and you need to get some feedback from the whole country into your political reporting. I didn't think we were getting it at all.

Q: Did you try to ginger them up?

STEVENSON: Yes, I did. After McBride, we got ambassadors who did. I know John Jova did. But under McBride, it was pretty bad. I won't comment any further on that one. There are some things there that were strange. Of course, Ambassador McBride is dead now.

Q: As a country director dealing with a country which is of major importance to the United States, but often overlooked, obviously there are always difficulties with Mexico. How did you deal with the embassy?

STEVENSON: ARA, I would have to say, was pretty content to let me make contact with the Ambassador and deal directly with him on many things I did as Country Director. On most ordinary things, I dealt right with the Ambassador, like the problem of the Tijuana sewage runoff that, until very recently, was causing big problems, because their septic system, or their sewage system, wouldn't handle the overflow. It wouldn't handle all the volume. So the overflow would go into the Tijuana River, and then it would pollute some of the beaches in San Diego and so forth. We talked about that a number of times, what could be done about it.

When I had something like salinity, that went up to the Assistant Secretary and then to the White House eventually. Then Brownell was appointed, and so forth. But a lot of the day-to-day stuff was just handled at the Country Director level, dealing directly with the Mexican Embassy. When Echeverría came up, I drafted the communique jointly with a member of the Mexican delegation, and we just sat down in my office there in State, drafted the communique, then cleared it with the front office, cleared it with the White House, and that was the way it worked. I dealt directly with Dick Kleindienst, too, who was then Deputy Attorney General and with the Director of Customs, for example.

Q: Much more so than many other countries.

STEVENSON: Yes.

Q: You're trying to figure out Mexican-American relations. If you have a problem, say, with concern about how good the reporting is--you mentioned that you didn't feel the embassy, under Ambassador McBride, the officers were getting out enough. Did you have to depend on their reporting, or would you get your information on which you would be making judgments from other sources?

STEVENSON: Of course, we certainly read the press. We got papers from Mexico City, too, and we looked at the Mexican press, as well. But we depended a great deal on the reporting from the Embassy. That was our principal source, certainly.

For border stuff, we got a lot from the Border and Water Commission. You know that the State Department--the man who runs the Border and Water Commission is under State. When you go down to El Paso, you are startled when you see these huge warehouses with earth-moving equipment and Caterpillars and bulldozers and it says "Department of State." Because the Border and Water Commission does come under State.

They supply a lot of useful information about stuff along the border, not only pollution and so forth, but the juvenile delinquency problem, which was very bad in Texas with young juveniles coming across into Texas and stealing and getting caught, then deported, coming back, coming back, and then finally going to Texas reform school and costing Texas \$15,000, \$20,000 a year to keep these kids in reform school. That's just an example.

What were some other areas? Oh, the Kickapoo Indians. Some of this comes later, when I was working on that special commission designated as the Border Relations Action Group. But that's the sort of thing that the Commissioner, Joe Friedkin, was very helpful on. Joe Friedkin always had on his staff a Foreign Service officer there in El Paso, who followed the actions of the Border and Water Commission. They gave us much useful information about the border.

One of the things about that Mexican border that has struck me hard is that the people in the *Distrito Federal*, the federal district, the people in central Mexico, look at the border with different eyes than we do. Many of the Mexicans along the border would like to have less border and closer relations with the U.S., and for example they don't mind U.S. TV coming down; they

don't mind their Spanish becoming Spanglish. But the people down further south do, and they are not about to yield too much ground in the sense of opening up that border to U.S. interests.

Q: Did you have direct relations with the governors of the various Mexican districts along the border?

STEVENSON: No. I did with some of the mayors in some of the towns. In McAllen, Texas, the mayor there was very active, trying to get a bridge built, or another bridge built. He came in to see me. But on the Mexican side, no. I didn't.

Q: How did you feel our consulates were used?

STEVENSON: Well, they were primarily for protection and visa operations, but we used to get some useful reporting from them, too. I can recall getting some good stuff from Tijuana and from Ciudad Juárez, as well.

Q: Did we have any feelings toward the government in Mexico? After all, the PRI [Party of Institutionalized Revolution] has been in there and is still there, really, since the '20s. It has obviously become a self-perpetuating institution, much more of a challenge now than it has been before within Mexico. But were we trying to say, "You don't have a democracy there," or was this not even a subject of mention or concern?

STEVENSON: It was the latter, very definitely. It was never mentioned, and the Mexicans would have resented it terribly had we done so. I think as long as PRI was running things with reasonable efficiency and in terms of U.S.-Mexican relations, as long as they weren't a problem, we weren't going to rock that boat at all. I think we were happy that PRI had knocked out the extreme left, you know. For a number of years after World War II, the extreme left continued to operate, and Lombardo Toledano--I'd almost forgotten the name--head of the Mexican labor confederation, was a communist and a very powerful figure. There were other communist figures of some weight in Mexico, and they were pretty well all subdued by the PRI setup. Their organizations just became nothing.

So, no, I'd say politically, I think we recognized that PRI was not resulting in a real democracy, but we weren't about to rock that boat. There was never anything like it. I'm interested, as you mentioned, that PRI is having some real big problems right now. This last election was a very troublesome thing.

Q: Within the State Department, you were there during a time of troubles, you might say, between the fact that the Secretary of State William Rogers, was being outdone, in many cases, by the head of the National Security Agency, Henry Kissinger. Did you feel any of this Kissinger-Rogers business?

STEVENSON: No, I didn't feel it at all. I wasn't aware of it. It never impinged on my work in any way. I thought that the White House gave very good cooperation on the salinity thing, and that was the principal problem, where we needed White House cooperation. I remember talking

to Alexander Haig, assistant to Kissinger, at the time of the Echeverría visit, and found him very cooperative and very helpful, no problems at all. That was my only dealing with them. So I would say no. I only became more aware of the Kissinger presence later when I was in Personnel and he issued his famous GLOP, Global Outlook Program, one direct result of which was that I went to Malawi as Ambassador, instead of as DCM to Mexico, to which I had been assigned.

RICHARD W. TEARE
Political Officer
Mexico (1971-1974)

Richard W. Teare was born in Ohio in 1937. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1948. His career includes positions in Barbados, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, New Zealand, and Australia. Mr. Teare was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in July 1998.

TEARE: Oh, yes, it was a three-year tour and I took sixteen weeks of Spanish at FSI before I went down. We drove all the way down in our station wagon and I was one of several Officers in the Political Section there. I was doing internal Mexican stuff, which is a very tough nut to crack, by the way. So I had been there fully a year and a half, working for Free Matthews. The Ambassador when I got there was Bob McBride, for whom Matthews had worked in Madrid, and then he was replaced by Joseph Jova, who was quite a character.

I was a middle grade Officer toiling away and trying to get somebody in the Partido Revolucionario Institucional to talk to me, the PRI. The opposition Party people had all the time in the world, PAM primarily. Lunch would begin at 2 or 2:30 and last until 5:00.

Q: What was the problem of the PRI? Were they interested or were they too busy?

TEARE: Well first of all they operated essentially a closed system. They didn't want too much exposure into their...they didn't want their inner workings exposed I think is the way they put it. Everything was done in private. There were no nominating conventions, no intra-party debates, nothing like that. Candidates were selected from on high. That included the selection of each President by his predecessor. Furthermore they were in control. They were never challenged. They won virtually every election in sight. It is only in the years since that they started to lose a few governorships and Lower House seats. So they were riding high.

They didn't need any help from the outside and they didn't welcome scrutiny. So although there were a few people, including Rodolfo Echeverría who was the President's son, son of the President at the time I was there and who was Secretary General of the Party, and he would occasionally consent to see the odd foreign diplomat, it was a rarely granted audience. I think I met with him twice in my whole tour there. So we were sort of going around the edges, working a lot from public sources.

There were some interesting things going on. There were a couple of fringe publications that were talking about the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968 in which at least a couple of hundred people were gunned down.

Q: This was not the Olympics?

TEARE: Yes. The pre Olympic riot.

Q: Of the students essentially?

TEARE: They were mainly students. The Secreariato de Governor Nacion at the time was Luis Echeverria Alvarez, the equivalent of Interior Minister. He directed the law enforcement authority and it is highly probable that Echeverria ordered or at least did not stand in the way of a tough crackdown on the demonstrators in Tlatelolco with all its consequences. But all of this was not only not confirmed it was not even to be speculated about. Echeverria meanwhile had moved up to be President in 1970 so this was dangerous stuff to be publishing.

Q: I was wondering, was this a police state in some aspects?

TEARE: Not in the sense of Eastern Europe, I'm sure, no, it was not...nor China. They did not have a system of informants in every block and every apartment building. And in fact, as we have seen increasingly since then, I think the police were not very efficient and quite corrupt. They could be cruel and vindictive and, yes, there would be retaliation and people who stepped out of line might have their cars burned or might be beaten up or worse. So it was a tough place but it had been for years. I think that climate prevailed until quite recently.

Q: In a way we often find ourselves meddling in other countries' possessive political systems if we feel that they should be more like us, more democratic and all. Did you find yourself in Mexico in a place where we just kept our mouths shut? We reported but that was about it?

TEARE: Yes. I think that was essentially the case. The Mexicans were very standoffish toward us. They had refused to let astronauts train in the lava wastelands of Northern Baja, California, which was considered to be some of the most moon-like terrain on the surface of the earth. They would regularly decline disaster relief from even the American Red Cross much less from the American Government.

They were fiercely independent. Their whole history it seemed to me at the time was defined by their feeling of having been ill done by the United States. The loss of vast territory in the Mexican War, the U.S. invasions in the last century, in 1916 Pershing's raid...all of those things. One of their great satisfactions was the expropriation of the American oil companies.

Q: Carranza?

TEARE: Yes. 1938 I think it was. So they were fiercely independent, fiercely nationalistic,

fiercely anti-Yankee. At the same time of course the migrant workers were going across the border. U.S. cars were enormously popular and U.S. consumer goods. There was a lot of smuggling going on. So it was the characteristic love-hate sort of situation.

We had policy problems over Cuba in particular because the Mexicans liked to twist our tails on anything but in particular they tolerated some Cuba presence when we wanted them denied and so forth.

Q: I was wondering if you found a certain sort of shoulder-shrugging. It seems like we really in many ways have close cooperation with the Mexicans on all sorts of border things and all this. But at the same time in foreign policy it has almost been handed over to the Anti-Americans so they have a rather strident foreign policy, I think from our perspective. Whereas in others things we have the FBI and water control and all sorts of things are kind of working between us.

TEARE: Well I think they are working a good deal more smoothly now than they were 25 years ago. It is true we had the International Boundary and Water Commission back in those days although I couldn't have told you what they did. But I think there was not very much cooperation on a lot of day-to-day things. Then, of course, as you say, a tradition of hostility in foreign policy matters almost for its own sake continues I think down to the present time although I've had nothing to do with Mexico really since '74.

But it was not an easy place to work I found. People didn't keep appointments; they kept you waiting forever. The traffic and the air pollution were bad. There was physical danger. There was a group called September 19th that was going around looking for people to kidnap and at one point the Belgian Ambassador's daughter, I think it was, was kidnapped and released after a few hours. Whether or not there was payment I don't know. But, remarkably, the perpetrators were caught, or some of them. They confessed that they had been casing the American Ambassador, trying to follow his movements. But he was too well protected and his movements were too hard to predict so they gave up on him and went to a softer target. So we saw that as a vindication of the precautions that we took.

But on the other hand just from what I've read in the last few weeks I think the common crime problem as opposed to political crime in Mexico City is far worse today than it was in my day.

TERRENCE GEORGE LEONHARDY
Consul General
Guadalajara (1972-1973)

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

Q: Today is the 22nd of April, 1996, and we left off a very important... Would you tell when and where you were in Guadalajara, Mexico, from when to when?

LEONHARDY: I arrived there in the spring of 1972, no, I'm trying to think; when you're in the tropics you forget the seasons. Yes, March of 1972. Since my earlier tour in Nogales, consulates in Mexico decreased to ten.

Q: And how long were you there?

LEONHARDY: And I was there until the fall of '73.

Q: What was your job and what was the situation like in Guadalajara when you got there?

LEONHARDY: Well, it was supposed to be a very peaceful place compared to where I was, where I under guard during the four years in Salvador. It's the second largest city in Mexico. We had a huge number of Americans - forty-five-fifty thousand Americans lived down there, at least in the winter, or maybe even year round - and we had six states in the consular district where we had a huge number of Americans like San Miguel de Allende and Puerto Vallarta and places like that - resort areas. Then we had a university - the Autonomous University of Guadalajara. We had about, oh, around twelve hundred American medical students down there that couldn't get into med schools up here and went down there. Most of them, I think, were pretty decent people but there were some bad apples in the group too that were involved in smuggling and other nefarious things. We had more trouble with those medical students, from a protection and welfare standpoint, than we had with all the other Americans. The Americans down there were generally involved in a lot of charity work and they had a big American society and they did a lot of wonderful projects for poor kids in need of medical treatment and that type of stuff. They were very active in many areas and I think were a real credit to the area.

Q: So they weren't a protection and welfare problem, were they? The older citizens?

LEONHARDY: No. Very seldom did you have any problem from that group.

Q: Could you talk about... You were Consul General. Could you talk a bit about the problems you had and how you dealt with them with these medical students?

LEONHARDY: Well, the medical students, they were mostly... For instance, I can give you one good example: this one boy's father was a doctor in New York and the kid got in trouble with drugs or something and the Guadalajara University actually expelled him, I think. Then he calls me and raises hell, you know, about his kid getting kicked out of school and I said, "Well, you have to take that up with the university authorities. Then he said, "What do we got you down there for?" and all that type of stuff. "I'm a taxpayer."

Then I remember one time a bunch of them came to my door on a Sunday afternoon and one of them had been bitten by a rabid dog and they couldn't leave the country because their visas or

their permits to stay in Mexico would expire if they went back into the States. I said, "Well, get your rabies vaccination here, get treated here." "Well, we don't like that type of treatment here. They have a new medicine in the States that we want." And I said, "Well, if you're that anxious to get to the States and get treatment, I'd call our consul in Brownsville or I'd call the duty officer at our consulate and tell him to call Brownsville and arrange for you guys to cross over, or for somebody to come over to give you this special vaccination that you think you have to have." And I gave them the name of the duty officer, and so forth and they never went back. But they just rap on your door. I think they were on drugs myself, that was my feeling.

Q: This was the height of the American involvement in drugs, wasn't it, of youth?

LEONHARDY: Well, that was one of our major problems down there. When I was down there we had six states where we had more Americans, not only retiree types or older people but youth coming down there, especially in the summertime. Under Mexican law, if you were found even with a marijuana cigarette, you were accused of use and possession and charged immediately. Within seventy-two hours they either decided you were innocent or guilty and they'd throw you in the tank and you'd be there for a year, maybe, before you ever got out. It was a real problem for the Mexicans because, you know, they had to feed these people - meager rations, of course, but anyway they had to take care of them.

Some boy scout from Keokuk, Iowa, gets in jail, he never did anything wrong in his life and all of the sudden he's in a Mexican jail. And the same thing, we'd get piles of correspondence on each case. They'd get to their Congressman then you had the three day reply rule; you had to get back that you were investigating. Then you have to send in a new report, you know. So I decided that the way around this was to get the Mexicans in bed with me on this and I went around, I made a very intensive effort to become friendly with the mayors, with the governors, with the chiefs of police in the bigger cities, and with the prosecutors and the whole thing in the six states. I spent a lot of time on the road. I'd bring one of our younger officers with me and I preached the same sermon to all of these people. I said, "They're a problem for you and they're a problem for me." And I said, "The one way to resolve it is as soon as you pick up some young kid..." Most of these kids were innocent kids; they just come down there, and they think, "Well, we can do this in Mexico. Nobody's going to bother us." And all of the sudden they're in big trouble. And I said, "Then you bring charges against them and they languish in your jails for a year and you have to go through all these problems, and I have to go through them too." And I say, "The best way to resolve this for both of us is for you to just turn them over to your immigration authorities and have them kicked out as undesirables." They said, "Gee, that's a great idea." When I left Mexico, I think, maybe there were six people in jail in the six states in my consular district out of a hundred eighty-five around Mexico. But I also said, "If you catch some of these people involved in the trade, you know, throw the book at them. We don't like those people any more than you like them." So that's another type of problem.

Then of course, we had a huge visa operation, of course. But getting away from the strictly consular aspects of the job, we had a lot of economic reporting, there was a lot of industry in the area, in different states. Then we had a lot of political, you know, elections going on all the time, both local elections and state elections that we had to report on. We had some threats against

personnel. Most of the time, they would come from the local police or the local city government would inform us and they would send out some police and say, "We want to follow you around for a few days. There's been some kind of noises," you know.

Q: Who would be threatening or where did you feel the danger was coming from?

LEONHARDY: Well, the local police just said, "We've had some indications that some of these people want to do something to you." They never did come out with any particular...

Q: Well, I can think of two groups - one would be the drug people. I'm talking about the... And the other would be the anti-American extreme leftists.

LEONHARDY: Right, right. Getting back to that, we had a DEA office...

Q: Drug Enforcement Agency office.

LEONHARDY: And two of these fellows were very good friends of mine and we used to do a lot of bird shooting together. They had assignments in the States and then come to Mexico and one of them said, "When I first got there," he says, "I can't wait to get out of this place because it's so dangerous."

He said, "You know, they're all over the place." He told me about an experience he had when he first got to Guadalajara. He said, "Nobody knows who I am." And he went out to a bar which had a motel connected with it, out on the main highway, where a lot of tourists come in and out. This was also a hangout for big drug dealers. He knew that from intelligence, of course. He went out there, he says, "Nobody knows me. I'm going to go in the bar and just sniff it out." So he goes up and has a drink and he hadn't been there more than five minutes and one of these drug guys came up to him and told him what his name was. They said, "We understand you just arrived."

Anyway, both of them told me about raids that they would go on. They didn't participate actually in the raids, they would sit out in a car and wait until the local federal police went in and raided these places. Then they told me about how a lot of these people were paying off and just all of the sudden let them go, you know. "Oh, you belong to... Oh, go ahead." So they had the feeling that they were getting nowhere. One of the problems I had with this whole thing... We used to have these consular meeting up in Mexico city - consular get-togethers with consuls from all over - and I brought it up and I was very unpopular for having brought it up but I said, "What if an American is a drug dealer. He gets involved down here. My DEA guys tell me about the horrible torture these people go through. They use a cattle prod on them; they use all kinds of electric shocks and everything else on them." And I said, "We, as American consular officers, have to see that their rights are observed under Mexican law." All I got from our female consul general at the Embassy at the time was, "Go to the Generals and tell them not to be so mean." Anyway, I said, "One of these days, we're going to get somebody who gets involved in drugs - some American - who's going to have good connections in the States and all hell's going to break loose when the word gets out that they've been tortured." And so, just before I left Guadalajara, that actually happened. We had a young fellow who had influence and he was involved in drug trade -

American - and they grabbed him and my DEA guys told me about the torture that this guy was going through. And we get a letter from a Congressman, from the State Department, an inquiry from a Congressman, and he'd gotten a letter out of the jail, he snuck it out some way and got it to his mother who went to the Congressman and we get the three day report. "We understand this is happening." I had a very good second man at the consulate at the time, that I'd served with before.

Q: *Who was that?*

LEONHARDY: Ernie Gutierrez, one of the visa officers. You may have... Ernie went over and talked to the head government official who the consulates knew was involved in payoffs and stuff; and he got very upset that we should be protesting this thing. And I sent two reports up to the Embassy; one was unclassified saying we went to the top man and he says they're not doing it - denies it, you know. Then I sent a classified report up telling what we think really happened and I said, "You decide up in Washington what you want to tell the Congressman." But anyway, just before I was grabbed down there, the governor who was a very straight guy, I will always be convinced, a nice guy.

Q: *Who was that?*

LEONHARDY: His name was Arosco Romero. I used to see him a number of times and I had this conversation with him one day and he said, "If you ever hear about any of my people, you know, or officials around here, getting involved in drugs, I'd appreciate it if you could tell me." And I came home and told my wife about that and she said, "Oh, God, don't get involved." But about that time we had a consular conference up in Mexico City and we had a Deputy Assistant Secretary named Bob Hurwitz came down and he said, "Your marching orders now are, you've got to get involved in drugs - in stamping out drugs." And I said, "What about the DEA? That's what they're supposed to do. They're getting paid; those guys know what they're doing." "No, everybody's got to get involved." So one of these DEA guys told me one day, he said, "You know, we were in on a raid - we were waiting outside on a raid - and they went into this place, right near where I live, in a very fashionable area of the city, and they had all this marijuana stacked and classified like coffee, you know, high grown, middling, and so forth, and prices and money lying all over the place. They grabbed about five guys, the Mexicans did, and one of them happened to be a candidate for the government party for congress, the PRI. As soon as they found out who he was, they just let him go. I told the governor about this, and my wife just had a fit. She said, "Oh, God."

Anyway, we were planning a new home up in Montana and she was going up to Denver to meet with some friends of hers that were architects and do some planning, so she left me at home with the kids. And it was around early May of '73. We had a good neighbor consul group which was mostly over the east side of Mexico, out of Monterrey and the Texas-Rio Grande Valley but they decided to expand a little bit so it was decided to come over on the west side of the mountains and they had their confab in Guadalajara. We had the consuls from the border and several other places and Mr. Sowsa - Javier Sowsa of the Sowsa tequila firm had a big party for them and they used his convention hall, and so forth, to have their meeting. So there's a lot going on and my

wife had left to go to Colorado and I'd taken her out to the airport and went to dinner that night at this big confab. So the next day, I was... Have I mentioned yet the terrible administrative support we received from our Embassy in Mexico City?

Q: Who was the Ambassador at this time?

LEONHARDY: The Ambassador was, I'm trying to think of his name, he was a career man, well, I'll think of it [Editor: Ambassador Robert McBride]. Anyway, he had turned the... When I had been in the Embassy before, we had a supervising Counsel for Consular Affairs, and he ran herd on all the consulates both on consular policy and administrative studies, and then, I think, they abolished that job or something, but then they turned the responsibilities over to the DCM [Editor: DCM in 1973 was Robert Dean]. Then when I got there, the Administrative Counselor - for whom I had very little respect - was in charge of this thing.

Q: Who was he?

LEONHARDY: I'll think of his name [Editor: Victor Dikeos]. But anyway, he later became head of Security in the Department of State, which was really amazing. But anyway, the Guadalajara consulate had two old cars. When I'd been in Salvador, the Ambassador and I used to change cars all the time. We never had one that looked alike. But down in Guadalajara, we had two old black Plymouths, always giving us maintenance problems and you couldn't switch from one car to another because they were both alike, you know. So we were easily singled-out, you know, going up and down the street. But getting back to this drug thing, I did inform the Governor about this incident and my wife, as I say, was upset, worried that the drug people would get at me.

Anyway, the next day, in the afternoon, our DEA guys had been working with the local police on a demonstration project to show the locals what the dangers of drugs were. They had a big exhibit down in the main police station and I went down to that. I should precede that by saying that I kept agitating about these cars. I also agitated about getting a driver because I had to go to all these functions downtown in the city and I'd have to spend a half hour looking for a parking place and all this stuff. We had a very inefficient administrative officer and the embassy told him we could hire a chauffeur so he hired one of the guards in the consulate who claimed to have had chauffeuring experience. But the first two or three days I had him, I was just nervous all the time I was driving with this guy; he obviously didn't have - if he had any experience, he'd forgotten it all. Anyway, that day, I went down to this police station. This was on the fourth of May; the next day, Friday, was a big Mexican holiday, Cinco de Mayo. I went down to the police station to participate and be there for the opening of this big exhibit. I went with the chauffeur and then he drove me back to the consulate and I said to myself, "I don't want to drive anymore with him." So I dismissed him for the day and I drove home. I'd invited these consular officers from the other areas of Mexico to a reception over at the house and I had it all set up. My wife had worked on it before she left and had it all set up.

The other thing that is very important in this whole thing is, about three or four days before I had my incident, we had a guy from Security in Mexico City come down and he was changing the locks in the consulate and doing some work. He said, "Haven't you been told about the

possibility that something might happen to you or other consular officers in Mexico?" And I said, "No." And I asked our administrative officer, he said, "No, no, I haven't heard anything down here." I said, "Well, it must not have been very important if they didn't feel that they had to call me and warn me, you know." Which they didn't. So anyway, when I left the police station, left the consulate, started driving home, we always - I'd learned that in Salvador - we varied our routes but in Guadalajara it was not easy because you had the main drag that went out right near our house and then I would cut over, once in a while, just before I got to the big intersection and go down a very narrow one-way street, across another big street, and into a narrow street that was one-way, went by the American school on one side and some kind of a church on the other. It even had trees in the middle of the street. Anyway, I was waiting for this light to go across the second big thoroughfare and when I got into this narrow street, these guys were waiting. They knew I would come down there once in a while, they'd been casing me, and so there was a guy drove right in front, he was coming the other way, and I said, "God, I've seen people driving down the street the wrong way a number of times, you know." It was nothing unusual but then this guy swerved around and blocked my way, right in front of me. I got a good look at him, you know, and I thought, "what is this crazy guy doing?" and the next thing I knew there was a car behind me and these guys rush me, came in, and one of them had an automatic pistol and they opened the door, they pointed the gun at me, you know, and opened the door and they came in. They pushed me over - there were three of them - they pushed me over. The one guy got into the driver's seat and he couldn't get the car started which was par for the course and so they hauled me out and they threw me in the back seat of the car of the guy that was waiting there. They put a blindfold over me right away and muzzled my mouth and threw me down on the seat and took off. Of course, I'd heard about incidents like this and now it's happening to me. Anyway, it was still daylight and some people told me afterwards that they were having a party up in a big building and they looked down and saw all this thing going on, you know. But they took me - they didn't drive very far. It couldn't have been more than about... But they changed cars twice and then they brought me into this house which was a kind of a row house in a very decent area of the city. Of course, I tried to engage them right away, but they were very incommunicative. They took all my clothes off, except my shorts - my underwear - and they had me in a room about as big...

Q: We're talking about a room about eight by ten or something.

LEONHARDY: Yes, it was about this big and it had some windows but the windows... Well, of course, I couldn't see, I was blindfolded, but I could tell there was no light coming in the windows. They had me on a hard bed. The first thing they asked me was, "Are you on any medicine or do you have any medical problems?" I thought, well, I'm going to give them a hard time. I said, "Yes, I've got a bad heart." "What are you taking for it?" I said, "Well, right now I'm not on any medicine." But there was not much conversation. I said, "What do you plan to do with me?" you know, I kept asking questions in Spanish, of course, but I got no real responses. They said, "We've made some demands on the Government." That's all they'd say. They had loud, Mexican ranchero music going on in the building. They'd taken me upstairs; there was an upstairs room. I remember it had a circular staircase. They would bring me some food from time to time. They always had somebody in the room with me. One guy was sort of... he would answer a few questions once in a while.

Q: Let's stop here.

LEONHARDY: I even engaged him in a little conversation. And there was a bathroom just off this room with a one step up, I remember. I started playing detective from word one, when I got in there, to try and figure out where I was. Anyway, the food was not very good, of course, but they gave me some scrambled eggs or something and I wasn't very hungry anyway. But I did talk to this guy a little bit and I said, "You know, what do you have me here for?" He said, "Well, this is a protest against our government." I said, "Well, why don't you try the democratic process." He said, "Oh, we've tried that and it doesn't work. The PRI, they're all a bunch of crooks." And he went into all this business of how bad the government was, and I said, "Well, I tend to agree with you." I said, "I don't like the way you want to resolve it." So I tried to find out what their demands were, what were they demanding of the government and they said, "Well, we want to get some prisoners released and we want to get word to the government how we feel about them, you know." That was about it. But anyway, I said, "Well, if you're going to wait for prisoners to be released," I said, "I'm going to be here forever." Then I kept thinking about the fact that the next day was Cinco de Mayo...

Q: Which is Mexican Independence Day.

LEONHARDY: That's a precious Mexican holiday, a Saturday, and then Sunday nothing gets done so I said, "Nobody's even going to do anything before Monday because they're all off on holiday, at the beaches and taking their vacations, you know." So I just tried to think, imagine what was happening on the outside. Then, of course, my wife was up in the States.

What the kidnapers were doing, of course, I found out afterward... They were in contact... I had a very good friend who was with the telephone company there and he assisted in getting a new telephone line put in right away to handle separate communications, and so forth, and they sent some people down from the Embassy, one was from USIA, to deal with the press, and we had big jacaranda trees out in front and there were reporters up in those trees and the whole damn place was surrounded. Anyway, the kids - our two young daughters - they were three and five at the time - were home with the nina. But anyway, they would fill me in later.

The kidnapers knew that my wife had come back. I didn't know how she'd come back but she'd gotten back and they would call and make demands on my wife and they'd say - or not demands but they'd tell her where to get messages. The Embassy and the State Department was trying to get her out of the act. They said, "Let them go to the Mexican Government. Don't you get involved." And she said, "Look, this is my husband and I'm getting involved when it's his life and I'm standing right there." Which I'm glad she did. But anyway, they'd say, "There's a message behind the statue of the Virgin in such-and-such a church and then we'd have to send a messenger from the Consulate down there - one of the Mexican boys who worked for USIA who did a beautiful job. Anyway, they'd pick up these messages and they say, "You've got to get in touch with the government to do this or you got to do this" or something. But anyway, the next day after I was in there for a while, they were very ebullient, very happy, because they said the government was going to accede to their wishes. One of their demands was to publish their

manifesto on the front page of the major newspapers of the country, that was one; the other one was to release a number of prisoners - I think there were thirty-two altogether and they were all over the country. They weren't just in Guadalajara; some of them were clear up on the border.

Q: While you were talking and hearing about this, where did you figure these people were coming from, I mean, politically?

LEONHARDY: Well, as I say, they were in the left wing. They tried the PRI and they said that, at least this one guy said, "I was involved with the PRI but they're a bunch of crooks and we gotta' unseat them." And I'll get to the political thing a little later.

Anyway, I learned later they were operating out of another place. There was a lot of back-and-forth going on, cars coming in and out, in and out and you could hear all these noises and chatter but nothing distinguishable. After I was there, I think it was on the following day, sometime in the afternoon, they took my blindfold off but they all had hoods with little slits, you know, and gloves. They wanted me to write some letters. They wanted me to write a letter to the Governor and write a letter to the head of the Consular Corps, the Consular Corps was all non-career people, except for us, and to my wife, I think, saying that I was all right and that physically I hadn't been bothered, and that I was being treated all right, and so forth. I think they had some other phrase in there they wanted me to put in and I refused to do it because I didn't... But anyway, the end result was that they, of course, got these letters to them, I got a letter to my wife, and all the letters were delivered, because she'd get calls saying pick up, you know, come to this church, or somebody had to come to it. They did tell me that some of their people were getting out of jail, and so forth, and I think it was on a Sunday morning, they told me that - or sometime on Sunday - that their people had been released from jail and that they were being sent out of the country. I said, "Where? Cuba?" and they didn't respond to that but anyway I suspected that would be the place.

It's just a miracle to think that this could happen on a holiday weekend. I've heard stories afterwards, of course, about how they brought these people in from long distances, and so forth, and somebody from the Foreign Office, I think, accompanied the plane to Cuba. They had thirty-two guys on there. One of them was the brother of the guy that blocked my way. But anyway, this was on a Sunday morning, they said, "We got our people out." I said, "Well, what are we waiting for?" And they said, "Well, we got certain things to do, and so forth." I said, "Are you waiting for nightfall?" And they sort of implied that might be the case. Then shortly thereafter, they came into the room with some recording equipment and they had some kind of a piece of paper they were reading from, written by one of their higher-ups somewhere, that was not there, an interrogation and they started off by asking me, they said, "You did these horrible things over in Viet Nam, killed all these people" and all this stuff, you know. And then they mentioned the My Lai incident in Viet Nam, and so forth. And then they said, "What do you think about that?" And I said, "Well, both sides signed a peace treaty in Paris and I'm happy as a clam that they did it. I think it was just wonderful." I said, "As far as I'm concerned, it's resolved." Well, they didn't have any follow-ups; see, all they do is ask the questions, somebody else had written this, you could hear him rattling this paper, and then they got into the Dominican Republic and our intervention there, which I could weasel around on those things pretty easily because I knew the

background but they asked me a number of questions but no follow-through. You see, they were just... Anyway, after they finished this, after about a half-hour of this interrogation - anywhere from twenty minutes to a half-hour - I was pretty exhausted because it was a grueling thing to have to go through. I told them, I said, I pretended my heart was bothering me. They had some woman there; several times there were women in the room and she immediately grabbed my pulse to see how my heart was doing. But anyway, they said, "Well, we've got a few more questions to ask you," you know, and so they gave me a little rest and then they came back and that was when they got mostly on Latin America and stuff. Then they terminated that thing and then I went through the usual waiting process for a while. Finally, they came up late in the afternoon and... Once in a while, I'd try to crack a joke or do something to see what the reaction was - nothing.

Then they brought a different guy in the room and he came up with a pair of pants for me to get on. I was always blindfolded and they had me gagged most of the time, but they'd take that off when they fed me and then I could converse with them. Near the end, they sort of left it off all the time. The pants were about a foot too long, you know. I said, "I've been in here for three days, you couldn't do a better job?" Then the guy sort of laughed, you know, a little bit. Then shoes that didn't fit, and so forth. Anyway, as I said, all the time I was in there I was trying to play a little detective and I knew just about where I was in location because I knew I wasn't far away from home. I knew I was near the main highway going northwest because it's Highway 15 and it goes under these underpasses and you could hear these trucks changing gears and then a train went by and I knew there had to be a sort of a vacant place in the area because you couldn't hear the trains, the sound was muffled, until they got right near the place and then it was loud and then it would be muffled again. I was trying to think of how we could catch these guys if I ever got out of this mess or how the Mexicans could catch them. Anyway, they finally started dressing me and this guy had this sub-machine gun, I could hear him cocking and uncocking it. Then it started getting almost dark; it was dark actually and they had me up at the top of this circular staircase and then they led me down the stairs and put me in the back seat of this car. There were two of them in front and the guy that I'd had some conversation with was in the back with me. We waited for quite a while and I said, "You know, what are we waiting for?" They said, "Well, we got some people coming," or something. Then the two of them, one of them in the back and one in the front, left. There was only one guy up front and he was trying to get the radio on, he kept kicking the dashboard, you know, and trying... Finally, about a half-hour later, they returned. They laid me down on the back seat and they put a serape over me and then they put an ammunition case on top of my stomach. There was one guy in the back seat, two in the front and I listened for every sound as we were going along, wherever we were going. I asked them; they said, "Oh, we're going to release you somewhere," they implied anyway. But one doesn't really know whether they were going to take you out and shoot you or... But I had a feeling - they'd gotten their demands met. The one demand that they made; the one thing that delayed this whole process was that they were able to get their demands met that I mentioned.

But I didn't know that they then added additional demand and that was a million pesos, they wanted. And they made that on the Government and the Government called the Governor and told him to get the money out. This was on a Sunday and certain denominations it had to be, and he sent his top aide to make this payment and they told him he had to wear a straw hat and a red

handkerchief around his neck. I happened to have an old red bandanna - a handkerchief - around the house and my wife got it to the Governor. He went down to the bank, he and his people, and got this money out. This guy paid the million pesos which is about eighty thousand bucks in those days; it wouldn't be that much today. But anyway, that was all unbeknown to me, of course. They didn't tell me that; that was one of the reasons for the delay in releasing me. Anyway, that night when we took off, I knew that we'd crossed a railroad track and I knew that we were getting into the center of the city because the lights were brighter, and so forth. Finally they got to a place on a street and they just said, "You can get out here. Don't take the blindfold off until after we get away." And I said, "There's a place to sit down?" and the place to sit down was the curbstone, of course. So I had these oversize shoes and oversize pants on and I walked down the street.

I got in front of a house that was just flush with the street and there was a stairway going up into the house from the street. Servants of this household, were sitting out on the front steps and one of the ladies of the house - they were two old widows (I don't know if they were ever married or not) but two nice ladies anyway - she was just unlocking her door to go in the house and I came up and I told them who I was, and they said, "Oooh!" Of course it was all headlines in the paper, you know. So she said, "Come on in." So I went in and the first thing they did was get a bottle of whiskey out and they said, "You need a drink, don't you?" and I said, "I could use one." It was one of these bottles that had a hard cap to get off, you know, so I went over to help her. "Oh, no, no, you don't do that. We do that. You're too weak to be doing that."

But anyway, from there I called home and my wife, of course, was excited. So they sent three people over from the Consulate - one was my good friend in DEA, another one was the young USIA fellow that carried all my messages, and the other one was our Consul General from Monterey [Editor: Edward P. Dobyns]. They came over and got me. Now my wife knew these newshawks were out in front of the house, you know, she had to figure a way to get me in passed the press. There was an old entryway on the side street and the door had been sort of rusted or something - one of these grates - and it was full of vines and stuff but she got that thing open so that I could be delivered to the side and not have to go through this bunch of newshawks. Anyway, after I got out, why, of course, the stories were... You know, everybody in the press and everybody wanted to find out what was going on, you know, how I fared and all that stuff, American colony, etc. Then they immediately put police around my house and all that stuff and the Governor came over. After about twenty-four hours, there was a real nice American that lived out on the lake, Chapala and he said, "Why don't you come out here and get away from this or a while." And I wanted a place where I could go and write this thing up - a lot of it - while it was fresh in my mind. So I accepted his offer. He said, "I'll leave all my household servants. I'm going to be away and you just take over." I went out there; I had a police escort and all that stuff, you know, where I could sit back and think while it was fresh in my mind and get it down on paper.

But we had a funny guy came in right after I got back and he said he was a representative of the federal police and he had no uniform on, but he passed muster with the other police who let him in, so I assumed he was the guy he said he was. He would stay there in the daytime and then he took off. I was there about two days before I went out to the lake. Then he went out there to the lake and then he disappeared at night. The next day, the DEA guy came out, my friend, and he

said, "You know that guy's a complete impostor." But he wasn't dangerous. But anyway, one of the things I wanted to do afterwards was to try to put the finger on these guys and give as much information as I could to their police authorities and I was interviewed at least by eight different groups - there was the military, and the federal police, and the local police, and other groups, and I told them the same story. I said, "I'm pretty sure..."

The other thing I should say, within a day afterwards, one of the CIA guys from Mexico City came down who was working with the federal police and they had me in a hooded type car with no windows except right in the front, and took me around in the area where I thought I'd been stashed and I said it had to be right next to a church. They were having May devotions and they were ringing the bell every morning, you know. And they went around to this old priest and he said, "Oh, we don't ring any bells here." Well, it turned out they had been ringing bells but he was scared, I think. He didn't want to... And there had to be some families in the area with kids; I could hear these kids all the time, and of course, the railroad and the highway, and so forth, so I knew just about where I was. And we were within about half a block of there it turned out later when I did find the place, where this incident took place and these guys were in there for several weeks later, I found out. But anyway, the police effort was not very good and I was very, very upset with the fact that, with the information I gave them, that they couldn't find these guys. But anyway, I went out and did my writing and then the Department said, "We'd like to get you back to the States for some rest and recreation." They said, "Where would you like to go?" And I said, "Well, I'd like to go to Montana." And this was in May when it was still kind of chilly out there but we had friends that had a ranch in a resort complex and we knew they'd be glad to put us up. So we flew up to Montana and spent about a couple of weeks. When I returned to the Department, I got what I call the "leper treatment." I have friends that have gone through this same thing and you're just dirt after this happens. They don't know what to do with you. Of course, I was near my retirement, but this attitude is hard to believe.

Q: It is really hard to believe that this was very much the attitude at that time.

LEONHARDY: First, also I should say, going back when I was still in Guadalajara, they said, "Do you want to come out or do you want to stay there?" I said, "I want to stay here." I said, "I think the chances of this happening again are pretty remote," and I said, "I like Guadalajara." I wanted to stay there until my retirement which was another year or so off. So they implied that they were going to let me stay there but when I get into Washington, they changed their mind. They said, "You got to come out. We couldn't have this happening again" and all this stuff. But they did give me another four months, they said three or four months. So I went. Another interesting aspect, even before I went up to the States, was the Governor came in to me and he said, "Look, I had to go get those million pesos out of the bank. Who's going to reimburse me?" I said, "Well..." He says, "Don't you think the American colony here might be able to..." And I said, "I'm sure they'd be glad to. Get a big thing going and collect money from people and pay you off." "But," I said, "I got to check with the Embassy first." So I checked with the Embassy (this is before I went up to the States) and they said, "Don't do anything, we'll take it up with the federal government, the Foreign Office." So I went off to the States and when I came back why the Governor came over to see me, he says, "Whatever happened?" And I said, "They said it will be taken care of, or something like that. Don't worry about it." And I said, "Well, I assumed that

everything would..." He says, "Well, I haven't heard anything." So I called the Embassy again and finally they came back and said that the Foreign Office said you can just forget about it, you know.

But anyway, after I'm there for four months, I leave in September and there were a number of farewell parties given for us before we left and I was over at one of these big receptions one night and the highest official in the Mexican Government next, to the President, the Secretary of Interior who is in charge of all the police, called me at this party and he interrupted this party - it was in the evening - and he says, "I want you to be the first to know that we captured two of the people who were involved in your kidnapping." And I said, in Spanish, I told him, "Well, Mr. Minister, I'm so happy to hear that." I said, "That you finally (I used the word finally) caught somebody." And he choked a little bit on that, then he said, "Would you be willing to come to the federal building tomorrow," (They were in Mexico City; they were going to bring them down) "to help identify them?" I said, "I'd be very happy to."

So my wife and I went over to this new federal building and you'd think being a new building, they'd have an area where you could look at people in a one-way glass, you know. But instead they had me peeking through cracks in doors and stuff and they brought these two guys out separately and one was the guy that blocked my way and he looked a bit oriental and it turns out he was part Chinese. Then the other one that came in from my left with the automatic pistol, he was the other one. During the four months, they'd let their hair grow out, beards and stuff, but they were clean-shaven when I saw them, especially the guy that blocked my way. So I asked them, "You got to bring a barber in here and do a little work on these guys; otherwise I can't help you." So that delayed the process and my wife had to go back home for some reason, so then they brought them back in after the barber had come in and given them a haircut and shaved them. So I said, "Well, the first guy they brought in was the guy that blocked my way." And I said, "I got to see him from his left side." And they had a situation where I could only see him from the right side. So then they had to change the venue and they took them away and brought me into another office where I could look through a crack in the door and see this guy from the left side. And then they brought the other guy in. They had, I must say, they had one of their top prosecutors from Mexico City, federal prosecutors, involved in this case, a very nice guy, and he said, after they took them away, "Well, how do you feel?" I said, "Well, I'm about ninety percent sure of the first guy and about fifty percent on the second." He said, "Can't you make it a hundred?" I said, "No, it's the best I can do."

Then they had a line-up and they had about twelve guys and they had these two guys interspersed. Under Mexican jurisprudence, you got to go up and put your hand on their shoulder, a Judas touch, and I had to do that with both of these guys. I must say, before they ever brought these guys in, they had me read all of their confessions - copies of the interrogations - so that helped a lot to make me feel a little better. But anyway, I still was uncertain and I agonized the whole night. The next day they took me out to the place where they had me stashed and then I knew that they had to be the people because they took me up the circular staircase and the room. This room... I must say another thing, they took the blindfold off me when they were writing the letters, I noticed that they had newspapers covering the windows and I read the headlines of these newspapers and I could get a feel for the approximate date of the papers, and so forth, which I

also passed on to the police, and so forth. Then I could see the step up into the bathroom but everything jived as to how I remembered it. So I felt better about my putting the finger on these guys.

Anyway, I went into the Director-General's office, I forget who it was at the time, I was not very impressed by the guy, and first of all, he says, "We think you ought to retire," or something like that, you know pushing me. And I said, "No, I'm not ready yet." And then they threw out the possibility of a Diplomat-in-Residence. Anyway, when I was in the Department, they threw up this possibility of my going as a Diplomat-in-Residence, and they had three or four colleges that I could choose from which was good. One of them was Thunderbird Graduate School in Arizona and I knew some of the people out there from my time on the border and I had a high respect for the place and I thought that'll be a nice decompression area. So I accepted that and I'm glad I did because it was a good experience. They were so nice to me up there; they had a house on the campus - a not very big one but we were able to have one of our maids from Salvador that we'd brought up to Guadalajara, she came up with us and unfortunately it was the year when the Arab oil crisis, and distances are long in Arizona, so we were pretty well confined to home. Then I picked up valley fever when I was there so I couldn't teach the first semester but I taught the second semester. I taught a course - a sort of a made-up course, shall we say, on Latin American economic development, I think it was - country by country. So my retirement age came in the Spring but I was just about to finish there so it worked out real well. Anyway, that's the story, pretty much, of Guadalajara.

Q: Where were these people coming from politically?

LEONHARDY: Well, another very interesting facet and really crucial to this whole release of mine was the fact that the President's wife's brothers controlled the whole southern half of Jalisco, they were extreme leftists. Her father had been a Governor in Jalisco State and was an extreme leftist and the brothers were in all kinds of shoot-outs, killings, and everything else.

Q: Who was the President?

LEONHARDY: The President was Echeverria.

Q: Who was no great friend of the United States.

LEONHARDY: No, he was... I would like to go on a little bit about him. But anyway, everybody in Guadalajara after I got out, or a lot of my friends - Mexican friends - said, "Well, the reason you got out so fast and everything," (can you imagine, the day before a holiday having this happening, nobody waking up until Monday, they got all these prisoners from all over Mexico in Cuba on Sunday afternoon), "the President pushed the button. And why did he push the button? The reason he pushed the button was that he thought his in-laws could be involved in this thing and he just couldn't have that happening." At first, I didn't quite accept that, and I had a lot of good friends all over Mexico, from my time in Mexico City and on the border, and so forth, and I figured that the fact that I was well-known in the Mexican community helped me but then I come to accept the fact that this guy had to have pushed the button because he thought his in-laws were

involved. They were the Zuno family. Anyway, after I got out and after I retired, I went down on several business missions to Mexico and I got little pieces of information about this whole affair from people in different areas of the country but up in Sonora where I'd been stationed, I still had good friends.

Just as one example, I went down there on a purebred race horse-selling operation with a guy and we talked to the Dodge dealer in Navojoa, Mexico, which is in the southern part of the state, who was an old friend of mine. He wanted to take me out to a place... I didn't realize that that's where they raised most of these horses. And so he took us out to this place where this horse ranch was and he said, "Now, if the head groom or the guy that runs the place is there, when I introduce you, if he blinks a couple times, the reason is that his daughter was involved in your kidnaping." I knew there were women in there. He wasn't there, fortunately. Then, maybe a year later, I was having lunch with a banker friend of mine in Hermosillo, the capital of the state, and he said, "You know, the weekend you were kidnaped, I was playing golf with the head of the military complex out here, a general," and he said, "we were on about the sixth hole and out comes his orderly and said, 'You're wanted immediately back to headquarters.'" And he said, "What!? A holiday weekend? What's going on? Nothing ever happens, you know." Then, "orders are orders," you know, so he goes back. His order was to get, this was on Saturday, to get this guy out of jail that was in jail because he killed a military officer, I guess, he was in for life or something, I don't know, get him out of jail and get him to Mexico City, fifteen hundred kilometers away right *toute suite*. Charter a plane, get him down here and you accompany him. And this guy was so mad, he says, "I have to ruin my whole weekend on my golf course for this damn gringo." But that's another story of the types of things that went on after the... that would come back and get hit with. But anyway, the other interesting thing is that they sent a guy down right after I got out, from Mexico City, public health officer at the Embassy to give me a physical, you know, once over very lightly, you know, check your pulse, a few little things like that. He said, "You'll get a good, thorough physical when you get up to the Department." No way. You know what they do with these guys that are kidnaped in the Mideast. They bring them into Germany and they run them through the mill. Nothing. I got no physical exam at all.

Q: Did the Ambassador have any words, I mean, see you after this... Did the Ambassador see you at all?

LEONHARDY: I saw him afterwards. He only... Another interesting thing is that the two guys - they had the consul general from Monterrey and then they had this press officer from the Embassy - these guys were hitting the bottle in our house like nothing and the only guy that had any sanity in the group was a fellow named Freeman Matthews who was a political officer in the Embassy - a real, nice fellow, a good friend. But when they came over to pick me up, I could understand everything the two guys said, the DEA guy and the local, but the Consul General from Monterrey was incomprehensible. I couldn't understand anything. Well, I didn't realize until afterwards that he was drunk. He sent a report into Washington that I was found at a bar surrounded by women. And here were two lovely old ladies that were so nice and it was their own private home, you know. This idiot... And a report came out up here and I said, "Where in the hell did that ever come from?" Any it wasn't until many months later that I found out that he'd sent a communication up there to that effect. Then the guy that was handling the press, he was

almost worthless, too, just terrible. But, thank God, I had a good... The DEA guy couldn't have been better, a close friend, and this local Mexican was so good but the rest of them were... I remember now the guy's name that was up in Mexico City; his name was Vic Dikeos and he was later brought up to Washington to head up Security. It was just sad, I mean, I had very little respect for the guy. He was a pleasant guy to talk to but he was just ineffective and, of course, I'll never forget the fact that...

Oh, the other important thing is that one of the FBI guys in the Embassy - we weren't close friends but we were good friends - and I saw him later. I think he came down to Guadalajara or something and he said, "You never got the information that this could happen?" I said, "No." I said, "If I'd known, I'd just call the Governor and get a police escort, you know. He says, "Well," he says, "I was at the meeting in the secret room - the glass cage - and," he said, "when they got a warning that something could happen in one of our consular operations and a possible kidnapping." And I'd got an inkling from the guy that came down to fix the locks, you know, but I didn't pay any attention to it because I said, "They would have called me." So he said, "They started talking about what they should be doing to protect people and all they talked about was protecting ourselves - those of us in the room here." And the FBI guy who's this friend of mine says, "What about the guys out in the boonies?" because it could have happened in the Embassy, that was the other thing. "What about the guys in the boonies?" "Eh, we'll get word down to them or something." Well, the word never came.

So it could have been easily prevented and they had the intelligence that it could have happened and the thing that my wife was worried about more than anything else was that the drug people had gotten me because I'd told the Governor about this incident. Well, she was in the States, she had an awful time getting back to Guadalajara from Denver. She was in Denver to Guadalajara. She had to go down to - the air flights weren't that frequent and she had to go down to El Paso and cross over to somewhere else and San Antonio and then down. But anyway, about, oh, two or three days after this happened, our oldest daughter was about five. She was watching television, we had some company in the house, and she come running out and she said, "Mommy, Daddy, you're on television and kissing each other." And she says, "You remember that big party you had here, and Daddy came in late." But the amount of alcohol consumed around that place was rather sickening when you have something like that happening, and you lose respect for some of your colleagues from that, you know, and I certainly did. I'm trying to think of the name of our ambassador, he was a career... His name was Robert McBride. Then the DCM who wasn't much better was Bob Dean. But I don't know whether any of this is going to... Maybe I'll get some lawsuits over this.

DIANE DILLARD
Consular Officer
Monterrey (1972-1974)

Diane Dillard was born and raised in Dallas, Texas. She joined the Foreign Service in and served in Greece, Mexico, the U.K., and Lebanon. She was

interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: What was the situation consular-wise in Monterrey?

DILLARD: The post was there to do consular work. There was an economic/commercial officer. There were drug enforcement agents located there, as well as a legal attaché, but it all had to do with things which are consular, like drugs and criminals and all those tasks we deal with.

In the immigrant visa section, there were seven Mexican employees and four interviewing officers. It was a kind of cattle pen type of thing. We had to use microphones to call the people up first to give their documents, then into our offices. The Mexicans are really very gentle people, and it was kind of a barbarous situation. We never seemed to get through with our work; it was incredible.

Then the inspectors came but didn't stay very long. No one stayed very long in Monterrey. [Laughter] But the consular inspector said, "Something is wrong here. These people are working as hard as they can work, and you're not getting the work done. You have to look at it." He said this to me, a junior officer. Well, Monterrey was the kind of place where there was nothing to do.

Q: What do you mean?

DILLARD: Outside of work. So I started staying every day and finishing up all the cases. Usually your national employees actually prepare the visas and assemble them. So I stayed and did their leftover work, and I timed myself on the various parts of the assembly. I was sure the national employees would work much faster than I was because I wasn't used to the work and I had to keep looking in the FAM to make sure I had everything in the right order. So I did that for about a week.

I figured out that it is possible to have an assembly line--a humane assembly line--what we were doing was inhumane both to the employees and to the applicants. So anything was going to be better.

I went to my immediate boss and said that I thought if we changed the system, we could get the work done. He was agreeable, and he gave me some ideas. He asked me to work it up, and then I presented it to the national employees, who were a little leery of the whole thing, in particular one of them. But we did work it out.

We did set up an assembly line, but what we did was switch people from task to task so it didn't become too onerous, each thing, and they did develop a competition with each other on how many they could do and how nicely they could type the visas. It was a team spirit, and it worked wonderfully well. We went from not doing 55 a day to doing 155 a day, with not a great deal of overtime, because we didn't have any money. We had to give comp time; that's all we could do. So I felt very pleased with the results.

Monterrey was the kind of city where it was difficult to belong. It was too close to the border for

the Mexicans to be impressed with you. You weren't even loved because you were a consul. You weren't loved because you were an American. You had no entré into a very traditional society which didn't have a role for women. But the work was very challenging and it was very good for my career to have nothing else to do but work. [Laughter]

From visas I got to go to the American Services Branch, and that was really my first experience with that work. I found that whatever happened on duty, after hours, was given to me because I was working the American Services Branch. So it meant I was on duty for six months, really. All we had was a recording system on the consulate telephone giving our home numbers; we didn't have any Marine guards or anyone to answer the phone, so once you were on duty, you had to be home. It made it hard when you needed to visit people in the hospital and such as that.

Because of the proximity to the border--and this is something that you don't realize until you've served at a border post--not right on the border, but it was close enough--you run into so many Americans who you wouldn't ordinarily run into overseas, because they just wouldn't get there, but they can get in a car and drive down to northern Mexico and get in an awful lot of trouble because they have no understanding of their own culture, much less another culture. So we had a lot of very strange things happen, and I had to pray a lot because I didn't have any earthly guidance. There wasn't anybody to turn to.

Q: Can you think of any examples?

DILLARD: I had a situation where a young woman took a bus down to Monterrey, and on the bus she took an overdose of sleeping pills. Fortunately, the bus driver was sharp. He drove immediately to the emergency ward of a hospital, with the whole busload of people.

The Social Security person at the hospital wanted to throw her out of the hospital, and so then I'd talk to the doctors and they'd say, "No, no, she can't go out." But I didn't know who controlled the situation. I didn't really know what to do about her. We couldn't get any information. There was a young woman, an American, who was at the hospital studying to be a midwife, and she helped me a lot.

But, finally, I found out--I think through the midwife--that this young woman had an aunt living in Monterrey. She somehow got the name, I guess. No, I called her mother and I got the name. I finally got the girl's mother's name, at least, and what part of the country she came from.

So I went down to the consulate and I looked through our files, because I thought, "The aunt's an American. She's going to be registered." And she was. I called the number that was on the card, but it had been changed. I asked for the new number, but it was unlisted. So I said, "This is a matter of life and death," and finally got the supervisor, got the number, called the woman, and I explained the whole situation to her, that I was afraid they were going to throw her niece out on the street, and the ready access to drugs in Monterrey was--you know, I don't know if prescriptions are even issued there.

She said, "I've cut myself off from my family. I really have no interest in this. I have to protect

my husband."

I cannot take credit for thinking of this; it had to be divine intervention. I said, "Well, that's all very interesting. Now, of course, when this young woman gets out of the hospital, which she may at any moment, and she goes and buys drugs, which she can do freely here, and she commits suicide, it's not going to be my niece whose name is in the paper. It's not going to be the niece of my husband through marriage, whose name is going to be in the newspaper."

And she said, "I see what you mean." So she did go see her, but even then, I didn't know what to do, because we didn't have a consular chief at that time.

So I went to the consul general, who knew nothing about consular work, and I presented him with the situation. He said, "Well, it's the fault of the Mexicans. They shouldn't let crazy people in. So what you do is, you go to the police and you tell them that it's their fault, so they have to deport her." Well, it was wonderful! What a wonderful idea!

I did it, and they said, "All right, but you have to pay." So I arranged with Health and Human Resources to meet her at the bridge, and I had to pay for two policemen to go up there and back. The aunt came in. She was going to pay everything. It came to something like \$10.55. She said, "Is that all?"

That was an unusual thing, but it was the kind of thing that happened all the time. There were a lot of accidents and people were robbed in their cars on the road, and then someone's son came with his sister--they were of Mexican origin--and he drowned. His sister decided to have him buried locally. Well, the family couldn't bear that. To exhume a body, how expensive that is, they got up the money to do it, and we did the whole thing. After it was over, the mother wrote that she wasn't sure that was her son. Well, that kind of thing is just--so I wrote her and I said, "Oh, you must believe that this is your son. It has been certified by the government of Mexico that this is your son." I could not have this woman, not believe, after they had probably mortgaged their house to do this. I thought, "Whatever, she's got to believe, because it's done."

People would be jailed on something that wasn't their responsibility, and their attorneys would hold them up for money before they would get them out. It was a horrible place. It's a pit.

Q: You mentioned that this is a traditional society, not very impressed by our titles or anything. Here you are, a woman officer, and women aren't treated with the greatest regard in Mexico. How did you operate, say, with the police? Did you have a problem with the police?

DILLARD: It wasn't a problem like that. It wasn't the womanness of me; it was the Americanness of me. For instance, three young men had come down for a wild weekend in Mexico, and they'd smoke marijuana with some Mexicans. They were all picked up and the Mexicans were released immediately, but the Americans were put in jail. I went to the attorney general. He said, "But these Mexican boys came from good homes."

I said, "So did these Americans." Finally, I could see that I was not going to help their case. In

fact, I was probably going to hurt it. So I had to just back down. That probably wasn't the right procedure on my part, but I didn't have a lot of guidance.

Sometimes you are at posts where you are a junior officer and you don't have any guidance and there's no real resource. So you have to make these decisions, and they might be the wrong ones sometimes, but it's important for your staff that you be able to make decisions. You have to think about it and not be foolish, but you have to be able to make decisions and pray that most of them are going to be the right ones. Your staff will realize if you can't make decisions, and that worries them. They get very nervous about that.

Q: *Of course they do.*

DILLARD: So that's one of the primary things that you've got to do.

Q: *There are no real answers to most protection and welfare cases.*

DILLARD: Exactly. They are all seat of the pants. They never happened before. You're never going to find the same case again.

Q: *You say you got out of Monterrey after so many minutes and so many seconds.*

DILLARD: Right. [Laughter]

Q: *You went back to Washington.*

DILLARD: Yes. I had had to buy furniture to go to Mexico, and I thought, "I may never see my furniture again unless I go to Washington." So I pleaded to go to Washington. It was a very good experience, particularly after a post like Monterrey, where there was no real life to speak of, very little cultural life, very little anything. So it was quite an experience, and I bought season tickets to everything at the Kennedy Center. [Laughter] I was lucky enough to live only three away. I was very fortunate when I got back.

MANUEL ABRAMS
Inspector, Inspection Corps
Washington, DC (1972-1974)

Manuel Abrams was born in Pennsylvania and then moved to New York City, where he graduated from City College. He started working for the government in the War Production Board and joined the Foreign Service in 1950. His career included positions in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, and Washington, DC. Mr. Abrams was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

ABRAMS: More of Europe than I thought I would have, because one interest I had in joining the inspection corps was to learn something about other areas. But my second inspection was Mexico, which was a very different place from Europe. I spent some time in the Far East as well, which I found fascinating.

Q: What was your impression of going to our whole huge embassy apparatus in Mexico? Looking at the policy and all.

ABRAMS: Well, Mexico struck me as one place where disease was a bit rampant, the disease that's known in the foreign service as localitis.

Q: Could you explain that?

ABRAMS: Localitis is a disease which someone in a foreign post acquires and it means that he becomes so interested in the problems of the country with which he is dealing that he may at times forget that his primary purpose is to represent US policy. That is interest in the country as it relates to US policy and not the country itself. Of course, in order to do the job you must have a measure of sympathy and understanding, a great deal of understanding of the country itself. But it should not go to the point that you become more concerned with the country's problems with you, than about the US problems with the country.

That does happen from time to time, and it has been labeled localitis. And Mexico is where I found some of that. Some embassies don't suffer very much from that. For some reason or another.

Q: I think that there is such a feeling particularly in intellectual and foreign officer circles in Mexico of mistrust/distrust of the United States that it sort of permeates SPP everything. How did you find this localitis manifested?

ABRAMS: In the way the objectives of the embassy were written up. That was the starting point. I was amazed to read it and find our interest was in dealing with the problems Mexico has with the US, for example, with the polluted water that flows from the US into Mexico. This is a problem that we have to deal with but it was written in terms of the Mexican aspect, not in terms of the US. There was a problem at the time, and as far as I know, it still exists, of trying to stimulate industry in northern Mexico by permitting the import of raw materials from the US into Mexico, then have them transformed into manufactured products and then reexported to the US without any duty.

Q: I think it is still there.

ABRAMS: On the whole it was a very good program. But dealing with that program, the sort of viewpoint I found in the messages being sent out of the embassy of Mexico, was the viewpoint of the Mexicans. Not simply reporting the viewpoint, which they should do but looking at everything from the viewpoint of the Mexicans. There were problems for US labor involved in this sort of program, but the embassy hardly recognized those at all.

Q: *Did you inspect the consulates, too?*

ABRAMS: I inspected five of them. There were two teams, and I did the north.

Q: *I recently read a book called More Than Neighbors saying that Mexico City and the political atmosphere there is almost poisonous as far as the feeling of many of the people there towards the United States who were in power. Yet when you get up along the border, many of the officials and so many overlapping ties that it is really a whole different world.*

ABRAMS: I would agree. There was much more of a tendency for the people in the border cities of Mexico to look north rather than to look south to Mexico City. There was much more admiration for the US and less of this feeling that the *gringo* is out to get us.

Q: *Did you find that the consulates were reflecting this kind of area more. In a way they were sort pursuing a northern Mexican/American relationship more than our embassy was?*

ABRAMS: I think that's right. It was a very different atmosphere. Now I didn't inspect consulates in the south, so I don't know. But this was certainly true in the north.

Q: *The real ones, of course, were Tijuana, Monterrey, Hermosillo.*

ABRAMS: Yes, I went to all of those.

Q: *But you did find it to be a different world.*

ABRAMS: Yes, very different.

Q: *Did you feel that the inspectors had some clout in the bureaucracy?*

ABRAMS: Very limited. Marginal. That was the best you could hope for. Some marginal effect, but not much more. The bureaus were in control and the inspectors could not do very much. But it so happened that I recommended that one of the consulate posts be abolished and it was. It hurt me in a way to do it, because it was one of the border posts that I liked most personally, but I didn't see it was serving any function. So one could have some effect like that.

RICHARD SMITH
Agriculture Department
Mexico (1972-1974)

Richard Smith was born in Cuba in 1935. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of New Hampshire and joined the Foreign Service in 1959. His career included positions in Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, and Washington

D.C. Mr. Smith was interviewed by Thad Smith in 1989.

When Mexico came open, I guess because of my broad Latin American experience and my Spanish, I was asked to take that post, and I was delighted. I think Mexico - I probably said this before - was one the finest posts you could have in the attaché service. It's got so much agriculture and it's so close to the United States and so involved in our overall economy, it's really an interesting post. There was a very large USDA/APHIS contingent in Mexico. I had the opportunity to head the negotiations for the screwworm agreement between the Mexico and the United States working with all the APHIS people. And that was quite an interesting experience negotiating that, plus all the trade issues. And the agricultural attaché, my predecessor Bill Rodman, really was one of the outstanding attaches we had. He had done an excellent job of building up the office within the embassy. So when I got there, the ag attaché office in Mexico handled anything to do with agriculture. It was a very integral part of the embassy operation and I fortunately was able to continue that. I had very good relationship with the two ambassadors and it was a very interesting assignment.

Q: You mentioned the close ties and working relationship between the Mexicans and U.S. I suspect you had a number, also, because just the geographical closeness I assume you had a number of visitors there that may not have traveled to some other places.

SMITH: Oh, sure. There was a constant flow of visitors, congressional and other high-level visitors. It was not uncommon to have an under secretary visit. I remember Dick Lyng, he was assistant secretary of agriculture and eventually secretary. Earl Butz came down at least three times, I think, while I was there. So you do have a heavy visitor load. A lot of business people come to Mexico, a lot of them just off the street wanting to get information. Then you had meat inspection. Meat inspection was a very big item in Mexico because they were shipping beef to the States and USDA had to inspect all their plants. We had a very large APHIS contingent. I guess there were probably two or three hundred USDA employees in Mexico, and the ambassador and USDA expected me to know what they were doing. And they were not in a technical sense responsible to me from a policy standpoint; I was the person they had to deal with in the embassy. So that took a lot of time and it was a challenge to make sure it all worked together and no one felt that I was threatening their responsibility in any way, and it worked out very well. There were some very outstanding people there.

There were many serious trade issues at the time that we got involved in. There was a vegetable issue and the famous court case on tomatoes, and marketing orders was a major issue. Mexico was importing huge quantities of grain and they were having trouble with the railroads and U.S. embargoed the railroads and I had to get involved in a major effort to get that all untangled. It was just constant interesting issues. There was also a lot of involvement with the states of Texas and Arizona and California, so you were constantly dealing with those officials, also, because of all the trade that was going on.

And livestock was a major operation there. There was a very close relationship with the National Cattlemen's Association and Mexican Cattlemen's Association and all the breeders' associations, so there was a constant activity in that area. So I really enjoyed Mexico very much.

Q: Who were the ambassadors during your time?

SMITH: They were both career ambassadors. The first one was Robert McBride, who was a crusty old foreign service career ambassador. But he was just outstanding and was one of those ambassadors that if you ever had an issue, you had to be very careful because when you went up with a problem, he right away wanted to do something. He was very supportive. I really thought he was an outstanding ambassador.

Then he was followed by another career ambassador named John Joseph Jova, who was an old Latin American hand. Again, he was very good, too.

Q: So you had no problem in convincing them of the importance of agriculture.

SMITH: Quite the opposite. They, particularly in Mexico, knew the importance of it. The key there was getting their confidence that you could handle the issues properly. And I think that probably continues today in Mexico - agriculture is so key there.

Q: I'm wondering because of your relative rank, et cetera, and I assume you were more involved in diplomatic and representational activities there than you had been, for example, in Bogota.

SMITH: Oh, yes. We were constantly accompanying either the ambassador or DCM to meetings with other cabinet officers in Mexico involving agriculture. I just recalled drugs was a big thing at the time and there was a major effort to try to substitute crops for drugs or work on various aspects of that. I got very heavily involved in that with the attorney-general office in Mexico and with the ambassador. So there was just a constant involvement.

Q: How did you find living conditions in Mexico City? Today, I think, foreign agencies are finding it harder and harder to get people to go there because of the pollution and the crime.

SMITH: Well, it was bad when we were there and I guess it's worse now. Clearly, that was a problem. There didn't seem to be a lot they could do about it given all the old cars and buses in Mexico and the fact that it's in a bowl. But we, after a while, got used to it, and everything was so interesting that we kind of tended to ignore it. We never found it to be something that really made us wish we hadn't gone to Mexico. And you could get out of the city rather easily if you wanted to.

FREDERICK H. SACKSTEDER
International Boundary and Water Commission
Texas (1972-1975)

Consul General
Mexico (1975-1979)

Frederick H. Sacksteder was born in New York in 1924. He received his bachelor's degree at Amherst College and served in the US Navy during World War II. His career included positions in Germany, France, Spain, Tunisia, and Mexico. Mr. Sacksteder was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

SACKSTEDER: First I should say, and I haven't mentioned this before, that my wife had medical problems which made it apparent that the Department would not clear us for an overseas assignment. I had been working with the Latin American Bureau, ARA, because I handled the Latin American missions, and the possibility came up of a job that would put me in a foreign affairs setting but still in the United States. It was with the International Boundary and Water Commission U.S. and Mexico, known as IBWC, in El Paso, Texas. We had been encouraged to take annual leave in winter, after the General Assembly, and we went to the Southwest where we had family and friends. During the winter of 1972, I was asked if I would stop at El Paso and meet the American Commissioner of IBWC who was looking for an officer to take over the job of secretary of the U.S. section of the Boundary Commission, which was an FSO assignment. On our way to Arizona we stopped in El Paso for a couple of days and I met him and some of his staff. He told me about the work and it sounded interesting. It was an opportunity to get back into contact with foreign affairs but on that border basis, so I accepted the assignment. In July of the same year, 1972, after the session of the Trusteeship Council had ended, I moved to El Paso.

Q: *So you did this from '72 until when?*

SACKSTEDER: Until '75, for three years.

Q: *What were the issues that you dealt with? In the first place could you tell me how this IBWC was constituted?*

SACKSTEDER: It was established by a series of treaties with Mexico and was primarily responsible for two functions. The first was the maintenance of the international boundary. The other was the distribution of the waters of the rivers that flow to or across the U.S.-Mexican border and include the Colorado and the Rio Grande and some of its tributaries. Given the fact, of course, that it's essentially an arid and desert area, water there is a very, very important issue. While I was still discussing this assignment with the Department, specifically with ARA and the Mexican desk, Mexico was clamoring for a resolution of a problem, of the salinity of the water of the Colorado River delivered to Mexico under treaty obligations.

During my very last weeks at the mission, the then president-elect of Mexico Luis Echeverria came to Washington for a traditional get acquainted visit and then came to New York. I had the opportunity to meet the president there. My assignment was by then firm so I informed him that I would be going to the Boundary and Water Commission to work with his representatives on the Commission on this issue.

Indeed, the minute I reached El Paso I was working full-time plus on the drafting of an agreement to resolve this problem. This ultimately involved working with a special commission set up by President Nixon and headed by Herbert Brownell, the former Attorney General, to conclude an agreement with Mexico that would be acceptable to both sides. Like all of these things, it involved much to and fro, drafts, further drafts, revisions to drafts and so on. The best part of the first year that I was there was devoted to drawing up this agreement. We went to Mexico City to sign it in 1973.

Q: As you were dealing with this, in the first place did you find that indeed there was a problem? If there was a problem it would seem that it would require something to be done in the United States since the water flows into Mexico.

SACKSTEDER: Correct, especially the waters of the Colorado River.

Q: And hence whatever had to be done had to be done by Americans. As you know Americans, particularly American business farming people, are not an easy people to deal with. How did that work out?

SACKSTEDER: Everything you said is absolutely true. They were not easy to deal with and they had strong congressional support for their position. The essence of the story, the basis of the problem was the following. First the waters of the Colorado River are the waters of *the* one major U.S. river that actually never reach the sea. Every drop of that water is used somewhere on the way to the sea and there is no flow into the Gulf of California, or as the Mexicans call it the Sea of Cortez, from the Colorado River. The apportionment of these waters of course has been an issue within the United States for generations. A large proportion of the waters go to California even though the Colorado River doesn't flow through California but without which Los Angeles would have been a desert.

When we talk about salinity, we mean the number of parts per million of dissolved salts in the water. It is considered that water more saline than 900 to 1,000 parts per million is not usable for irrigation or for agriculture. The salinity of these waters from the Colorado River, was aggravated by the discharge of pumped waters out of an irrigation project in southern Arizona called the Welton Mohawk district which consisted almost exclusively of citrus orchards. Citrus in that hot, dry climate requires a tremendous amount of water to produce a crop, 12 to 15 feet of water per year. This water was then pumped out of that district through a canal which discharged into the Colorado River just about at Yuma, Arizona, so fresh water could replace it. The pumped water raised the salinity of the existing water in the Colorado River to a point where sometimes it reached 1,200 to 1,300 parts per million and it was this water which was delivered to Mexico for irrigation purposes and which the Mexicans complained about.

The whole issue then was what do we do about it? Do we try to improve the quality of the water somehow rather than cut down consumption of it? This was very difficult to do because all of these people using the water had rights, as they were called, and you don't take their rights away easily. I proposed, and it was laughed at by my commissioner and others, that we close the Welton Mohawk district, and buy out the 30 or 40 farm operations there and

“make them all rich.” Of course that was pure naivete. We had to deal, among others, with Senator Carl Hayden who was the dean of the Senate at the time and who was a staunch defender of his constituents.

It was decided that technically the only thing to be done was to build and operate a massive de-salting plant that would treat the waters that came out of the Welton Mohawk district by a process called reverse osmosis. Reverse osmosis requires vast amounts of electric power, but there are generating facilities in that part of the country operated by, among others, the Bureau of Reclamation, which is basically responsible for that sort of work, and which can produce electricity at very low cost. So a multi, multi-million dollar plant was designed and built and has been operating since to reduce the salinity of the Welton-Mohawk discharges to the point where the water that passes after that to Mexico in the Colorado River is acceptable.

The long range future of the southwest of course is totally another question which is how much more demand can you put on the limited supply sources, namely the water of the Colorado, by the continuing growth of population and its demands for water. The amount of water used for irrigation of course is umpteen times greater than that needed to support human life in terms of domestic consumption.

The U.S. Section on the International Boundary and Water Commission is essentially a group of civil and hydraulic engineers. I was principally responsible for liaison with the Mexican counterparts of that commission and with the drafting of all kinds of agreements, called “Minutes” of the Commission, to resolve problems under the jurisdiction of the International Boundary and Water Commission over the entire border from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. I had the opportunity to cover virtually every mile of it more than once and be acquainted with all the various problems that the engineers were working on, so that I could convert what the engineers agreed to into treaty language.

Q: How did you find your Mexican counterparts? Was this pretty much a group of professional people both on the American side and the Mexican side?

SACKSTEDER: Absolutely, yes. Very, very professional. Both commissioners by Treaty definition had to be civil engineers. This was not a position opened to a diplomat. I, the diplomat, was the secretary, but the commissioner, the chief engineer, and the heads of the various engineering branches, were professional engineers. In the case of the United States, they were civil service employees and in the case of Mexico they were the Mexican equivalent, but professionals.

Q: When it got to work, did you find that politics intruded? Obviously they intruded on both sides but as far as the commission went, did politics play a part?

SACKSTEDER: No, really not. Politics on a national basis did intrude of course on that big issue of the Colorado River water but on such questions as the distribution of the waters on the boundary, these were strictly engineering decisions. The Boundary and Water Commission operates two major dams, Falcon and Amistad, on the Rio Grande, or, as the

Mexicans call it, the Rio Bravo, which forms the boundary between the U.S. and Mexico from El Paso east to the Gulf of Mexico. The administration of the storage, discharge, and use of the waters of these two big reservoirs is determined by the Boundary and Water Commission in accordance with the percentages of those waters which are allocated to each country. Those are, as I say, purely technical decisions. They don't become political, except on rare occasions where there may be complaints that the other side is getting more than its share.

Q: What about you were mentioning on the other side the maintenance of the boundary?

SACKSTEDER: That again brings up all kinds of interesting possibilities. Let me just cite one or two examples. The land boundary, which is established by Treaty and marked by boundary monuments, begins at El Paso and goes all the way to the Pacific. It separates west Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California from the corresponding Mexican states. One section of that boundary is traversed by the San Andreas fault, the tectonic plate fault, in the area near Mexicali and Calexico in southeastern California. An earthquake caused a movement of the plates that distorted the boundary line and its markers and the question arose, how do we rectify the boundary which has moved? In this particular case it was to the primary advantage of Mexico. We're talking here about square feet, not about square miles or acres, but nevertheless we had this boundary question. We finally concluded that the best way to solve this problem was to ignore it. We'd just leave the boundary markers where they were and even if they were distorted a little bit, the line between boundary markers would continue to be the boundary.

Another problem that arose and this arose repeatedly in what we call the river boundary, the Rio Grande river boundary. The Rio Grande flows from west to east in a roughly northwest to southeast direction. It's a hydraulic fact of life that in the northern hemisphere waters of a river flowing from west to east will tend to abrade the southern bank, yet the treaties stated that the center of the main channel of the river will be the international boundary. Mexico would complain that after a flood, a little bit more Mexican soil ended up on the northern bank meaning the channel had moved southward. That was another problem we had to study, correct our maps and determine where the actual boundary was. It could involve all kinds of factors including land titles. Also, for example, in the case of a drug smuggler arrested in that area, was he on Mexican soil or was he on U.S. soil?

Q: What was your connection to the State Department during this?

SACKSTEDER: I reported not only daily but virtually multiple times a day with the Mexican desk. The Mexican desk had an officer working full-time on the boundary issues. During my time it was a fine gentleman, a civil servant, by the name of T.R. Martin who had held that position for a long time and who was the Boundary Commission "desk officer" under the director for Mexican Affairs. I was on the phone hours on end taking down long hand text of drafts, or sending the same to the Mexican desk. I mentioned my problem to the El Paso head of Mountain Bell. He had an early and slow model of a fax machine installed at both ends. It saved us hours of tedious work.

Q: During this period from '72 to '75 you are really talking about a system that worked aren't you?

SACKSTEDER: Yes, it worked well.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point and we will pick this up again in '75 when you left the International Boundary and Water Commission for what?

SACKSTEDER: For the consul generalship in Hermosillo in northern Mexico.

Q: Today is the 27th of August, 1997. Fred, how did this consul generalship come about?

SACKSTEDER: It came about primarily through the efforts of then ambassador to Mexico, John Jova. He wanted a political officer to be on the scene because of developments that had occurred there over the preceding several years. He had happened to have been my boss once before. When I was on the Spanish Portuguese desk he was officer in charge of French Iberian affairs. We remained in close contact over the years. He had visited us in El Paso on a number of occasions because his elder son was at the university there. When he became aware of the situation he convinced the Department that they should waive the medical restrictions on my wife, and assign me to Hermosillo where I replaced a consular officer whose almost entire career had been devoted to visa work.

Q: Who was that?

SACKSTEDER: His name was Edward Stellmacher. Ironically he had recommended, and the Department with alacrity accepted, that the post cease issuing immigration visas because, he argued, having come from the visa mill in Manila, there wasn't enough volume to justify having a staff handling immigration visas. The Department had agreed and they were able that way to cut two officer positions. Almost simultaneously USIA abolished the branch PAO so when I arrived there I found myself with two officers instead of five.

Q: You were in Hermosillo from when to when?

SACKSTEDER: From July of '75 until about March of '79.

Q: What was the situation in Sonora? It's Sonora isn't it?

SACKSTEDER: Yes, Sonora.

Q: What was the situation there particularly the one that Ambassador Jova wanted a political officer there for?

SACKSTEDER: Sonora occupies a fairly significant place in the recent history of Mexico.

Q: All those generals.

SACKSTEDER: All those generals.

Q: I know about this only because I am in the middle of a book called Mexico, a Biography of Power by Enrique Krauze. For those who haven't read the book you might explain why...

SACKSTEDER: Very much in brief, Sonora together with Chihuahua, the two large semi-desert northern states of Mexico, were the real cradle of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. There were still currents of political activity in that area that our embassy considered worth following closely. At the time that I reported for duty, the state of Sonora was governed by a young man, a very loyal member of PRI, Partido Revolucionario Institucional, the official revolutionary party of Mexico which of course continued to rule Mexico many years later and had been in power since about 1928. His name was Carlos Biebrich, a good German name. Incidentally there were quite a few Mexicans of German extraction in the area who had come there as early settlers and had acquired ranches, which was one of the principal activities.

Carlos Biebrich was at that point in deep, deep trouble with President Echeverria, because he had permitted a situation to develop where some campesinos who worked communal farms (they called those communal farms "ejido") south of Hermosillo and near Ciudad Obregon were protesting over land ownership. He had permitted excessive force to be used to break up this protest movement by some of these "ejidatarios," as the workers on the ejidos were known, which had led to a number of deaths. President Echeverria, while professing of course to respect the results of free and open elections such as they were held in those days in Mexico, felt it necessary to summarily remove the governor. There was what you might call a turmoil in the society at the time when I arrived there. As a matter of fact the president chose not to hold elections, but to appoint a successor governor. An unusual step but occasionally resorted to when the political situation was considered by Mexico City to be unstable or risky. The appointed governor, Alejandro Carrillo Marcor, was totally different person from the man he replaced.

Q: What was the spark for both the demonstrations and the repression?

SACKSTEDER: There were several basic reasons but the principal one was the access to land. In this particular instance, as in other occasions of the like nature, the campesinos were demanding more land for their ejido. It should be kept in mind that in Sonora there were still vast estates held privately by among others the family of the former president, Alvaro Obregon. By the way Obregon's son, young Alvaro Obregon, who had been governor of Sonora, was a resident of Hermosillo although he had his estates further south in the area around Ciudad Obregon, a city named after his father.

Another reason that the embassy had wanted a change in principal officer at that time was because of problems that had arisen with respect to the American citizen prison population in Sonora, almost all of them detained for various violations of narcotics laws. At the time I arrived we had approximately 120 Americans in the prisons in Sonora, which, I believe, was

the largest number in any consular district in the world. The vast majority had been arrested by the Mexicans for attempting to smuggle marijuana across Sonora and into the United States. Some, however, were involved in the cocaine and heroin traffic.

Q: What were your border crossing points there?

SACKSTEDER: The principal border crossing point was Nogales because that's where the main highway to Tucson crossed but there was a string of border crossing points. Agua Prieta and Douglas, Arizona was one. At the opposite end was San Luis Rio Colorado with Yuma, and there were several other small ones but all of them available for the passage of contraband from one side to the other. I mean from one side to the other because of course smuggling went on in both directions however the smuggling northward was almost entirely narcotics, and chiefly marijuana.

Q: I take it just as an old consular officer myself that you did not have the equivalent to the Tijuana and the flesh pot problem of people coming down, getting drunk, and chasing girls, that sort of problem. That wasn't your problem?

SACKSTEDER: No, that wasn't our problem at all. Building on this question of the prisoners I might add that at the principal prison in Hermosillo, an old prison which was later replaced by a modern penitentiary, there had been a riot. In the process of suppressing this riot the Mexican authorities had used very strong measures and although nobody was killed, there were a number of prisoners injured among them a few Americans. Of course the embassy and the consulate had to take a very strong position that they were incensed that this was allowed to happen. It appears that the Mexicans, while they didn't ask for anybody's removal, were upset by the tone of the reaction when they argued that they were merely trying to maintain order. They did admit that conditions in this particular prison were such that a riot of this nature was not entirely unexpected.

Another problem was that some months before I went to Hermosillo a young vice consul on his first assignment, his name was Patterson, had been murdered under conditions which were very confusing. It turned out after a thorough investigation that he was the victim of an American, a sort of adventurer whose reasons for committing the crime were never explained. He had befriended the young vice consul, then lured him into the countryside and beat him to death with a tire iron.

Q: Wasn't there some thought that it was a kidnaping at one point?

SACKSTEDER: Initially the assailant made it out to be a kidnaping. He sent ransom notes and set a time for the delivery of a ransom did not appear. It turned out that the young man was dead long before this took place.

Q: I might for the record, if anyone is interested in more of the details on this they might want to look at the oral history that was done with Charles Gillespie who was the security officer in Mexico and was intimately involved in this case. Anyway this had happened before

your time.

SACKSTEDER: This had happened a few months before I got there but there were still investigations going on. There were all of these little problems which the ambassador told me he didn't feel were being followed or covered as well as he would like them to be covered. That led to the retirement of my predecessor and my assignment there.

Q: When you arrived there, first before we move to the American Services problem and problems with American citizens, how did you find the political situation in Sonora? I have heard that in Mexico there is a tremendous difference between the northern tier states, Chihuahua, Sonora, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, where they are much more closely associated in a way with the United States as opposed to when you get to central and southern Mexico where there is quite a different perspective, attitude, and all of that.

SACKSTEDER: Indeed there is and it is one of the concerns of the Mexican government of course that the orientation of the northern tier states is much more toward the United States than toward Mexico. History having taught Mexicans over the preceding centuries that Mexican territory had a way of wandering across the border into the United States, this was, without question, a concern of the central government. While there was not very much they could do about it, they certainly made an effort to keep an eye on things up there and while not flatly discouraging across border relations, trying to keep them low key.

I'd mention one example, and that is the so-called Arizona-Sonora and Sonora-Arizona commission which was a joint commission of largely private individuals in various fields of activity, ranching, business, etc. It functioned as a chamber of commerce in a way, as a goodwill organization between the two states, of Arizona and Sonora. While the governor of Sonora naturally paid more than lip service to this organization and to his fellow governor in Arizona, on behalf of Mexico City he kept a sharp eye on what it was doing and how far it was trying to go. When a situation might arise at the joint meeting of, let's say, the ranching committee about changes in import and export regulations and things like that, the governor wanted to be sure that this was going to be agreeable to Mexico City. The reason the ranching aspect of it became important is because much of the cattle raised in Sonora was raised for shipment for export to feedlots in Arizona and New Mexico, and into the pipeline of the American beef industry.

Q: I was wondering, the normal role of the American consul general is to promote as close and good relations with the country where he is stationed as possible, yet here in a way this was sort of countering what was Mexican policy. I would imagine that at a certain point it would make our embassy feel a little uncomfortable if things got too close because they would probably have the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Mexican ministry sort of making it known that you're overdoing it or something. Did you find that during this time?

SACKSTEDER: Not in any very manifest way, no. Let me bring up another aspect of our work and this is tourism, both just cross border tourism and tourism in the sense of American citizens owning second homes in Sonora and on the Gulf of California. We calculated that at

any given time there were in Sonora, depending on seasons, not less than between 5,000-10,000 Americans residing in my state. Many of them as investors had purchased properties. To protect their interests took quite a bit of the consulate's time. By protecting their interests, I mean cautioning them when we realized that they were beginning to get involved with Mexicans whose credentials, probity, and honesty were either slightly or highly questionable and whose record had warranted warnings about doing business with them. These development outfits advertised heavily across the border to lure, to encourage Americans to come down and invest.

The conditions under which American investments could be made were somewhat different than it might be in other parts of the world because of Mexican law that prohibited foreign ownership within certain distances of the inter-national border, the border with the United States, or the sea coast. And these were primarily the areas where Americans were interested in investing. To do so, they had to do it through a "presta- nombre," or borrowed name, usually of a Mexican notary or attorney, the property being in that attorney's name not in the name of the American owner. This could give rise, and did give rise sometimes, to rather tricky situations.

Q: Oh, yes. I would think anybody would be ten times cautious before doing this. How did you work in this situation?

SACKSTEDER: By every means available to caution people about what they were getting into. Many Americans are quite naive. They assume that everybody else, because they are nice to them are "Oh, that's a good fellow. I trust him fully." We had to caution them that no you shouldn't trust them fully. You should be certain about this person before you put your property in his name even though of course you have a separate agreement between the two of you that it is your property and he's only holding it in trust for you.

Q: What did you do? Did you do the equivalent of commercial checks on people and have a list?

SACKSTEDER: To tell you the truth, the Mexican authorities were the best support we had because they did not want situations to arise which would cast unfavorable publicity on Mexico. In addition to the governor, I worked very closely with the secretary general of the state, (kind of like the lieutenant governor), especially with the director of tourism, who also represented the Tourism Ministry of Mexico City. These people had the power to enforce the laws and if necessary to take drastic measure against unscrupulous individuals. This was not always well received by the Mexican parties in questions.

As I did on more than one occasion, I went to one of these places where there was a concentration of Americans. Specifically, in the Guaymas/San Carlos area on the Gulf of California where there were quite a number of Americans holding property under this arrangement. I got them together for a talk. I explained what the legal situation was, what their situation was, what we could do to help them, and what they should do to help themselves. The chief culprit in this case, who happened to be somebody I knew quite well,

let it be known through the grapevine that it wasn't healthy for me to talk like that in his territory. I didn't stop.

Q: Did you hold sort of interviews with people who might make note of this in American papers and all. In other words sort of make yourself available to anybody who came by the consulate general and all?

SACKSTEDER: Yes, definitely as far as that was concerned and a good many Americans would drop by as you say, before they made a decision. We would advise them as to the risks they were running, the conditions under which they had to operate. I also took every occasion I had when in the U.S., Arizona primarily, to speak to the press. I had several televised interviews about the situation in Mexico during which I always brought up that aspect of it.

Q: At that time could a person invest in property in Sonora, if they took the proper safeguards, with relative security?

SACKSTEDER: Yes, they could. For example, one of the American colonies in Sonora was in a little old silver mining village called Alamos. It is a little town of a couple of thousand which was established long before Hermosillo and the more modern cities, probably some 250 years earlier. Sometime around the '60s and early '70s Hollywood people discovered Alamos and they began to buy these semi-ruined colonial houses and restoring them. Alamos was not in the zone where they had to have an intermediary, so they could buy property outright. A little colony of some 200 or 300 Americans, mostly full-time residents, developed there. For their convenience and in order to keep in touch with them, I went down there periodically. My predecessors had not done that with one exception. One of them had property in this same little town so he was one of them when he was down there and they kept in touch with him that way. I made it a point to go down three or four times a year for a day or two and gather the colony together and discuss their problems, talk about the situation, and provide certain consular services. As you can understand they were some 250 miles south of Hermosillo so they were more than happy to have the consulate come to them rather than they have to come to the consulate.

Q: The Americans who resided there, other than the property disputes, for the most part were they much of a problem with consular problems and all of that?

SACKSTEDER: No, they were not at all. Actually the majority were older; I won't say elderly, but older. Most of them of course were retired, young retirees and even old retirees, and their demands were very few. They often needed advice about things such as satisfying Mexican law requirements concerning the importation of automobiles on which we could advise them. Otherwise it was basically a question of registration of citizens so we knew who they were and where they were, and the matter of occasional consular services like notariats or passports, although a passport was not essential. You could reside in Mexico with just an extended tourist permit which was renewable provided of course that you were there as a tourist and not earning a living. There were very strict restrictions on working in Mexico.

Q: While we are on the American subject, with prisoners during this '75 to '79 period had the prisoner exchange business developed at that time or did it develop while you were there?

SACKSTEDER: It developed while I was there and the first prisoner exchange, which actually turned out to be a one way exchange, took place just shortly before I left Hermosillo. We were able thereby to relieve my successor at the consulate of a real headache, because we were required by regulation to visit every prisoner not less than twice a year, and if anything arose, more often. When I say if anything arose, if a family got a congressman to write the Department, then that meant another visit. We spent an awful lot of our time on the roads going to the prisons to visit the prisoners.

Something somewhat ironic had developed during this period and that was the institution of the Privacy Act. When we had to interview a prisoner at the behest of the family or through their congressman, it was often because the family were not getting regular letters from the individual, and they were concerned. Of course all parents would be concerned about their children being in a Mexican jail. We would be obliged to go there and say, "Your mom and dad are very worried that you haven't been writing them. Have you? Now I have to write your mom and dad through their congressman." By the way, Pete Stark of California was the congressman for 25 or 30 percent of our prisoners so we had reams of correspondence from his office in these types of situations. Then we would add: "But now there is a new law that says that we can't say anything to anybody about what you said to us unless you sign this form which is a Privacy Act release. You have the right to refuse to have any information passed on." You'd be surprised at how many of them availed themselves of that. They'd say, "No, I don't want to sign it. I won't sign it." Whether they mistakenly thought that this might later constitute some kind of evidence for legal pursuit in the United States I don't know. It was remarkable how many of them refused. Many of these young people, and most of them were males, came from family backgrounds where they were probably not close to their parents. They had wandered off and they had gotten into this drug business.

Q: What was your impression, outside of when you had a riot or something, of how the American prisoners were treated?

SACKSTEDER: I don't know how many of them told me that they were sure glad that they were in the Mexican prison and not in the penitentiary in the States. The attitude of the Mexican authorities was quite benevolent, particularly with respect to the Americans. They knew that the Americans had recourse to the consul, and the consul meant the American government. I won't say they babied them, but the bulk of our prisoners were in what they called "reformatorios," reform centers. There, living conditions were quite acceptable.

They had virtually complete freedom within the walls to circulate. In some instances they'd find one of them was a teacher so they established classes and occupied their time in somewhat more useful ways than they would have otherwise. The Mexican attitude is you cannot deprive a prisoner of conjugal rights. By conjugal I mean even girlfriends were considered conjugal rights so they could be visited and satisfied that particular problem. The

American prisoners, by and large, received money from family or friends which went a long way in the prison canteens to supplement the basic rations. With the exception of that riot in the Hermosillo prison which led to the closing of that prison even before I got there, you couldn't say conditions were bad. As I say, a number of them expressed themselves very openly in saying they were sure glad they were there rather than in the States.

The reason that they welcomed the exchange was because it had been made well known, and the Mexicans were aware of it, was that this exchange which was supposed to lead to their sentences being completed in American prisons, wasn't going to work. The minute they crossed the border they were free. That's why of course when the transfer took place, our prisons in Mexico were virtually emptied. There were a few who refused to go back perhaps because they had something in their record or some charges pending in the States which of course they would be picked up for. Almost all of them went back and that was it.

Q: Did you and your officers have to attend a lot of trials?

SACKSTEDER: No. You don't attend trials in Mexico, that is something that Americans cannot seem to understand. There isn't an open trial, there is no jury system there. It is based on a Napoleonic code and it's a question of first of all an official investigation into the circumstances and then a judgment by a judge based on that evidence. There is no confrontation between the defense and the prosecution, there is no trial in court.

Q: What about criminal activities other than.... At that time this was drug smuggling, we're not talking about something that developed later with big drug lords and all of that?

SACKSTEDER: No, this is petty drug smuggling. There were other cases. We had at least two or three cases of homicide, one of them involved a woman. I don't recall but there must have been some cases of assault, robbery, or burglary but the vast majority of the cases were indeed narcotics.

Q: What about car theft, was this a big problem?

SACKSTEDER: As a matter of fact it was the principal occupation of the FBI agent assigned to my office as legal attaché. It was the pursuit of and the attempt to recover automobiles stolen in the United States and driven into Mexico.

Q: Were you just a way point or were the cars being stolen and then ending up in Sonora?

SACKSTEDER: No, it was really a way point. Most of these either ended up in the Mexico City area, or they went into what they called chop shops where they were broken up and used for parts, or they went on further south into Central America. I don't know that many would have gone all the way to South America.

Q: What was your impression of the Mexican bureaucracy in Sonora where you had to deal with it as far as efficiency, corruption, approachability, that sort of thing?

SACKSTEDER: At the top, at the level of the governor and his immediate associates, I think that they were absolutely honest, capable, intelligent. As you went down the line you became aware of the possibility of corruption, though not because you were approached. They were well aware who the American consulate people were and they wouldn't dream of approaching us because they knew they would be denounced right away to the governor and that would be the end of their job. The "mordida," as they call it in Mexico, the bite, lived say at the level of the policeman, if he could get away with it, or the customs officer. Prisoners would occasionally tell us during our visits with them that such and such a guard, "but don't say I said it because if he finds out he might try to beat me up, insists on bribes to distribute our mail" or things like that. In most cases if we felt that we were comfortable enough with the prison director, we'd tell the prison director without saying who had said it, "We have learned that such and such an individual had become a tax collector for distributing mail," or whatever it was. Generally speaking they would take measures, the thing would stop.

Q: While you were there, on the political situation, we're talking now it's 1997 where they have just had really the first almost open election since the revolution, so this was well before that. What were the politics of the area and what were you sort of reporting?

SACKSTEDER: We were reporting of course to the extent that we were aware of it. There was a beginning of the Partido de Accion Nacional, the PAN, which is generally referred to as the conservative or business party. It included some of the people that we knew personally, who, in confidence, would say "it's a beginning, we're not strong and obviously we can't compete with the PRI but there is interest in developing an opposition." This was not of course welcomed by the governor's palace.

I better say a word or two about the governor, about Alejandro Carrillo Marcor, the appointed governor to fill out the term of the elected governor. He had been a member of the Senate. As you know, Mexico had and still has so-called "no re-election," or one term, a real term limit law. During his service as a senator for six years he had been the equivalent of chairman of their Foreign Relations Committee. My governor and I couldn't get together without his talking about his great friend Senator Mike Mansfield, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. They had become quite good friends. Every year, or two, the foreign relations committees of both countries, both House and Senate, held a joint meeting. One such joint meeting took place in Hermosillo at the insistence and at the encouragement of Alejandro Carrillo Marcor. Although by then Mansfield was no longer chairing the Foreign Relations Committee, we had quite a delegation from Washington. They went through the professions of good friendship, mutual understanding and so on, and appropriate outings and entertainments. It was just an excuse for an outing but Don Alejandro took great pride in the fact that he had brought this about in Hermosillo.

Q: You were there during a significant part of the Carter administration. Was there increased interest in the problem of sort of a one party system in Mexico, in human rights, and all that, than there had been previously, or concern about it?

SACKSTEDER: Yes, I think you could say there was although we have to remember that the United States government had been living quite comfortably with the Mexican system for a good many years. Let me tell you what happened on the occasion of the election of President Lopez Portillo, who had been designated to be the PRI candidate by Luis Echeverria. Of course there was no contest for the presidential seat but at the same election we had a contest for the mayor of Hermosillo, they call him Presidente de Municipal. It is a significant office in Mexico; the mayor has a lot of power. As I said, we had a contested election there and on election day my colleagues and I toured around the town to get a feel for how the electorate was turning out. We were startled by the low turnout, given the fact that there was a contested election for mayor, yet when the results were announced, the votes for the uncontested PRI presidential candidacy for Lopez Portillo, were about three times as many as all the votes cast for the contested mayoralty by the same voters. It was a clear indication that the ballot boxes were full of votes even before anybody cast a ballot.

Q: You didn't feel the Carter administration was making any particular emphasis on Mexico?

SACKSTEDER: Certainly they weren't making waves. As a matter of fact, perhaps the best remembered incident involving President Carter was when visiting Mexico he recalled his first visit to Mexico and having suffered from Montezuma's revenge.

Q: We're referring to a diarrhea condition.

SACKSTEDER: Yes.

Q: What about economic conditions during that time, from your perspective, in Sonora and connections with the United States?

SACKSTEDER: It was during my time in Hermosillo that the first devaluation of the peso took place, the first official one. The peso had of course gradually over the years eroded in purchasing value in terms of dollars. After many years where you got eight pesos to the dollar, it had dropped to 12-and-a-half, and then it went to 25 or 26. This had a drastic effect on the buying habits of the Mexican middle class. The Mexican middle class in that part of Mexico considered the malls in the United States to be their shopping malls and they were a tremendous source of income to communities such as the border towns, as well as Tucson and Phoenix. With the devaluation and a loss of that purchasing power, business in the U.S. dropped drastically and was of course felt throughout the Arizona economy. That's one thing.

The economy in Sonora was generally speaking far healthier than it was in most of the rest of Mexico. I think it tended to be the case across the northern tier. This was in part due to the so-called twin plants, or the "mquiladoras" in Spanish. The twin plants being primarily assembly operations in Mexico by American companies. They were called twin plants because part of the operation would be in the United States, generally along the border. The other half of it, or perhaps more than half of it, was in Mexico where the assembly took place. I think, for example, of companies that were manufacturing safety belts for the American

automobile industry. The raw material was produced in the United States, shipped across the border as temporary import into Mexico, assembled into safety belts in Mexico, and then re-imported to the United States. Paying only the value added, namely the cost of the labor to assemble it, enabled the American companies to compete with other low cost suppliers mainly in the Far East and other parts of the Third World.

Q: It is also designed to create a manufacturing base in Mexico which would attract Mexican workers so they would not put as much pressure on our migration.

SACKSTEDER: Exactly. Of course that didn't always work because when the majority of these twin plants were established on the border, they attracted people from central and southern Mexico in large numbers to those jobs. As soon as those people got settled there they began to look across the border to where things were much better notwithstanding. It gave them a taste of what living in the American paradise was like which they wouldn't have had if they didn't come that far.

As a matter of fact that led to the starting of what you might call economic enterprise zones within Mexico and one was established in Hermosillo. The first industry to move there was an American company from the mid-west, I forget now from exactly what state, called Collins Radio. Collins Radio was the principal supplier for the U.S. army of portable radio equipment, but they also did some avionics and other manufacturing. They decided to establish their plant in Hermosillo itself where there was an adequate labor base available. After my departure one of our auto manufacturers, I think it was Ford, established an assembly plant in Hermosillo in this same enterprise zone. Of course these people were still some distance from the border but they were getting good jobs in Mexico, settling in their own culture. They were less prone than those right on the border to think, "well I'm so close, why not go across and instead of earning five dollars a day, which in Mexico was not bad wages, I could earn five dollars an hour."

Q: You were there mainly during the presidency of Echeverria....

SACKSTEDER: Echeverria and Lopez Portillo.

Q: If I recall Echeverria had a reputation of a certain antipathy toward the United States. One, is that true and did you feel that in the government atmosphere?

SACKSTEDER: I think his antipathy was purely internal political. Every Mexican has a little bit of resentment of the colossus in the north, every Mexican has it. Although in most cases it is either well hidden or only latent, for a politician it is a good horse to ride. I don't know if I mentioned this earlier but Mexicans, jokingly of course, love to say about the United States and its territorial expansion at the expense of Mexico, that the United States had not only taken half of Mexico, (which we did at one time, about half of the Mexican territory became U.S. after the Mexican War) but we had taken the best half with all the good roads, and all the clean cities!

Q: Fred is there anything else we should discuss during your time in Hermosillo?

SACKSTEDER: I don't know if this is of great interest but we might just make a mention of an alleged kidnap attempt of the American consul general. I am still not convinced that it was true because I never saw any evidence that would support it. I happened to be in Alamos speaking to our American community when my deputy in Hermosillo telephoned. I was told it was urgent so I left my audience and went to the telephone. He said the security officer at the embassy had just called to advise me that they had information from the Mexican security people with whom they worked closely that a terrorist group, possibly the same one that kidnapped Terry Leonhardy in Guadalajara in '73, was going to attempt to kidnap me. The target date for this was two days hence.

Mind you I was there in Alamos alone and I hadn't even taken the official car, I had driven my own car. I felt perfectly safe of course in Mexico. My deputy told me that the embassy had found out that I was there alone and they said for me to stay with a lot of people, not to go out alone anywhere. They would send down my official car with the driver and a security man, what we called there a "pistolero." I was not to attempt to return to Hermosillo until they arrived, a good half day's travel.

The governor had been informed so when I got back he wanted to see me. He said that the Ministry of the Interior had insisted that he provide additional security. I did have a bodyguard, in normal times an employee of the consulate, mainly a chauffeur who legally could carry a weapon, which he did. They insisted on much stricter security both at the residence and in and out of the office. This happened about a year-and-a-half before I left Mexico and for the remaining time there I couldn't go anywhere without a chase car, in the bullet-proof consulate official car, and with between four and six bodyguards.

Q: That's no fun at all.

SACKSTEDER: No, it wasn't. Our life became very circumscribed. My wife and I eventually ended up buying a small house south of Tucson so we could go at least one or two weekends a month and get away from the security. When I crossed the border they stayed behind and when I was coming back they would meet me and accompany me. My wife couldn't go to the hairdresser without being followed by two pistol-packing burly guys.

And yet, as I say, I am not convinced that there really was something. Perhaps the increased security deterred whoever might have had an idea. It was supposed to be one of these terrorist groups like the one that had done the thing in Guadalajara. Terry Leonhardy was kidnapped and held for several days. U.S. policy was "we don't pay ransom." The Mexican government did. They released some prisoners to Cuba and they paid several million pesos.

CHARLES ANTHONY GILLESPIE, JR.
Supervisory General Services Officer
Mexico City (1972-1975)

**Executive Assistant, Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC (1981-1985)**

Ambassador Charles Anthony Gillespie, Jr. was born in California in 1935. He received a B.A. from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1958. After serving in the military for four years, he joined the State Department in 1965. His career posts include the Philippines, Indonesia, Belgium, Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, Chile and Washington, DC. Ambassador Gillespie was interviewed in 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy

GILLESPIE: I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I've just been assigned as the Executive Counselor to the Embassy in Mexico. We have the Embassy and nine constituent posts in Mexico. The Executive Counselor is the formally designated Number Three officer in the Embassy. He supervises the Consul General in Mexico City and/or all the consular activities in Mexico." He said, "There is an opening in the General Services Office for a Supervisory General Services Officer [GSO]. That's an FSO-3 position," which is equivalent to today's FSO-1.

Q: It's approximately at the colonel level.

GILLESPIE: At the colonel level. Dikeos said, "You are an FSO-5 or two grades below that. If you agree to take that job, you would have three or four American staff in Mexico City and about 115 Foreign Service National employees under you there. You would also be responsible for all services, purchasing, general contracting, building maintenance, and repair activity at the nine constituent posts of the Embassy. I would like you to come and be my Supervisory General Services Officer and drop this Russian stuff."

That was really a hell of a situation to be in because the job that he described sounded like a really big deal. It meant skipping being an Assistant General Services Officer, one of several in Moscow, and moving right up. That looked interesting, and the job sounded fascinating. I already knew Spanish, which I had spent all of those months learning at the Foreign Service Institute during my military career. Dikeos said that he really wanted me for this job. I had learned along the way that, in the Foreign Service, a boss who particularly wants you is like a bird in the hand.

I still didn't know these people in the Bureau of European Affairs and the Office of Soviet Union Affairs. I hadn't even begun to get to know any of them. I agonized over that. When I discussed it with my wife, she was very practical. She said, "Look, Mexico City is not forever. Moscow is at least an implicit commitment that you'll go back again. Schools run out in Moscow at a certain stage, which they don't do in other parts of the world. It's your decision, and I'll do whatever you like, but..."

Q: How many children did you have at that point?

GILLESPIE: At that point we had two, who were still pretty young. So, anyway, I chose to go to Mexico City with Vic Dikeos. That set me on another track, another path. That got me into the

Bureau of American Republics Affairs [ARA], with which I had not had much to do in the past. It sort of set things going in that direction.

Q: So you went to Mexico City when?

GILLESPIE: I went to the Embassy in Mexico City in June, 1972. We packed up in Washington and drove across the country with our two kids - no pets - in a big Chevrolet Impala sedan. I recall that we were listening to a song called, "The Horse with No Name," a song that was very popular then. We drove across the U.S. from East to West and then headed down the West Coast of Mexico. We entered Mexico from California in Tijuana and cut back to the mainland of Mexico, drove through Mazatlán, and eventually, went through the State of Sinaloa, the mountains and the desert. We arrived in Mexico City in June, 1972.

It was supposed to be a four-year tour. I stayed there just about three years and a month, for reasons which we can get into later.

Q: Alright. What was your assignment in the Embassy in Mexico City?

GILLESPIE: I was assigned as the Supervisory General Services Officer. That put me at the head of a Section in a very large, administrative organization. When I arrived in Mexico City, there were three American Assistant General Services Officers and about 110 Foreign Service Nationals of different categories. These included the Mexican employees in Mexico City and at the constituent posts. I learned after I got there that I also had all of the General Services responsibilities for what at the time were nine constituent posts, i.e., Consulates General and Consulates.

Q: What had you been told about the job before you went to Mexico City? You always "pick up" both official and corridor gossip about both the job and what you really were expected to do.

GILLESPIE: Well, Mexico was hot stuff in the administrative area, for two reasons. Earlier, we had all thought that people like Tom Stern former Assistant Secretary of State for Administration and some others in the administrative area were modern managers. The concept of an Executive Administrative Counselor had arisen. It had first really come to the fore in Thailand, at some point in the 1960s, where you had the Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission, and a huge mission below them. We picked up, as I characterized it, a little bit of the British Head of Chancery idea. This was a third-ranking person or almost co-equal with the second-ranking person. However, his or her job at the time was certainly the administrative management of the mission, so that the Deputy Chief of Mission could really concentrate on managing substantive affairs and inter-agency problems related to policy and diplomatic or other kinds of operations.

I guess that this system had just been imposed in Mexico in the late 1960s, which, at least without the military, was about on a par with the Embassy in Bangkok in terms of size and complexity. In addition to the Embassy itself there were these nine constituent posts, with

tremendous immigrant and non-immigrant visa issuing responsibilities. There were also other agencies in Mexico, such as what was then the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs [BNDD] and which has since become the Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA]. There were other agencies represented in Mexico as well. Our mission in Mexico is unique because of Mexico's proximity to the United States and the nature of our activities there.

As I think I mentioned earlier, I arranged to change an assignment to Russian language training and then to be an Assistant General Services Officer at our Embassy in Moscow to take this job in Mexico and serve with a person who was going to replace Ralph Ribble. Ralph had been the first Executive Counselor in Mexico City and was still there when I arrived. The man who'd recruited me for my job, Vic Dikeos, was coming later. I had been basically sold the job and told that it would be "large and a challenge," that it was two grades above my personal rank, and so it would be what they now call a "stretch assignment" for me.

I was told that I was going to be expected to manage a major real property, building, and long term leasing program, including new office buildings. There were also pressures back then in 1972 because of the balance of payments problems which had come up earlier during the Johnson administration and continued through the Nixon years. We would have to cut back, so we were probably going to be paring down. One aspect of my job would be to manage that, dispose of things, move things and people, and so forth. I had been led to believe, and it turned out to be the case, that this would be a rather complex job with a great deal happening.

Q: Who was the Ambassador when you went to Mexico City?

GILLESPIE: When I arrived, the Ambassador was Robert McBride, a career officer. Ambassador McBride was a quintessential Foreign Service Officer. He had been Political Counselor or DCM in the Embassy in Paris. He had served in Europe and other areas of the world. His DCM was Robert Dean, a Latin American specialist. The Embassy was staffed with what I considered high quality people. H. Freeman Matthews, whose father had been a rather prominent Foreign Service Officer, was the Political Counselor. There were lots of people on the staff whose names I had heard of and whom I had seen around the Department. They later went on to do a variety of other things. It was a big, active Embassy. At the time there must have been, if you counted all of the American and Mexican staff, probably close to 1,000 people in the Embassy and constituent posts. The Embassy in Mexico City alone probably had a staff of several hundred.

There was a huge consular operation. The Embassy in Mexico City was one of the visa mills where junior officers were assigned to do visa work. We had a large group of junior officers.

Relations between the United States and Mexico were more or less as they've always been. There was a feeling among the Mexicans of superiority over the United States because of their cultural background and an inferiority complex because of their concern about this big, heavy-handed neighbor to the North, the disparity in economic relations, and all of that.

The Mexicans had gone through something which has still not completely disappeared, even in 1995. That is, a very difficult situation which mirrored things happening in the rest of the world,

in France, and in the U.S. - the well-known 1968 riots. In 1968 Mexican youth had risen up in protest against the policies of their own government. They wanted political and economic reform. They felt that the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the famous PRI, was too institutional and not revolutionary any more. They were probably right.

Luis Echeverría, the man who was Secretary of the Interior in 1968, basically put down this revolt. There were shootings...

Q: It was during the Olympic Games in Mexico City, too.

GILLESPIE: It was right during the time of the Olympics, so there was a prominent display of all of this to the world. Later, Echeverría became President of Mexico. In those days you became President because the outgoing President named you the candidate of the PRI. The Spanish term for this is *dedazo*, which is literally "fingering." The person so fingered becomes the anointed and then President during elections which were absolutely under the control of the PRI, the governing party.

Echeverría had been President of Mexico since 1970. Mexican Presidents serve a six-year term, with no possibility of re-election.

Other items which were kind of hot on the policy plate at the time included narcotics trafficking into the United States. However, in the multilateral sense Mexico has always had the view that it's big, it's important, and it should have a voice in the world. You may recall that the Mexicans set themselves apart from the U.S. at the time of the Castro revolution in Cuba and refused to go along with anything the United States wanted to do in the OAS (the Organization of American States) regarding the exclusion of Cuba. The Mexicans maintained relations with Cuba continuously, in effect thumbing their noses at us. However, they did whatever they felt that they needed to do with regard to Cuba. The Mexicans had been very much involved with the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77 group of 77 countries seeking major reform in the political and economic order.

My strong recollection is that the Mexicans were really playing a key role in some of the things happening at the UN, and specifically in connection with the effort by certain Arab and other countries to promote resolutions stating that, "Zionism is racism." This issue was deliberately aimed at isolating Israel. I can recall vividly attending Country Team meetings in Mexico City when we considered what action to take regarding Mexico and how to convince them not to take the positions they took.

President Echeverría had a pet project called, The New International Economic Order (NIEO), which was very much part of the North-South controversy of poorer countries of the Southern Hemisphere of the world against the richer countries of the Northern Hemisphere. The view was that the richer and industrialized countries owed the poorer countries a living and ought to transfer resources to them. That was the policy backdrop.

In addition to global issues there were bilateral narcotics and agricultural problems. There were

border problems involving smuggling across the Mexican-U.S. border. Illegal immigration of Mexicans into the U.S. was just as big an issue then as it is now. The *maquiladora* facilities in Mexico near the border with the U.S. involved the assembly of products in Mexico, with Mexican labor, using raw and semi-finished inputs imported from the United States. The finished product was then re-exported to the United States, essentially on a duty-free basis. They were initially set up as part of a U.S. program during the Johnson administration. Previously, Mexican "guest workers" had been brought into the United States to work, on a temporary basis. This program had been stopped, as many Mexican workers remained more or less permanently in the U.S. So the view was, "If you can't bring Mexican workers into the U.S., send the raw materials to Mexico and have them assemble the products there." That's how the *maquiladora* system began, following a Canadian model from the 1950s!

Many U.S. business firms established themselves in Mexico, investing in ways which created problems. Although these firms were to have duty-free status in the United States, if there were any evidence that they were exporting to a third country, there were problems. Getting production inputs into and out of customs bond was a problem.

There was a problem with the trade in agricultural commodities. It turned out that beef in the form of heads of cattle were often moved across the Mexican-American border two or three times, before eventually going to market in the U.S. or elsewhere. That presented a whole range of problems.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which more or less includes the area South of Mexico City from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean and down to the Mexican-Guatemalan border, is a natural barrier against an insect called the screw worm. This worm is transmitted by a fly which is carried on cattle. The worm infects the cow, which becomes a vector, a breeding ground for the screw worm. I got involved in this because it required the assignment of U.S. Department of Agriculture Inspection Service people in remote areas of Mexico. My job was to go and help them to get the land on which to construct buildings and bring in cars and trucks for this activity. What these American inspectors were doing was fascinating. However, there were many public relations aspects in which I was involved on the edges, if not directly, from time to time.

The program for dealing with the screw worm involves collecting larvae of the fly itself. You breed the larvae in cattle blood to a certain point. Then you irradiate them with radioactive material. That makes the larvae infertile but does not kill them. You allow the larvae to reach maturity, put them in little boxes, load them onto airplanes - hundreds and thousands of them - and release them over the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in southern Mexico and other areas where the screw worm is found. These flies mate with fertile flies, and there are no progeny. You learn a lot in the Foreign Service and you go through some terribly smelly situations along the way. The cultivation or propagation of screw worm flies is something I never want to see again.

Q: So you were a willing participant in a kind of process of coitus interruptus.

GILLESPIE: I think of it now in terms of all of these debates about human fertility control. There I was, out there doing it with flies! This was a big program. As I mentioned earlier, when

speaking about Thailand, we didn't have the U.S. military involved in this program. However, there were several hundred USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) employees involved in this program. They were based in Texas and all over Mexico.

Q: I never served in Mexico but I have the impression that Mexican policy has always involved something of a double standard. The foreign policy of the country has been turned over, in effect, to the Left, people who really don't like the United States or took on that coloration. Meanwhile, in the rest of the country a lot of Mexican-American business goes on, in which everyone is involved. Despite problems, relations between the two countries have generally been good. On the other hand there was this Zionism Is Racism resolution, which basically was an Arab resolution at the United Nations aimed at sticking it to the Israelis. That was the playpen for the Mexican Left. Did you get that impression?

GILLESPIE: Oh, yes. However, I have to say, it became more prominent and more visible as Mexicans, and specifically President Miguel De la Madrid, who was two Presidents ago in Mexico, began a process of economic reform in that country.

However, this was absolutely true in the 1970s, when I was in Mexico, and had been so earlier, I believe. Nonetheless, there was still a lot of political capital to be made if the President of Mexico could appear to be opposing the United States on some issue.

Q: You were saying that the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs had allowed the leadership to show...

GILLESPIE: It has become more evident recently, I think, and maybe this is in the process of further modification, that in the field of foreign affairs Mexico's internationalism was going to lean to the Left. This was part of the political equation in Mexico while, at the same time, a less leftist line would be followed domestically. However, I think that it was established policy for Mexican Presidents, through President José López Portillo, who succeeded President Echeverría, to demonstrate their leftist credentials.

I remember the periodic display of these credentials vividly. Ambassador McBride would come back from a meeting with the Mexican President and would say, "He's done it again!" The Mexican President would say, in effect, "My turn signal will say 'Left,' but I'm going to go 'Right.'" Then the Mexican President would go Left and didn't go Right. We hadn't trusted him, but we knew that he was going to say that. Ambassador McBride would respond to that with a wry and sort of sardonic grin. Sure, that was the practice.

Mexico really doesn't have cabinet ministers as such. Mexican cabinet level officials are called Secretaries of the various departments, as is the case in the United States. The Secretary of Foreign Relations, called "RE" Foreign Relations in the Spanish acronym, has often been one of the most leftist figures in the PRI. That's where such leftists got into the Mexican Government. The Secretariat of Foreign Relations, which is a mixture of career people and a lot of politically appointed officials, has reflected that mixture. Over the past 20 years or so when I have been associated with the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Relations its professionalism has increased

dramatically. It has a cadre of well-informed, competent, and able diplomats who are politically very sharp. They have been under the political thumb of both the PRI and the Secretary of their department for a long time, and they can't get away from that easily. The Secretary of Foreign Relations was the man on the LeFort. This gave the President and the other Secretaries room to move in whichever direction they wanted to go.

In terms of Mexico's foreign policy, President Echeverría, his predecessors and his immediate successors all saw their interests and advantage as best served by not being with the United States. To say that they are anti-American is always a rather inaccurate term. They could also be described as, challenging, not caving in, not surrendering, not under Washington's thumb.

The thumb of the United States in Mexico is remarkably big. In Mexico City our Embassy reflected this during my time there and, I believe, it reflects it today. In Mexico our diplomatic establishment, in many ways - although you can overstate this - is a piece of the Potomac River, moved South. Back in the 1970s you definitely saw that the Office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Mexico City really didn't feel that it was under the authority, leadership, and command of the U.S. Ambassador. It responded to the INS in Washington and had a lot of direct contact with INS posts along the Mexican-U.S. border.

I've mentioned the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the screw worm program, which is basically a domestic program translated into the overseas environment. The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service was really a domestic operation. The leader of that group in Mexico, in terms of pay grade and all of that, was a super-bureaucrat in the U.S. Civil Service. He was about a GS-19, or something similar. He outranked a lot of the people in the Embassy in terms of pay and position and reported directly to a major-level person in USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). He was wise enough to keep the Embassy informed of what was going on and took the Embassy's lead because he thought that it was in his interest to do so. However, in terms of program and all that, he felt no obligation to the Ambassador or the DCM. This was also true, as I mentioned, with the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) - now the Drug Enforcement Administration, or DEA. They wanted to be in the Embassy because they wanted diplomatic passports, since they all carried guns and did all kinds of things. They liked the protection provided by a diplomatic passport. However, they didn't think that the State Department, the Ambassador, the Political and Economic Sections, or anybody else in the U.S. Mission knew what should or needed to go on.

Going back to the World War II years the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) had had an office in Mexico City, which was called the Office of the Legal Attaché in the Embassy. The head of this office was one of the most senior officers in the FBI. It was a big-time job. The FBI didn't have a lot of overseas posts at that time - Mexico City was one of the few. The FBI officer in charge of this office during my time in the Embassy in Mexico City was a very smooth operator. However, he knew that if the Embassy put too much pressure on him, all he had to do was to pick up the phone and call somebody in Washington. He could get on a plane and go to Washington very easily.

Interestingly enough, Congress paid a lot of attention to Mexico. Congressman John Rooney,

who was near the end of his career in Congress, controlled the State Department budget. He was actively interested in what was going on in Mexico. He had a lot of constituents in New York with contacts in Mexico. There was Congressman Kika De la Garza, Democrat of Texas, a Mexican-American congressman who was very influential on agricultural questions. I remember that whenever the State Department considered closing or even reducing the size of our consular posts in Mexico, such as Mazatlán, Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, and so forth, we'd get a phone call from De la Garza, Rooney, Wayne Hayes, or some other congressman, saying, "You can't do that." The Senate Majority Leader at the time was Senator Mike Mansfield Democrat, Montana, who had very close contact with Mexico. He had set up a U.S.-Mexican Interparliamentary Group. He visited Mexico at least twice a year, bringing a delegation with him. They would go to Acapulco or one of the other Mexican resort areas. They would meet with their counterparts in Mexico. Mexican legislators at that time were really drones. They didn't have any authority, since Mexico has a presidential system. However, Mansfield and his delegation would come down to Mexico and make all kinds of wonderful statements.

By the way, the GSO supported all of this in an interesting way. One of the things that Senator Mansfield had done, some time in the 1960s - I don't remember the year - was to say, "Well, if I'm going to keep coming down to Mexico, then we're going to have to be supported." So Mansfield, the Senate Majority Leader, had taken a fellow from New Jersey, known to him in some way, and had him brought into the Foreign Service as what was then a Foreign Service Staff Officer. He had him made the head of the "Visitors' Office" in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, where he stayed for about 12 years. This man had Mexico wired. I must say that he was of benefit to everyone in the Embassy, because, if we wanted to go to a hotel in some far-off place in Mexico, David would always be able to get us in, usually at a cut rate. He could get us a reservation if space was tight. Certainly, if we had any important visitor from the Executive Branch or the Congress, David took care of all that. He had a staff of three Mexican employees, who worked with him. All of them were well-connected. I can tell you that at Christmas time and the Mexican holiday of the *Cinco de Mayo*, May 5, Mexican National Day, an enormous number of cases of booze were handed out as gifts by the Embassy. These were delivered to the very top Mexican figures with whom David and the Embassy worked. There were Baccarat decanters of cognac and all kinds of wonderful things that greased the skids.

In a personal way there was some tension in this connection. My predecessor, who was much senior to me, had told me, "One of your jobs will be managing the Visitors' Office. They don't report to you, but you depend on them, and they depend on you. You both report to the Ambassador, so you're going to have to figure it out." It was a challenge for the three years that I was there in the Embassy in Mexico City. I think that we handled it adequately. It worked and it worked rather well. This fellow did not like to have any of what he regarded as his prerogatives stepped on.

Q: You must have had to tread very carefully, with the DEA, FBI, and all these other people. Technically, you gave them support. Were you able to call on resources, say, from the FBI. In other words, if you needed, say, a generator, could you get a generator or something like that from them?

GILLESPIE: I find that I have to talk about this situation almost as if it were ancient history. The whole idea of Shared Administrative Support in an Embassy was still being worked out. I had just come out of the administrative area in Washington, from the office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Administration. I had worked as the clean up guy for the head of Budget and Finance. I knew about all the reimbursement stuff and who reimbursed whom, and how you did this. The answer to your question is, "Yes, we cut a lot of deals." If we needed something, we got it, one way or another. It was always legal. I learned, early on, that in this business, and we've just seen it in the Anti-Deficiency Act and these furloughs of federal employees during the past week or 10 days, that there are certain real rules in our business if you're dealing with government property, funds, or resources. You had darned well better know what those rules are and follow them. I learned those rules early, I stuck with them, and I had no qualms about saying to an Ambassador or a DCM or another Embassy officer, "You cannot do that, sir. That is not permitted." One of the main problems is what is called cross funding. This involves taking money from one pot and trying to spend it on something else. Usually, this is strictly forbidden and not permitted. If you do that, you get into significant legal and maybe even criminal trouble. You have to work these matters out very carefully. What you do always must be able to stand the glare of the Inspector General or an auditor, or you, your bosses, and everybody else will be in trouble.

However, the answer to your question is, "Yes, we can figure this out." Can we talk about the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)?

Q: Absolutely. The point is, we're talking about past history, and I think that we should describe this as best we can.

GILLESPIE: I had had a very close relationship as a Security Officer in the Philippines, definitely in Indonesia, and certainly in Belgium with various personalities in the CIA. They knew me. When you are dealing with people in that business, particularly from the Directorate of Operations [DO], you would like to think that they always tell the truth, but you never know whether, in fact, they do. And you never know who's exploiting whom and how.

Whatever the case, when I got to Mexico, the CIA Chief of Station (COS) called me and asked me to come to his office. He was the head of the CIA operation in Mexico, which was really big. It did not have a whole lot to do with Mexico. You may recall the Kennedy assassination and all that. The Soviet Union had a huge Embassy in Mexico. It was perceived to be one of the main launching pads for penetration of the United States. There were a lot of things going on. The COS said that he had been told by his colleagues that they had known me as a Security Officer. He wanted to make sure that I understood that he had a big, complex operation and would need a lot of support from the General Services Officer. He was conducting a very smart, interagency, managerial operation.

He then did something that was very interesting and had not happened to me before, in the same way. He said, "I would like you now to meet with each of my officers who are here under State Department cover, i.e., are listed as State Department officers while still working for the CIA and learn what they do. I'd like you to have a sense of what they're doing. If there's any way that they can help you, in anything that you're doing, and so forth..."

The point here is that the Central Intelligence Agency in Mexico had a big operation. It had a lot of resources and its own administrative structure within the Station. Their Administrative Officer, while junior to our Executive Counselor, was senior to me. He was a very sharp fellow. We quickly figured out how we could help each other. I could help them buy things and do things so that they didn't have to reveal who they were. He could provide various kinds of things that we couldn't get our hands on very easily. We could do this on a proper reimbursement, involving paper transfers, and all of that.

What struck me was the extent of the influence of the Chief of Station and those below him. The Chief of Station has about as much clout as an Ambassador does within the Station. Everyone just said, "Yes, sir," and started briefing me on what they did and how they did it. Not down to "sources and methods," but the kinds of things they did. For example, one group of CIA officers dealt with Eastern Europe other than with the Soviet Union. Another group dealt with domestic Mexican affairs. Still another group did technical things. They showed me all of the gadgets that they had. They told me that if we ever needed any of it, just to ask for it. All of this had a point because it came into play about 10 months after I arrived in Mexico. The key point here is that the Chief of Station in Mexico, like Chiefs of Station around the world, had his own lines of communication back to CIA headquarters. However, in the case of Mexico, I think that this was compounded.

The Ambassador obviously cared about what the Mexicans were doing. He cared tremendously about the Station's coverage of the Mexican political and economic scene. However, he knew that by far the bulk of the Agency's intelligence resources was devoted to the Soviet Union and other communist bloc targets. The Chief of Station had an interesting job.

The Ambassador, the DCM, and the Executive Counselor were the heavyweights of the mission. The position of Executive Counselor turned out to be an interesting arrangement. The Executive Counselor, a senior Administrative Officer, actually prepared the efficiency reports on the Consuls General at the constituent posts when I was there. This was an unusual practice since the Consul General in Mexico City, who was also a very senior, consular officer, usually handled that responsibility, as do Consuls General in our Embassies elsewhere in the world. I think that there was always some resentment about that.

Q: I'm sure there was.

GILLESPIE: In fact, this situation has changed since then. It's gone back to the previous situation where the Consul General in Mexico City prepares the efficiency reports on the Consuls General at the constituent posts.

Q: I'll come back to these other things later, but there is one thing which you have not mentioned here. For any GSO, probably the most important person as far as he or she is concerned is the Ambassador's wife. Normally, the Ambassador's wife is fine, but she can be absolutely hell on wheels. The Embassy in Mexico City has had some hells on wheels. How was Mrs. McBride? Was she a problem?

GILLESPIE: Mrs. McBride, if my memory serves, had been a Foreign Service secretary. I guess that each GSO has to deal with these things in his or her own way. I dealt with Mrs. McBride, to the extent that I was able, in the same way that I dealt with the Ambassador. That is, I was straight. I was "there" for her, whenever she wanted me. I dealt with her in as business-like a way as I could.

The Embassy Residence in Mexico City is a big barn of a place. It has always had its own little support structure. The term we used then was, "a full-time, resident staff." An American woman was the combined social secretary and manager of the property, staff, and everything else. She was a wonderful woman and she and Mrs. McBride got along famously, which made life much easier for me. First of all, Mrs. McBride didn't have to call me very often. I can't remember any instance when Ambassador McBride called me about something at the Residence. That's a little bit unusual for a GSO.

Q: Oh, yes!

GILLESPIE: It wasn't my fault that things worked well. We had a Mexican GSO staff, a superb Building Maintenance Staff, under *Ingeniero* (Engineer) Jorge Duarte. He was short in stature, very handsome, and very smart. He was no more a graduate engineer than the man in the moon, but he carried himself well. Everybody called him *Ingeniero* as a matter of courtesy, because he was the boss of this maintenance staff. He knew how to make things right quickly, if anything went wrong. He was a bug on preventive maintenance.

Q: Sounds wonderful.

GILLESPIE: He would come to me and say, "We have to spend money on the water system in these places because it's going to go bad." I would say, "Well, let's budget for it." He would say, "Yes, but we have to do something right away," so we'd have to figure out how to find the money. Then the bad thing didn't happen because he arranged to have preventive maintenance done.

Anyway, I was blessed with an excellent maintenance staff and I was blessed with Mrs. McBride, as well as her successor as well. These women were very serious. They took their jobs as the Ambassador's wife very seriously.

Q: Who succeeded Ambassador McBride?

GILLESPIE: John Jova. His wife was Pamela Jova. Ambassador McBride became quite ill. Let's see. I arrived in Mexico City in 1972. He must have left Mexico City by the end of 1973. However, during 1972 and 1973 he probably spent weeks in Texas at Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas. He was having serious health problems. I don't know whether it was cancer or just other, internal problems. However, he died not long after he left Mexico. Mrs. McBride died recently. I think that her name was Jean. I never got to know her well, but we had a nice relationship. As I said, I don't think that Ambassador McBride ever called me. Mrs. McBride

rarely did. It was usually the social secretary at the Residence who would call the right person in the GSO's office and didn't bother me with whatever was needed. I had one Assistant GSO, Tom Linville - Duane T. Linville. He was one of those marvelous people. Not a Southerner, but he spoke slowly. He had a quick mind but a slow tongue. If we had anything going wrong out at the Residence, I'd get Tom to go out there. He would walk through, look carefully, take notes, and say, "Yep [yes], that's the problem. We'll have that taken care of. I can't do it today, but I'll have it done by noon tomorrow, Mrs. McBride" (or the secretary). And he did. So people had confidence in Tom, and thank goodness for that.

Meanwhile, I was running around, going to the Consulates in Merida, in the Yucatan Peninsula, to Mazatlan, Hermosillo, and other places. We had building projects under way. We had buildings falling down around our ears. We had DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) people who needed new office space. My boss felt that the Supervisory General Services Officer ought to be on top of those problems. We had Principal Officers at the Consulates who were active and engaged. We also had other Principal Officers who didn't even want even to think about office space and maintenance problems.

Mexico, because it is Mexico, is close to the U.S. If you have a health problem, you want to go where you can be close to home. So Canada, Mexico, and posts in the Caribbean are the assignments of choice for those who are chronically ill because they are closest to the U.S.

Q: I worked in Personnel for a time. This is where we put an awful lot of people - particularly single ladies whose mothers were getting elderly.

GILLESPIE: Exactly! Mexico is a large country where we have a number of posts. It could absorb duds. If you had people who weren't too sharp, well, let me tell you. The administrative people who also had administrative responsibilities at some of our posts in Mexico fit that description. So my boss would say, "You'd better get out there and make sure that that doesn't get messed up." We were doing a lot of new things, Stu. Here I worked very closely with the people from the consular operation. We were dealing with a tremendous increase in the visa work load which was well under way.

Remember Lake Chapala, near Guadalajara, Mexico? There were Mexican securities called "*pagares*" which were attractive investments, particularly for Americans who had retired. During the "boom days" of which I speak, there were literally thousands of Americans - school teachers and middle level workers who were collecting their Social Security and retirement pensions and living in Mexico. They were investing in Mexican securities and had moved - lock, stock, and barrel - to the lovely area around Lake Chapala, near Guadalajara. Life was cheap, life was easy, and they were living the life of Riley. They were also living in the area around Cuernavaca. They were getting fantastic returns on their money - 30 to 50 percent. They converted their pensions, denominated in U.S. dollars, into pesos, and lived on the proceeds. These people were fine.

Well, they presented problems. They were growing old, were getting sick, and dying. They often had few friends. They were a problem for the American Consulate people in Guadalajara, or the American Consul in Mexico City who dealt with the Cuernavaca area.

So we had a tremendous workload. How would we handle all of this - particularly the visa load? The fact is that so many people want to come to the U.S. that they line up the night before, just as they do for a rock concert or a big time football game, and stand outside waiting to enter the Consulate or Consular Section of the Embassy. That looks bad, and it creates security and human sanitation problems of all kinds. In the early 1970s we did not have, to my knowledge, anyone in Washington who was systematically looking at this problem. No one was apparently considering systematically whether there were rules which we could apply, whether they affected Kingston, Jamaica; the Dominican Republic; Mexico City; or Italy, which would deal with people. We had people who were thinking about this problem, but there was no systematic approach to it.

As it turned out, one of my jobs was to do a major renovation and "add-on" in the Consulate General in Guadalajara. The Consulate General was just going to duplicate what was already there. I said, "Wait a minute. We've got to look at how we're going to deal with the fact that the waiting lines have increased 150% in the last two years, and we think that they're going to grow longer. Can we build better waiting rooms, arrange for seating, and bathrooms?" They hadn't thought of doing any of that. I took *Ingeniero* Duarte and got the consular officers in Guadalajara around a table. We tried to scope out what we thought was going to happen. We contacted Foreign Building Operations FBO in Washington. They weren't much help. Many of the people in FBO were just a bunch of duds and didn't care. All they wanted to do was spend the money they had. We did a lot of that kind of planning. It was really kind of a management job. I thought that this was fascinating and challenging. It was going on all over the place.

There was one event which I want to be sure to cover and not forget about. Maybe we can discuss it in a later session. You'll recall that Ambassador Cleo Noel and Curtis Moore, the DCM in Khartoum, Sudan, were killed by Islamic terrorists. At the time we had what National Security Adviser Kissinger said was a clear policy on terrorism, kidnapping, hostage-taking, and these kinds of things.

That policy was put to the test early in 1973 when Terence Leonhardy, our Consul General in Guadalajara, was kidnaped. He was driving in a car, which was forced over to the side of the road. There he was snatched by a group which, I think, called themselves "The 21st of September Movement," or something like that. This was a group of radical, Mexican leftist revolutionaries who had been fairly active for some time. They threatened to kill Leonhardy.

By that time Vic Dikeos, the incoming Executive Counselor, had arrived at the Embassy in Mexico City. Vic and I had both had a background in security. We had a Security Office in the Embassy in Mexico City with, I think, a couple of American Regional Security Officers in it. Both of them were competent, but we were immediately faced with a serious crisis. Bob Dean was the DCM and Charge d'Affaires. Ambassador McBride was out of the country, up in Texas. Dean turned to Dikeos, who turned to me. My job was to set up and manage the crisis management operation, not to get directly involved with the security aspects.

So we took over part of the Embassy. We shut it off from the rest of the Embassy and brought in teams of CIA, FBI, and other people. Working through Dikeos, I could tell these people to handle

this. I organized it and set the schedules for 24 hour operations, because this went on for several weeks, as it turned out. We got through this operation. Leonhardy was eventually released. We did not pay any ransom. We held firm on this point. The Mexicans, however, made sure that he was released. I saw how you "play the edges" of this kind of matter carefully. We learned about the capabilities of the Mexican intelligence and federal law enforcement services, in terms of wire taps and clandestine activity. Of course, our own CIA and FBI were involved. I forget how many times Vic Dikeos and I flew back and forth between Mexico City and Guadalajara. We set up a smaller operation in Guadalajara - press, public affairs, the whole nine yards. It was really a challenge to handle this operation right. There was a constant battle with the Department in Washington about how far we could go with the Mexicans. Should we tell them NOT to do certain things? Should we close our eyes if they do some things of which we would not approve to get our man out? How would we handle this?

The Mexicans, of course, are capable of terribly repressive conduct. They just squeeze people until they break to get information - whether these people have information or not. It was a very, very challenging time. Bob Dean was really tested. I saw people blaming Consul General Leonhardy for what was happening to him. We learned about many of these comments after the fact. There was the Stockholm Syndrome and other syndromes, such as the one which goes, "Well, if he hadn't been in the car, going from his home to his office, he wouldn't have been kidnaped, so it's his fault!"

Q: Yes. In fact, there was a real problem for a while, early on in this business. Anyone who was kidnaped in this way was, in effect, put off to one side and, in fact, blamed for what had happened.

GILLESPIE: People like Leonhardy. That happened to this man, and that's the point of all of this. As far as I was concerned, all of this organization that I was involved in was kind of mechanical. It's important to get it right and do all of this stuff. I'm trying to remember the name of an officer who recently died and who had been the head of the anti-terrorism office in the Department. He came down to Mexico during the detention of Consul General Leonhardy but didn't want to touch this incident with a 10-foot pole. He was scared to death of it for the very reason that he would be blamed if it went right and blamed if it went wrong. He was a good and nice man but he was no help. Charge d'Affaires Dean finally said to him, "Well, if you want to sit here, that's fine. We'll go ahead with our business." That was, to try and stay on top of this incident and basically try to answer Washington's questions. Washington wanted to know what was going on, what were we doing about it, what were the Mexicans doing?

In any event, Leonhardy was eventually released. Then two things happened. The first is the thing you mentioned. All of a sudden, people asked, "Why did this happen to this guy? He's been with those commies. He may have been tainted by all of this. Maybe he agrees with them." The Mexicans weren't so sure that Leonhardy was quite the reliable person that Leonhardy had been as the Consul General just a few days or weeks before.

The State Department said, "Well, we're planning on getting him out of Mexico. We don't have a job for him." Leonhardy kind of wanted to stay on as Consul General in Guadalajara. Well, he

stayed a little while but not long. Eventually, he went off to be a Diplomat in Residence at some university in the U.S.. After that, he just kind of floated around, but nothing much happened to him.

The other thing that happened was Terence Leonhardy himself. I just saw him the other day and had a wonderful conversation with him, but we won't talk about this part. He thought that he was a hero because he had survived. As a survivor of a kidnaping, he deserved recognition. I'm sure that a psychologist or psychiatrist would say, "Yes, you have to figure out how to recognize what happened." Leonhardy translated his experience into, "I want a promotion, a bigger job, or at least an award for having been kidnaped, having survived, and having come back safely." There is logic in that, but when you think about it, you might conclude that what he really needed was something else. However, his interpretation of the event was different.

I watched that event. I saw behavior that was duplicitous, uncaring, and unknowing. Then I saw people saying, "We have to do something. Don't freeze this guy out." The system basically said, "Well, first of all, even if it wasn't his fault that he was kidnaped, he shouldn't have said what he said when he was released," which was nothing other than the fact that the kidnappers hadn't hurt him. He didn't praise them but he said that they didn't hurt him. He said that he was glad to be free and that he didn't agree with what the terrorists were doing. He made all of the right statements. However, the view was expressed by some people in the Department, "He shouldn't have said what he said and, for God's sake, what a resentful ego here. He thinks that he deserves some kind of recognition for this. Forget it!" So they pushed him aside. It was really sad to see that happen. I can't say that I was in a position to do anything, but I didn't say, "Oh, gosh, let's handle this carefully." I just watched it all.

Q: I think that this attitude changed, particularly after the kidnaping of Ambassador Diego Asencio in Colombia. This happened eight years later. By that time people had begun to think more carefully about such incidents, particularly after 1973, when the Vietnam prisoners of war were released. When Diego Asencio was released, he was told that he could have any job that he wanted in the Department. People said how well he had behaved. Well, indeed, he conducted himself very well. However, there had been a basic change in attitudes.

GILLESPIE: Remember the 1950s in Korea and the attitudes toward the brainwashed prisoners of war.

Q: Yes, remember the novel, The Manchurian Candidate.

GILLESPIE: So Leonhardy suffered through that. I watched this process very carefully. It led to dramatic changes in the security situation at our Embassies. At that point the security organization in the State Department began to tighten everything up. We closed off some areas of our posts abroad and began to do different things. Once terrorism strikes, as we all know, you feel that you have to tighten things up. You certainly cannot ease things up. That situation changed a lot of things in Mexico. We'd had these nice constituent posts. I won't say that they were sleepy, because they were busy posts. They were nice places. We had some which were located in office buildings. All of a sudden we had to figure out ways to tighten security. We had

intense debates over whether the policy was right and what we should do to get Leonhardy out. Should ransom be paid? Should we negotiate with the terrorists? At that point we did not have Brian Jenkins, who is now recognized as a security expert, to tell us what to do when you have a hostage situation. That kind of expertise was only beginning to emerge.

Q: There is a book on the assassinations in Khartoum written by a Foreign Service Officer named David Korn. This deals with the murder of Ambassador Cleo Noel and Curt Moore in Khartoum. This was a peculiar situation in which Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Nixon tried to show that they had, to put it in diplomatic language, "balls." They weren't going to make any concessions to the terrorists. They were talking tough and they were not particularly helping the cause. They were engaging in a lot of posturing and they weren't very practical. Did you see that kind of posturing going on in connection with the kidnaping of Leonhardy?

GILLESPIE: Oh, absolutely. We were being told by Washington, "You WILL hang tough here. Charge d'Affaires Dean was on the other end of the phone. We had an open telephone line to the Department. We had no secure telephones in those days. In fact, we were taping everything that was going on and keeping logs of all of these developments. We set up a mini-Operations Center. Dean would be on the phone with an Under Secretary, an Assistant Secretary, a Deputy Assistant Secretary, the FBI, or the CIA in Washington. Dean would be told, "Don't let them do this or that." Dean would say, "Well, wait a minute, we have to get this guy out alive. What do you mean, 'Don't let them do that?' You're telling us that we're not going to pay ransom" or do this or that. Then Dean would be told, "Yes, but that's coming pretty close to it. The Secretary..." That was all very much on people's minds. We have a policy and we must follow it. Dean would say, "Look, I hate to do this, but you'd better send me that instruction in writing. I want to see it in writing and then I'll follow your instructions. If I don't receive written instructions by this or that time, I'm going to do this." You know the old idea, "Unless otherwise directed, I will do the following." Well, sometimes we'd get a piece of paper and sometimes we wouldn't get a piece of paper. They would check it out in Washington, and people would say, "That's kind of silly. We'll try to interpret the Kissinger instructions."

It got fairly hairy. For a relatively young, junior Foreign Service Officer in there with a bunch of officials who were mostly older and supposedly wiser than I was, I learned an awful lot in a hurry about bureaucratic behavior and the internal and interagency politics of such a matter. As far as I was concerned, Bob Dean was absolutely straightforward. He clearly saw that the established policy, that we would not pay ransom, had its merits. Once you begin to pay ransom, you're on the slippery slope.

However, short of paying ransom, we've really got an obligation to the person concerned, whether he's our person or somebody else's. There is an obligation to that person and to those around him. There was Mrs. Leonhardy to deal with. She was in a state of panic. It was just terrible. We had people in the Embassy - Americans and Mexicans all around - who were asking, "What's happening? Who's taking care of our people? How will this work out," and so on. I thought that Bob Dean handled this matter well. He was on the phone all the time to Ambassador McBride who was up in Texas for medical treatment and couldn't come back. Remember,

Ambassador McBride may have been undergoing or recovering from surgery at that time. He wasn't physically able to be there at the Embassy in Mexico. However, he was involved in some of the developments.

I have vivid recollections of moments when somebody in Washington would propose something. One or another of the people in Mexico - either Bob Dean or my boss, Vic Dikeos - would sit back and say, "Wait a minute. Slow down. Let's think about this. What are we doing? What's the objective? What are we trying to accomplish here?" We would be getting instructions like, "Go in there and tell the Mexicans" and "Go see the President of Mexico and tell him this." If it wasn't Bob Dean, it would be Vic Dikeos who would say, "Now, wait just a minute. Do you really want us to go in and beard the President of Mexico on this" particular point and at this particular time?" I saw how an individual is at least able to manage the event at the moment and get people back on some kind of even keel.

Q: The problem often is that micromanaging a situation from Washington gives people a feeling of power, but it's really not there. In Washington they always want to appear to be going to the top. Anybody who's dealt with bureaucracies knows that if you go to the top, things gets referred down and watered down. It's a hell of a lot better to go somewhere else.

GILLESPIE: Go to the right level and then have them get the top level on board. Then you leave it to them to figure out how to get the top level officials on board.

So I have to say now that this was a tremendously educational experience for me, although many aspects were disturbing at the time. I know that Terry Leonhardy is still not happy about the way this matter was handled.

Q: Where is he now?

GILLESPIE: He's here in Washington. He's retired and does some international consulting. He doesn't have any great chip on his shoulder. I think that he was released in April, 1973. Then, just before May 5, the *Cinco de Mayo*, Mexico's national day, they caught some of the kidnappers and shot them. Leonhardy still talks about that with a little gleam in his eyes. He says something like, "Damn it, I'm really glad that that happened." He says, "It served them right," and all that kind of thing. He still has that very much on his mind. It hasn't gone away. It's now just one of many cases in the annals of the Foreign Service. We've had some cases, such as Ambassador Cleo Noel and Curt Moore and others, who have been killed.

There was, of course, a second kidnaping in Mexico while I was there. This involved another consular officer, John Patterson. This incident occurred in March, 1974 - just about a year later. It involved another entire series of facts, stories, and policy related matters that affected it.

During the intervening period a couple of things happened. First of all, in March, 1974, the OAS {the Organization of American States} held its annual General Assembly session in Mexico. In the meantime Ambassador and Mrs. Robert McBride left Mexico, and John and Pamela Jova replaced them. We had a new Deputy Chief of Mission, Robert Brandon. The Administrative

Section remained pretty much the same. I think that we had a new Security or Budget and Fiscal Officer. There was a new Political Counselor, Hunter Step. The rest of the Embassy staff stayed pretty much the same.

Anyway, the OAS held its General Assembly during what I think was the first week of March, 1974. Ambassador John Jova is of Spanish descent. His Spanish forebears came to Cuba and then to the southern part of the United States about 100 or more years ago. John had been Ambassador to Guatemala and U.S. Representative to the Organization of American States. He spoke several languages and was absolutely bilingual in Spanish. His wife, Pamela, was British by birth but is as American as they come. They are delightful people. He is a real gentleman.

As I said, I think that Ambassador McBride was kind of a cool but distant man, in any case. However, of course, he'd been ill and hadn't been accessible. Jova, while not a ail fellow, well met type of guy at all, was accessible to damned near anybody. He seemed to have a lot of confidence in the people around him. He felt that if this confidence was merited, he continued to show it. If it wasn't merited, I guess that he'd withdraw that confidence. However, you couldn't ask for a better boss than Ambassador Jova, as far as I was concerned. He wanted to meet with me right away. I walked through the Residence with him and his wife. He wanted me to look into the condition of the cars, the people, and all the rest of it. He wanted me to brief him on the situation affecting the consulates. When I did that the first time, he said, "Good. It sounds as if you have it under control. I hope that I don't have to get very much involved in it any more, but you can count on me if you need me." He continued, "You, Gillespie..." (He always called me 'Gillespie.' He said to his secretary, "Gillespie can come into this office any time." And I think that he meant it.

He had a staff assistant who was a bright, young Foreign Service Officer. Ambassador Jova just let it be known that if the GSO needed anything from the Ambassador and the "Front Office," that was the way it was going to be. An excellent beginning. It was not all that difficult.

Anyway, the OAS General Assembly met in Mexico City in March, 1974, at a time when the U.S. Secretaries of State went to these meetings pretty regularly. On this occasion the Secretary of State was Henry Kissinger. Kissinger's Executive Assistant was Lawrence Eagleburger. His Staff Assistant was L. Paul Bremer III. I knew both of them. I knew Eagleburger from Brussels. I had met Bremer earlier on other occasions and had gotten to know him.

On a visit overseas the Secretary has to have a Control Officer. Eagleburger and Bremer said, "Gillespie will be the Secretary's Control Officer." Well, I think that if Jova had not been the Ambassador and Dikeos my boss, there might have been some real heartburn. They might have said, "What do you mean that the GSO is going to be the Control Officer?" Instead, they said, "Look, we know what the Control Officer's going to do for us. We don't care what he would do for some other Secretary. He's going to help us keep this guy under control and make sure he doesn't get into any trouble." So I became the "gopher" or "get it done kind of guy" for Eagleburger and Bremer, to make sure that Kissinger was satisfied. They brought me in to the Secretary and said, "Mr. Secretary, this is Tony Gillespie." Kissinger said, "All right, he'll take care of me" and all that kind of stuff. From then on Christine Vick, his secretary, and all of the

other people on the Secretary's staff would say, "Get Tony" or, "Where's Gillespie?"

Meantime, a preliminary match for the Davis Cup was being played with Mexico. Bremer and I took off and went to watch that. However, what really happened in March, 1974, if your memory doesn't go back that far, is that Kissinger came back to the hotel. I happened to be there. He said, "I want to leave here right now. I want to go away." I said, "What do you mean? What's going on?" He said, "These people do not have any concept of foreign policy - neither the Latin Americans nor the Americans. They don't understand what is happening in Europe or Asia. They hardly know what's happening in front of their noses. This has got to change." So we got the "GLOP" [Global Perspective program].

Q: Actually, I guess that, combined with this, there was an area meeting of Ambassadors?

GILLESPIE: All of the U.S. Ambassadors in Latin America were asked to meet with Secretary Kissinger in Mexico City. Interestingly enough, the Assistant Secretary for American Republics Affairs, was a good looking guy. He had sleek, gray hair and was known as "*El Tiburón*" - the Shark. I can't think of his name. Anyway, he was the man putting on the Chiefs of Mission meeting. He put together the whole program, which was very much focused on Latin America, money, perquisites, and these kinds of things.

It turned out that Kissinger was just fed up with this. I was in the room with him. He was yelling at Bremer, me, and his secretary, taking it out on all of us. He said, "This is crazy. These people don't know what they're doing, they don't know what is going on in the world. The only guy who knows what he's doing is this guy, Jova, our Ambassador to Mexico. I talked to him, and he has a very clear understanding of how this all fits into the world situation," and so forth. So the Secretary thought that Jova was a good guy, but everybody else was in deep trouble.

The result was that it led to this whole senior officer system of assignments under which people long assigned to a given area were to be reassigned elsewhere. They had to be reassigned out of the area where they had spent a long time. They couldn't remain locked in a given area and all of that. It all happened while I watched the process. It was really wild. I saw how things are done. Eagleburger was saying to Kissinger, "Don't worry, we'll take care of this." He got on the phone to the Under Secretary of State for Management and the Director General of the Foreign Service, saying that we are going to do this. So the whole Foreign Service can thank the Bureau of American Republics Affairs, ARA, for this.

Some of the ARA people in fact had worked in other areas. There was a number of them, but...

Q: It didn't come out. Of course, there was the other side of the coin. I used to use a quote from Kissinger when I was on a panel giving the oral examination for the Foreign Service. I think this remark goes back to the time before he became a professor at Harvard. He used to say, "Latin America is a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica." In other words, Latin America doesn't amount to anything. So Latin America wasn't Kissinger's field, and our Ambassadors to Latin American countries weren't talking about his favorite topics.

GILLESPIE: However, the circle comes around. Later in 1974, that very same year, or it may have been early in 1975, Kissinger married Nancy. They went to Acapulco, Mexico, for their honeymoon. By then Kissinger had had an intense relationship with Mexico and Latin America. Of all of the major foreign policy thinkers in the U.S., he was as knowledgeable about, and wrote cogently on, U.S. relations with this hemisphere - more so than damned near anybody else. And Kissinger made sense, talking about how important Latin America is, and all that kind of thing, whether strictly for business reasons or otherwise. Nevertheless, we got the "GLOP" program.

I saw GLOP at first hand. I saw it emerge. It was really something to see a Secretary of State behave in this way. That is one form of leadership. He came into his hotel room and said, "We've got to change this system. I don't want this to happen any more. People have to be gotten out of their shells and made to understand what's going on." For good or for ill, that was the way it was.

Q: However, actually, it had to have been in the presentation. When you look at this situation, Ambassador Jova had served in the Middle East. Despite his Spanish last name, he was not a pure Latin America hand.

GILLESPIE: Among those affected by GLOP were officers who had worked their way up. They had been Deputy Assistant Secretaries and Ambassadors in other parts of the world. It was probably not totally fair. But whatever happened at the session, I was in Secretary Kissinger's hotel room when he came back. He walked into the room just fuming. He went on about it. I think that he talked to other people about it. He carried that program forward.

That was early March, 1974. In mid-March this screw worm program which I referred to earlier really started to kick up. I had to go down to a place called Tuxtla Gutiérrez State of Chiapas right around March 20 to sign a contract for the construction of a big screw worm facility that we were putting in there. I was the senior Embassy officer talking to the head of the program. I was an FSO-5 and a GSO, and here I was the senior Embassy officer down there. The people running the project had their own plane, so they flew me back to Mexico City on March 22, which was my 39th birthday. I had spent the previous night in Tuxtla Gutiérrez. I returned to Mexico City on March 22, in the morning. I went straight to the Embassy, not to my house.

At the Embassy I found out from Vic Dikeos that John Patterson, our Vice Consul in Hermosillo, State of Sonora, had been kidnaped. We had already gone through a kidnaping. Vic, DCM Brandon, and Ambassador Jova were there at the Embassy. Vic said to me, "Okay, we know how to organize for this. In this case, would you stay here at the Embassy?" It was about 9:30 or 10:00 AM. First of all, though, we headed for home. Dikeos said, "I'll drop you off at your house." We got to my house, and my wife had a huge surprise party planned for my birthday. I walked in, and it was kind of a sad event, under the circumstances, but it sticks in my memory.

We then geared up and organized at the Embassy. Consul General Ford in Hermosillo was a long-time consular officer. His hobby was binding books. He was a wonderful man, and his wife was a wonderful person. John Patterson, the man kidnaped, had probably been married to Andra Sigerson Patterson for not more than six months. She was a young wife, and this was their first Foreign Service post. I had met John. He handled the administrative responsibilities at

Hermosillo. He had been to Mexico City and was taking his job very seriously. He was a delightful young man, and she was a delightful young woman. She had come to Mexico City to see the capital of the country and our Embassy. They were a lovely, young couple from, I think, Philadelphia, or some place else here on the Eastern seaboard.

We received a ransom message of some kind. One of the very few Hispanic FBI agents was stationed in Hermosillo, because there was a lot of law enforcement activity going on there in the Sinaloa Desert area. And he...

Q: Who was "he?"

GILLESPIE: The U.S. FBI agent. So Dikeos and I got on a plane and flew up to Hermosillo. Also with us was Keith Jenkins, the Security Officer at the Embassy, if I remember correctly. He was a very serious, professional security type - not your old time, heavy drinking...

Q: Ex-cop.

GILLESPIE: Jenkins was a college graduate, had been an officer in the military service, I think - in the Navy Intelligence Service, or something like that. He was a very sharp guy. The three of us got on a plane and flew up to Hermosillo. We met with the Consul General and his family and with Mrs. Patterson. All of the people up there, the FBI agent, and the local authorities were hard at work on this incident.

We returned to Mexico City and set up another Crisis Management Center. Then we found out that John Patterson's mother was the divorced wife or the widow - I don't remember which - of a very wealthy or well connected Philadelphia banker. Their attitude was, "U.S. policy be damned." She was going to get her son out. She was lobbying on the Hill. We had the Senate, we had the House of Representatives, we had everybody and his brother involved in this matter. The pressure was really heavy on the State Department in Washington and on Ambassador Jova and the Embassy in Mexico City.

I really saw John Jova under pressure. If Bill Dean had it rough for the Leonhardy incident the previous year, Ambassador Jova was just getting it from all over. Senators and Congressmen were calling him directly. They wanted a read out of exactly what was going on. I saw Ambassador Jova handle this matter, and I'll tell you, Stu, he's a real professional. He gave them what he had to give them but he didn't let them beat him up. I saw how an Ambassador can deal with such an incident and handle it in a straightforward way. It was tough. These Congressional callers were accusing the Embassy and Mexican Government officials of not doing enough. Ambassador Jova didn't fall into the trap of defending what was being done. He explained what was going on. He said, this is what we are doing, and we are keeping these pressures on.

We really got into heavy pressure. We had calls from Secretary Kissinger, the U.S. Attorney General, and the FBI Director. All of these senior people in Washington were involved in this matter. It was decided that, while the U.S. would not pay ransom, we could not prevent the families of free, U.S. citizens from taking action. However, we were in a foreign jurisdiction, and

how would we handle what was done? Mrs. Patterson, John's wife agreed to a plan under which there would be an attempt to make a ransom payment that would be thoroughly covered by law enforcement authorities, both Mexican and U.S. The money itself would be marked in several ways and would all be under control. How would we do this? Dikeos, Gillespie, the Security Officer, and Mrs. Patterson would make the payoff.

I was the driver of the vehicle used and, basically, the facilitator. Keith, the Security Officer, was sort of the "pistol," the "shotgun." Vic was the "brains," and Ann was the family member.

Q: Ann was John's wife.

GILLESPIE: Yes. She was not in complete agreement with John's mother, but she also was not going to fight her mother-in-law. John's mother got the bank in Philadelphia to provide \$500,000. The bank basically put up the money in small bills, which were generated in Tucson, Arizona. The three men - Dikeos, Gillespie, and Keith Jenkins - the Security Officer flew up to Hermosillo in a DEA plane, where John Patterson's wife, Ann, joined us. We then used Consul General Ford's black station wagon. It was nearly new. I had obtained a bunch of new cars for our constituent posts. Consul General Ford's car had low mileage on it, so it was in good condition.

The three of us from the Embassy in Mexico City, Consul General Ford, and Ann Patterson got in the station wagon and drove up to Tucson, Arizona. In Tucson we went to the FBI office, where we picked up \$500,000 in a blue, Samsonite cosmetic case. It had a little seal on it. Of course, we couldn't open that seal, but we were told that it contained \$500,000. So I had to sign for a case whose contents sight unseen were supposedly \$500,000! We put the case in the back, jump-seat well of the station wagon. Keith got into the back seat, and then Vic and Ann alternated between the front and back seats. Then we drove to the first, designated drop point, a place called Rosarita Beach in the State of Baja California. First, we drove from Tucson, Arizona, to San Diego, California. We were doing things which are illegal under U.S. law. We were now taking a half million dollars in cash into Mexico.

We had nothing with us in the car, in the way of a piece of paper. However, we understood that the skids had been greased for us, so that we shouldn't have a problem, but we didn't know who was watching us. There was this ransom demand, and it sounded as if it could involve a gang. We didn't know if they were Mexicans, Cubans, Germans, Americans, or whoever. We went down to Rosarita Beach. We were supposed to see certain signs. We were only to leave the money in a certain place if there were certain indicators that that's what we were supposed to do. We went down there and spent two nights. It was a terribly tense, difficult time. Here was Ann Patterson with us, and we were all worked up. We spent two nights there at Rosarita Beach, but the signs never appeared.

So we went back into the U.S. with the money. We went on a sort of *hegira* trip across the Southwestern part of the U.S. We went to Texas, to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and came back that way. We returned to Hermosillo. There was another message there which said, "You screwed up. You didn't give us the money there at Rosita Beach. Now we're going to do it some place else." So we went to the next place listed. I think that it was back up in the U.S. this time. There was

nothing there at all, so we figured either that the kidnappers had given up or something had happened.

Well, to make a long story short, a little while later John Patterson's body was found in a shallow grave right outside of Hermosillo. It turned out that the FBI, using the traditional FBI methods, had sent a team to Hermosillo. They went through every lodging receipt in the town of Hermosillo for a period of three months before he was kidnaped and afterwards. They found the registration of an American, Billy Joe Keasy, a ne'er-do-well, Vietnam veteran, probably mentally troubled, who had tried to defect to Cuba, flying a light airplane from Louisiana. He was a Californian. Eventually, the FBI located him, and it was learned that he was the guy who had set up the scheme to get \$500,000.

It turned out that Keasy had gone down to Hermosillo and had met with Patterson as a purported American businessman who wanted to do business in Hermosillo. John, who was also the Commercial Officer, had had lunch with him. Evidence that John had met with Keasy came out in the course of the investigation. Well, that's the way that case ended. The money was returned and so on. Again, this was a case where Washington tried to tell the people in Mexico City what's going on.

I can remember Ambassador Jova having to deal with this case as Bill Dean had done in the Leonhardy case. In the Patterson case we were at least doing something. I'm still not sure in my own mind that it was the right or the wrong thing to do, but we did it. Those were the orders as to the way it was going to be handled. I think that Patterson's mother still has a lawsuit pending, alleging that the State Department mismanaged or mishandled the case. The fact was that there was nothing to mishandle.

The authorities later learned, or surmised, that Keasy had taken John Patterson out of Hermosillo, supposedly to look at a property which he wanted to invest in. Keasy apparently attacked and tried to subdue John Patterson and, in the process, hit him too hard and killed him. He then buried him in this shallow grave just outside of Hermosillo. Although Keasy tried twice to see if he could get the ransom, he had never gone to the Rosarita Beach site, and the other place was named just to throw everybody off the trail. Keasy had actually gone back to California, gone underground, and tried to avoid arrest. Keasy eventually copped a plea for second degree manslaughter in the U.S. He eventually pled guilty and eventually was sentenced to about eight to 10 years in prison and then was released.

Remember that at this time we were in the midst of trying to protect federal officers overseas. The question of whose jurisdiction was involved came up.

Vic Dikeos left Mexico fairly soon thereafter. In the meantime, he had talked to the State Department, and they put Ann Patterson, the widow, on the payroll in Washington. Eventually, Dikeos became the Assistant Secretary for Security and hired Ann Patterson to work in the security organization. She worked there for a number of years and then, I think, she left.

Obviously, this was a fascinating episode. You join the Foreign Service but you don't know what

you're going to get into. We literally drove thousands of miles, sitting on this money. Think of the discussions you can get into regarding what's going on, what the policy is, and what it all means! Ann Patterson was the youngest of the three of us - that is, the Security Officer, me, and Ann herself, although not by much. Of course, Vic Dikeos was older, and this was a kind of an interesting mix of people. We saw it all happen. You really have to say that it was an amazing situation, but, then, we're an amazing country. We were a funny group of people. We were pulled into this event, we went off, and it all happened. DEA was flying us around. They brought stuff to us in airplanes. The CIA was doing things. The FBI was doing things. On the one hand they do fantastic drudge work, and it paid off. We saw other things that they tried to do. And then you realize that they have feet of clay like all the rest of us.

In the Foreign Service you see some really strong people and hear anecdotes about some of these things. We went through a period in Mexico City before we got into the actual ransom *hegira* that I went on. We sat in these offices and then wondered, "Could these young people have set this up themselves?"

Q: I recall that that was a view which floated around for a while.

GILLESPIE: Ambassador Jova, bless his soul, said, "I will not reject any hypothesis. However, we're going to have to see some awfully strong proof before we go very much further down that road. This is something that I simply do not want to believe. If there's any evidence that points in this direction, we'll pursue it, but..." Then he looked at me and said, "Let's get on this and figure it out. What do we know, how can we find out?" Jova had a wonderful remark which he'd use at Country Team meetings or in his office or in a group, where some subject would be up for discussion or decision. He would reach a decision - whatever it was or how it would be expressed. We'd all just sit there. Then he'd say, "You don't understand, do you? If you agree, nod your damned head. Otherwise, get out of here!"

He used this comment in this particular case. He said, "We will not reject any hypothesis, but I'll have to see an awful lot of proof before I'll accept that a young Foreign Service Officer and his wife are doing this." So we went through the whole record. Eventually, as you say, that kind of talk came out. John Patterson's mother heard about this, and Congress heard about this. You can't reject the possibility that it was right. However, Ambassador Jova was really staunch. There were different members of the Country Team, some of whom had thought about this possibility and put a lot of intellectual energy into what was going on here, what should we be doing, and how we should do it. This whole episode showed me a lot about our capacities and the people we have. These two incidents in my career were really something.

After the Patterson incident something occurred which was very interesting. I think that it was one of my other career breaks in the Foreign Service. As I told you, I think, I had studied Spanish, and my Spanish was pretty good. However, as GSO, I was using it in the construction trades and so forth. Of course, I used it socially, in reading, and in doing other things.

There is an American Battle Monuments Commission cemetery in Mexico City, which was set up after the Mexican-American War of 1847. Even before that, there had been an American

Community Cemetery, because, you remember, there was this strong, religious feeling in Mexico. If you were a Protestant, you couldn't be buried in a Mexican cemetery. The cemetery of which I am speaking is located on a little plot of ground in downtown Mexico City which had really become a lovely garden or park. It may have covered five or 10 acres. In the center of this cemetery was a common grave, in which, I think, the remains of about 1,200 American military people were buried at the end of the Mexican War. Also buried there were the remains of sailors, ship captains, former consuls and vice consuls in Mexico, and their family members. The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) took over the maintenance of this site.

Well, Andy Andrews, a retired U.S. Army major general, who had been my boss, though not directly, when I was in the Army in Germany, was the director of the ABMC. He came to Mexico City to look at this cemetery. The ABMC had a resident supervisor in Mexico City, who was a GS-7 - a gray-haired, nice old guy. He had been living in Mexico City and had a Mexican wife. He took beautiful care of this cemetery, like a groundskeeper. However, because I was the GSO, I took General Andrews over and saw the cemetery.

Lo and behold, about two months later, we got a diplomatic note from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating that the Mexican Government was condemning the American Cemetery because it was in the way of a new, high speed highway, which was going to go right through it! We were asked to remove the remains of Americans buried there.

Ambassador Jova, DCM Brandon, Dikeos, Political Counselor H. Freeman Matthews, and I discussed this. We agreed that this was pretty heavy stuff. The Ambassador said, "Well, whose action should this be?" I had known Brandon in Brussels, where he was the Political Adviser to CINCEUR (Commander in Chief, U.S. Forces Europe). Brandon said, "Well, I'm really torn, Ambassador. On the one hand, this could become a major political issue. The Political Section should be involved in it. However, this gets down to the property and what we're going to do. I know Tony, who has worked with the ABMC, and Vic Dikeos. I kind of think that Admin and the Political Section should share the action on this." Well, Free Matthews, the Political Counselor was not terribly thrilled by all of this. He foresaw that this would involve diplomatic notes and dealing with the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Jova said, "Fine, I'll be involved to the extent that I have to be. However, Gillespie, this is your chance to see whether you can handle serious, diplomatic work here." Then he said, "Vic, make sure that Tony knows what he's doing." He said to Free Matthews, the Political Counselor, "Make sure that you help in any way you can and make this a collaborative effort."

Well, as it turned out, I ended up involved in detailed negotiations with the Regent of the *Distrito Federal* (Federal District), as the mayor of Mexico City is known, with the Secretariat of Foreign Relations, and with other Mexican officials. I worked on the diplomatic notes and other correspondence. Actually, we worked very closely with the Political Section. It worked well, but it really gave me a chance to get deeply into this. We looked into alternative sites for the cemetery. We convinced the Mexican authorities that this cemetery really was diplomatic property and had the right character. They would have to compensate us, and all of that. During the rest of my tour in Mexico City this was my major project, in addition to the other tasks of a GSO.

Q: Was there a feeling among the Mexican authorities that they really wanted to get rid of this cemetery, or was there a feeling...?

GILLESPIE: There were at least two aspects of it. First, they really did have a plan to put a high speed highway through the site. That was part of the Mexico City master plan. As the Mexico City planners were preparing these drawings, they simply did not appreciate the character of this piece of property. It was only later, after the plan was drawn up, that they realized this. It was through this work that I got to know the head of planning for the Federal District, a very nice woman, an engineer. She was very interested in urban planning and had attended conferences in Hawaii and other places. What they wanted to do was just to "cut into" the cemetery to a certain extent and leave the rest. That was what their hope was. They didn't want to compensate us. They just wanted to take it under the right of eminent domain and have us adjust.

General Andrews and the Embassy said "No" to this idea. We took the view that this property was a shrine and that you don't do something like that. Well, in the final analysis we modified our position somewhat. The Mexican authorities jiggered their plan a little bit so that we only had to give up a small portion of the cemetery. We negotiated this matter out to everybody's satisfaction. As it turned out, it cost the Mexican authorities a whole lot less than any of the alternatives. The ABMC was satisfied with this because as part of the compensation they were able to do a lot of other things which they wanted to do. So we basically got some cash and help on other matters.

I felt pretty good about this. We had come up with a good, negotiating package. First we got it through the technical people and then through the Secretariat of Foreign Relations, because they were involved in it, by this time. I can remember vividly attending a meeting on this with Ambassador Jova and the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations. Ambassador Jova was directly engaged in this matter. On this occasion we were speaking in Spanish. The Secretary of Foreign Relations said something about the kind of people who were buried there or the reasons why the cemetery was there. I saw Ambassador Jova sort of sit up in his chair, with a smile on his face. He said, "Mr. Secretary, I heard what you said but I wish I hadn't heard it, because that is not very *caballeresco*, gentlemanly." He used just the right word. The Foreign Secretary considered it, smiled, and said, "Please forget that I ever said it." That was an example of how a good American Ambassador picked up on something, moved on it, and did it elegantly. I'll never forget that as an object lesson in diplomacy. I've used this story two or three times.

Q: This is all part of diplomatic training.

GILLESPIE: All part of the training. I told Dikeos and laughed about that. Since then I have gone on and done other things. Dikeos said, "Gillespie, you probably don't know how lucky you were to have John Jova as your boss. He really had confidence in you and felt that you could handle this matter. I'll tell you that there were things going on behind the scenes, with some people thinking that the GSO - and a junior GSO at that - shouldn't be given this responsibility. Some people felt that you should be assisting a more senior officer, rather than going out and doing things by yourself."

I remained on close terms with Ambassador Jova. He died a couple of years ago. We were on "John" and "Tony" terms. He would call me, from time to time, wanting to know how things were going. He was a wonderful man.

Q: Good. Were you there in Mexico when Ambassador Jova's son was arrested on a drug charge - in London, I believe? This was the time when young kids were doing this sort of thing. I have heard, and I have no evidence of this, that Ambassador Jova had been giving the DEA a difficult time in Mexico. There was some notion that the DEA was paying him back. Does this...?

GILLESPIE: John Jova was not pleased with U.S. anti-narcotics policy. There was no doubt about that. He was concerned about the heavy-handed, police type things that were going on. I know that he had a lot of confidence in what the FBI was doing in Mexico and the way they operated. I think that he had a degree of confidence in the Central Intelligence Agency and the way they operated. He did not trust the BNDD Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, later the DEA Drug Enforcement Administration type of operations. He felt that they were too heavy-handed.

Of course, this was all before the Camarena incident and the terrible things that happened. Ambassador Jova didn't know for sure but he thought that the BNDD/DEA might be joining the Mexican authorities in some of this heavily repressive activities in connection with drugs, being present at interrogations, and doing other things - which later turned out probably to have some truth in them. However, he didn't make any accusations. At his staff meetings he would say, "Is this the right thing to do? Are we doing the right thing?" regarding our policies on narcotics. We heard that story. I didn't believe it. I don't know whether it was true that, maybe, the DEA may have seen a chance to rub it in. I know that this incident involving their son affected John and Pamela Jova very deeply. They were disturbed by it. John made no great secret of this or talk about it that much. However, he didn't hide the fact that there was a problem. Their daughter came and stayed with them at the Residence for quite a while - before the incident involving her brother, and she came back and stayed with them afterwards. Like all kids, they were looking for things they might do, what they could do with their lives, and so forth.

I was talking about ambassadors' wives and the Residence. If Mrs. McBride was good, Pamela Jova was truly outstanding. She would call us occasionally. We became involved in a major redecorating scheme for the Ambassador's office. That was one of my objectives. I thought that the Ambassador's office was awful. It was a wonderful room, but the furnishings in it were terrible and poorly finished. I prevailed on FBO (the State Department's Office of Foreign Building Operations) to get enough money to do that. Mrs. Jova wanted to keep in touch with that. She would call me on the telephone with ideas. I'd get the decorators from Washington to come down to Mexico City and work on it. It's amazing. I was back there in Mexico City last year, and some of the same furniture which I had obtained was still there - nearly 20 years later!

Mrs. Jova was wonderful. She treated the women in the Embassy with great consideration. She couldn't have been nicer to my wife and to everybody - young and old. Ambassador Jova made sure that officers and staff people were invited to the Residence. He always found time to talk to

them. To me, Ambassador Jova was what you'd like the whole Foreign Service could be. He was a smart guy, broad gauged, efficient, and highly principled.

Q: In Bob Brandon you had a very professional DCM. He was the DCM in Athens when I served there. He had served under two very difficult Ambassadors - MacArthur in Vienna and Henry Tasca in Athens. I spent four years as Consul General under Ambassador Tasca in Athens, with Bob Brandon as the DCM, my boss.

GILLESPIE: Unfortunately for Bob Brandon, in a sense, the Embassy in Mexico City had an unfortunate reputation. I guess that Bob Dean broke this reputation a little bit. He went on to be Ambassador to Peru. However, not many DCM's in Mexico City became Ambassadors. They came down to Mexico City, worked hard, but didn't go much further. We had known Bob Brandon. His son Butch and my son are about the same age. They went to a Cotillion, a dancing club for kids, in Mexico City. It was part of the Anglo establishment. I remember these two boys just hated it.

Q: Butch Brandon was my son's best friend in Athens, before the Brandons went to Mexico City.

There are two matters which I would like to cover here. As GSO (General Services Officer), you were dealing with Mexican labor. I've often heard that the Mexican labor movement has been and still is a power unto itself. You practically have to use the Army to get them to do something. The other point is the corruption issue.

GILLESPIE: Yes. On the labor side the Mexican labor situation is distinct, if not unique. Labor, consisting of the working people, has always been a key part of the political organization called the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI. As it turns out, the Mexican working force is not terribly well organized. It has certain power centers. Velázquez, who is now 93 years old, heads it. He has always represented a political force, but it has been a concentrated force in the petroleum sector - following the nationalization of the oil industry in 1938 - and public workers, including teachers and some white collar workers. However, the labor movement has always been a captive of the PRI. The labor movement doesn't do very much that the PRI doesn't approve. So wildcat strikes and that kind of thing are not the order of the day in Mexico. They can happen but they are not frequent.

The Embassy had its own labor force. We worked through contractors, but the contractors never had any major problems, as far as we were concerned. Embassy Foreign Service National employees, as such, were a class unto themselves. They were getting good pay and benefits of all kinds. I negotiated their health insurance program. We had accidental death and dismemberment insurance for the Mexican employees of our Embassy. There is a guy up in Texas, Harry Janette, who still handles these matters for a lot of the countries in Latin America. Of course, we gave employees of the Embassy subsidized meals in the cafeteria. We had an Employees Association. Part of its function was to provide low priced, good meals through a concessionary arrangement. This has gotten better since I left Mexico. So we didn't have a labor problem.

However, Velázquez could turn out what purported to be a labor demonstration of some kind at

any time. The PRI could pick up people and bus them in from all over. They would give them some money, food, or drink, and that kind of thing. The PRI would pick them up out in the country and bus them in to Mexico City. They could arrange a march of 10,000 people that would go past the American Embassy, complaining about Vietnam or whatever it might be. It wasn't a traditional, labor demonstration. Basically, we have seen, under both President Carlos Salinas De Gortari and now in the Zedillo administration that people sit down and say, "This is how we're going to manage things." They are told that wages can be increased this much, and we will allow price increases to this or that extent. So you have *pactos* (pacts or agreements). The pacts really only affect a small minority of the labor force, but there is a tremendous, organizational ability to put on a show.

Q: Then you could go about your business without having to consider a very touchy labor force which might, for political reasons, go out on strike.

GILLESPIE: We operated through contractors in Mexico City. We didn't buy anything - such as property, for example. We had a device involving a distinction between short-term and long-term leasing. Long-term leasing is for 10 or more years. Long-term leasing, under the law and the authorization of the State Department, allows you to treat the property as if you own it. This means that in the case of a long-term lease you can take U.S. Government funds and spend them on maintenance and repair, as well as capital improvements, which you can't do with a short-term lease.

For example, in Nuevo Laredo State of Nuevo León we had an abominable building for our Consulate when I arrived in Mexico. We invited bids and contracted with a contractor to put up a building to suit our needs. The arrangement was that we would then lease the building for 10 years, renewable for 10 more years and then renewable for another 10 years. He would put up the building exactly to our specifications, with all of the security specifications, the wiring, and all that stuff. This was all in the lease. It was his job to get it built. *Ingeniero* Duarte, my engineer and an Embassy employee, was the primary point of contact on that building. He and I had to review all of the plans, as did FBO (Office of Foreign Building Operations). People from FBO in Washington came down to do this. The contractor in this case, named Marcos Russek - and this gets into your next question - would go up to Washington and review all of the plans with FBO.

You asked about corruption. I never had any serious doubts that Mr. Russek got a lot of things done, at a competitive price, because he knew how to get things done in Mexico. This meant that he had to have certain people on his side, however he did it. We were not involved in any of that. We were contracting for a delivered product. The price was fair, as far as we were concerned. He won this contract in a competitive bidding process. We don't think that he bought off his competitors or anything like that. However, the fact is that he got the bid, he got the job done, and he made money on it. We brought some equipment and materials into Mexico, under diplomatic customs duty free entry arrangements. He had to provide materials up to specification, and we checked on them. He got these materials in Mexico or somehow had them delivered in Mexico. We didn't get involved in this. My guess is that he made the necessary payoffs.

All of our Embassy cars had diplomatic license plates. We didn't get into the *mordida* (Mexican

slang for a bribe) business of paying off the cops. The cops would stop our drivers. The drivers would be careful not to thumb their noses at the cops. The drivers would show the diplomatic identity cards showing that they were driving an Embassy vehicle and that they were Embassy employees. We never got into the corruption business.

We asked ourselves if we were doing the right thing. I mentioned the Visitor's Office. I had a person in the GSO office called an expeditor. For everything that we brought in we had to have the necessary documentation. It might be necessary to cut down a small tree to obtain the wood pulp to make the paper to prepare all of the forms for diplomatic entry. However, even with diplomatic entry the bureaucracy in Mexico was very slow. We'd have goods coming in that were perishable, important, or which were "needed yesterday." My expeditor knew how to get that stuff moving. I didn't give him any money, but he had access at Christmas time to quantities of booze and other goodies, to be given out as gifts. You can ask yourself questions about the morality of the system there. The fact is, that's the way you did it.

We knew that there were other Embassies and business firms which did not hesitate to make payoffs in one form or another. I don't think that there were very many U.S. companies involved in paying bribes. They all proclaimed their innocence, but we all knew that foreigners really paid people off to get things done and to get them done fast.

However, we were the big, American Embassy. American visas were never given out as favors at all. At least, to my knowledge they were not given out in any knowing way, contrary to U.S. law or regulation. But you and I both know that when the Director of the Mexican Customs Office needed to go to the U.S. to see his aunt, or something like that, he would call me and say, "Ah, Mr. Gillespie, could you help me?" I would say, "Send the papers and fill out the forms," by arrangement with the Consul issuing the visas. My expeditor would either go and pick up the completed application forms from the person involved, or they would be delivered to the expeditor. I would never see them.

The Consular Section would check the application out. If the person were eligible for a visa, he didn't have to stand in line, and the whole process went on. So this was kind of our stock in trade.

By the way, the Embassy in Mexico City was the first post where I actually issued visas. Later on, I did a little of that at the Embassy in Managua, Nicaragua. We got into a kind of crisis in Mexico City, and Vic Dikeos (the Administrative Counselor) and the supervisory Consul General in Mexico City arranged that every commissioned officer assigned to the Embassy would spend a certain amount of time on the visa line, including heads of Sections and, in my case, the Supervisory GSO. So Mexico City was my first visa-issuing post.

I felt that expediting the issuance of visas to particular Embassy contacts was not in any way corrupt. I thought that the matter was being handled to everybody's satisfaction. However, there was corruption going on in Mexico City. I can remember sitting in a Country Team meeting with Ambassador Jova. Richard Smith was our Agricultural Attaché. He later became the head of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) in Washington. Then he retired and is now making lots of money as a consultant.

Anyway, Dick outlined for us one day how Mrs. Echeverría the wife of the President of Mexico at the time, made a lot of money. President Echeverría himself was squeaky clean. However, I mentioned before how beef moved back and forth across the Mexican-U.S. border. Every time a head of Mexican cattle crossed the U.S. border, coming or going, \$2 went into the personal account of Mrs. Echeverría, by a circuitous route. Now, there was a lot of beef involved and a lot of crossing of the border. Dick sat there and explained it all one day. So there was some corruption.

Q: Corruption often winds up impacting on the GSO office, more than anywhere else. Did you find that some of the consular posts were "getting off the range" a little bit in this connection? There our consular officers were, living in the local atmosphere. It's easy to get overly cozy with local people. Did you find this a problem?

GILLESPIE: It never came to my attention. I know that in Brussels, for example, in the GSO Section, some really long-time British national employees of our Embassy in Belgium were eventually found to have been involved in a thoroughgoing scam. However, to my knowledge nothing like that happened in Mexico during my time there, and I've never heard of it since. I am speaking now of the early 1970s, which were kind of a boom time for Mexico.

Q: Of course, they had oil exports.

GILLESPIE: Mexican oil prices were way up, but their impact had not yet hit the economy. Mexico was also borrowing large amounts of money in the early 1970s. I remember Roberto Coeto, my chief local employee. He was one of the sweetest, nicest, and smartest guys. I tried to treat him that way. I had arranged for him to go to the States and take courses in general services administration, property management, inventory maintenance, and all that kind of thing. I had an American subordinate, Brent Olson, who was really into ADP, (Automated Data Processing.) That was a time when you really did get end of the fiscal year money.

In late August or early September of a given year our Counselor for Administration would get a call from the Bureau of Administration asking "How much additional funds can you take?" Or they would ask, "How much money do you have on hand?" They would say, "We've got \$40 million available for allocation" - a large sum of money at the time." Vic Dikeos, his deputy, Jim Leaken, and an excellent Budget and Fiscal Officer, Rodríguez, and I would sit down to discuss this matter. They would look to me to find ways to spend the money. They would ask me, "What can you do, what can you buy this fiscal year for use next fiscal year?"

Well, Brent Olson and I had set up a system under which he could project about how much we could really absorb: purchase furniture and furnishings, buy supplies, and pay electricity and other utility bills in advance. He had this all in a computerized data base. So Vic Dikeos would ask me how much we could take. I would give him a number - "Up to \$1.7 million. We would really like to have an additional \$750,000, but we could take an additional amount. I can assure you that it is legitimate, and we can justify it."

That's the way the system would operate on the U.S. side. It was a fascinating time, because they really had this money available for allocation to us. If you didn't spend the money, you lost it. It went back into the General Treasury accounts. The Bureau of Administration would call us and say, "Thank you so much for having taken the money." It then was in the "base" for the next fiscal year.

On the corruption issue I don't recall anything involving our consular posts.

Q: Well, it obviously would have been in your field.

GILLESPIE: I'm trying to think. We had some questions, once in a while, about some of our people getting too close to some of the vendors. However, we would usually move our procurement around to various suppliers. We tried to arrange for competitive bidding. However, what we found in Mexico was that, for example, North American Van Lines and Mayflower Transportation and Storage Company had their own agents in Mexico. Of course, household effects were going back and forth overland to the U.S. They were competing with each other. They wanted to know whether our procurement practices were clean. It wouldn't have taken much effort for my people to find out whether somebody was playing any games. We would try to "buy American," "fly American," and all of that. To my knowledge we never got into any kind of smuggling deal or anything like that.

Occasionally, there were some strange developments. It turned out that back in the 1960s, for whatever reason, the Mexican customs authorities in the port of Acapulco on the Pacific Ocean side of Mexico had confiscated a whole shipment of wine for the Embassy Commissary. This shipment had been sitting in Acapulco for about 10 years. One of my objectives was to get this matter resolved. We finally did. It took a lot of work. It turned out that, after they'd been sitting in Acapulco for 10 years, the wine wasn't very drinkable. It hadn't been a corruption matter. It had just been a result of bad bureaucratic practice. There were no major, corruption scandals.

The Embassy in Mexico City was a big post, with a lot of things going on. We were talking earlier about behavioral matters. There were a few issues of that kind. It was a tough post for single women, but a wonderful post for single men. Housing was pretty accessible, and the allowances structure was pretty good. It was a matter of bringing your own furniture. There were no government-owned or leased housing, except for the most senior people. People lived well. Gasoline prices were low. There was a kind of crazy import scheme on cars. You could only import a car of a kind which was produced or assembled in Mexico. There were people who tried to get around that provision all the time, but we had no difficulty in controlling that.

We weren't able to sell cars at the end of a tour for a profit, so that didn't enter into the picture at all. Later on, that was somewhat relaxed, but the restrictions were subsequently reimposed. We didn't have that to worry about.

Q: You said that you left Mexico City a little early.

GILLESPIE: Yes. I was there on a four-year tour of duty. In July, 1975, my wife and the kids

were in the States, and I was about to go up and join them for local leave. It wasn't home leave. We were just going to take local leave in the States.

I had a phone call from Personnel in the Department. They told me, "You've always indicated your interest in mid-career university training. We have an unexpected opening. Would you be available?" So I went to see Vic Dikeos, my boss. He asked, "Do you want to do that?" I said, "I think that I'd like to have that advantage. I've had a great career." He said, "Go for it!"

Q: When was this?

GILLESPIE: In July, 1975. By the way, just before I got to Mexico City in 1972 there was a big earthquake in Nicaragua. A lot of the people in the Embassy in Mexico City had to go down and help out in that. I was not involved. Another thing that happened in South America which affected us slightly in Mexico City was, of course, the overthrow of the Salvador Allende government in Chile in 1973. A lot of Chilean refugees started to come to Mexico. I didn't get deeply involved in that, although I met a few of these Chileans.

Q: This must also have had the effect of souring relations between Mexico and the U.S.

GILLESPIE: Yes, our relations with Mexico were affected by all of that, because of the suspicion that we were involved in the overthrow of Allende and the fact that we had been involved in the attempt to keep Allende out of office.

But to return to my tour of duty in Mexico City. In 1975 it had been three years since I arrived there in 1972. I got this phone call from the Department regarding university training. So I said, "Okay. Where do you want me and when?" We worked it all through, and I was assigned to the Maxwell School of Public Administration at Syracuse University in August, 1975.

May I interrupt and mention one other point about Mexico? Stop me if you don't want to get into this, but, very briefly, Mexico was very important not only for reasons of my own career but it was also very important for my wife. I would like to mention that.

Q: Please do.

GILLESPIE: My wife, Vivian, was a 1950s wife. That is, we had a 1950s marriage. She had graduated *cum laude* from UCLA University of California in Los Angeles after having studied education. She had taught school and helped support me when I was in graduate school between service in the Army and joining the Foreign Service. Then she had gone with me to the Philippines, bore a child there, and then went to Brussels. In Brussels she studied French assiduously. She got what was eventually rated a "3-3" Speaking Knowledge, [3 - Useful; Reading Knowledge, 3 - Useful] in French. She enjoyed that very much but was still very much of a housewife.

When we got to Mexico, she became fascinated by Mexico's history, as well as its anthropology and archaeology. These are not unusual things for foreigners to become interested in when they come to Mexico. To the best of my knowledge, she was the first Embassy wife ever to be admitted to and to study seriously at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, or UNAM, as it's called. That was a hotbed of social unrest. It was a typical Latin American university, in this respect.

Q: Particularly at the time of the Olympic Games of 1968.

GILLESPIE: Exactly. We talked about the 1968 series of events and the repression and killing of hundreds of students.

In any event Vivian was able to enter to a program of study in Spanish. She studied - and here's a plug for the Mexican-American Cultural Institute, which was run with a combination of USIS (United States Information Service) and private money. She studied Spanish intensively for three hours a day, five days a week. She got her Spanish up to a level where she could enroll at UNAM, where she took graduate level courses three days a week in anthropology and archaeology in Spanish and in Mexican history. So in the course of three years she accumulated a lot of credits.

This helped us a lot in knowing and understanding more about Mexico and it played very directly into what happened at Syracuse University and how we took advantage of the year that the government gave us there. I wanted to mention that.

The other matter which we didn't touch on, and it didn't bear directly on Mexico but it obviously was a major consideration for our national life, was the Watergate affair. The Watergate affair was going on while I was in Mexico.

There I saw the cultural slant. The Mexicans, given their background and the way their politicians and political system operated, found it hard to understand the thrust of Watergate. Mexico was a country where cable TV was just beginning to come in and the Dallas Cowboys football team was extremely popular. American style football was already developing a certain popularity, in addition to soccer, which was so important to the Mexicans. We were getting a lot of the news from the United States directly from television. It was fascinating to me to see the Mexicans look at a situation where an American President was under tremendous fire for having done or not having done various things. He was accused of having done things which seemed pretty mild by Mexican standards or standards that were applicable in the rest of Latin America. Or, for that matter, in other parts of the world.

I believe that I thought back a bit on what I had seen, not so much in Mexico, where two, outstanding career Ambassadors managed a very tough relationship. However, basically, they

didn't spend much time with the outs or what one might call the opposition. They had broad contacts. Today, if you go to Mexico City, as I have, you will find that our Political Section actually has officers who are trying to manage the relationship with not just the principal, political party, but with the other parties that are now coming up. They are trying to keep the Ambassador and the senior people in our government in contact with the opposition. A good Ambassador like our current one, a political appointee named Jim Jones, listens to their views. He's got a good sense of that.

The next incident which I recall must have happened in May or June, 1978, soon after the Masaya incident. Jay Freres, the Economic Officer, and his wife, who was originally German, had a couple of sons, one of them the same age as my son, and a couple of daughters. We were pretty close friends. Marie Freres told her husband that she had been to the dentist, a Nicaraguan bearing a U.S. passport who was living in Nicaragua. I assume that the dentist and his family were dual nationals, with both Nicaraguan and U.S. citizenship. The dentist told Mrs. Freres that his sister, who was also a U.S. citizen, had a son who, with a friend of his who may have had a Mexican connection, were fugitives from the Guardia Nacional in Nicaragua. They had been with the Sandinista Liberation Front up in the northern mountains of Nicaragua. The Guardia Nacional was reportedly getting close to them. These two young men were staying at the dentist's house. The dentist wanted to know if the Embassy could help them.

So Jay and I went to see Ambassador Solaun and a recently-arrived DCM named Frank, whose last name I can't remember. He was a big, red-haired guy who had been DCM in Malta. Frank was a chain-smoking, heavy drinking, professional Political Officer, an FSO. He was a no nonsense type of person. Mary Daniels, the chief of the Consular Section, was also present at this meeting. We asked the Ambassador and DCM what we could or should do about this. These kids were fugitives, and the Guardia Nacional was after them. Quite frankly, Stu, I don't think that we ever reported this case to the Department. We decided to do what we could to help these young men escape the Guardia Nacional. Jay Freres and I, with me driving, took the Ambassador's Cadillac at night and picked up these two kids at the dentist's house. Meanwhile, I had contacted the Mexican Ambassador and discussed the case with him. With the agreement of the Mexican Ambassador we took the two kids, had them lie down in the back seat, and took them to the Mexican Ambassador's house. They got of the car, ran inside, and had asylum from the Mexican Ambassador, as Nicaraguans, not as U.S. citizens. They were moved out of Nicaragua the next day. I don't know whether this was ever a matter of official record.

Q: You were right. That's the type of thing you do in the field. If you don't do it there, the news of the incident gets all over the place...

GILLESPIE: If you don't do anything, you have lawyers inquiring, the Bureau of Consular Affairs gets involved, and by the time you make a decision, whatever it is, you may have lost any chance to be effective. Well, Ambassador Solaun, bless his soul, and Frank, the DCM, reviewed the situation. Frank asked what our options were. If we called the Department on the open telephone, the Nicaraguans might hear us. If we sent a cable, it would be two days before we got

an answer. These kids were in the dentist's house, the dentist raised the matter with us, and what could we do? We discussed the matter and decided to contact the Mexican Ambassador to see if he would offer asylum to them. As I mentioned above, I think that the other kid had some Mexican connection. The Mexican Ambassador was the logical person to call. I had previously met the Mexican Ambassador to Nicaragua. He had been in the Protocol Office of the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Affairs when I was the GSO at the Embassy in Mexico City. I had met him in connection with one of our property deals - maybe the American cemetery matter I mentioned previously.

I called the Mexican Ambassador and asked if I could come and see him. Freres and I went to see him and presented the problem. We asked him, "Would you help? We have not discussed this with anyone." He said, "Yes, if you can get these two young men here after dark and pull into my driveway with a car having diplomatic plates." Ambassador Solaun agreed to this course of action. There was no Nicaraguan surveillance that we knew of at the Mexican Ambassador's residence. So we did it, and that was it, as far as we were concerned. The dentist was always grateful to us, and, I suppose, so was the kid's mother.

Q: Well, moving on from that, we probably should talk about the Latin American banking crisis. We're talking about, what, 1982?

GILLESPIE: 1982. I should check on the dates because I do not have a chronology available. However, in any event, what happened was that Mexico basically went bust. Euro-Dollars were circulating at that particular point. Everybody had been borrowing money. Petroleum had been very high-priced, and Mexico was a major petroleum producer. The situation was very similar to the one we saw most recently in 1994. The Mexican peso was over-valued. The Mexican Presidential election was held in 1976, and another election was coming up in 1982.

Q: Every six years?

GILLESPIE: Yes, every six years. Whatever it was, the Mexican peso had been over valued, and Mexican external debt levels were high and at adjustable, not fixed interest rates. This was a tremendous boom time in Mexico. The Mexican middle class had credit cards and was buying things, traveling around the world, and doing all sorts of wonderful things. It all began to come apart in 1982.

Q: In 1981, when you started to work in the ARA Bureau, was this matter raised from time to time?

GILLESPIE: I can't remember.

Q: There were so many things on your plate.

GILLESPIE: I simply can't remember the degree to which this issue was flagged in 1981 as a

potential problem. It doesn't do any good to speculate back on that issue because my memory just isn't complete about the time when Regan was Secretary of the Treasury and Haig was Secretary of State. What was interesting was that David Mulford was the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs.

Mopert was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs. What seemed very natural and normal to me then, although it certainly wasn't true later, was the degree to which the State and Treasury Departments, at the Assistant Secretary level, really worked very hard and closely together. In cooperation with the Federal Reserve and with others they tried to moderate the Mexican financial crisis, although I don't think that there was anything that we could do to end this crisis at all. If I remember correctly, Tom Enders was very concerned about the spread of this crisis to other economies. Of course, it did spread to Argentina and a few other countries. The question was how do you moderate a crisis of this kind?

The key tactical issues which I saw at first hand were how did we make sure that Mexico had enough money, basically overnight, to be able to meet demands tomorrow morning, while we were negotiating with the IMF and others to get them some help. Another issue was how could we prevent the Mexicans from doing something really stupid, which they ended up doing, anyway. They tried to put monetary controls on and tried to do a lot of things which everybody now says were the wrong things. What I saw of this was like some people's conception of a foreign exchange house or a trading floor. Various people involved in the crisis were on the phone all the time talking with other people in London, Paris, New York, and in the State and Treasury Departments, trying to make sure that they stayed on top of the situation, almost on an hour to hour basis. Indeed, in some cases it was minute to minute - to try and keep the fire from spreading. I think that this effort impressed me because I saw a couple of Foreign Service Officers who were really on top of this crisis, in my view. This was really something to see. I knew a little bit about economics and finance, but not very much. These Foreign Service Officers were moving all the time. That was the key point there.

What we saw from other capitals was a strong sense of interest in what was going on, with people wondering how it was going to affect them. Tom Enders was really trying to ensure that the strings of control were all held together. I think that this was one of the areas which marked him in the minds of some people as vulnerable - trying to do too much, too fast in some of these areas.

Q: How about the banks? As I recall, American banks were heavily involved in this. What role did we play?

GILLESPIE: We were trying to make sure that things held together long enough for the banks to be able to take whatever protective action they could. This was a banking crisis. Mexico was not able to make its loan payments. The loan payments were not to the U.S. government - they were to the banks. And these were mainly U.S. banks, which were heavily extended in Latin America and in the Third World generally. This was a case of the U.S. government acting to help U.S. business and banking interests so that they would not suffer a total collapse, in the same way the government bailed out Chrysler. In this case we were not

using funds appropriated by Congress. We were trying to get the international financial institutions to try to shore up the situation long enough for the creditor banks to work out their problems with the debtor countries.

Q: From your perspective, what was the response of the Mexican authorities at this time?

GILLESPIE: On the one hand, they were desperate and, therefore, wanted whatever assistance they could get. I guess that my impression was that they weren't sure what to do or how to do it. At the same time these same issues of nationalism and sovereignty were very much involved. However, they were not willing to go too far in the direction of getting help, particularly from the United States.

Q: From my perspective, it seems as if the Latin American countries don't like big brother i.e., the U.S., to dominate them too much. However, when the chips are down and they get into trouble, they appear to say, "For God's sake, get us out of this." Was there something of that or not?

GILLESPIE: When they are in extremis, the Latin American countries tend to look for lifesavers wherever they can find them. In this case the Mexican economy was really in trouble. This was a situation where a sovereign country could really have gone belly up. They really could have gone broke and bankrupt.

You have to look at what was driving the U.S. and even at what was driving Tom Enders. I remember conversations with him at the time. These were not deep, extensive, philosophical discussions. However, good heavens, the whole international financial system could come apart if this kind of thing continued. He felt that this was a time when we had to get serious and put the structure back together. Otherwise, if Mexico went bankrupt, which country would be next? So we were making this effort not just for Mexico by any means, and not just for the American banks. Sure, that was a benefit for the banks. However, this system that we had built up since the 1930s, and certainly since World War II, at the Bretton Woods Conference 1944 and other meetings, could have crumbled, and we would have had financial anarchy, if matters went beyond a certain point. At least that was our assumption. I am quite confident that this consideration was driving Tom Enders. Whatever he thought about Mexico and the Mexicans and whatever the Mexicans thought themselves, he saw this consideration as the value and interest which needed to be protected.

So Enders moved in that direction. This is why you could say that there was a real community of interest and views between people in the Treasury and State Departments, the Federal Reserve Board, and elsewhere. There was a feeling that we should all move together. Then it became a tactical question of how do you do it and who moves what and where, and "will the Mexicans do that?" My recollection of the details is not that great. It is just interesting to note that a young man who was of Enders' generation was brought in by the Mexicans. His name was Jesús Silva Herzog, who is now the Mexican Ambassador to the United States.

Q: How did this whole problem work out, as we saw it?

GILLESPIE: Well, basically, we put the cat back in the bag. The Mexicans did a number of things which you would not want anyone to do today, and at a certain cost to their economy, to their middle class, and to their prosperity associated with it. This was unlike what was done by a country like Chile which was faced with the same kind of crisis, but not nearly on as large a scale. Basically, Chile did some belt tightening, took some bitter medicine, and things like that. Chile tried to pull it all together, mostly with their own efforts.

It's interesting to note that both Mexico and Chile suffered dramatic reductions in real income, inflation, high interest rates, tough times, and other problems. However, Mexico did it in a way that was government controlled. Chile's effort was more market-oriented, although not exclusively so. Probably, that is the basis of or at least an element in Chile's current prosperity. Mexico had to go through some real gyrations to get itself out of its problems, and we still don't know the details of all of those. Mexico didn't build the strong economic base that Chile did.

There were also similar problems in Argentina, Brazil, and in other, debtor countries in Latin America. The only Latin American country which took this tough road was Chile, which was under a military controlled government. However, other military governments certainly did this - in Brazil and elsewhere. These countries, as well as Mexico, have all had to go through rather drastic, reform processes to get on the road that Chile is on.

Regarding the rest of the Western Hemisphere, I think that that was important, too, during this period. Mexico had a Foreign Minister named Jorge Castañeda, who was very much in the Mexican tradition. The traditional Mexican attitude is that, whatever the personal, ideological views of the President of Mexico, the Foreign Ministry has traditionally been thought of, and its probably just a stereotype, as the home of the Mexican left.

Q: I've always heard this.

GILLESPIE: That is where Mexico's revolutionary outlook is on display. They don't revolt at home in Mexico any more. However, outside of Mexico, the Mexicans are going to be part of the revolutionary context. Jorge Castañeda seemed to fit that stereotype very well, whether that's really true or not. He loved being a fly in our ointment. So there was a lot of support for Sandinistas, the FMLN, and contacts with Cuba. Mexico has managed to maintain very amicable relations with Cuba and Fidel Castro over all these years. On balance, this seems to help Mexican interests. It is of some interest to note that, contrary to his protests and denials over the years, Castro may have trained Mexican revolutionaries who might have acted against their own government. Nonetheless, Castañeda and the Mexican left, or the Mexican establishment under his lead, certainly didn't mind seeing us troubled and engaged in Central America. They tried to moderate our behavior. They were very supportive of the Sandinistas throughout this period. It was to the Mexican Ambassador in Nicaragua that Jay Freres and I delivered these two young Nicaraguan-American dual nationals in the back seat of the Ambassador's car to get them out of Nicaragua.

Q: Unlike the situation affecting former Presidents of Mexico.

GILLESPIE: Unlike Mexico, yes. When I was in Mexico, everybody knew that people like former President Echeverría and his successor, President López Portillo, had Swiss, Miami, and New York bank accounts, properties in California and Florida - all of these different things. Their net worth had increased exponentially, while they were reaching the top of the political structure and then moved beyond it. That didn't seem to be the case, and still doesn't seem to be the case, in Colombia.

Yes. I've thought about that and I cannot recall that it was ever brought up as a programmatic issue at any post. Early on in the 1960s, when I was the GSO (General Services Officer) in Mexico, I very clearly remember going over to the *Zona Rosa*, Rose Zone, or tourist area in Mexico City for lunch with American colleagues or Mexican contacts. There would be young, Mexican women there, dressed in the most abbreviated, mini skirts, and with legs that didn't stop till they got to their waists. They went around handing out these little packs of four cigarettes, samples of Winstons, Marlboroughs, Camels, and some of the other brands.

Q: I was getting them all over the world, too.

GILLESPIE: It didn't always work both ways. The State Department was usually pretty good about letting us know what they did. The Department of Justice was horrible about matters of this kind. One of the major problems that we had with Mexico during this time was the case of Dr. Álvarez Machain. He was a gynecologist from Guadalajara. It was alleged, and I think that this was probably accurately asserted, that he was involved in keeping Enrique Camarena, an American citizen and a DEA agent serving in Mexico, alive and conscious during his interrogation by drug traffickers who had captured him. The object of the drug traffickers was to make sure that Camarena felt as much pain as possible during the time that he was being tortured by them. They eventually killed him. The drug traffickers were trying to find out whom Camarena dealt with, who his sources were, and all of that. Dr. Álvarez Machain was eventually snatched and taken to the U.S. in a way which was not coordinated formally with the Mexican Government. Eventually, he was put on trial in a U.S. court and acquitted. As of now, early in 1997, a U.S. Federal Appeals Court has ruled that he may now sue the United States authorities for improper arrest, wrongful prosecution, and a number of other things. So we haven't heard the end of this.

It turned out that Dr. Álvarez Machain's seizure in Mexico was, indeed, a kind of rogue operation, but it had support pretty well all the way up to the top of our Justice Department, reflecting how independent some of our agencies can be. No one in the Justice Department had

ever told anyone in the White House, from the President on down, that they were considering and planning this snatch of Dr. Álvarez Machain in Mexico. In fact, the Justice Department had been warned not to do things like this, but they went ahead and did it anyway. This was extremely embarrassing to President Bush. I guess that President Bush had invited President Salinas de Gortari of Mexico to join him on the border. I think that they were supposed to go to a San Diego Padres baseball game together, just at the time Álvarez Machain was being picked up, or at least something was happening in this connection. It put the two Presidents in a very difficult and unpleasant situation on both a personal as well as an official level.

GILBERT J. DONAHUE
Vice Consul
Guadalajara (1973-1974)

Gilbert J. Donahue was born in Virginia in 1947. He received his bachelor's degree from American University in 1968. His career included positions in Mexico, Ivory Coast, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and Brazil. Mr. Donahue was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2000.

Q: How did this work out going to Guadalajara? Was it at that point where your wife had to resign?

DONAHUE: About the time that we got married, the rule ended that a FS officer had to resign a commission to get married. So, neither my wife nor I had to go through that procedure. We had no guarantees that we would be assigned as a tandem couple, but it worked out for us.

I met my wife, Linda Louie Donahue, while on a nonprofessional courier run to Mexico City in the summer of 1972. She was doing a parallel run from her post, Guadalajara. We had mutual friends from our A-100 courses at FSI (we entered the State Department in the same year, 1971), but prior to our meeting in Mexico City we had not known each other. Our initial meeting was followed by Linda's visiting me in Mazatlan and I visited her in Guadalajara. We did some traveling to tourist locations and then we decided we were more than friends. One problem loomed for us, however. At that time, a Foreign Service Officer who married a foreign national had to tender his (or her) resignation. It was up to the Department to accept it or not. Although there were many officers married to foreign nationals, the decision was made on a case-by-case basis. The situation for Foreign Service Officers marrying each other was a bit different: the female officer was expected to tender her resignation and usually it was accepted. This meant that a woman could have a Foreign Service career only if she swore off marriage. Indeed, most of the senior Foreign Service Officer women we knew in the Embassy in Mexico City had remained unmarried during their careers.

Fortunately for us, however, one of those women was on our side. This was Margaret Hussman, Consul General in Mexico City. She had had a long, successful career culminating in her Mexico City assignment. Although she had not married, she no longer accepted nonmarriage as a

necessity. At that very time, the Department was also reviewing the policy and considering change. Ms. Hussman briefed us on the likely changes that would come out of Washington and she helped us determine a date for our wedding (which we did in Washington, along with a lot of State Department paperwork) to ensure that neither Linda nor I would be adversely affected by the marriage. Ms. Hussman also helped me get a short tour assignment in Guadalajara following our marriage so that we could both complete Linda's tour and arrange follow on assignments together. Linda and I were among the very first tandem couples in the State Department.

We have seen the Department become more, and then recently somewhat less, helpful with tandem assignments, as the number of tandems has continued to grow. Coupled with the closing of many posts and the shrinking of many embassies, especially some of the traditionally larger posts, it is becoming more of a strain on the system to accommodate tandem couples. We were very fortunate that we could always be posted together. We have seen officers who had to accept postings in different countries, and even continents, suffer problems in their relationships as a result. Early on, Linda and I decided we would emphasize our marriage and, when children came, our family, over taking the best choice of assignments aimed at furthering our career. We believe we made the best decision, but it is up to each tandem couple to decide.

As life in the United States increasingly assumes the normalcy of a working couple, it will continue to be challenges for the foreign affairs agencies to ensure that couples who wish to work and live together at the same post have those opportunities. My wife and I were able to find a fit with the State Department's own needs in our Chinese assignments. Since housing was so tight, the mission preferred working couples because it minimized the need for apartments. However, few posts have such limitations. In our experience, it appears the State Department has worked harder than some other agencies to accommodate working couples. The greatest difficulties seemed to befall colleagues who worked for different agencies, which have their own personnel systems and policies on foreign assignments.

One possible solution is to enter into more treaties with foreign countries to facilitate Foreign Service spouses' finding work on the economy. While the treaties we already have undoubtedly do help, the ease or difficulty of obtaining employment often has more to do with factors beyond the U.S. Government's control, such as the state of the host country's economy and the likely discrimination against foreigners, even if they have the requisite language and other qualifications.

When I was transferred to Guadalajara, I expected that we would remain in that city for a fairly long time, maybe another two-year tour. But at that time, Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State and he wanted especially for junior officers to be transferred to other parts of the world and have a totally different kind of experience. He wanted to churn up the FS. He especially wanted people to change continents or regions and learn about issues on the other side of the world.

Q: This was the GLOP program.

DONAHUE: That's right.

THOMAS M. RECKNAGEL
Senior Deputy Administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs
Washington, DC (1973-1975)

Thomas M. Recknagel was born in New York in 1918. He received a bachelor's degree from Cornell University and later pursued his studies at the University of Virginia. Mr. Recknagel served in the U.S. Army during World War II and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His career includes positions in Israel, Germany, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Vietnam, India, Sudan, and Washington, DC. Mr. Recknagel was interviewed in 1986 by Victor Wolf, Jr.

RECKNAGEL: Mexico was another matter. The drug problem back in those days was growing by leaps and bounds, as it has continued to do ever since. Drug smugglers were a good deal less sophisticated then than they have become now. Colombia was then, as now, the primary source for drugs coming into the United States. One of the preferred means of getting those drugs into this country was to use young people who were vacationing or studying in Colombia or coming back through Colombia on their return to the United States, to get them to carry small amounts but, nevertheless, very valuable amounts of drugs into the United States with them. Initially, this worked quite well for the drug smugglers, because these kids simply weren't suspected. Later, after a few of them were discovered, our Drug Enforcement Agency people began to look into it and realized that this was a very major operation. These kids were being paid well in their terms, but nothing in terms of what the profit was for the drug dealer. As you may recall, "mules" was the term that was used for them. Many of them came through Mexico City. The place to change planes, or merely where the planes stopped coming back from Bogota was very often Mexico City.

Once it was known that there was considerable traffic of this sort going on, the question arose of how were we going to get at these people. The first thing was that these American citizens contended that when they were in the transit lounge they were immune from arrest by the local authorities. That, of course, has been fully resolved since, but it was not fully resolved at that time. Since then, it has been clearly established that there is no question that an airport transit lounge is part of the national territory of the country on which it is located, and a criminal can certainly be arrested in the transit lounge.

Q: I suppose that resolution, that legal decision, if you want to call it that, not only has implications for narcotics smuggling, but has implications for such things as terrorism.

RECKNAGEL: I should think very much so. Happily, we didn't have the terrorist problem in those days as it exists today. As soon as this decision was made, the Mexican police, with the full cooperation of our own DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] people, moved in on these "mules," and there was quite a large number--80, 90, or more--arrests of these American kids in transit through Mexico. They were carrying significant amounts of drugs-- strong drugs, heroin, cocaine, and so forth--and were, of course, guilty under Mexican law of a very serious crime, just

as under our own law.

The problem that we got involved in was a very typical consular problem. They were arrested, they were thrown into the jug, and then the question was: Were they really getting the treatment that we felt that they deserved as American citizens, or were they being mistreated, denied basic rights, and so forth? The problems in dealing with these people were really traditional consular protection problems. The thing which makes it somewhat interesting, however, and worth noting is that it became a very real issue on the Hill. Certain congressmen, most notably one congressman, Fortney H. "Pete" Stark of California, championed these people and demanded something which was a very new concept. He argued that although they were arrested in Mexico and were guilty of crimes under Mexican law, they shouldn't be made to serve their sentences there. They were nice, clean-cut American kids, he contended, and should be allowed to come back to the United States, serve their Mexican sentences here, and under conditions which we would consider humane. Stark, at least, did not consider the conditions in the Mexican prisons very humane. As far as I know, this was the first time such a concept had been broached. We brought into it also some Americans who were in Turkish jails, also on charges of drug smuggling, also convicted in that country.

Although the matter was not resolved more than partially during my time in SCA, it was subsequently resolved both in the case of these kids in the Mexican jails and in the case of at least one of the Americans in Turkey. The decision was made that they could come back here. This was the point at issue: Could our American courts recognize a conviction in a foreign country? Could we put an American citizen in prison to serve a sentence which he had been given in a foreign court under foreign law? There was the question, first of all, whether we could even do this, that an American citizen should be subjected to this. Secondly, how would you do it? In other words, would there have to be a court order here, or how could it be handled? Finally, would we accept the same sentence? Would we have a new trial here? The decision was made that, basically, yes, if the person agreed that he would serve the sentence here, or that he would at least go into a period of probation equivalent to that in which his sentence would have required him to remain in jail in the foreign country, and if the foreign country would agree to release him on those terms, then we would take him back here and the states and local authorities would provide the necessary supervision. How this has worked out, I cannot answer. I simply know this was the point that we reached when I left SCA. Indeed, through your own experiences, you may know cases subsequent. But that was the point that we reached there. It was very interesting.

Q: The only thing I know about that is that the big issue in negotiating with the Mexicans and the Turks and other countries where this issue came up, was how to persuade the foreign governments to accept what really was a derogation of their own sovereignty.

RECKNAGEL: Absolutely.

Q: Why is Mexico less sovereign than the United States? Why is Turkey less sovereign than the United States? Harmonizing this strong political requirement that political forces in the United States were placing on our government with the pride and the sensitivity of some of these foreign governments, that they are just as sovereign as we are, I know was the major preoccupation. I do

not know how that was done either, but it clearly was complicated.

RECKNAGEL: That's certainly right. I think, basically, it was achieved in the case of Mexico because, in fact, the Mexicans were absolutely sick and tired of this problem, because we were constantly beating on them because of the pressures that were put on us by people like Stark and others. We were constantly beating on the Mexicans about the treatment that they were meting out to these people. On the one hand, we wanted them to arrest them, we wanted them to enforce the laws, and then they would get them in prison, and we were constantly raising Cain with them about the way they were treating them.

Q: These people like Stark and others on the Hill or elsewhere who were taking the side of these young people, were they ever prepared to discuss with you or address the issue of the whole concept of drug control, drug enforcement, or did they simply try to keep themselves separate from that?

RECKNAGEL: To my mind--and I'm a little bit prejudiced against Stark; I found him particularly annoying and the way they were playing it to be annoying--they made it an emotional issue. They would get some kid who had been arrested, an attractive, young college girl, and they'd get her family and these weeping letters that she would write to the family, and the family imploring us to do something to save their daughter, to bring her back. It was played much too much on that basis, to my mind, and I believe that I can say accurately that our own drug enforcement people within the Department, with whom I was dealing at that time, particularly Sheldon Vance, who was the Assistant to the Secretary on Drug Enforcement Problems, felt very much the same way, that they were detracting from, rather than contributing to, the basic effort.

JOSEPH J. JOVA
Ambassador
Mexico (1973-1977)

Ambassador Joseph J. Jova was born in New York in 1916. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. In addition to serving in Mexico, Ambassador Jova served in Iraq, Morocco, Portugal, Chile, and was ambassador to Honduras and the Organization of American States. Ambassador Jova was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: What about the role of Mexico? Obviously we're going to get to Mexico in a little while, but was Mexico sort of the burr under the saddle every time you had to deal with anything?

JOVA: Yes, and no. That changed. Mexico naturally has its own policy. It was always very anti-imperialist, anti-intervention in the affairs of others. They were really the guardians of those principles against the U.S.A. because they were the ones who had suffered most. On the other hand, on many things, if it was a debate, and we could be on Mexico's side, if we could be together, one could feel good in one's conscience, usually, in those days. Plus the fact that the

Mexican ambassador was sort of the dean. He was one of the veterans of the Mexican foreign service, and a lot of his career had been spent in U.S.A., in border posts in his youth. And then he had also been ambassador to Japan, ambassador to the United Nations; the White House actually; and now he was the ambassador to the OAS; or permanent delegate. And, mind you, the vice dean of the OAS, the Nicaraguan, had been there longer, but the Mexican ambassador was the next in rank in seniority, and he was also much wiser, and more judicious, and had the universal respect of everybody, and affection also.

Q: I think an important thing about this relationship in the OAS, I don't want to over-characterize it and please correct me, the United States obviously had its policy because of our size, and might, but was Mexico as a major country the leader of the other side in most cases where we weren't all together?

JOVA: Yes, except that the Chilean delegation...Allende was still in. That would be the leader on some of the leftist ideas, and if Mexico were to join in with the judiciousness of the Mexican ambassador, and the judiciousness on many things of Mexican state policy, well then that became very formidable. Now if the Mexican, and people like that didn't join the Chilean, why then, as Don Quixote said, "The dogs bark when the caravan is leaving." You know it doesn't matter too much. It might mean something but people would do their telegrams, I suppose, and there wasn't that much sympathy when he had gotten into an extreme mood.

Q: Leaving that, could we go on to your next job which, of course, for any Foreign Service officer is an absolutely major and vital job. That was your appointment as ambassador to Mexico where you served from 1973 to 1977. How did you get the job? This is so often a political appointment. How did you hear about your assignment?

JOVA: I've always said when I was Chief of Personnel Operations people would ask me about those things. I said, "like the immaculate conception." One doesn't know exactly how it happened. Well, I was here and more directly involved. First of all, I was rather well considered. And if you looked around the field, who was in Latin America; who were the candidates; who were the top-notch people; I was better than most, believe it or not.

Q: No, no, but you're talking to somebody who has sort of a look of big deal. I mean being qualified for this job has never been a major consideration.

JOVA: My immediate predecessor was a career person, Bob McBride. That always makes it a little easier. And actually his immediate predecessor, Tony Freeman, was also a career person. So it wasn't like trampling new ground, although it had been held by politicals many times over in the past. I was approached with the possibility of being ambassador to Argentina, and mind you, this is an important position also.

Brazil was mentioned also, but that wasn't so immediately open but it was interesting because I did have some Portuguese having been stationed in Portugal, but Argentina was what they most wanted to fill at that particular moment. Mexico was also coming open.

I was told both were coming open, and I was told their hope was that they would propose Mexico and hope that I would go. I couldn't help but to be flattered. I mean I was awfully gratified, and perhaps fewer headaches. Don't kid yourself, the Peron regime had headaches too, plenty of headaches. But it was also very, very far, and I had children in school and in college still. Of course I would go there but to the extent that I can express a preference. I'd like to express a preference for Mexico partly because it is so much nearer, and then for my own personal situation. You know when you're far away you pay your way back, it's a terrible thing.

The next thing I knew it was Mexico. In my heart of hearts I had always wanted to go to Spain, but that didn't work out. Admiral Rivero was named. And he, like so many of those political appointees, one of the things they're most interested in is visiting every state in the union, or visiting every province.

Q: I can't tell you how often in interviews, particularly political appointees, this is one thing that they say--I went to every province.

JOVA: Its one way to escape your problems.

Q: Yes, it is because these are usually protocol trips and really accomplish very little, except showing yourself.

JOVA: Showing yourself is fine, you should have an idea of what is what in that country, but you can overdo it, particularly in a centralized country like Mexico. The action is in Mexico City. You don't realize how big it really is, and how varied it is. It takes longer to get from Tijuana to Mexico City than it does from Tijuana to San Francisco. Anyway, it had different problems and that sort of thing, but the real job is where the power is.

Q: Before you went there Henry Kissinger was still the National Security Adviser. What was your feeling, because obviously this was not a routine assignment, about the interest of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger who were two very major players--both through ability and interest in world affairs. When you were going out did you get any, either discussions with them, or emanations from them about what they wanted from you?

JOVA: One thing, and one thing only. The drug problem, narcotics. There was also an acute demoralization in the U.S. government. Nobody knew what was going to happen in the presidency. Kissinger himself was affected, he was trying to maintain things on an even keel. My secretary was seconded probably for a period of a couple of months, or six weeks, to be one of Kissinger's secretaries, and she told me it was kind of horrifying the things she heard in that short period between Kissinger and the White House, and Kissinger's remarks about the then President Nixon.

Q: This was the precursor to the Watergate thing. It started during the election of '72, and the after results of the Watergate investigation started in '73--he resigned in '74.

JOVA: Yes, and I didn't go to Mexico until January, but was named in '73.

Q: What were you getting from the State Department, any other issues that they felt you'd be concentrating on when you went out?

JOVA: It seems to me that I'm always charged with some frivolous matters--that's a terrible word to use. When I went to Chile to be Chargé, it was to persuade the Country Club to cut down the pine trees that obstructed the view because a mistake had been made in the plan for the very important embassy, and the land was two meters lower, but anyway this was a big thing. When I was going to Honduras as ambassador, it was also some little inconsequential thing.

When I was going to Mexico, it was the American cemetery, which was our oldest battle monument outside of the United States. The Mexicans wanted to move it using the pretext that they were putting a super highway through. The British had given up theirs, and why shouldn't we give up ours. And the then Mexican Foreign Minister, who was an insecure person, particularly in view of the fact that his brother was married to an American Jewish lady from Brooklyn. Due to that and an unusual interest in soccer, she had become friendly with Henry Kissinger. So that was one thing that Henry Kissinger wanted to please them on, get rid of that cemetery, give it up. Well, that turned out to be much more complicated than one thinks, and with a lot of emotions. And imagine, you had the Battle Monuments Commission up here, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the remnants of the war in Mexico, all up in arms--the American community. I remember that being a big, big thing with the Foreign Minister for the first few months that I was there. We finally worked something out. And mind you, it took months, and with a lot of interference from other people, like the Battle Monuments Commission. We finally gave up part of the land, and were able to reduce the size of the cemetery, and consecrate those bones all in one place.

Q: This is part of the web and woof of what ambassadors do, and what attracts attention.

JOVA: And it was the same on drugs. I heard the same story on drugs over and over again wherever I went. Now, I didn't hear this from Kissinger, and I did not see Nixon. I think this was a very bad time.

Then, we had big trade problems. We had the problems of Echeverria. It was a real problem to us in the United Nations and in bilateral relations because of his spouting anti-American oratory, and taking difficult positions. He was the leader of the Third World in the United Nations, particularly on economic matters and developmental matters, etc., That became his big, big battle cry--the economic rights and duties of states. It was in the great big major conference room of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And, of course, later on the devaluation of the Mexican currency, many things like that happened later on. Later on, border problems, commercial problems, etc.

Q: What was the situation with Echeverria, and how did we see him? What was his span of time there? How did you deal with him, and what was your impression of him?

JOVA: Echeverria is a very interesting personality, and also kind of a boring personality, if the two things are possible, because he was very repetitious. I found this true of both presidents.

They say the same thing over and over again, criticizing their opposition, or making their own points over and over again. On the bilateral basis, in spite of the public declamations, we usually were able to arrange things, and we really had a pretty good deal. Mind you, his only aide was quite well known to us, as a younger functionary in the Ministry of Interior, then finally the Minister of Interior which is a top political position. He was working very closely with their own agency here. This is one of the reasons that he had to take even more overtly anti-American stances because he had a guilty conscience in respect to that, and because he had to protect himself against criticism. We took over a place that was in deep, deep trouble beforehand as far as disturbances and riots. After all, 1968 was, like in most of the world, traumatic in Mexico too. They were prepared for the Olympics, and they had the student riots--the president gave the order but he had to carry out the order to fire. And, of course, to shoot down students in any country in Latin America is a grave...well, here too, look at the Kent State thing and the effect that had.

Q: This is obviously an unclassified interview, but its also no secret that the Minister of Interior...you've always had this almost anomaly in relations with the United States and Mexico. The Minister of Interior and our FBI, CIA and other agencies have always worked very closely together. I mean many things that haven't gotten political. Its really foreign affairs which is left to be the place where the Mexicans can stick it to us, whereas in normal working relationships it works fine. And he was part of the machinery.

JOVA: He was the leader of the machinery. And you're right. The U.S. has to be a little bit thick-skinned, sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me, a little nursery rhyme. And take it a little bit as a big power, and let it slide off our backs. But in various times in the relationship, this would be taken personally by the occupant of the White House, or the Secretary of State.

Q: There was considerable concern in the United States, what do we do if there's another Mexican revolution with the leftists taking over? This was a major public debate, or discussion anyway.

JOVA: People forget that, and also the economic crisis, and particularly the monetary crisis. First the unwillingness to demand an accountancy because it was almost a sacred thing...well, "we won't give this up." It was a big thing and eventually was given up to 25 to 1.

Q: This is the peso to the dollar. It was 12 to 1, then it moved to 25 to 1.

JOVA: After that, a bigger change was made but that was the first step.

Q: Were you ever able to speak to Echeverria without getting a speech? "I understand your position, but this just isn't playing well in the United States, and can we not do this?" Could he be reasoned with on this?

JOVA: Sometimes, particularly when it came to some piece of action that might be disguised by oratory; then it was done. Some things just took a long time. For one thing Mexico is centralized, and yet it isn't centralized. One little incident: a convention of travel agents there--two travel

agents disappeared, a man and a woman, presumed dead, and they were. And that went on forever, to find them, fix blame. In the meantime, the widower of the female travel agent with a little child strapped to his back, was parading on 16th Street in front of the Mexican embassy. We never could get anybody to take the blame, or anybody who really...and eventually we pulled all the strings. "It's the state police." "Oh, no, this is the judiciary police." You know, passing the buck back and forth. And the ministry got into focus on that, and of course something like that is bloody when you have to recognize that you're at fault.

Q: What had happened?

JOVA: They were killed by the state police that was just notably corrupt, and the bodies were found in some swamp eventually, but I'm talking about months, months later. Echeverria eventually played a helpful role when he could be made to focus, and keep his feet to the fire.

Q: Echeverria, did you find him in private a different person, or was he his political persona still going full blast when you'd go in and see him?

JOVA: I had a very deep family problem, and he came in personally to the residence to speak to me, and to express condolences and offer help. This was a very unusual thing, to show this human aspect. So it's easy for everybody to be dumping on him once he's gone. And on the other hand, including intellectuals, say when history is written they are going to find he had many more positive things than people are willing to recognize now. He had a great many negative things too. And lots of people feel he was very wrong. Mexico always has to have a bit of anti-Americanism in any of its policy, but he overdid it. After all, this is a delicate relationship that you can't be taking the cow to walk too much, if you want to get the milk. It's better to try to find ways to eliminate, or overcome obstacles if possible. We do things unthinkingly. We do things not thinking what's going to be the effect over the border. It's just incredible. But the Mexicans also have to analyze the situation each time, and hopefully they're cool about it. Actually things got worse with the next one, because he got along so badly with Carter. It was very bad chemistry there.

Q: Tell me, as you observed it, we're talking about the time of Echeverria. When you're dealing in Washington, with the American government, it's not always the President. It can be the National Security Adviser, some aides, the court if you want to call it. How did you find dealing with the presidency of Mexico at that time? Was there the equivalent to a White House court, or people that you, as the ambassador, found were influential?

JOVA: Well, certainly the sub-secretary of government because you can't go see the president. Sometimes you may want to send something through the chief of staff, sometimes you may want to deliver a message yourself, and certainly if you wanted an appointment with the president, it was much better to do it that way, than go to the Foreign Ministry, and protocol--they make a big thing out of it--or have you wait. So it was always done that way, and better to do it that way and not throw it in people's faces. And an important member of the court, of course, was the madam. She was important and you certainly had to be nice to her.

Q: So because of his background he had to overcompensate. How about Madame Echeverria?

JOVA: She came from a very highly political leftist family from Guadalajara. Her father had been head of the University of Guadalajara, most leftist, and most famous, the nearest thing to a Marxist-Leninist...and the sons the same way. So she was very nationalistic, and she loved China and all those slogans. She is the one that was responsible for painting on every possible wall the same kind of dumb slogans that you see in Cuba, and certainly in China. She was not somebody I'd go to see, but somebody we went out of our way to be nice to, and she was always very nice to us, and to others.

Again, when I was briefed by the agency on this they gave me a biography with a psychological profile of the president. There were only two lines about Mrs. Echeverria, feminine, although I don't think she was particularly feminine, but a great help to her husband. Nothing about her family background. All this I discovered, since it was well known there, that she was a very strong personality, and she did come from a very highly politicized family that was extremely leftist. An interesting thing that wasn't in the biography at all.

Q: And particularly for this key country as far as we're concerned.

Today is May 20th, 1992 continuing an interview with Ambassador John Jova. John, when we left off the last time when you were talking about the CIA giving you this very cursory profile, and also about they're wanting to sort of limit your access to the president. To carry it a little farther, was it your impression that this profile of a man they should have known intimately...

JOVA: No, I think it was purposeful. It was more than cursory. I gave the wrong impression. It wasn't cursory. Well, it certainly played down his overtly anti-American aspects, which incidentally were more talk, I think. It was talk because he had to cover up precisely the fact that he was born on the frontier, and his first years of schooling were with American nuns on the American side of the frontier, he told me once. Well, that he had to play down, and the fact that he was a close associate of the CIA all those years in the Interior Ministry, and then eventually as Minister of Interior. And then as president obviously he had the same sort of connections that were kept on. I often suspected perhaps some of his blatant populist stances, etc., were sort of a cover compensating for his past associations.

Q: To follow through on one theme, again this is an unclassified interview, but how did you find your relationship with the American CIA?

JOVA: It was good. It was very good. I'm sure sometimes we had confrontations, but it was generally good, and they understood that I wanted to see the president whenever he wanted me to see him, and whenever I wanted to see him. And sometimes I would let them arrange it, other times I knew the right-hand man, I could call him. And I would see him also which made them a little bit uncomfortable. He, incidentally, never wished to be seen--only but once was I in his office.

Q: This was the sub-secretary of the Interior.

JOVA: He preferred to see me at the ambassador's residence, and he would fix it up for me to see the president within hours, or within days--very rapidly. If you did this through protocol, it was like a big deal, you'd never get an answer, or it would take three weeks to answer the Department or the White House. But done this way, and not flaunting it in front of the Foreign Ministry, otherwise you were treated with the same degree of rapidity that the Bolivian ambassador might receive.

Q: What about the relationship with the Foreign Ministry? The Mexican Foreign Ministry has always seemed to be kind of the burr under the saddle of American-Mexican foreign relations. How would you describe its attitude, its personnel, and its effectiveness in dealing with them?

JOVA: Well, you're right about it being the burr under the saddle because that was the favorite way the economic people played ball for what they wanted. Not that we gave anything, not that they would take any, but they wanted the arrangements to get the Mexican tomatoes in, or whatever it involved. The Foreign Ministry, if everything went right, they'd be the big apostles of non-intervention in the United Nations and the OAS, non-intervention in the affairs of others. So they were used for that, and of course, they had a lot of people that were specialists, and had lived years doing one thing or another, United Nations affairs, or frontier managers. I was three and a half years with Mexico, I forget how many desk officers we had, and it got even worse after I retired. And they'd change all the time. I remember one time that of the eight persons in the Mexico section...

Q: This is in the Department of State.

JOVA: ...six of them were leaving all at once, the director of Mexican Affairs, his deputy, six people were all leaving at once. I remember talking to Joan Clark...

Q: Director General.

JOVA: I said, "Joan, this is terrible. I know its not my business, but this just seems a terrible way to run..." And this is true of Mexico which is so important, where continuity is so needed. It must be even worse in some of the other places. This is something that has been imposed on us by what used to be called the Young Turks, who are now old and graduated, and the AFSA, the union too, because the Foreign Service officers felt they all had to have more variety of experiences, and that everybody should get a chance at political desks, geographic desks, and not be stuck in whatever, the boring things of life.

On the other hand we had very hard working people, sometimes the Mexicans were less hard working, or had been there longer, but they usually had positions that were inherited. Of course, if they're too good they haunt us, like Castañeda who was a problem, and eventually became Foreign Minister. He was very good. Of course, we're suckers for that. If somebody had a nice old face, and he's blonde, everybody takes it for granted that they're much better than some brown

Indian type. And then his step-son, Andrew Rosenthal, he of course was even blonder, and a Russian mother, and the father was Jewish but American. But certainly a very, very intelligent young man. Hated by his peers, partly because he had been to American schools, American colleges, but partly because he was such a hard working, smart person.

But also, on the American side, even when they were negotiating a fisheries agreement with the father, by the end of the meeting we had everything, or mutually agreeable solution, and suddenly young Andrew Rosenthal, the son-in-law, would come in and he'd start asking the wrong questions, and pushing the step-father, and the first thing you knew the agreement was undone, and we had to start all over again. I like this man. I think he's very smart, and he was a personal friend of mine from before. He was just a pup when I knew him when he was the third or fourth man on the Mexican Delegation to their mission to the OAS. He got in trouble then too by being too smartass and the Honduran ambassador (who wasn't the brightest at that time at all, now dead.), suddenly asked for the floor and complained about the smartass, intellectual superiority, etc., of this young man. He said, "After all, I'm a graduate. I'm one of the few Hondurans with a doctorate from the University of Mexico. Not only that but I'm the representative of my country here. My brother is married to a Mexican, therefore we consider ourselves friends of Mexico and to have the second secretary of the Mexican delegation mocking me, and making superior remarks about me face to face in committee meetings is too much, and I object." Well, this was very embarrassing for the Mexican ambassador. He sent him home for a month or two until this calmed down, and they let him come back more chastened, but that was when he was young.

Q: I've never served in Mexico, and my only real contact with them was when I was with the Senior Seminar. I did a series of interviews with foreign consuls in the United States to get a feel for the other side of the Hill, and the Mexican consuls in Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, and some other places I went, were quite different from any of the other consuls, including those from behind the Iron Curtain in those days, in their bitterness. They felt that either they weren't allowed easy access to Mexican citizens, or Mexican citizens were arrested but didn't want the Mexican consul to come. Anyway, there was a lot of bitterness there. I would think that this problem, that maybe occurs in the United States for various reasons, would reflect on when these people came back and worked on the desk. Was this a problem?

JOVA: Most of your frontier problems, and protection problems, are always very difficult. They were a headache for us. I'm sure sometimes they were a headache for the Mexican representatives in the southwest and around the country. Mind you, some of those people specialized, and this went from one consul to the other and stayed forever, and married American wives and sometimes married two or three times.

Q: They weren't as likely to end up in the inner circles of the Foreign Ministry then.

JOVA: In some cases. But in some cases that's where they got their start. They became experts on border relations. Rafael de la Colina, who was the Mexican ambassador to the OAS in my day, and was the wise man of the Mexican foreign service, and also in the OAS, a delightful person. He could turn on the bitterness when necessary, but usually he was a philosopher. But he spent most of his lifetime doing just that both in the ministry, and border consulates. But he also made

the big time. He had something in Europe, and he was the Mexican ambassador to the U.S., the White House. At one point he was ambassador to Japan, and then he came back as ambassador to the OAS, and stayed there. He became a fixture for many, many years. A Mexican was his first wife, because I knew the son later on in Mexico City; and then he married an American, she died; and he married another American. And when they retired, they're living out here in the lovely suburb of Merrywood over the river in Virginia.

It wasn't a very organized foreign service...I'm talking about the past. Also, strangely enough, a foreign service where the people didn't want to serve abroad. Quite the opposite of most foreign services, and ours. We want to serve abroad. In Mexico they were happier at home. There was not another place like Mexico, and that was how their wives felt, and they felt. They could live well, they probably had money when the Mexican peso was strong. It isn't like the Argentine, they all wanted to be here because one dollar would buy a million dollars worth of Argentine pesos at one time or another. They had younger professional foreign service officers, not political appointees although if they were lucky they belonged to a family that had political interest that might help. One of the criticisms of the Mexican embassy here was that they had a lot of people that had stayed forever, and were older, and maybe had married American wives, or maybe not, but were sort of encrusted in the embassy structure. And then an ambassador would change and he would bring political appointees, or people that were going to go with him when he became Foreign Minister later because many of them were sent here. Now the type of young people that the ambassadors bring with them is apt to be much better. But at least now they have the energy, and the astuteness to cultivate congress, and to cultivate the press which they used to do less well than some other countries such as Chile. Chile, with a smaller embassy, were up all over the Hill all the time, and knew everything and the press. The Mexicans were more relaxed, or adjusted, or also because they didn't want us doing the same thing down there.

Q: The reverse side of the coin, how did you find the embassy when you went there? You were there in '73. What was your impression of our embassy, and its strengths and weaknesses?

JOVA: We had some good people there. Some of them I brought. One of our few bigger embassies--mind you, the bigness was in other agencies, agriculture, FBI, you name it, they were there. But the Foreign Service part of it...well, start with administration. It certainly was better than Honduras which was bigger than you would think. In Mexico, security, just a little example; here we had all that security in front of the chancery, and in back there was nothing practically. The garage door was wide open. Anybody could have sped through one little sleepy policeman, and blown it up because that was a favorite trick. I said, "Why don't they close it?" "Oh, it will wear out the mechanism to go up and down."

Here where petroleum was so important we had somebody who does commercial reporting, and they're the ones who really started reporting that they'd discovered the oil--through the other agency. That should have been one of our key things.

For cocktail parties, oh sure, a whole bunch of embassy people would be invited but usually they'd be clustered and talking to each other. But then for seated parties, how many people of that embassy would add something to a dinner party, as far as speaking Spanish. We always had the

same little handful of people rather than spread that out more. That's where I would also question our examination, our whole process. You had people that were wonderful, intelligent as far as brain power went, but as far as personalities, and openness, and dealing with foreigners...At first we weren't producing that kind of persons, or certainly the wives weren't that way. They didn't want to go out. Of course, this was the business of wives' rebellion. It had just started but I gather it has tapered off where it is more reasonable. But you had some like that, not realizing what a wonderful opportunity it was also for a spouse to participate in history, so to speak. I'm giving you all the negative spots in it.

They had one of those economy drives, and they abolished the position of staff assistant, I suppose you'd call it, to the ambassador. And I fought, and I gave up. And I said we'd upgrade this very good secretary and she'll serve, but reluctantly. But it also presented such a bleak picture, they were closing consulates, and would I do my share. Well, the minute I left the ambassador came in with a high-powered junior officer from Wisconsin, and a staff assistant, the whole thing.

Q: How about the political section? How did you feel about their reporting? Or were they relying mainly on newspapers?

JOVA: We had some that were very good, particularly cultivating the younger members of the PRE...

Q: PRE being the party in power.

JOVA: We had others, the senior ones that didn't want to leave Mexico City, didn't want to go traveling around, didn't have that skill of cultivating people. Really that position could be filled in Washington, and just have airmail editions of the *Excelsior* and the *El Diario*.

Q: These were the major newspapers.

JOVA: ...sent up to Washington, and they could do it perfectly well, and not have to pay for housing, and all that sort of thing. We had some that were very good, and had extensive contacts among the younger people.

Q: Where did you go for the younger people? Were these people you had sort of kept an eye on from previous posts?

JOVA: There were only two or three people. It wasn't like the old days where you would ask for what you wanted. I brought my staff assistant, it took him three or four months before they would let him come.

Q: Who was that?

JOVA: Bill Moffitt, very nice, and very good. And I brought two people for the political section; one that had been working for me in our mission to the OAS. Again it took several months for

him to come. He subsequently became an ambassador.

Q: Who was that?

JOVA: Frank Crigler. And also another one that was on the desk that I didn't know before, but on the desk he was taking care of the briefings and I was very well impressed with him. And he was one of the ones who developed extensive contacts, Hamilton. And his wife also became a Foreign Service officer. She was in the consular section.

Treasury had a very good person there, not at first but the one that we had the second part of my time there, and who stayed for years and years and then I think went back. Its awfully good to have a few people, if they're good, that do build up that kind of depth there. And, of course, Treasury was so important to us. His name was Pasco; he's here now at Treasury.

Q: How about the labor side?

JOVA: We had a pretty good guy there. That's very difficult to penetrate, or it was in those days. Then he left and they sent us somebody who didn't speak any Spanish. That, I remember, objecting to, because I said they should have someone who can really get out there because you're cut off altogether if you can't build up some contacts. And that was difficult.

USIA, they had some good people. I had a big knock-down drag-out fight when one left, and they assigned me somebody who was an Eastern European specialist. Well, that was fine, but I said, "That's the wrong person, who doesn't speak a word of Spanish to deal with the cultural..." But there again the acting director of USIA made such a point that's its better just to accept this. It was one of those fights that went on for several months. He was a very nice person, and he did all right, but he had a very, very big handicap. At that time I was doing a lot with USIA, so much so that I understand young officers all over the hemisphere would say, "Oh, we'd like an assignment to Mexico because Ambassador Jova is doing..." I'm pointing out the weak points in the staff, and I haven't given enough emphasis to the strong points.

Q: You were talking about the USIA. How did you find it in that period, what was the role, and how did you deal with the Mexican media as ambassador?

JOVA: Well, when I got there they were very hostile, their attitude, very challenging. I must say, and again with the help of USIA, I had pretty good relationships including personal relationships, including some of the difficult personalities. By the time I left they were quite positive. Some of the usual stuff stimulated by USIA, but some that had really been developed through personal contact. The editor of *Excelsior*, and a very powerful person--a rather squat person--became a personal friend. And the same way with the editor of a news magazine who had a strong anti-American bias partly because he was on one of those awful lists that he couldn't come to the United States.

Q: We're talking about being on the visa look-out list as being ineligible for a visa.

JOVA: He was leftist, but he had been accused of being Marxist. By the time I left he did a cartoon caricature of me on the front page and a nice article. Now, mind you, they'd throw you a left ball, but generally good. I had an openness with them.

Q: I'm talking about the main elements of the press that you had to be very careful about interviews that they'd distort what you said, or was it pretty much a free give and take?

JOVA: The American press was worse on that. I had a terrible experience with that.

Q: You mean here in Mexico?

JOVA: The Mexicans might well distort something, but on the other hand our relations became quite good within the realm of the possible, let's put it that way. The New York Times man and the Washington Post woman became personal friends and I'm still in touch with them. My complaint about the American press was a television interview that I gather at one time the Foreign Service Institute used as an example. But you have to be careful of an open-ended interview on which you're just going to choose something at random. This was for CBS, one of the major chains, and it was on the American prisoners. This was a big problem at that time. The accusation was that the American citizen prisoners, drug running usually, were abandoned. They were being mistreated, harassed and tortured by the Mexicans. I think I can be proud having worked a lot of that protection. It so happened that one young vice consul, now a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, was in charge, Donna Hrinak. She had that terrible job in the consular section--visa lines--but then she was in protection and was one of the ones visiting the prisoners. She did a wonderful job. I was so happy to see her here as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State--it doesn't seem that many years ago.

This interviewer was covering that same problem, and the questions were all exacerbated. I went to visit and there wasn't room there to swing a whip, and they said they'd been whipped. Once somebody was arrested, however, we had to remember that this was an American citizen, and therefore, like Saint Paul, "I am a Roman citizen, and therefore not subject to the torture." I think this is true, American citizens feel that way also. In some cases they were interrogated in a very nasty way, with sometimes American participation.

This was my big quarrel with the DEA, the Drug Enforcement Agency. I collaborated with them in everything else, but on this aspect it was one that was very delicate. This is good because sometimes we could get information that we could never get at home with all our constitutional protection. Remember, this could harm us enormously. Look what happened to the police program which is run by AID in Latin America. And that was really a good purpose, to modernize the police forces, teach them the new things without necessarily having to shoot the victim. But when they were faced with terrorism in civilized places like Argentina, or Uruguay, what happened? What destroyed, what caused Congress to abolish the program? Because they said it was confirmed; they could hear American voices while they were being tortured; in effect for intervention. And the Americans were then listening and looking, because they were getting such valuable information on terrorists and communist movements. Well, that was enough to cause Congress to cut them out. Here the same thing had happened, it was the wrong thing.

Q: You were talking about American prisoners and the participation of the DEA people. And you were saying that you'd worked with the DEA, warning them not to get involved.

JOVA: I think I was a source of strength. I had access to them at any time, the Foreign Minister of course, but the Minister of Justice, Director General or whoever it was that was in charge of the drug problem. And I think we did great things collaborating together as a country team, and the ambassador is a very important part of it. But the mistreatment of Americans, sometimes it was unintentional. The jails were no good and in some places the jailers were mean. In other cases there were interrogations but we were in no way condoning torture, or illegal methods of interrogation.

I paid for it later. I'm not going to go into it here, but there was a resentment on this particular thing that perhaps caused me trouble.

Q: On this television interview, did a question come up about that?

JOVA: This interview was almost suspicious, I realize now. "There must be something good about this approach, about their being arrested, and imprisoned. Can't you come up with one good thing that flows from this?" This is after an hour. "Yes, I suppose if even one single person is dissuaded and discouraged from participating in the drug trade which is such a terrible thing. Its affecting the whole social fabric of the country. In that case, I suppose you could say yes, something good has come of it." "That's fine, that's just what I want." The interview finished. "Thank you very much"

And the next thing I knew I was up here in Washington on consultation, and the desk said, or the Secretary's office, "What the hell has Jova done?" They were getting calls, the American ambassador let those bodies swing, that sort of thing. Complete misinterpretation, completely taken out of context. It's much better to do an interview and say, "Okay, as long as you're going to use the whole thing. I'll make an on-the-record statement. Two minutes, do it, but I won't talk for an hour and you just chose what you want."

Q: What about the prisoner situation? When you got there, and while you were there, did you find that you might say the enforcement side was the predominant side? Because there's this terrible dichotomy between the enforcement side, and we want to stop drugs, punish the people. And the other one is protecting the Americans.

JOVA: For the Mexicans this was an easy way, a cheap way. "We're strong on the drug war. We got these Americans at the airport ranging from young people, to grandmothers sometimes." Some American kids are so dumb they bring marijuana into Mexico to smoke during the two days they're going to be in Tijuana, knowing this is a paradise, and then get caught. Some were the couriers coming from Latin America with cocaine, for instance, and just transiting the airport. But rather than going after the real drug lords that were organizing the heroin trade, they would go after the marijuana stuff, and the cocaine that was brought from elsewhere, and yes, they'd collaborate on the heroin too, but they couldn't show statistics. That really wasn't affecting them

in any way. Now, once this guy got captured the temptation was to get as much information as they could, in some cases very violently; and in some cases they were just badly treated in the jails. If you didn't have somebody to give you food, you didn't get food; or you had to get a good cell or you'd be sleeping out in the courtyard. But at the same time we must recognize that in many of the jails they were better off than they were here. Some jails were very nice, all wallpapered and that sort of thing, for women and for men also.

Now, my work also was with the Foreign Ministry, as well as with the enforcers. The enforcers didn't want to talk about it. "You're insulting, you're driving us crazy and here we have results, and this is the way a Mexican would be treated too." I remember the Foreign Ministry saying, "This is embarrassing. I can just see the embarrassment for this government, on a civil rights violation because this is really a human rights...these individual cases are interpreted as violations of human rights." In some cases they're no-goods, other times they may be no-goods but they come from good families, and that means they're related or they have access to the Congressman or the Senators, and that's why we're being driven crazy. And there are headlines in the U.S. press all the time, and the Department is getting all these complaints, and we're being pressed by members of Congress. Well, the law is the law.

And finally one of the last Foreign Ministers of my stay there, said, "You're right in taking this under study." But the main thing is to find the formula, and this is not an exchange of prisoners, but exchange of sentences. And it has to be mutual, work both ways. That when we propose that any American, that you say, "We'll exchange his sentence, and we'll take him to serve his sentence in the U.S., and we'll agree to it. And any Mexican that wants to serve his sentence in his homeland, we'll turn..." So it isn't judging the validity of the process of the court process. So I set that up, and no reply from the Department. Then I set up another one and I said, "Look, this is unusual, and this is a Mexican initiative on a problem that we've spent so much time, and so many representations on. Now they've come up with something that's possible. Maybe it should be changed a little bit, but please..." No, no, it's against the law from L.

Q: L being the Legal Adviser's office of the Department of State.

JOVA: Then Kissinger arrived on one of his last visits, and I said, "You're going to have problems with this. They're going to raise this." And sure enough, we called on the Foreign Minister and obviously he was kind of annoyed and humiliated. He'd made this constructive suggestion at some risk...and getting a negative bureaucratic answer from our side. And Kissinger, of course, could get things done, and he said, "Put another set of lawyers on that." Well, that worked out, and a treaty has made legal history. By that time I had retired; I was so pleased many months later, maybe more, when they called me--you don't often get this--from the Department, actually the Legal Adviser who had worked on this; Monroe Lee was involved except by that time he was out too; they invited me to the Rose Garden ceremony for the signing.

Q: How did you find your dealings with the Drug Enforcement Agency? In the first place what control did you have over them as far as their participation in interrogations and things like that? JOVA: They did their own housekeeping, and they sent down one of the big senior persons in it. How long it has lasted, I don't know, but at that time I said, "No, we can't put ourselves in

the position where we're accused of something that goes against the U.S. constitution, and to say publicly that we can get information here that we can't under our system." So that was that. Later on I'll speak personally.

Q: Moving on, what about another problem that I'm sure must have been with you all the time, immigration?

JOVA: Oh, yes. At that time it got quite acrimonious because a Marine General had been appointed commissioner of immigration, and he wanted results. This was back in '74. "And we'll send them back by God." So for a while it was terrible to see these planes coming in; buses sometimes; but a lot of the time a plane; and all the passengers would get off; and then this little huddled group that had been returned with their little possessions, old rags and a few little...it really made a terrible public relations image, if you want to look at it that way. Here they had gone up there to work, and they'd been sent back--some of them after having lived there a long time, and some of them just captured. And, of course, the Mexican press played it up, and the Mexican government played on that greatly. It's a law of supply and demand. As long as there's a demand for it here, and actually its applicable to drugs also--as long as there's a demand for it here somebody is going to be producing it if the price is high enough. As a Mexican said, "I never saw a diving board without a swimming pool." And, of course, this is what we're facing now. I think education...just as we've turned people off about smoking tobacco. I'm not going to enter into that thing, whether it should be legalized or not.

Q: Back to the immigration side. We're talking about supply and demand.

JOVA: The same thing. There's a pull-push. A pull from here, and a push from Mexico because there the conditions are hard. The more prosperous Mexico is, then the less push there will be. In a depression there's apt to be less pull. But there again it has to be done humanely.

Q: Was this a matter of negotiations, or complaints?

JOVA: Oh, yes, all the time. Were they doing their part to prevent the flow? First of all the constitution says a Mexican is free to move anywhere. So there had been a program to make life easier and better in the northern part of the country, to encourage them to stay there. But naturally it wasn't a perfect program, far from it. Perhaps they could modify the constitution, reform it, amend it. "But look, Mr. Ambassador, are you asking us to build a Berlin wall type of situation where we prevent people from getting out? That's what you think about eastern Germany." And, of course, if you look at it that way, it gives you pause. How can we ask them to keep their people in with machine guns, and the wall, or whatever it is? Now it's up to us to keep them out as best we can, but we have to do it in a humane way, an effective way. I don't know, particularly after I came back and I testified. This was changing the law here, reforming the act. It has helped for a while by the way. I gather that right now it has helped less.

Q: Well, you didn't have many tools to deal with this problem, did you really?

JOVA: The tools would backfire. The business of exploiting willy-nilly like the general was

doing; or building the fences. And, of course, that stupid man..."Yeah, they're going to cut their feet climbing over this fence," because it had razors. It hit the press, and that was awful in those days. The other thing is, everybody has the right to control their own borders. They also recognized that it was up to us.

Q: Today is June 2nd, 1992 and this is continuing a set of interviews with Ambassador John Jova. John, I wonder if you could talk about your impression at that time of the ruling party of Mexico. How we felt about it. I've always been uncomfortable. I'm not a Mexican hand, but here is obviously a corrupt one-party system which lectures to us on all sorts of things. But this is an outsider's view. How did you feel and deal with this party at the time?

JOVA: First of all, it works. When you think its given Mexico 60 years of peace. And the figleaf, if you will, of democracy because after all they could preach to us, they could preach to the rest as the envy of all the other Latin Americans even though they mocked it. I mean they were sarcastic about it, but still if they could organize something for themselves, they'd be very happy. I'm talking about the Central Americans and that sort of thing. The other thing, they are hated by our right wing, our extreme right.

Q: Of course you were there during the Nixon administration which, although it was not dominated by the extreme right, it was part of the Nixon system.

JOVA: Oh, yes, but those were realists. I'm talking about the further right. Sure its infuriating, the fact that they criticize us, and they're so sanctimonious about it. But on the other hand, as the French inventor of the gear shift said, "It's brutal, but it works." Well, that's how it is but up until now its worked pretty damned smoothly.

And there also was for a long time the mechanisms by which the people felt they were participating. After all, they had the votes, the rallies, and the benefits of pork barreling, etc. Now naturally those were the real beneficiaries, the professional politicians because its true. Of course, no reelection to that particular job, but they all got other jobs. They couldn't be reelected again as a deputy, but they could be elected a senator, or as a governor of a province, or a mayor of the city, some of those professions, but all their life being elected.

Q: I take it you really didn't have good contacts within the party structure itself.

JOVA: You had contact with the senators, the mayors, and the governors. But with the people actually running the party at headquarters they were apt to be more *delicado* about things, particularly to the ambassador, or at least in my time.

Q: Did the party set policy? Or was it really set by a ruling group which used the party group in the time you were there?

JOVA: Of course, the president is a very important person, don't kid yourself. But on the other hand, there are others that give the continuity to it all, and they have to make sure that the various live forces are sort of kept in balance. In other words, the labor movement, which is very powerful, believe it or not. And that was headed again by an old master who when I was there

was considered so old that he might die at any time, or would retire, and what would happen then? Well I left there, 14 years ago I'd say and he is still the head of the labor movement. Those are very good genes, those Aztec, they're apt to last a long time. Well that and the teachers' union are important; the oil workers union.

Then they have their practical people. They have to have business; the bankers; not too cozy but they're sure they're getting their share. Its one of those things you could spend your life worrying about, and analyzing, and how does it work. A friend of mine who used to be our political officer (since then has gone on to be an official in the Peace Corps, then an ambassador twice), said, "Now that I'm retired, and doing some consulting, I want to find some time and study and see what makes that damn thing run." But after all, the very fact that its kept peace in Mexico, and our border, and on those things which we've been able to come to arrangements on, why that's been very good for USA.

Q: Did you have a problem on the corruption side? From all accounts, again I'm speaking as somebody who really doesn't know. The system is really corrupt and Echeverria retired with considerable cash reserves.

JOVA: That goes back long before that.

Q: I mean, others have done this, and up and down the line. This is part of the system. Here you are, the American ambassador, you have people who really don't like the situation in Mexico, particularly as you say the right wing...

JOVA: And also to the left wing because this is really democracy, you know.

Q: Did you find there was a problem in reporting on corruption? Corruption is always there, you can always write a long report on it, but if you write a report it sure as hell will leak. And if it leaks it just causes trouble, and what's the point? Did this come up at all?

JOVA: It came out in the press. It was very hurtful. If some brave press person there discovered something and printed it, or published a story; then, "Oh, the right wing in the United States is undermining me."

Q: That's a reporter, but what about the embassy? You've got bright officers sitting around looking at the political situation; corruption is a major part of the political situation; pay-offs, or whatever it is; yet if they report on this or overemphasize it, although it is important, it surfaces back in Washington...

JOVA: Where nothing is secret.

Q: And then it can be used and it just causes trouble. Its never resolved, it just causes trouble. Did you have to deal with this, watching the reporting?

JOVA: Its true, sometimes to a young idealist you say, "Cool it. We know its really not democracy, don't make such a big thing about it. Its working." Most of them were practical. Well,

you know most of those countries are so corrupt. Cuba used to be so corrupt. I've had Cuban relatives, they went to do business in Brazil, and they said, "We've never seen anything like this, its so corrupt." "What about Cuba?" "Oh, that's nothing." Maybe they knew their way around, I don't know. But in Brazil, their impression was, it was infinitely worse. There's all kinds of corruption. There's the little corruption, I suppose we do it when we give Christmas presents to our trash collectors, and the newspaper delivery boy, that ensures that they give us better service for the rest of the year. And, of course, there's an awful lot of that in Mexico, but small stuff for the policeman, the little functionaries. They have to live, their salaries are so poor. I'm not talking necessarily about the policemen, that's more disgusting. You know, to make sure the paper gets on top of the pile rather than underneath.

But what's more disturbing is the big corruption. You can almost tell when you approach the house of a *político*. First of all there's the armed guards, and then a big house, and flood lights, then an antique automobile, or something of that sort. Or maybe it would be something else, maybe its art. Usually its not something in very good taste. Way back to Aleman, and those who were so respected by Americans. He was sort of pro-American, and not only as president but afterwards as a big father figure there in Mexico. So he probably stole, a lot of it he made. He made Acapulco his project, and he did so much for that and he owned so much land. They named the coastal seaside drive, Costa Aleman, out of gratitude.

But by the time I was there, Mexico was bigger, and therefore there was more to be corrupt about. The compound, the master's house, it was a favorite thing, and houses for children, he gave it to the University of Cuernavaca in the state of Morales. The other houses that he built are much more modern and better. Then by the time you got to Mr. López Portillo, and before the big bust came, they had already discovered oil. Mexico was in a state of shock after Echeverría, and poor. They couldn't even pay the embassy up here. The only thing they were spending money on was the oil company, wisely. They kept that under production because they had just discovered these new fields. Well, after that Mexico was like Saudi Arabia for a few years. In Europe and Paris the hotel people talk about those Mexicans. "Oh, yes. Those are the sheiks like the Arab sheiks that speak Spanish. Spanish speaking sheiks." They were throwing their money around just the way the Arabs did. There was much more for López Portillo to become one of the rich men of the world.

Q: Did the problem of corruption come to your official attention? I'm thinking of the Port of Veracruz, the rake-off of the unions, or in oil.

JOVA: Oil was very corrupt--the oil workers were very corrupt.

Q: In a way it didn't involve us. But did you have to go and say, "Your dock workers, or your railroad workers, are holding up American firms." Or was this a matter that came to your attention?

JOVA: Yes, it had to be done rather delicately, I suppose. Some things were insoluble. I think it was the Hilton, they were furious. They gathered together businessmen in New York that have an interest in the country you're assigned to...and it was this Hilton Hotel man, they had lost the

Casa Hilton, and it was taken back by Aleman (who really owned it) but they ran it for many years, and spent money on it. "This has never happened to Hilton. We must get that back." Well, that was a challenge, they never got it back, they never got what they wanted there. That was Aleman. Who would you complain to in a case like that? The government...he was a sacred cow, friendly to the United States. He had his own story too, the Hilton hadn't given him a fair deal, or whatever it was. Anyhow, years later that was one of the hotels that I think was greatly affected by the earthquakes, but that's a moot point.

Q: Did you have contact with the PAM, this being the opposition party. It played a little role in those days.

JOVA: In the past perhaps it had been strong. In my day it wasn't strong at all. Well, of course, it got much stronger afterwards. Most of one's friends were probably PAM, if they weren't members or sympathizers. I'm talking about one's social friends. They were very useful. Sometimes I'd say, "Hey, are we spending too much time with the bankers?" Well, not only were they the most civilized, but there is where you'd meet ministers in a relaxed setting that you wouldn't get sitting across a desk from them. The other ones who really had a vested interest in making this system work, coopting the people; it was very nice to know them and be invited to their events. They'd contribute to both parties regardless of where their heart was, just in case.

Q: You brought up something for someone looking at this, a student of diplomacy in future years. It seems to imply that you do better business in Mexico--this could apply to other places--in an informal setting than going to somebody's office.

JOVA: Definitely. No question about it, or at least that made it possible the next time you went to his office to talk in a different way.

Q: Why was this?

JOVA: I think it's probably human nature, and also it's very Latin, and particularly with American representatives. Sure, there was apt to be a little bit of a distance because of self respect, and because of officially anti-American views, etc., or fearful of being tagged as too pro-American. I think that's a very important aspect.

Q: Is there something in the American characters the way we do business, or something, that you found sort of rubs the Mexicans the wrong way?

JOVA: I know when I was assigned there, the Mexican ambassador to the OAS was the dean of not only the OAS corps of ambassadors, but of the Mexican diplomatic service. We had lunch, and he said, "John, a piece of advice. Be slightly aloof, and treat people with dignity. That means a lot there. It's different here once we get to know each other, we were all quarreling, and yet drinking together in multilateral forums. But remember, when you're dealing with Mexico, you're dealing with the successors to the empire of Montezuma, followed by the vice royalty of a Spanish era, and then our own Mexican president, particularly with the president, and then with the others of official importance. Because they are the heirs to those traditions, and don't forget,

they love the French in spite of the fact the French invaded them. They are very taken with French culture, and French diplomacy. And the French love to tweak the tail of the American lion, and that's appealing also."

But in general a well set table, and correct placement...mind you, after you know them, then you can be very intimate. I must say in that Pamela deserves a lot of credit, because as I mentioned, a well set table and a well cooked meal, there's no question, that means something. Its no big deal to go to the American embassy for a meal because they eat better at home. Its not like here; to go to an embassy is sort of a big thing. They eat better at home, they have all those servants, and I'm talking about Lisbon, Madrid in the old days, as well as Latin America. So if you're going to play in that league, and develop the atmosphere where you are on a first name basis and relax, this counts for a lot.

Q: Having this in mind, did you find that you were directing your other officers in the embassy to do likewise? Would you sit down and, not plan strategy, but how does one develop this, or did you just assume they knew as well as you did, and they would follow by example? How did you direct your officers who had the main contacts with the Mexican authorities?

JOVA: It was hard for the officers, for the younger officers who didn't have much money, and didn't have as much representation. By the time its divided, what the ambassador spends they usually manage to cover us one way or another. But by the time its divided up for the first secretaries, and the second secretaries, and third secretaries, it doesn't give them that much. But they could still do things nicely, and make friends. But, of course, their targets obviously were apt to be different. There were younger officers there, the ones who could get close to the pre-activists. But the bright young people in the political section could get close to the Christian Democrats in the case of Chile, and the new ones coming up, etc. The same thing is true of Mexico. And those were the proper targets for them. If everybody tried to see the Foreign Minister, that's the wrong thing. And you sometimes see that in the Service. Somebody that's married a rich wife, or they're socially ambitious, they want to entertain the Foreign Minister, or the President if they can get away with it. That only creates confusion.

Q: It could be a disaster. Moving up to the northern tier of Mexico, we have a string of consulates there, an awful lot of cross-border arrangements dealing with water, and with enterprise zones. Again going back to the time you were there, did you find 1) were the consulates useful, doing more than doing their normal work, and 2) taking care of Americans in trouble with immigration?

JOVA: This closing down of consulates because its a wonderful statistic. We've closed so many posts this year, and I know two or three Americans in a consulate were able to do much more contact than the same number in the embassy. So it was harder, you just have to work harder. But I'm for keeping up the consulates. I recognize that now there's the additional problem of the security involved and it costs so much, I've been told, to maintain a consulate with the proper super-secret communications, and security measures, that its almost a financial constraint, a truly financial constraint, not just a helpful statistic as in the old days.

But to the extent that we could have the consulates, and to the extent that we had people there just not to do visas--that's not a put-down to the visa issuers--but have some sense of what they can do as far as really keeping the embassy and the Department informed of the spirit of that section of the country they're in. And, of course, Mexico is quite a diverse country. The north, for the reasons you have stated, near the frontier the industrial zone. They're meat eaters, they're wheat eaters, which really makes them physically different than the ones further south...different kinds of Indians to mate with, and there's perhaps a higher proportion of Spanish blood in the north.

Q: How did you find you were served by the consulates in this regard in your time down there?

JOVA: We had a mixed thing, but we had some good principal officers in those consulates, particularly in the north. In the south we didn't have very much, Merida, Guadalajara and Monterrey, those were important consulates, almost little embassies, so we were well served.

Q: Did you find that unlike any other ambassador, maybe our ambassador to Canada, but you had all these agreements which ran almost state to state, rather than country to country up along the border. Did these intrude? Did you find we had a policy and they'd say, "Yes, but what about the Arizona-Sonora agreement?" Or the people there had been talking to the American Department of Interior, and they've already taken care of this, or they're doing this. You must have found a lot of that going on, didn't you?

JOVA: There was a little bit. I don't recall it being a problem, because anything really important, the central government in Mexico had to agree on, and certainly we did. Then, of course, in the whole Rio Grande, the water business, there was a coordinator for that too that had been there for many, many years. He was one of those people who was able to stay on and on. I'm not even sure that he was really a FSO, but played a very useful role. And the same way with the desk here, they had one person--maybe its more now--but in charge of keeping in touch with that coordinator, and the water problems of dividing it up.

Q: In dealing with the Mexicans, how did you work it as far as explaining the United States? Obviously they're deluged with information from the United States. But you're the ambassador to interpret it. I'm thinking of the various groups; one is the TV; the university students. How did you deal with these and try to explain America?

JOVA: Well, you did your best. We don't understand our own government sometimes. One of the things that's very interesting is the fact that there are American study programs. This was something new. It was just beginning in my day, and that was something certainly that we encouraged through USIA, and from the ambassador's office. There were plenty of Mexican study programs even then, almost too many. Sometimes I would say, "They're studying this place to death, let it happen." But its very good to have them now studying the U.S. because it is more complicated than one thinks. Of course some business people knew more about us and would know how to get things done.

Q: Did you find yourself acting as a teacher a lot, in a way explaining how things worked, to

member of the Mexican government?

JOVA: A bit yes, and to the president, yes. Of course they had a very active interparliamentary activity--Mansfield, who loved Mexico and he was at the top in the Senate...

Q: Head of the Foreign Relations Committee, Mike Mansfield.

JOVA: He had a special fondness for Mexico which meant that that interparliamentary movement was very active between the U.S. and Mexico. Also Mexico was fun, therefore they had no trouble rounding up people to come down. There was a similar one for Canada but I gather they frequently have difficulty rounding up enough important people from both houses. Mind you, it was different when they'd come up here. It was embarrassing when it was the turn of the U.S. to receive them. Hardly any congressional people would come, and the Secretary is busy, the Deputy Under Secretary is busy, and maybe even the Assistant Secretary for Latin America wasn't there.

And, of course, they are so different. They may be poor as a country, but when it comes to receiving, they don't have the budgetary constraints that we do in the Department. Therefore, when it was their turn to receive for the meeting of the interparliamentary things to take place in Mexico City; or frequently in one of the state capitals; why, they'd throw the house out the windows--the best food, singing, and all that. Where here they'd have to scrape together to give a little lunch in the congressional dining room.

Q: I remember talking with Senator Pell one time, and he said, "I get this wonderful treatment abroad, and when they come here all I can offer them is bean soup."

JOVA: That meant, of course, they pushed the State Department to spend some money to give the reception. We were short of money, they didn't have unlimited funds either, but still they would do something but it would be very, very different, cars assigned to you down there. We can't do that.

Q: You were there during an unique period in American political developments during the Watergate period. How did you explain Watergate and the eventual expulsion of Nixon from the presidency? How did you deal with the Mexicans? How did they view it? It was difficult for everybody, all the Foreign Service trying to explain this.

JOVA: It was difficult, you're quite right. And it was anguishing to see the television of the Nixon family. And to Mexicans it was just something they couldn't figure out. Well, the same thing was true in Europe. In northern Spain we had gone to visit and old people would have a little altar to Nixon, believe it or not. "Oh, that's one of the best presidents you guys have ever had." In Mexico, they're practical, they thought Nixon was a good governor.

Q: He had been a senator from California too which made him closer to Mexico.

JOVA: Yes, they liked his practicality.

Q: Using our expression, did you have to wing it, or did you get instructions, or advice, on how to play this one from Washington? Or was Washington too embarrassed to do much about it?

JOVA: There must have been some advice, it might have been boiler plate. Everybody was buttoned up about it.

Q: How was American TV received in Mexico as far as what they were doing? Did this cause upsets, or not--some of the things that were put on, Mexicans portrayed poorly, or something like that?

JOVA: Mexican people portrayed poorly, something like that the press would get and play it up. They got American TV, but not the political news in those days.

Q: Were TV news people coming down to Mexico and then coming back with things that made life more difficult for you?

JOVA: They're very independent but at the same time very sensitive, and very suspicious even if they know these things can't just happen with our press. The minute there would be a series about how bad the Mexican system is, corruption, political maneuvering, or if it really was a democracy, right away they're putting pressure on us. "This just didn't happen, this is that bad congressman from Georgia. They're doing that on purpose. There's a little group of right wing people that don't like us." And they'd call you up and speak to you about it.

But they also know how to manipulate the American press, and they had favorites that they would invite always, distinguished Americans, and several distinguished press people to the annual report to the nation by the president in September. And were they taken care of while they were there! They were really guests. Of course, that was a cross for the poor diplomatic community, or the chief of mission beginning with this one because it went on for so long--hours. And the president speaking and all orchestrated, everybody would stand up whatever he said; applaud if he kicked the U.S. Sometimes we'd bring flasks, and take little nips. And a couple of times I was out of the country, then he'd put the devils interpretation, "The American ambassador was absent. He was at home. He avoided coming to inform me."

Q: Did you find that the American ambassador in Mexico was watched rather carefully? How did this work?

JOVA: Well, that's a newsworthy person, or personage. So in other words, right away they'd try to grab you and interview you on the street. And, of course, that's very European too. The columnists were always...big examinations of what caused what. We are very poor at that. We think its dumb, or terrible, or just cranks that do that.

Q: An American diplomat thinks that most Europeans over analyze things and they see patterns. Well, they're not patterns.

JOVA: Or they're less patterns than we think they are, or they're not patterns. I'd tell them, "Listen, we're not that well organized. I wish it were true in some cases. I wish it were true that a whole Machiavellian scheme could be carried out by the State Department, Pentagon, working with the White House," that sort of thing.

Q: Then what happened? The president of Mexico had just to the delight of the audience kicked the United States in the testicles, and somebody sticks a microphone in your face, and they say, "What did you think of the president's speech?" How would you reply?

JOVA: You think of something, particularly if at the same time he might well have said, "Our relations on the other hand are better than ever, etc." Well, then you'd emphasize that. "Basically our relations are good, as he's said to me over and over again."

Q: How did you and the embassy view the Mexican armed forces? Unlike any other Latin American country, and many other countries, you never really hear much about the armed forces because they often are so much a power.

JOVA: They're very aloof, and very secretive. The other Latins found them that way also. I remember Guatemalans, or Central Americans specifically, "Oh, they have a zipper on. We never know what they're thinking or doing." Within the possible, our attachés, and our mission, worked on it and developed personal relationships. And I knew quite a few of them because the attachés would want me to come to their dinner party, or for me to host them. So you got to know the top ones. They were close mouthed, and the system was very respectful of them.

Q: Did you find that it was generally agreed that we weren't to offer too many goodies to the armed forces, to make them any stronger? Did you find there was any conflict about what we could give, and what they wanted?

JOVA: No, it was more a budgetary problem of what they were willing to buy. I can't remember that being a problem. Naturally there was a lot of cooperation on things they would use for drugs control. So much so that that was going largely to the Minister of Justice. At one point there was unease that the Minister of Justice had more planes than the Minister of the Air Force had. Naturally they weren't fighter planes. Mexico doesn't accept AID. Now they have an AID office, but again doing very restricted things. But there was no Peace Corps, and no AID in my time. The AID mission wasn't a mission, it was an office for publishing books. After that they got into birth control. After I left they changed that, but they do have an office now, a relatively big one, but not really to help, the way they do in other countries. They are so worried about being bought by us, or appearing to need our help much as they may need it. It all has to be done in a very relatively subtle way, or not done.

Q: What about the southern area of Mexico? I hear a great deal about the northern tier, but the borders with Central America and down there? Was this of any concern to us? Or what was happening down there?

JOVA: Yes, it was. That was one of the things which I think afterwards became more

constrained. But even then it was of concern. First of all, the illegal immigration; because just the way Mexicans sneak in here, Guatemalans and others would sneak in. And that's the one thing we could agree on. Knock down those illegal vagrants from Guatemala crossing the border, who eventually a good portion would come up and cross our borders. That and the fact that Guatemala had a very active revolutionary terrorist movement going on. Our military people and their military people would discuss that; much more after I left because it became more of a concern. But, of course, the central government doesn't want them to get too involved in anything of that sort. But they were pressing for that because they were concerned for their own strategic purposes.

Q: Were you able to get officers down to the troubled borders in the south? Or was this, "Stay out of here."

JOVA: It wasn't that troubled, and we did go for one thing or another because in effect there was a whole zone there in that narrow part of Mexico that became a barrier.

Q: How about Cuba as a factor? I mean events in Cuba, had they pretty well run their course and it was sort of old hat, or did Cuba keep popping into the conversation?

JOVA: Oh, Cuba kept popping into the conversation with Echeverría. Even if they made loud noises about how bad our Cuban policy was, and voted against it in the OAS, remembering that the Mexicans were the only ones that didn't vote for the expulsion of Cuba from the system, or the suspension of Cuba in the system. After that flawed past, then a working arrangement that was relatively comfortable grew up between the then Mexican government and ourselves in regard to Cuba. Talk big, but cooperation underneath on the flights and photographing, that sort of thing.

Q: But with Cuba were there any major sticking points in the four years you were in Mexico? Or was it just that you found things not quite as friendly?

JOVA: Definitely not; the problem of their votes in the OAS and the United Nations, and their general relationship, etc. This is Mexican policy; that's a fellow country, and this is their government. It's up to the people to throw it out themselves, we shouldn't participate. But that was true in many countries.

Q: Well, John, tell me at the end of this series of interviews, you left when the Carter administration came in. You'd had your normal four years in a major embassy, but tell me how did you view, and how is it viewed? The man who was appointed your successor was sort of a shock to a lot of people in the Foreign Service and out. I mean he was an ex-governor of Wisconsin, Lucey, really didn't speak Spanish. It was sort of an odd assignment, and from all accounts didn't work out very well anyway. At least this is the Foreign Service scuttlebutt. At the time, how did you feel about this?

JOVA: Carter felt very strongly that, the way he put it, our relations with Mexico were so important that this just can't be left to anyone, or a career person. It should be someone really

close to the president who has chosen him specially. Well, of course, there were all kinds of internal party reasons, I think, for appointing Pat Lucey because of what he had done in the election, what he hadn't done.

Q: He wasn't part of Carter's inner circle anyway

JOVA: No, but this was his payoff because he'd given him support at the convention. I can't remember the circumstances, but there was a political debt there, and he justified by saying this would give visibility of our close relations. No, it was the wrong appointment. He is an intelligent person, a nice person, and his wife was living up here rather than down there.

Q: We're talking beyond your period but just to get a feel...one of the things I heard was that when Lucey came (which happened later on too under Gavin), he had staff aides there who completely shut out everybody, and very suspicious of the Foreign Service. They were going to do everything their way which, of course, doesn't work.

JOVA: I remember somebody at that time telling me, "We might just as well have the newspapers flown up here. We could do it just as well as far as the reporting we're getting from the embassy itself." Who knows, they might have kept me on longer. Mrs. Carter actually made soundings, and Pamela said, "Oh, no, we have other plans." "Are you sure they couldn't be changed?"

BRUCE MALKIN
Economic Officer
Mexico (1974-1977)

Bruce Malkin was born in Philadelphia in February 1946. He received his bachelor's degree from University of Pennsylvania University. His career includes positions in Jamaica, Mexico, Singapore, and Washington D.C. Mr. Maklin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2005.

MALKIN: I was in the Consulate General in Guadalajara for three years, until mid '77.

Q: What was your job?

MALKIN: In Guadalajara I had a wider role than I would have had in Mexico City, where officers were just following the petroleum industry or some limited sector of the economy. I was basically doing everything that wasn't consular or admin. I handled mostly trade promotions and U.S. investments. We had maquiladoras there, where American investors were assembling electronic items for re-export back to the U.S.

Q: A free trade area or something.

MALKIN: Yes, it's a value added manufacturing free trade area.

Q: Who was Consul General there?

MALKIN: Matt Ortwein. It was his final posting. It was considered to be a very easy choice post for an end-of-career CG.

Q: What was the situation in Guadalajara when you were there? Since you were dealing economic and political and all that?

MALKIN: Yes, I was responsible for our contacts with and reporting on economic, political, and commercial activities. Therefore, I was involved with U.S. and Mexican businessmen, provincial Governors, Chambers of Commerce, student leaders as well as agricultural leaders. USDA's newsletter printed my article on the tequila industry of western Mexico, which required a lot of intensive research on my part, visiting many tequila factories. Our jurisdiction covered six western Mexican states, including Jalisco.

Q: Did you go out and look, what is it cacti?

MALKIN: It is distilled from the fermented juice from the agave plant.

Q: There's a very large American community there?

MALKIN: There is in Lake Chapala, not so much in Guadalajara. There was a big community of veterans and elderly or sick Americans who needed affordable live-in help; there were a lot of deaths of American citizens being processed at the Consulate General because they were just dying from old age or sicknesses

Q: What was the political situation at that time?

MALKIN: As I recall, Luis Echevarría Álvarez, was the president, and he was a jerk. I think he is on trial earlier this year for some things he did in those days. He was pretty left-wing, and not pro-American. Then there were the political parties supported by different gangs, while the public universities and the private universities in Mexico City were having student warfare, which spilled over into Guadalajara in a smaller fashion. I tried to keep in touch with student leaders there, and write political reports on what was happening and get them to the Embassy. The Embassy always liked to get these items from the consulates.

Q: Were these university gangs politically oriented, or were they just gangs?

MALKIN: I think they were just gangs. They may have had some nominal connections with the political parties in Mexico. I remember my wife at that time still loved me, and she bought me a bulletproof vest to wear when I went to lunch with these characters. It was different to go to a restaurant with them. They cleared out the floor of the restaurant, and they had bodyguards. It was a little intimidating to be around real thugs.

We were a little nervous because this was only a year after the American Economic/Commercial

Officer at our Consulate north of us in Hermosillo was kidnapped and killed, and Terence Leonhardy, the former Consul General in Guadalajara had been kidnapped and released. So the whole idea of attacks on Americans in that particular region of Mexico was certainly a real threat that you lived with. It made us aware that American diplomats could be at risk.

Q: Did you find, many of us had accepted the fact the PRI was going to be there forever and ever?

MALKIN: I never thought they would be displaced, by the PAN or anybody else, but eventually they were.

Q: Did you have much problem with Americans? Were they getting into trouble, arrested, kidnapped, robbed, that sort of thing?

MALKIN: In Mexico City they were, but not in Guadalajara. In Guadalajara my biggest problem was a crooked American businessman who had one of these maquiladoras, and he brought in these shipments of electronic components and did not pay for them. When I went to his factory to try to mediate a dispute with the Mexican suppliers, the factory was empty. It was padlocked and he was gone. That was unusual.

I started a little group among the American business community in Guadalajara to meet with the Consul General periodically, since there was no American Chamber of Commerce. We just had informal discussions at the Consulate itself, or maybe at CG Ortwein's home once or twice, to try to plum their thoughts on the likely depreciation of the peso vis-à-vis the dollar and the problem with all the peso-denominated bills that the Americans were investing in because it was going up so fast. What was going to happen if the peso really took a dive, which is exactly what happened in the late 70's.

Q: Did you feel the hand of our Embassy in Mexico City very much?

MALKIN: As I recall, the only ones interested in me were the people at the Regional Trade Center in Mexico City. The Commerce Department had a Regional Trade Center for Central America and Mexico, but it always had its trade promotions in Mexico City. I became friendly with the Mexican organizers of the large annual fair in Guadalajara. In 1977, my third year there, I convinced the men in charge of the fair to donate adequate space in the fairgrounds for an exhibition of American farm machinery. The actual organization of the American businesses was handled by the Commerce's Trade Center in the capital. It was the first time Commerce ever had an off-site exhibition outside Mexico City, although the Trade Center was supposed to be regional. I was flying to Mexico City to coordinate with the Trade Center Director, Art Leonard, and he and his staff came to Guadalajara to check on arrangements. We had a really big exhibition with tractors from John Deere and Caterpillar and a number of other agricultural machinery companies, and it was a big success. So everybody, both State and Commerce, were happy again with my commercial work.

Q: Then, you left there in what, '79?

MALKIN: '77. We served in Guadalajara from 1974 -1977. I should mention that our first daughter was born in April of '74, shortly before we moved to Mexico. Our daughter spent her first three years in Guadalajara, and, of course, became bilingual. Years later, she studied Spanish again and regained her fluency.

MILDRED MARCY
UN Conference on Women, USIS
Mexico City (1975)

Mildred Marcy grew up in Oregon, where she attended Willamette University and went on to finish her BA degree at Barnard College. She started volunteering with the League of Women Voters soon after World War II and served as National Organization Chairman and Treasurer on the National Board of the League of Women Voters of the United States. She joined USIS in 1957. This interview was conducted in 1991 by Dorothy Robins-Mowry.

Commission And Subsequently In Complex Preparations For 1975 UN World Wide Mexico City Conference On Status Of Women.

Q: Mildred, when did you actually move over there?

MARCY: February, 1975, I think. Bernice went over about October, 1974.

Q: I don't think that is right. I came back from Japan in '73. When you and I had the turnover....

MARCY: But I was in that EEO office for 7 or 8 months.

Q: Oh, okay. You must have been there then into '74.

MARCY: I remember when I finally got to the State Department we had to prepare for the Mexico City conference in June of '75. At the same time we only had a year to prepare the report of the President's Commission. So we had to organize all the committees of the Commission and do the planning. We refused to do the position papers for the Mexico City conference. We insisted that IO had to continue that--that was Shirley Hendsch. We had all that condensed into the first six months.

Bernice Bar had been seconded over and she had done some baseline work as to how the Secretariat was going to get organized. She was assigned to Virginia Allan's office and to Shirley Hendsch's office. There was no space yet created for the IWY Secretariat.

Q: I remember the first time I visited you at the State Department you were in a corner suite, I think on the first floor.

MARCY: It was called the transition suite.

Q: It was Mildred, Bernice, and maybe one other person--things were pretty simple except you had a private bathroom, I remember.

MARCY: They put us in what is called the transitional space in the Department where after a presidential election if the administration changes, the new secretary of state occupies that space while the transition team gets to work. We lost that space when an election came along and Carter was elected. Dick Moose, who used to be on Carl's staff, was head of the transition team for State. Dick was the one who had to oust me from the space in the State Department, but I found space over at the Columbia Plaza that State still has.

Trials And Tribulations In Mounting U.S. Part Of Mexico City Conference

There is a funny story that goes along with my first day at the State Department. I had this posh space but no personnel yet, except for an executive officer who was called executive director and thought that he was going to run the operation. He had been assigned by the Director of Foreign Service Personnel, Nathaniel Davis. But I knew enough about this particular individual by reputation to know that he was a 3 martini man at the Golden Table every noon. I was not about to have anybody like that calling any shots at the IWY Secretariat. I went to Nat and I said: "I appreciate the fact that you were trying to get the office partially staffed before I came over, but I am not satisfied with the person that you have assigned. I would like to see the dossier on the Foreign Service Officers who are available for a Washington assignment to see if I can find somebody else." He protested just a little bit. He said: "Do you have any particular objection to him? I have eleven other officers I can give you files on and you may find someone there that you prefer, but any particular reason you don't want this man?" I said: "Yes, I know him by reputation and I know also having been in USIA long enough that the new girl on the block always has a hard time in a new environment and I'm the new girl on the block in the State Department. I am not going to be known as the person who got saddled with a turkey, especially a stewed one." Nat howled and he said: "You will have the eleven files on your desk by the end of the day."

In those files was an absolutely superb officer by the name of P. Chandler Roland, who was our executive officer. I have never worked with a more efficient, more *simpático*, more committed male Foreign Service Officer. He had to go home and consult with his wife before he accepted this assignment, and then he brought full commitment to the position. After a year and a half in the job I was able to write such a glowing OER on him that he received, not just on the basis of my report, a significant promotion. He was the best executive officer we have ever had and he really helped to get us off to an excellent start.

The whole process of creating a staff out of nothing, we eventually built the staff to 40 people at the time when the work was the heaviest, meant combing the availabilities, defining the jobs, defining the duties, deciding on the committees of the Commission. Jill Ruckelshaus was the first Chairman of the Commission and there were 35 members of the Commission. I won't go into the work of the Secretariat aside from saying that we had a two fold responsibility for the first six

months. One was to work with the Bureau of International Organization Affairs in developing and writing the position papers to guide the U.S. delegation to the International Conference in Mexico City in June of 1975.

Pat Hutar, who was the U.S. delegate to the UN Status of Women Commission, was the head of the delegation and Mr. Daniel Parker, who was the director of AID, was the co-head of the delegation to the Mexico City conference. The delegation members were appointed by the White House and the House and Senate, as were the 35 Commission members, but they were not an identical set of people. There was some overlapping, but it was really dealing with two groups of approximately 35 people all of them politically appointed. We had also gone through a long consultation process with non-governmental organizations about people who might be on both the Commission and on the Delegation. Of course that all had to go through the State Department and the White House appointment offices. Anyway, it was a complicated three-ring circus. The first and inspired appointment that Virginia Allan and I agreed on was to get Catherine East from the Department of Labor, the Women's Bureau, who had been the Executive Director of the Esther Peterson's Commission on Women (during President Kennedy's tenure), and was fully cognizant of all the issues and knew how to help this Commission build on previous experience. Catherine came to the staff as head of the program--the substantive work of the Commission. Gradually we were able to get and build a staff of some 35 to 40 people that worked on...

Q: Mildred, where did your budget come from for so many people?

MARCY: \$500,000 brought from different government agencies. Many of the staff were seconded and paid for by their own agency. USIA paid my salary. The others were seconded from the Labor Department, HEW, etc. But we had to do a persuasion job to get their budget officers to pay their salaries.

Q: And then you had to have a budget for your expenses.

MARCY: That's right. The \$500,000 that was allocated by the various cooperating government agencies at the beginning was what had to be put together initially by Anne Armstrong to justify the Executive Order. That was what we had to operate on until the women in Congress led by Bella Abzug and Margaret Heckler got together, near the end of the first year and before our report had been completely prepared and printed, and passed PL 94167. It directed this National Commission to organize and convene a national women's conference and for other purposes. The other purposes meaning state conferences in all of the fifty states and the six territories. It appropriated \$5 million which was to cover the total expenses of the Commission and the state commissions.

I'm skipping over this because it is in the archives in one way or another--not in the Agency archives, but it is available wherever the International Women's Year Commission files are.

In the early summer of 1975--just five months after the Presidential Commission had started its work, the Secretariat was still in a partially organized state, and the U.S. Delegation to the UN Conference on IWY had barely been appointed--there occurred the worldwide UN Conference in

Mexico City. I won't go into detail because that's all documented in UN and U.S. legislative and executive branch files. Just let me say that the World Plan of Action was adopted unanimously on the last day by voice vote. But introduced in to the deliberations leading up to the last day were the Zionist Resolutions and the New International Economic Order, NIEO. All of these were issues that were surfacing repeatedly in UN conferences. Ours happened to be the first where the two issues, Zionism and the New International Economic Order, surfaced with such vehemence and such rigid positions. The only reason we were able to pass the World Plan of Action out of the Mexico City conference was because the women delegates were determined that they were not going to be sidetracked from the main purpose of the conference on to these other, they considered, subordinate issues.

Q: I remember the opening session at which the President of Mexico spoke. He was an ardent advocate of a policy called the New International Economic Order. He gave a very, very strong speech. After that there was concern that the conference would focus on issues other than those of the women's conference itself. Mildred, I think it is important, both for what went on at Mexico City with the establishment of the non-governmental Forum, but also because of your own organization back in Washington. Before the conference you were bringing together in that office, as workers or as representatives from organizations cooperating with what you were doing, a multiplicity of governmental operations as well as the non-governmental organizations. This was a massive diplomatic undertaking.

MARCY: Well, it was unusual in the eyes of the State Department, too, because we were insisting that the briefing papers for the U.S. Delegation reflect not simply governmental positions, but government positions derived from or reflecting public attitudes, concerns and beliefs. The only way to determine that was to call in acknowledged representatives of eminent organizations and some individual experts of one kind or another, and have them cooperate with us in defining the terms of the issues in the U.S. context, which then were incorporated into the position papers to instruct the delegates from the U.S. That whole process of having governmental personnel essentially briefed by non-governmental people with certain expertise on various women's issues, and there I will use the term women's issues because it concerned employment, health, etc. as it impacted on women, was a healthy exercise both ways and was a learning experience both ways. It developed pretty good position papers. At least there was consensus among the organizations that the U.S. delegation in the main, not entirely, but in the main, was carrying out the will of the people, if you can put it that way. It was a technique that I wish had been followed more adroitly in later periods. They still go through pro forma motions, but there is not the real consultation as I observed it.

Q: I remember being in some of those planning sessions on policy papers. We sat around one of the big conference tables at the State Department for 2 and 3 hours trying to come to some agreement but also finding out where we needed more information. My understanding was that the Mexico City Conference as a women's conference was an educational experience all around. For instance, as I recall, the delegates were not given good training on how to perform at an international conference. We often were behind the eight ball because the delegation did not know how to lobby internationally. That was changed subsequently. Also at Mexico City I remember we had an uprising among the organizations led by one or two rather militant people

who felt that they were being left out. Do you want to address any of this?

MARCY: Yes, I would like to emphasize the support we got from USIS and the embassy. Particularly in the person of Ambassador John Jova who was very receptive to the whole principle of the Mexico City Conference. He made available the open air space outside the embassy offices where every morning we would have a meeting with anyone who was interested from the U.S. delegation or the Tribune, which was the parallel non-governmental forum clear across town, to come and discuss the issues that were going to be discussed in the respective bodies that day. We had some hot and heavy discussions. At one point the Latin American groupings from the Tribune felt very, very strongly that they wanted a translation in Spanish of the Tribune's positions presented to the U.S. delegation and to the Mexico City Conference. USIS worked all night printing in Spanish the material that the Tribune developed so that there could be again a confluence of views. It was not always productive and satisfactory, but there was an attempt made to bridge the gap between the ballet, as we used to call it, of the governmental delegations and the free for all stomp and dance that was going on at the Tribune. It was an exciting experience.

LEONARD F. WALENTYNOWICZ
Administrator for Security and Consular Affairs
Washington, DC (1975-1977)

Born and raised within the Polish community of Buffalo, New York, Leonard F. Walentynowicz obtained a law degree from the University of Buffalo. He was appointed director of consular affairs under Presidents Nixon and Ford. Mr. Walentynowicz was interviewed in 1992 by William D. Morgan.

Q: She came back after you?

WALENTYNOWICZ: Correct, Barbara took my place after I left. She was a Carter appointee. I have some other thoughts on that too for Barbara's sake, but that's for another time. But, the important thing is we then had a treaty with Mexico, the first time in the history of this country, where we exchanged, so to speak, prisoners, or defendants in criminal action, when we gave them that option. And, what was remarkable about that treaty, it was sustained under constitutional attack, and it was sustained only because I insisted, this is where I am going to take a little horn blowing. My practice, as a lawyer, from Buffalo, my tradition in human rights, when the treaty was originally prepared, it did not contemplate the involvement of the individual. This was between two sovereign states. They decide who goes where. I says, no way Jose. And then under the US constitution, and not only under the US constitution, but I think, it is a matter of international human rights. You've got to get the person involved; you've got to tell him what's involved and you've got to get his consent. Does he want to do that? He may want to stay in Mexico.

Q: He might want to stay where drugs are more available in jail.

WALENTYNOWICZ: And that's the same way for the Mexicans; they may feel that American jails are better than Mexican jails. I don't know that it is, so you see, my point is, I insisted on this, because there were conferences, and I insisted with Bob--from legal--he brought in the treaty. That was Bob Dalton. I insisted, and I said, "What are you talking about?" and he said, "You know, all of the people are saying this is sovereignty, this is between sovereign states." "What are you talking about, this is human beings involved, see." And guess what was the reason why the second treaty wasn't put under attack and was sustained? Because that treaty had that provision in it.

Q: Protection of the individual choice?

WALENTYNOWICZ: Correct. So, I feel good about that, that we got that in there. There were two major initiatives in offering protection, which still are there, and not only that, but the Mexican treaty became a prototype for other treaties that the United States has, not only with Canada, ...we started one with Canada when I was still there. But I understand now, of course I haven't followed up on it, but with many other countries, including Turkey. And some other countries, similar treaties, not identical, but at least similar treaties, that provide... and I think that's a major human rights...

Q: I think that the reader should know that at this time also was an explosion of the drug problem, that had started a few years before, but had really reached a crescendo. Also, the attitude that you described before of "they're all a bunch of bad guys"--but especially the official emphasis on anti-drug policies, which is understandable-- caused you to walk into these issues just as you came on board, just when the brakes had to be put on.

WALENTYNOWICZ: Yes.

Q: Someone had to do something, even though you went through what you went through, on your very first congressional encounter. It was good.

WALENTYNOWICZ: Exactly, yes.

Q: It really alerted you to the human sensitivities, and the political sensitivities.

WALENTYNOWICZ: Not only that, but I want to make sure that the record is clear on this. I am not taking credit for originating of the idea on this, because this to me, was brought to me by two people, I can't think of their names, from New York City. There was a man and a woman. Very nice people, they were from some kind of a defense fund, okay, you know, that's what they were from.

Q: Um hum, a defense fund...

WALENTYNOWICZ: Anyway, whatever it was, they brought it up, and I want to give them credit. I can supply their names from my notes later on, but I just don't want to say that I was the

originator of the idea, but I certainly energized the idea in the Department.

And the reason for that is because there were a lot of senators that felt we should not commit America to someone else's ideas of refugees, and so forth. We can go into that, but that's the overview, and then you had the specific things. And I found that Albert and his committee were only interested in addressing specific aspects, that's number one. The other thing is that at the time that I was there, the Democrats controlled the Senate. And I'm not picking on the Democrats, I'm just simply trying to give you a history, because the Democrats also controlled the House, and Albert was a Democrat. The House was doing work, but the Democratic guy was Eastland, and Eastland never held a hearing.

Q: Because he didn't believe in the immigration policies, and didn't believe in getting involved.

WALENTYNOWICZ: He didn't believe in any policy. All he believed in was making sure that farmers of the southwest and the south had enough Mexican migrant workers to take care of his political constituencies, that's all he cared about, so he didn't want to mess up the... He never had any hearings, he never got anything done, I mean, he just never had any hearings. And, you know, to me, forgive me, the name of Mr. Eastland and so forth, but I thought that that was disgraceful. I thought that was irresponsible.

Q: I think you will find everyone in the Visa office felt the same way.

WALENTYNOWICZ: Yeah, I know, I mean, here the Senate of the United States has a definite responsibility and so forth, to do positive things, and its' not doing anything, OK. And then on the House side, you have a lot of hearings, and a lot of action, but they are doing what is now known as micro-managing, you know, instead of doing the broad policy things. Now, some of the micro-management made some sense, you know. I remember in retrospect, I don't know if I would still support it, but one of the things that I know was hot on the agenda for the House, and I did support it, was to make sure that a child can't petition his mother and father until 21 instead of upon birth.

Q: And this was aimed at Mexicans, for example, that would come across the border, have their birth, and go back home.

WALENTYNOWICZ: Correct, and I understood that logic, and I supported that logic, but on the other hand, it also bothered me that really isn't going to solve the problem, you see, that was what I meant about micro-management instead of macro.

I was rocking the boat, okay, and then it is this: You know we have developed a system now where we give certain people a preferential treatment. Okay, the bulk of the new immigration, if you will notice, based upon the figures that were reported this morning in the Washington Times, I'm not talking about the comment, about the facts. The bulk of them, are the very people who are the beneficiaries of this preferential treatment. So, what you are saying, mainly...

Q: *...the Mexicans?*

WALENTYNOWICZ: Mexicans, and also Asian-Americans, and Latin Americans, and Hispanics, you see what I mean. So what you are saying now, to the Americans that are already here, is "We are going to bring all of these newcomers, and we are not only going to give them a chance to be Americans, but we are going to give them an even better chance at being an American. You have got to share what you have built up. And you have to deny your kids the right to be a police officer, or what have you, a fireman, or go to school, because these new people are coming in." Now, that's only going to go so far.

Q: *Is that called backlash?*

WALENTYNOWICZ: I wouldn't call it backlash, because I think backlash means, to me, some kind of a negative connotation. I think all it means is that an American wants fairness; that's what I want. In other words, we've got to have an immigration policy to welcome newcomers, we have to do it fairly.

Q: *What if the Hispanic speaking immigrant takes over and it's Spanish that I've got to learn and what if I can't get my job because that Asian got it in my stead?*

WALENTYNOWICZ: That's what I'm getting at. Not only do you have the preferential treatment problem, but then you go to the other part of it and that is you are going to change the fundamental makeup of America.

Q: *You define Americans as what?*

WALENTYNOWICZ: Well, that's the point. This is what, remember at the beginning of this whole discussion, we talked about dual identity, see? I mean, I've thought about this many, many, many, many times. We still have an America, OK. I don't know if we defined it as crisply as some commentators may desire, and so forth, but I do think that we do have some kind of fundamental ideas about America, OK. We have a Constitution. We have a system of jurisprudence. We have a system of government. We had a system of values, and it was based upon family values. Yes, we tried to keep religion out of politics, but that doesn't mean we didn't have values. I mean, whether or not you called yourself Catholic, Quaker, or Anglican...

Q: *...or none of the above.*

WALENTYNOWICZ: ...or none of the above. There was a certain kind of value. America meant something. I tell you for the reason that is because of the comedians. The comedians make fun of things, and make fun of values, we do this, and we do that and we get foibles and I'm not just talking about comedians, I don't just mean satirical comedians, but I'm talking about the guys like Jack Benny, who could tell a story. Or one of the other guys, Irvin Cohen, who would tell a story and so forth. You know, the Jewish mother and her penchant for matzah ball soup, and so forth to cure all illness, you know chicken soup to cure everything.

Q: *Ethnic jokes?*

WALENTYNOWICZ: Sure, and a lot of them were bad but a lot of them were good, you know.

Q: *Right.*

WALENTYNOWICZ: And the point that I am getting at is that I don't know whether or not, I'm a fear monger; I'm not, because I welcome them. I'm the guy that said in the last office, I think that we can bring in more immigrants than we are.

Q: *Bring in though, but bring in legally, you are talking about legal immigration.*

WALENTYNOWICZ: I'm talking about legal immigrants. Define immigration that has a purpose that we are doing it for the reasons like we said before. We have to protect the immigrant, we have got to protect ourselves, and we do it in a fair way.

Q: *So much of it is what we used to call back door, or illegal, or...*

WALENTYNOWICZ: It still is!

Q: *...or some other way....*

WALENTYNOWICZ: It still is. This is the reason why I posed it essentially the way I did. I'm not saying there shouldn't have been some amnesty, but the way we gave amnesty in '86. I think it was terrible!

Q: *What was that again?*

WALENTYNOWICZ: The amnesty of '86. We said that anybody who was here illegally in '82 comes in.

Q: *Oh, yes, their status is legitimized.*

WALENTYNOWICZ: Right, and the reason for that, you know there was only one reason, because the bulk of that, and the statistics will prove it, 80% of the people that got legalized were Mexicans. It was a Mexican "reliefdom" and what did it do? Did it help any? No!

Q: *It gave them a legal status here.*

WALENTYNOWICZ: Well, yeah, it helped the Mexicans, but did it help the Americans? Did it control the problems? Did it help them at the border? We did none of that, none of that happen? In fact, we had the next volume of people coming in, wherever they may be. And I think that's kind of unfair, because there are a lot of other people from other parts of the world that want to come to America.

Q: Short of going bankrupt totally, and becoming immoral and all of those other things that would cause people to run away from us, how do you control the people coming in? The Hispanics coming across the Mexican border, for example?

WALENTYNOWICZ: Well, I don't have any magic solutions. I'm not going to be defensive about it here, but I think we have to make some decisions, much smarter decisions than we have now. Let me give you an immediate example. We have very strong border control, all along Canada, and in the gulf ports and Miami, we do! I know. I get called periodically by the federal court service about being caught and so forth, many times. Those people get caught, and they get prosecuted, and they get prosecuted firmly, okay. I'm not saying that it's paranoid, but they get prosecuted. For what do these people get prosecuted for? In the southwest, nobody gets prosecuted. That to me is unfair because it is a big issue of selective prosecution.

Q: But is it volume that brings this about. From Canada no one is running away, to speak of. But from Mexico they are coming in by the millions.

WALENTYNOWICZ: Volume, volume, right. In other words, not only that, but also the agreement. The Canadians respect this more, our relationship with Canada. So you are asking about Mexicans, I think that one of the things that we have to do, is to make it clear to the Mexicans that we mean business.

Q: How do you do that?

WALENTYNOWICZ: It's hard! It took me 18 months...

Q: ...to build a wall?

WALENTYNOWICZ: Well, you know, obviously, you are saying to me...well, we have been talking about Mexicans. I don't know. I know I talked with the Mexicans for 18 months. I talked to the attorney general, and we never got any place until -- I will tell you what happened -- until I caught the eye of Mr. Kissinger. I didn't talk to him personally, but I mean through Larry. This is a good treaty, this is good, everybody will benefit from it, okay? and finally, this was it. I don't know if this has really happened. I think of that happening as an effort to control the flow of people, in this US/Mexican trade treaty.

Q: So we are really talking about two nations very different economically, one who is third world...

WALENTYNOWICZ: And culturally, and also that they respect each other.

Q: But Mexico needs an escape valve, and we happen to be a very convenient one. And they are not discouraging people from leaving Mexico to send remittances back...

WALENTYNOWICZ: But we permit all of this.

Q: *Technically, it is all illegal isn't it?*

WALENTYNOWICZ: Yes, technically, it is illegal. But my point is that it is illegal. If we do all of this stuff for other countries, people would get offended. But somehow we are supposed to accept this from Mexico.

HERBERT THOMPSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico (1975-1978)

Herbert Thompson was born in California in 1923. After serving in the US Army from 1943-1946, Mr. Thompson finished his bachelor's degree at the University of California. His career included positions in Spain, Bolivia, Argentina, Panama, Chile, and Mexico. Mr. Thompson was interviewed by Thomas J. Dunnigan in 1996.

Q: *Well then in 1975 at the end of that tour, you went to Mexico City as DCM, an even larger embassy. There you had two ambassadors, Ambassador Jova and Ambassador Lucey, I believe. Is that correct?*

THOMPSON: Yes, that's right. With a substantial hiatus between them during which time I was chargé.

Q: *What were the principal problems that you encountered on arrival in Mexico?*

THOMPSON: Of course, one has to live in and deal with a border country, perhaps other than Canada to have any sense of what relations with Mexico are like. Perhaps the best introduction I had to things Mexican was that within days after my arrival, we had a CODEL [congressional delegation] arrive that insisted on meeting with the President. As a result, the ambassador and I took them, two Congressmen, to the Presidential Palace and participated intermittently, rather participated in what proved to be an intermittent nighttime meeting with the President, Echeverria, which I suppose began at 9:00 P.M. and ended sometime after 1:00 A.M. At some point, First it must be understood that President Echeverria's work method was to have a variety of consultant groups and conclaves and meetings with supporters going on in the palace simultaneously. He would move rotating from one group to the next so that our conversation would reach a certain point in our group when he would turn to the foreign minister and ask him to continue and excuse himself and disappear. For the next 20 minutes the conversation went on without the President at which point the President might or might not intervene again, and then be gone again. Somewhere in the course of this rather chaotic evening, I remember excusing myself to locate the gentlemen's room, and upon being told where it was, I found I had to traverse a long corridor which was also a kind of petitioner's waiting room, so that the corridor was full of people lining the walls waiting and hoping to

speak to the President or someone. This is after midnight, because Echeverria was famous for his night hours. As I went down this hall, I was suddenly struck with the realization that what I was looking at over the heads of these waiting Mexicans were drawings of the gun emplacements of General Scott at the time he invested Chapultepec. It suddenly dawned on me that the President of Mexico, every day, walked past those symbols of American occupation of his capital, and it helped to a degree to explain some of the attitudes.

In addition to the great peculiarities of serving in and with a country which shares an immense unguarded frontier with the United States, I had supposed that personal relations would be very difficult in Mexico because of the constant stress of endless problems being sifted by representatives of both governments in Mexico City. To my surprise I found that the Mexicans were very adept at distinguishing between personal relations and official difficulties and did not tend to carry one over into the other. I found Mexican officialdom not only very cordial but very cooperative and enjoyed a splendid working relationship during the time I was there, despite the problems we were constantly being confronted with.

Q: Was the fact that you had come from Chile a strike against you in the Mexican eyes? Did they ever bring up the question because they did not sympathize with Pinochet as I recall.

THOMPSON: That's right. Mexico was in a state indeed about Pinochet, but no one on the Mexican side ever adverted to my having been in Chile when I came to Mexico.

Q: Now Henry Kissinger visited Mexico when he was Secretary of State in '76. Did that have any effect on our relations or on your peace of mind?

THOMPSON: Oddly enough, I don't recall that it did. I do recall that - oh, that was earlier - I had accompanied President Johnson on a visit to Mexico while I was in the secretariat, so I had some notion of what state and quasi-state visits entailed on the ground. I had had some warning of what was to come so I was not surprised.

Q: While you were there, President Echeverria was succeeded by Lopez Portillo, I believe. Did that have an effect on relations between our countries?

THOMPSON: Not any major effect. Lopez Portillo was more flamboyant, I think, in both his behavior and his menage than was Echeverria, but in terms of overall relationships, I don't think there was any great change.

Q: Were you involved at all when ambassador Andrew Young visited Mexico City?

THOMPSON: It wasn't on my watch.

Q: What were the leftist influences there, the Soviet and the Cuban in Mexico because both have had large embassies there I understand.

THOMPSON: That's right and of course at some point very late in my tenure we had the

whole falcon incident or whatever the trade name it went by of the Americans who were apprehended on the grounds of the Soviet embassy and all that. But certainly the Soviet and Cuban embassies were massive installations in Mexico and certainly were very active people.

Q: Were they influential or just active?

THOMPSON: I wouldn't say so much influential as active. In fact, of course, the revolutionary pretensions of the NMRP party despite its 70 year tenure in Mexico was I think an important bulwark to the development of leftward sentiment and political activity in Mexico. In other words, the Mexican government itself monopolized to a large degree the space on the left that the political stage allowed, and there was very little opportunity for the others to operate. I think its also true that while the Mexicans found the Soviets and the Cubans very useful in their games with the United States, they were also very security minded in terms of their own well-being and were not in a mood to tolerate any nonsense from that quarter. After all, Echeverria had already gone through the student riots of 1968 which were a great black mark on the tally sheet of the Presidency, and certainly had those missions in large part to thank for his troubles.

Q: Now were you there when Vice President Mondale paid a visit to Mexico City?

THOMPSON: I don't know where I was when all these visitors showed up. When was Mondale there?

Q: And Secretary Vance?

THOMPSON: I may have been there when Vance was.

Q: You served under two ambassadors; describe your relations with them. They were quite different men, John Jova being a consummate professional; Ambassador Lucey being a former governor.

THOMPSON: And a consummate outsider. Well, relations in fact with both were reasonable working relationships. I obviously had more sympathy with Ambassador Jova and shared more assessments with him that later proved to be the case with Ambassador Lucey. That being Ambassador Lucey's first post of any kind, whereas Ambassador Jova had a long record of service in the career. I had known Ambassador Jova years before when we had worked together in Western European affairs, so it was the resumption of an old relationship to appear on the scene as his DCM. None of us of course had had any contact with Ambassador Lucey or I'm sure could quite imagine all of the elements of that relationship.

Q: Did they use you to full effect as DCM? The ambassadors?

THOMPSON: Ambassador Jova did deliberately and with full intention. Ambassador Lucey did, but I suppose more because I rather forced my activities on him that was responding to direction from him to undertake certain efforts.

Q: Did he bring any of his own people with him?

THOMPSON: Oh, yes! He brought with him a very able young staff officer who had been his secretary of administration in his gubernatorial administration in Wisconsin. This young man of course was brought to Mexico City under the trappings of the ambassador's staff aide or staff assistant. In fact he loomed far larger on Ambassador Lucey's horizon than that description would account for. I must say however that while it may not have been altogether to Ambassador Lucey's liking, that gentleman did not play the role of DCM while I was at the post. We maintained perfectly cordial working relationship, with it being clear to him that he was the ambassador's man and not mine, but that I was also the Ambassador's man in a quite larger sense.

Q: When you were there we had a large number of consular offices. Did you get to visit them?

THOMPSON: I think we still had 10 functioning consulates which was down from about 14, as I recall, some years earlier, and is now still fewer. I did make the rounds to all the consulates and consulates general while I was there as DCM and consulted with all the officers at post, and did such things as visits to American prisoners in Mexican prisons at each stop. It was a large swing to get around to all of them.

Q: Did you drive or air travel or both?

THOMPSON: We traveled by car.

Q: You traveled by car because you have mountainous terrain, deserts, everything.

THOMPSON: Everything. But the travel mode was largely dictated by security considerations rather than the most expeditious means.

Q: Speaking of security, say a word or two about that. Were you ever under any threat, or the embassy under any threat while you were there?

THOMPSON: Well, going back a ways, we received lots of threats in Panama. Persistent threats; to a lesser extent in Chile, and somewhat more actively in Mexico. In all 3 places we were required to operate with a security detail which was a great nuisance.

Q: Armored cars and things like this.

THOMPSON: I didn't have an armored car. The ambassador had an armored car. I just had an ordinary vehicle with a follow vehicle behind.

Q: Would you say the Mexicans were pleased that the President chose a former governor to come down as Ambassador? Did they regard that as a recognition of their importance?

THOMPSON: I don't think the state governor aspect was very meaningful to them. On the

other hand, the Mexicans are very class conscious when it comes to Mexican-Americans and quite correctly believe that the major influx of Mexicans to the United States has been from the rather backward rural areas of Mexico, and that as a consequence any Chicano who would aspire to the position of Ambassador to Mexico City is highly unwelcome. That has not of course prevented the United States from naming a succession of Mexican-Americans as Ambassador to Mexico who have served.

Q: With varying results I gather.

THOMPSON: I presume.

Q: Were the Mexicans pleased when the Democrats took over in '76 with the election of President Carter?

THOMPSON: I don't think that the Mexicans had any particular hopes of a better shake from President Carter than from President Ford. I suppose in general their tendency would be to assume that they're going to be somewhat better off under a Democratic regime in the United States, but I think they can't demonstrate that on the basis of events in the relationship. They, of course, had their presidential election that installed President Lopez Portillo simultaneous with the Ford-Carter turnover, so that their attention was rather distracted from our election to their own.

Q: You had two new Presidents confronting one another. Was the Carter administration's emphasis on human rights well received in Mexico or cause them problems? Or did they react to it at all?

THOMPSON: As I recall, the Mexicans, that is the government, did not react particularly at all. The Mexicans having handled this business much more adroitly than other governments in the hemisphere over the years, did not have clean hands altogether in this area, but they never showed their hand in a way that could make it an international incident.

Q: During your period there was it evident that Mexico was being used as a drug conduit to the U.S.?

THOMPSON: I think the Mexican role was more as a producer than a conduit at that time. Mexico of course was producing huge amounts of marijuana and was also cultivating other narcotic products, but it was not at that time a significant way station to the United States. I remember the drug problem was a major problem that we had to keep an eye on because it, and our problem of Americans in Mexican jails on drug charges, were two areas Ambassador Jova asked me to be responsible for immediately [upon my arrival], since when one wasn't driving us crazy, the other was.

Q: How were your relations with the CIA station in Mexico City, which I presume is rather sizable?

THOMPSON: I think they were no worse than other places.

RICHARD S. WELTON
Agricultural Attaché, FAS
Mexico City (1975-1979)

Richard S. Welton grew up in Moorefield, West Virginia and graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in economics. He began working for the Foreign Agricultural Service in 1956. His career included positions in Argentina, El Salvador, Spain, Mexico, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Quentin Bates in 1996.

WELTON: When I was serving in Mexico I used to say that I served two countries, maybe three including Mexico, but certainly the U.S.A. and Texas. I had to be aware of and take care of visitors and telephone calls from the border, whenever there was a problem getting some U.S. product in, or maybe something being shipped from Mexico that was causing problems on the other side.

Beyond that, depending on the post of course, participating and assisting in international meetings was another role that the attaché at post would get involved in from time to time. I'm sure you can add a lot from your own experience.

I think probably the most rewarding post in many ways was Mexico. I was there also a fairly short time -- only two and a half years -- but I have asthma, so that was a drawback there. But we had a lot of programs going on. Lots of visitors, including Secretary Butz, who came there shortly after his ill-fated trip, when he told the joke that got him in trouble. But he was a great visitor.

Q: He visited us in Brussels, and met the top officials in the Ministry of Agriculture. He was very capable and very helpful to us.

WELTON: I thought one of the best Ambassadors I had was John Jova in Mexico. He probably took more interest in his American staff's welfare than any other ambassador I've served under. He tried to get to know the staff. Secretary Butz made a compliment -- I asked that Butz meet with him and the larger embassy staff, and there must have been fifty people there. And the Ambassador went around and introduced them all by name. Secretary Butz said, Mr. Ambassador, that was an amazing performance. You may have stumbled over one name or two, but you have gotten to know all the people. Actually, I think all of the Ambassadors that I had were fairly easy to work with. Probably the most eccentric person I had was Ambassador McClintock in Argentina. He had a dog that went everywhere with him, and he had a monthly visit to the staff, when he would come around to the attaché's office every month. I remember

somebody commented once that he came in and we had a big dictionary on a stand, and he said, "You don't use this dictionary much, do you?" He'd noticed that it was opened to the same page it had been the month before. As I say, they were all fairly easy to work with. Some of the wives, on the other hand, were a bit more difficult. I remember the DCM's wife in Mexico, and we had an Ambassador's wife who had been a sheriff. She was kind of difficult to live with at times. Kind of the epitome of the Ugly American. I won't mention that name, of course. But those were some of my more memorable experiences.

BRANDON H. GROVE
Senior Inspector, Office of the Inspector General
Washington, DC (1976-1978)

Ambassador Brandon H. Grove was born in Illinois in 1929. He received a B.A. from Bard College and graduated from Princeton University in 1952. He joined the State Department in 1959 and served in the Ivory Coast, India, Germany, Panama, and Washington, DC. The following excerpt is from the 1994 interview conducted by Thomas Stern.

GROVE: I was asked to undertake my next inspection together with Ambassador Hewson Ryan, who had been a deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. We were to inspect, for the first time, the US-Mexican International Boundaries and Water Commission (IBWC), a remarkable organization until then unknown to me. Ryan had recently left the bureau and joined the inspection corps for this purpose. The two of us visited the 1800 mile border between the US and Mexico. We had to familiarize ourselves with the highly technical duties and responsibilities of the IBWC to which the Department made a large financial contribution every year, although much of its substantive work concerned the Department of the Interior. The American commissioner is appointed by the president and has considerable independence, loosely reporting to the State Department's Office of Mexican Affairs. The Mexicans handle their responsibilities in a similar fashion. Our task was to find out how efficiently the organization was managed, and how effectively its funding served US interests.

This led to one of the most absorbing journeys of my life. We traversed both sides of that border by small and large planes, van and Jeep. As this was a joint commission, we were interested in conditions on the Mexican border and the interaction between US and Mexican authorities. We also wanted to observe the twin border cities, of which there are quite a few, because these are critical to US-Mexican relations. I found it fascinating to learn about various boundary demarcations, the natural *Thalwegs* which run down the exact middle of waterways, water rights, irrigation, and sewage disposal. Tricky problems arise when communities belonging to different countries and cultures share a common geographic region, resources, and environment. Illegal immigration was already a serious problem in the 1970s and we addressed it in our report.

We found in the IBWC a binational organization that functioned extremely well. We were warmly received by the commissioner, Joseph Friedkin, and his staff because they knew they

were doing a good job, felt neglected, and wanted to tell us about their work. Ryan retired before the end of our inspection, and I decided to cast our final report as a success story, explaining the elements that contributed to a highly efficient operation of great scope and size. I was delighted when our report found wide readership, because we discussed basic aspects of the management of a joint international endeavor which was tangible, highly technical and complex, and which had its roots in a treaty relationship between two governments. Both Americans and Mexicans were extraordinarily well trained and competent. We were impressed by their skills and tactful treatment of each other, especially at the operating and engineering levels, where they regulated water flows and managed waste systems.

Some words about that border. We began our trip in a raging flood in Brownsville, Texas, and ended it in the dry heat and under blue skies of Tijuana, Mexico, at an enormous sewage disposal plant. Before setting out, I read several books written in the 19th century available in the State Department's library, travel and exploration narratives full of local color, adventure and, in one journal, a thinly veiled, poignant love affair involving an Army officer separated from his family and a woman living along the Rio Grande. The region is still exciting. The blurring of borders in twin cities such as El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, and the degree to which such economies depend upon each other, as with our Canadian boundary, was making the North American Free Trade Agreement of 1993 inevitable. No foreign travel has intrigued me more, and few experiences are more valuable to a diplomat than to immerse himself in the collaborative work of his own country with one of its great neighbors.

JOHN A. BUSHNELL
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, ARA
Washington, DC (1977-1982)

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

Q: What was the nature of the Mexican Foreign Ministry and how did ARA deal with the Mexicans?

BUSHNELL: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mexico had some very competent people, but it was what I would call a weak Ministry. By this I mean it did not coordinate the actions of the many other parts of the Mexican government that had foreign operations, many of which affected the United States. This weakness of the Mexican Foreign Ministry had a major impact on ARA

because we dealt primarily with the Foreign Ministry and the Mexican Embassy in Washington which was essentially part of the Foreign Ministry. Meanwhile, most US agencies that had something to do with Mexico, and there are many tens of them from the Department of Agriculture and the Social Security Administration to the FBI and the Forest Service, dealt directly with their counterpart agencies in Mexico, usually without even keeping the State Department informed. The result was that we had many positive interfaces with the Mexicans and solved many problems for them and for us, but this good relationship did not have any impact on overall relationships as expressed between the foreign ministries. ARA had no way of bringing these positive programs together to present a positive picture of Mexican/US relations. In fact the Mexican Foreign Ministry often criticized our foreign policy. Mexico often opposed us in the OAS, the UN, and other international organizations, but such opposition had no effect on the hundreds of positive programs we shared with Mexico.

When Pete Vaky took over ARA, he wanted to do something to bring the full range of interfaces with Mexico together. He had identified this problem over the years during his various assignments in Washington. He proposed setting up a Mexican coordinator in ARA and requiring every government agency to involve this coordinator in overseeing all their Mexican programs. Although everyone in State liked the concept, there was a State bureaucratic struggle because various bureaus wanted a piece of the action. For example, EB thought economic agencies such as Agriculture and Treasury should work through EB. Finally, Secretary Vance decided to appoint an Ambassador at Large and Coordinator for Mexican Affairs responsible directly to him. With some difficulty we worked out an arrangement such that the ARA Mexican desk would be the staff of this Ambassador and he/she would work closely with the ARA assistant secretary. Fortunately, Ted Briggs was the Mexican Country Director, and he managed to coopt the Mexican Coordinator under ARA's wing.

Ambassador Robert Krueger was appointed the special coordinator for Mexican affairs for the Secretary of State. He had been a Congressman from Texas. He was in charge for some years of a Mexican-American coordinating mechanism including several cabinet ministers from both countries which would meet a couple of times a year, with the delegation generally chaired by the Secretary of State. This arrangement substantially improved relations because it changed the focus of our relations from our conflicting policies in various international fora to the actually positive cooperation among our various agencies in solving problems affecting one or both countries.

I did little on Mexican affairs. The one major issue where I became involved was the purchase of Mexican natural gas by the United States. Our lead negotiators were Jules Katz, Assistant Secretary of EB in State, and Harry Bergold, a FSO who was serving as Assistant Secretary of Energy for International Affairs. Harry had served in our embassy in Mexico at one time and spoke Spanish; he handled the Mexicans quite diplomatically. But Jules was quick to lose patience with the Mexican practice of dragging out negotiations and trying to make every little detail more favorable to them. I was told by the officers on the ARA Mexican desk that negotiations would deteriorate into a big spitting match between Jules Katz and the Mexicans.

The Mexicans wanted to set an outrageous price for their gas. We did not want to pay any more

than what we had negotiated with the Canadians for their gas adjusted for transportation costs. The Mexicans wanted to charge, delivered at the Mexican border in Texas, the same price that the Canadians were charging at the Canadian border. The difference was that gas at the Texas border with Mexico was coming into an area of the U.S. which had lots of gas. The American market for this gas was far away, whereas Canadian gas was coming into the U.S. much closer to its natural market. However, the Mexicans politically couldn't agree to setting a lower price than the Canadians had set for essentially the same product. There were difficult negotiations on this matter. Several times I met with Jules to try to work out some imaginative proposal that would move the negotiations forward. I thought the Mexicans needed some face-saving proposal so they could claim they got the same price as the Canadians while in fact they would in one way or another pay for the greater transportation cost. However, Jules believed we had to explain the pricing clearly to the American people, which would of course destroy the face-saving. We then worked on setting the Mexican border price based on the price in Chicago or someplace where there was a big market. The transportation costs would then be subtracted before the Mexicans were paid. We really wanted the gas, and the Mexicans had no other market so I could not understand why an agreement could not be reached. Finally, Harry Bergold worked out a formula that was acceptable to both sides.

Q: My impression is that during this period of Mexican history, Lopez Portillo was elected President of Mexico in 1976. Also, there had been a very large oil fields discovered in the Mexican States of Tabasco and Chapas in 1976. So the Mexicans assumed that they were going to receive large revenues from their oil exports to the U.S. They launched a very substantial expansion in their oil production facilities and borrowed a lot of money. They contracted \$8.0 billion in foreign debt in practically no time at all. However, they did not get the oil income to service the debt, so this was a significant, economic issue. Is that an accurate summary of the situation?

BUSHNELL: I believe the Mexican economic problem was basically their exchange rate policy. In the year or so before a Presidential election the ruling PRI party would try to hold down domestic inflation by refusing to let the peso exchange rate depreciate much. At the same time they would increase government spending sharply for the public works that helped the dominate PRI win every election. Of course they had to borrow tremendous sums to support this policy, especially as many wealthy Mexicans knew that a great way to make money was to take it out of Mexico before the election at the overvalued exchange rate and bring it back after the new government was forced to devalue not too long after the election. These capital movements from Mexico could exceed 15 billion dollars, all of which the government and Central Bank would have to borrow.

The discovery and development of new oil fields made the rest of the world much more willing to lend to the Mexicans. However, there has long been great corruption in Mexico. One result of having the same political machine in power for 70 some years is that there is never a housecleaning. Oil did add to Mexican wealth, but mainly to the wealth of a relatively small group in or close to the government.

Q: Of course, the problem was exacerbated because, as I recall, President Lopez Portillo

nationalized the banks and tried to impose strict controls on foreign exchange transactions.

BUSHNELL: That's exactly right. The Mexicans adopted exchange controls to stop the outflow of money. But like most everything else, the administration of the controls was corrupt, so those that were favored or that paid got their money out. Some foreign banks did not want to be a part of this game, and there were big foreign bank operations in Mexico. Tensions resulted in the nationalization of all banks which the PRI believed to be a popular policy. PRI had gained great nationalistic political support for years because it had nationalized the oil industry in the 1930's. The nationalization of oil undoubtedly set Mexican development back a decade or more because Mexico did not have the capital or skills to expand the industry

Q: So that's the way the Mexicans dealt with these economic issues.

BUSHNELL: I don't recall the details. I was busy trying to improve the management of the Bureau of American Republic Affairs [ARA] and working on The Caribbean Development Group, Central America, and the various crises. I didn't have a lot of time to even follow the Mexican economic situation. It did not seem to be on anyone's agenda. I raised it once with Treasury, but the senior people in Treasury did not even seem to remember that there was a Treasury Attaché in the Embassy in Mexico City. When I worked at Treasury, I had set up that office in the Embassy in Mexico City so that Treasury could follow the Mexican situation in detail.

Q: Of course, there were also the factors of illegal immigration and the movement of narcotics across the Mexican-American border. Did you get into that at all or did you have any impact on that kind of traffic? Did you try to tighten up the border controls?

BUSHNELL: Congress set up a high level commission to study the entire immigration question. It held hearings and mandated studies. ARA was only an observer. There were lots of issues, but the central question was how to stop illegal migration, much of which was across the Mexican border. I was very interested, and still am, in that issue. I spent considerable time discussing it with the members of the Commission. My feeling was that some members' concept that you can physically stop the flow of illegal immigrants into this country is not realistic as long as they are attracted by our high wages and pushed by low wages and high unemployment in their native countries.

Q: Perhaps it was as realistic as that electronic wall in Vietnam that the Department of Defense was going to build.

BUSHNELL: Or arranging the Coast Guard boats in the Florida Straits so that no boat can cross between Cuba and the United States. Despite the difficulties, people are willing to pay large sums and risk their lives to cross the border into the United States. I argued the only effective way to cut back sharply on illegal immigration was to deny the immigrants jobs in the United States. No penalties could stop the flow of immigrants. But, if they couldn't get jobs in the United States, they wouldn't come across the border. Thus it's a problem of enforcing the immigration laws and labor regulations, since it was already illegal for undocumented immigrants to work. The

problem was INS had few officers trying to find working illegals, and, when they did find them, the maximum penalty was deportation. They would cross the border illegally again and often be back working for the same employer within a month. A law could be passed to increase the sanctions on immigrants, but I did not think even a few months of jail would be effective in slowing illegal migration substantially.

I was convinced the only way to slow immigration was to place substantial penalties on the people that hire the illegal migrants. Most of the Immigration Commission agreed with me. However, they spent a lot of time on the issue of a national identity card as a way to help employers avoid hiring illegals. I have never understood why so many people are so opposed to a national identity document. People seem to have no problem with having a passport which identifies them for foreign travel. I don't recall ever hearing of a single case where someone refused to get a passport because it is an identity document. If all Americans of working age had an identity document, it would be easy to prosecute any employer who hired a worker without such a document, or a comparable document issued to legal immigrants entitled to work. However, the Commission was not prepared to recommend a national identity document. I argued that employers generally knew which of their employees were illegal although illegals usually bought a social security number and often managed to get a driver's license. There was a big and fairly cheap market for all sorts of forged documents including fake birth certificates. However, employers knew if a new employee had real references from a previous job or school in this country; large employers had personnel officers who spoke the common immigrant languages and could question the potential new employee; in fact interviewing potential employees to check for such things as skills and honesty is routine. The problem was that it was illegal for the migrant to take the job but not illegal for the employer to hire him/her. The Commission eventually recommended a law that would make hiring of illegal migrants a crime with rapidly increasing fines and even potential jail for repeat offenders.

I thought the Immigration Commission's work would substantially reduced illegal migration. But in fact INS never really enforced the new law. There was considerable political pressure against prosecuting employers for hiring illegals. Employers claimed they checked for a social security number and other documents and were given such documents. Some judges were not prepared to hand out the punishment in the law. INS claimed it did not have the resources to go after the employers. We could have a lot less enforcement people at the border if we enforced the law against hiring illegal migrants. The new law was not passed until after I departed ARA; I only learned of the failure of this approach in the following years.

More immediate migration problems were often a concern of ARA. Somebody would shoot an illegal Mexican crossing his land near the border, and the Mexicans Embassy would react to that. The Mexican Ambassador or somebody from the Mexican Embassy would come to the State Department almost every week to complain about some action taken to deal with illegal Mexican immigration or with consular protection for Mexicans accused of crimes. The Mexican desk would deal with these issues, and the Mexican Office Director would mention them in ARA meetings. When we set up the cabinet-level Mexican/American Commission, the Mexicans gave these issues priority on the agenda.

Q: Did you travel to Mexico?

BUSHNELL: I went to Mexico twice while I was assigned to ARA. My central concern on both visits was the situation in Central America. We tried to coordinate our efforts toward peace and improved human rights in Central America with the Mexicans or at least explain carefully to them why we were doing what we were doing. Most of the time we were at cross purposes, and it was not possible to get Mexican support for our policies. However, we had an opportunity to discuss them. Once I met with officials of the government and the political parties; the other visit was to participate in a foreign policy seminar organized by the Mexican Congress.

I might record something that explains a lot about Mexico but even more about US foreign policy worldwide. Early in the Reagan administration, it was decided to send General Vernon Walters to Mexico to explain the new Administration's Central American policy and seek Mexican support. I assumed Secretary Haig picked Walters for this mission. As acting ARA assistant secretary I met with Walters to brief him before his trip. When he came back, he came in to see me after he had debriefed Haig, and his story really opened my eyes. He had spent a long evening, largely alone, with Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo, who I had long considered one of the brightest and most level-headed Mexican politicians. They had relaxed by telling war stories and developed a good relationship. Walters had then explained Reagan's determination to halt and even turn back the expansion of Russian communism. Lopez said he was glad the U.S. was finally waking up but it was too late. He said the Mexican government believed the U.S. would be overcome by Russian led communism sooner or later and that was why Mexico had to maintain a fully independent foreign policy and keep its distance from the United States, so it could eventually strike its own deal with the Russians. Walters challenged Lopez' conclusion. Lopez argued that communist gains in Angola and east Africa, in Afghanistan and Nicaragua showed that communism had the momentum. Moreover, Lopez argued the authoritarian Russian system, although not to be preferred in an ideal world, gave them a big advantage in maintaining the discipline and forced sacrifice for world domination. The United States, he said, was consumer dominated and would not make the sacrifices necessary to stop the advance of Russian communism as had already been illustrated in recent years. He referred to our embarrassment in Iran and the fact that Cuba, despite its small size and weak economy, could play almost as big a role both in this hemisphere and in Africa as the United States. Both Walters and I were shocked at what Lopez presented as considered positions of the best minds in the Mexican government. For the first time I fully realized how our well-meaning Latin policies which leaned against the right on human rights grounds and offered some small movement toward Cuba could be misinterpreted around the world, especially in light of other signs of US weakness. Of course Lopez headed a largely authoritarian government which a single party had controlled for almost as long as the communists had ruled Russia, so in part he was speaking of the advantages of the Mexican system. Lopez told Walters Mexico would watch carefully what Reagan did in the worldwide struggle against the Russians. He also said Mexico would be neutral in Central America while trying to increase its own influence without taking sides between the U.S. and Russia. History proved the Mexicans completely wrong, and after a few years they tied their wagon to the rising US star. This Mexican view showed me Reagan and Haig were right that the U.S. had to show strength against any communist threat to regain momentum for democracy in the world.

OWEN B. LEE
International Organizations Officer, OAS
Washington, DC (1978-1979)

Owen B. Lee was born and raised in Massachusetts. He began his college education, but with the onset of World War II, he served in the U.S. Army for four years. In 1949, Mr. Lee graduated from Harvard University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1955. His career included positions in Bolivia, Romania, Germany, Spain, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Thomas Dunnigan in 1996.

Q: You mentioned the fact that among those who were probably the least enthusiastic about it were the Mexicans. Of course, our relations with Mexico are probably as important as any in the hemisphere. How does that play in the OAS, or does it arise there?

LEE: Well, our dealings with the Mexicans have always been a little bit ambivalent. There were times when we could work very closely with them, and I might say in my particular area on money matters, they were very dependable. The Mexicans were more dependable I would say than any other country except, perhaps, the Brazilians, in terms of seriousness in dealing with money matters and giving support. Mexico, like us, was what we call a major contributor and therefore had a concern to hold expenses down and they were serious about it. When it came to political matters, that was different. The Mexicans were traditionally difficult. They didn't commit themselves easily and they always stood back, a little bit like the Brazilians, to see how things were moving before committing themselves. As I mentioned earlier in the Santiago Resolution, Mexico finally joined in.

But, there was a turn around which took place about 1992 when we suddenly began to see that the Mexicans wanted to cooperate with us very closely. I don't remember if this was the change of a president or not, but, they had orders to work more closely with us, and we did work more closely with Mexico. I can't say how it is now, but clearly I think in recent years our relations with Mexico are much better overall in many areas. We sensed it immediately in the OAS. We had one Mexican ambassador, I remember, who was very disagreeable and always trying to pick a fight with the United States at various meetings. He was followed by one of the most effective ambassadors I have seen at the OAS, a man who became a minister later. He was very friendly, very cooperative. I think since then we have had a Mexican leadership that has always been cooperative.

MICHAEL MAHONEY
Consular Officer, Consular Bureau
Washington, DC (1978-1979)

Michael Mahoney was born in Massachusetts in 1944. He received a bachelor's degree from Saint Michaels College in 1966 and later a master's degree in American studies from the University of Wyoming. Mr. Mahoney served in Liberia with the Peace Corps. In 1971, he joined the Foreign Service, serving in Trinidad and Tobago, Greece, the Dominican Republic, Italy, and Washington, DC. Mr. Mahoney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

MAHONEY: Again, I'll give you an example. By the middle of the 1970s, there were 600 Americans in jail in Mexico, most of them for drug violations. This was the direct result of a very intense application of American pressure to the Mexicans to do something about the drug trade. The Mexicans found that the best way of doing this was not necessarily to arrest their own people, but to arrest a bunch of Americans, virtually all of whom, by the way, were certainly guilty. Four hundred of the 600 were from the State of California, most of them the children of middle- and upper-middle-class parents, kids who thought it was a lark to carry six or eight kilograms of heroin or something else, for which they'd get paid \$10,000 to \$20,000, and were very unhappy when they were caught at the airport or someplace else like this and put in a Mexican jail for 25 years with no chance of parole.

The miserable prison conditions that these people found themselves under, and the vocal and financial abilities of their aggrieved parents in California, led to intense pressure being brought on the State Department to "do something" about these "poor kids and their terrible sufferings."

At one point, the Appropriations Subcommittee of the House said to the Latin American Bureau, "We are going to have the assistant secretary up here to testify every month until you tell us what you're going to do about these poor kids."

Believe me, the assistant secretary for Latin America did not want to spend his time testifying before Congress on the subject of Americans in jail in Mexico, because he thought he had much more important things to do.

Out of this came the hiring of a Harvard law professor named Detlev Vagts, who drafted the first prisoner-transfer treaty. This was drafted as a way of pricking the balloon of congressional pressure in the United States about all these poor kids in jail in Mexico.

So the first treaty was drafted with Mexico, although I must say the Consular Bureau itself was extremely skeptical of this initiative. It was really pushed, directed, and financed by ARA, not by CA.

But when the treaty went through and the logistics of transferring hundreds of prisoners had to be negotiated out with the Justice Department and so forth, again the Consular Bureau was ready for this.

Then the Consular Bureau became, of course, a big proponent of doing this elsewhere, because it meant that it got people back to the country and out of the hands of consular officers and into the

hands of the American judicial system domestically.

This was a tremendous innovation, stimulated by a consular problem. So the management of the Department came to see that although in general it had no interest in consular problems, consular problems had the ability to really jump up and bite them if they didn't pay attention to them and if they didn't make sure that there were people there who could manage these problems.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Staff Secretariat, Narcotics Program Officer for Mexico
Washington, DC (1978-1980)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy.. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well, then you moved over to the part of the secretariat that was dealing with, what? With criminal activities?

ALEXANDER: No, at that time it was strictly narcotics. It was an office that was created in response to Mexican brown heroin. Vietnam was over, the war had ended a year or two before, but a lot of the GIs came back with a habit and drugs were just running rampant. I'm not blaming the GIs coming back from Vietnam, but it was part of the phenomena. Drugs were found everywhere, or were being used to a degree on a scale that no one ever imagined, and all of a sudden we woke up to the fact that most of these drugs, almost all of them, were being manufactured outside the United States and imported into the country, and someone said, maybe we ought to start looking at this as a diplomatic problem as well as an enforcement issue. This office was set up to advise the Secretary and to coordinate with foreign governments to the extent that such things were being done in the time when possible assistance, aid, and the idea was to raise the issue from one of strictly legal and criminal to a diplomatic, political level. So, and Mexico was probably the catalyst, because most of the heroin that was coming into the U.S. was from Mexico. We were having so many border problems, so this office was set up. It expanded while I was there, in fact became a bureau shortly before I left.

Q: You were there from when to when?

ALEXANDER: I was there from February or March of 1978 until January of 1980; almost two years.

Q: What sort of things was your office concentrating on at that time? I mean, say, with Mexico?

ALEXANDER: I was the program officer for Mexico. That was by far the largest overseas drug program we had. We were funding the program to the tune of some \$80 million, which, in 1978, was a staggering amount of money. We were essentially trying to eradicate the poppy fields and, to a lesser extent, the marijuana fields. It was the marijuana eradication that got most of the attention because we were using an herbicide called paraquat that started the paraquat scare across college campuses in the U.S. and became quite the issue of the day. I don't think there was a week that went by that there wasn't a story in The Washington Post or The New York Times suggesting that the youth of America were being poisoned by paraquat on their marijuana. We were sued by a group called NORML which was the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. I was interviewed by everybody from Rolling Stone magazine to the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. It was rather amusing in a way. Our principle project was eradicating the poppy fields. We, the State Department, got involved in something which we had never done before. We essentially built an air force comprised of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. We pioneered new aerial spraying techniques. We paid the Agriculture Department to do experiments with different types of herbicides. We were looking to have minimal environmental impacts, minimal health impacts. We were paying certain agencies to develop programs that we could use to spot cultivation of drug crops from the air, and a lot of this stuff was brand new. The technology didn't exist and I find it interesting to look at what we do today in Colombia and realize that hey, you know, you're responsible for the program that's in place there, you know, you and your colleagues pioneered this stuff and you know, it's been refined over the years but the basic program was started back then.

Q: How did you come up with these programs? I mean, just a small group sitting around saying hey, we got to figure out a way to do this? Could you contract this? How did you operate?

ALEXANDER: Basically as you just suggested. We were a very small group, a handful of people who didn't really know much about this field. We had some old, and I don't mean old age-wise; well, yes, actually they were older than me, I was a kid, I was in my 20s, these guys were in their 40s and 50s. We had some old AID public safety types who were onboard with us and we had some liaison officers from DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) from Customs. But basically, a handful of people sit around a table and say, "well, you know, how are we going to approach this problem and what are we going to do?" There were so few of us, and this was so new, that despite my being at the time an old FS5, which today would be an FS3-

Q: Yes, which would be defined by, let's say a captain.

ALEXANDER: Yes, maybe something like that, yes, around that level, I'm not sure a captain, between a captain and a major maybe, or something. The point is, I was pretty doggone junior—especially so when you consider that, I mean, Secretary Vance called me down to his office and the two of us sat there and I ran through what I was doing, what my program was doing, with the secretary of state. And anyone who knows the State Department knows that FS3s, in today's grading system, don't sit down with the Secretary of State one-on-one for more than five

seconds. To sit there for a half an hour or an hour, just you and the Secretary was, I think, well, it was a reflection of just how small the office was, but also how concerned he was. I even got a note from the president once. I did some night reading on something, I can't remember the issue, but I got back a nice little note from President Carter saying keep up the good work. Again, I was an FS3; FS3s don't get personal notes from the president. They don't have, again, one-on-ones with the Secretary, but I did. I took a chance when I went into this office because it was a new office. It wasn't a geographic bureau. My friends, my contemporaries, said no, no, it's too out of mainstream, this drug thing, you're going to ruin your career and blah, blah, blah. I shared those concerns, but I also saw it as an opportunity to get involved in something on the ground level; something that I sensed was going to get bigger rather than smaller; more important rather than less important. It was a gamble, particularly in those days where, again, the State Department was still pretty traditionally tied to political reporting, economic reporting. You serve in Europe and you do this kind of stuff but you don't do drugs and you don't do global issues and population, environment; those were just not things to do. I'm glad I did it because I think that's where my career began to separate from those that I came into the service with.

Q: What was the Mexican response to what we were trying to do?

ALEXANDER: I felt that the response was astoundingly positive. The degree of cooperation with the Mexicans, when I compare it to the relationship between the two countries today, was absolutely first class. The Mexicans took this issue as seriously as we did. They threw resources at it. Yes, there was corruption on their side, but they tried to assign elite units to the problem to go out and actually eradicate the poppy fields manually where we couldn't do it with the helicopters, and round up the traffickers. My day-to-day contact was the assistant attorney general of Mexico, who was a young guy not much older than me. In fact, the Mexicans and the Americans in the embassy used to tease us, because we even looked a little bit alike. We had a great, great relationship. Fernando Viesa is his name. His boss, the attorney general, was the same way. He would fly out with us on the helicopters and see what we were doing and we even got shot down once.

Q: What happened?

ALEXANDER: We were flying over a poppy field, I think it was in Sinaloa Province... I'm pretty sure it was Sinaloa Province. I flew out so many times that I can't remember every trip, but a couple of guys popped up out of nowhere as we were hovering over one of these fields and started unloading their weapons, discharging their weapons, firing at us. They put some rounds into the helicopter and we had to come down with a hard landing. There was a nasty little firefight that ensued, during which two or three people were killed. Anyway, for the Mexicans it was dangerous work. They did get killed, but I think they were as committed to it as we were. What happened over the years; the mutual recriminations and things, may have contributed in large part to where we are now. I'm not saying that the Mexicans don't cooperate, but the trafficking part doesn't seem to have improved. The production side has. To the best of my knowledge the Mexicans aren't in the business anymore, or certainly not on the scale that they were of producing brown heroin.

Q: How were relations with the DEA and the enforcement agencies? Frequently the DEA wants to go in and do things in a foreign country to which the foreign country says "wait a minute, don't you do it, we'll do it ourselves." There's this built-in tension, but at this point, how did you find it?

ALEXANDER: The tension existed then. The dynamic wasn't much different than it is today, I would imagine, but I think attitudes were different. There really was a feeling in those days that America was at war, that we were drowning in drugs. It was a national epidemic and people were afraid, they were frightened. There was a sense in government that we had to address this and we had to win this war or it would be the death of us, literally. I don't know whether it was the Carter administration or not, but the personalities, while strong, were not combative. I would have to go back and ask the person who became assistant secretary what her sense was, but my recollection was that we had very good inter-agency cooperation, DEA, CIA, Pentagon, all the folks involved. I mean, we had our occasional turf battles, sure, and there were missteps. You know, the DEA was an enforcement agency and they had to go and get the bad guys and things, sometimes things happened and the Mexicans would get upset but we usually would defend the DEA and my recollection was, more often than not, they behaved appropriately and if they stepped on a few toes they weren't stepping on our toes and they were to be defended. So I would say that the cooperation was good and the relationship was good.

Q: Going back to what you said previously, what would you say the true story about paraquat was? I mean, were we lacing campus marijuana with-

ALEXANDER: The paraquat in the marijuana? No. This was a lot of hype. In point of fact, paraquat, it's still used today. You probably, if not you, certainly your neighbors, use it on their weeds. It has commercial names like Round Up and it's a well known herbicide that's been around forever that doesn't leech into the soil. Again, I'm not a scientist and I don't have shares in this so I'm not going to carry water for these folks, but our sense in those days was that this was about as safe an herbicide as we had in the inventory. Despite what we were told by the manufacturer, I used to go out to Beltsville to the USDA lab to see personally, and we did all kinds of tests to see if the effects on marijuana were not going to contribute to some pandemic health crisis.

Q: Well, my gosh, in particular in the era when we were coming out of Vietnam and Agent Orange was a major issue.

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes. This was not an Agent Orange issue and it did not do what the defenders of marijuana smokers were purporting that it did and certainly enough time has gone by now, 30 years, that we know that yes, it was, as we suspected, a good, safe herbicide. It killed the plant so quickly that the probability of paraquat tainted marijuana getting into the marijuana supply was negligible. Regardless, the ingredients of marijuana without the paraquat were so much more noxious and dangerous than the paraquat that the argument was a silly one to begin with.

Q: How did you find that our embassy in Mexico City responded to this?

ALEXANDER: Oh, I thought they were terrific, absolutely phenomenal. The folks that they had working this issue for the State Department, for DEA, Customs, and the other agencies were absolutely some of the best officers I ever worked with. Joe McLaughlin, Caesar Bernal, who was a Mexican American, old, old family, they'd been in Texas for 200 years; those two guys were magnificent. They had a terrific relationship with the Mexicans, the ambassador respected and admired them, heeded their counsel. They frequently came to Washington to brief congressional staffers. These guys were great, absolutely great.

Q: You mentioned you met with Secretary Vance. What was his interest in this?

ALEXANDER: State had just taken over this role, this international narcotics role and so I think he wanted to know, basically, at least from me, specifics about the Mexican program: what were we trying to do and why were we doing it the way we were doing it, was there anything that the president should know? He had seen, you know, reading the press and listening to the news and all the uproar about the paraquat, and was interested in what I thought. I was actually surprised at the amount that he seemed to know or how closely he'd been following this issue. It was obviously of great concern in the administration.

Q: Who was your supervisor, who was the head of your unit?

ALEXANDER: The senior advisor who later became the assistant secretary was Mathea Falco, a young woman in her mid 30s, extremely impressive woman who had come, I believe, from the Hill. She had been a Hill staffer. Her deputy was Ed Corr, a Foreign Service officer who had been the ambassador to Peru or went out as the ambassador to Peru, I can't remember now. They were my senior bosses.

Q: So, although it was a very small group, it had some senior clout.

ALEXANDER: Yes. Yes, we did, in part because we didn't have much competition. It wasn't that there were 15 agencies all vying for a piece of this particular pie. We were very young as a group, but I think it was our youth that gave us a lot of influence and a lot of power because we were energetic. Not that people, older people, were not energetic. We were in a sense converts, pilgrims. We were pioneers.

Q: Well, you were committed.

ALEXANDER: Committed, yes. Enthusiastic and willing to try almost anything that was legal, obviously. We weren't wedded to old ideas because there were no old ideas to draw on.

Q: You talked about the embassy and the great cooperation you had in Mexico. What about the bureau, the ARA? Did you have any sort of turf battles with them?

ALEXANDER: No, no. Absolutely not. I would speak to the Mexico desk on a regular basis, but they pretty much left us alone. It was kind of understood that the White House is interested in

this and these guys are doing what we don't have to do. It's a nasty business, it's a thankless job. We were being attacked again in the press and the media, by a lot of people on the Hill who were concerned about-

Q: Well why were you being attacked?

ALEXANDER: We had, no one wanted to admit it, but a significant portion of the children of the elite, of the American illuminati, were in university and they were smoking dope. Whether you went to Harvard, Yale or, you know, Podunk U, this was something that was widespread in the United States. Not only were college kids doing it, but a whole lot of other people were doing it as well. You know, it was all the, you know, the wink, wink.

Q: Well, the businessman's cocaine, a couple sniffs had replaced the three martini luncheon.

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes. In fact, that's a good example. The cocaine phenomena, which came out of this marijuana thing, was more of an '80s problem than it was a '70s problem, but it was part of the same dynamic. There were a heck of a lot of people out there doing drugs and they were concerned about the quality of their supply. A lot of the people who were smoking marijuana— again, these weren't the throwaway people.

Q: The kids around the pool hall.

ALEXANDER: Yes. These were the well-to-do, the elites and their kids, many of them, and so they were concerned, and that was a very important, significant ingredient in the resistance to what we were doing.

Q: I realize you had the Mexican portfolio. What about Burma and Afghanistan?

ALEXANDER: Others had that.

Q: So you didn't get involved?

ALEXANDER: No, I didn't get involved in that. I didn't get involved in that and I will not even try to speak of that program.

Q: Who flew the helicopters? Where'd you get the helicopters and fixed wing planes?

ALEXANDER: We, the State Department, bought them from Bell. They were Bell 206s and Bell 212s. Fixed wing aircraft, we had Pipers and other things that were used for observation purposes. We gave them all to the Mexicans; they were flown by Mexicans whom we trained but we weren't actually operating the aircraft for Mexico. There were U.S. laws against it, and Mexican laws against it.

Q: But you're saying you used to go down there and get on these flights?

ALEXANDER: Yes. Yes, I'd go down every couple of months and I would usually fly out to one of the provinces because I had to see how the operations were going. I was the one that the staffers on the Hill would call first, asking, "what are we doing in Mexico, I understand that we lost a helicopter" or this happened or that happened. Helicopters were expensive and when they crashed people wanted to know why, what happened. Also I wanted to have a complete understanding of what was happening, you know, exactly how the program was working. I wanted to be sure we weren't just flying around observing it, but that we were spraying a lot of these fields. I wanted to see how that worked and the only way to do that and to speak with any authority was to actually go down there and observe it firsthand.

Q: Well, I mean, when you go on one of these flights which you go on-

ALEXANDER: Let's put it this way, should I have been armed? Yes, probably, because we were flying in really remote areas and, again, occasionally there were firefights. If I needed a weapon there would have been one available. Let's just leave it at that.

Q: Wear a flak jacket, by the way?

ALEXANDER: Yes, yea, oh yes. Definitely. In fact, I remember once taking it off and sitting on it and a couple of Mexican soldiers who were on the helicopter with me smiled and said, "well you know, you're supposed to wear it." And I said, "Yes, I will when I get out." And they said, "Why don't you wear it now?" And I said, "Well because if they shoot at us the bullets are going to come up through the floor." And those two guys looked at me, took off their jackets and sat on them. And all of a sudden they sort of smiled like, this gringo's a little crazy. They sort of looked at me a little different like, well maybe this guy's not so stupid. I learned that lesson the time we were actually shot down and we took rounds and they came up through the bottom of the fuselage. And so I thought well, when I'm on this thing I think I'm going to start sitting on it. I don't know whether that would have actually worked or not.

Q: This is a good standard type thing.

ALEXANDER: Well, it was – I noticed after that experience that more and more people were doing it. I had some people tell me, "no, you should have kept it on and you know, this is a big myth, and people used to do this in Vietnam and stuff," and other people used to say, "no, you're smart, sit on it." I sat on it, that's what I did because my experience had taught me you want to sit on this thing. But yes, no, flak jacket I definitely had, and weapons were available.

Q: Well then, when you left this, you left this job when?

ALEXANDER: January of 1980.

Q: Did you see this as an area you wanted to get involved with overseas? Was there sort of a narcotics profession, a narcotics division?

ALEXANDER: One arose out of our founding this office, this bureau. When I started there it

was S/NM, Narcotics Matters, part of S. When I left it was INM, International Narcotics Matters. Now it's, I think, INL. It's further evolved. I was there, literally, at the inception, seeing this bureau, and then we started creating this cadre of narcotics officers that were assigned to embassies abroad. I had no desire to do that. I felt that I had done it and it was time to – I hate to use the word, I mean, I'm going to be a hypocrite – to go back into the mainstream. In other words, I had served in a functional bureau, but I had to attach myself to a mother bureau, a geographic bureau, at some point in order to get those overseas assignments that I needed to get, and I didn't want to restrict myself to going to places where they had narcotics affairs officers and I didn't want to be that specialized.

Q: There isn't much of a career pattern for that unless you move to a bigger country, but after you finish with Colombia where do you go?

ALEXANDER: Yes, exactly. So I felt that, having done narcotics in Washington was enough and I wanted to do something else. I enjoyed it, it was one of the best jobs I had in the Foreign Service. Again, it gave me an exposure to the upper levels of government at a very early stage in my career and I think it helped me, very much so.

WILLIAM T. PRYCE
Political Counselor
Mexico City (1978-1981)

Born in California and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Pryce was educated at Wesleyan University and the Fletcher School of Tufts University. After service in the US Navy he worked briefly for the Department of Commerce before joining the Foreign Service in 1958. Though primarily a Latin America specialist, Mr. Pryce also served in Moscow. His Latin America assignments include Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Bolivia and Honduras, where he was Ambassador from 1992-1996. Ambassador Pryce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: So then what did you do?

PRYCE: I went on to be the political counselor in Mexico City. There was a question of whether I was to go as deputy chief of mission to Guatemala or as political counselor to Mexico City. In those days the discipline was greater than it is now. The official word was that both posts were equally important. I tended towards wanting to go to Guatemala because I had known the ambassador. I had worked with him and he wanted me to be his DCM and I looked forward to working there.

At the same time they needed a seasoned, well qualified person to be political counselor in Mexico City. We had a political ambassador who had been unsatisfied with his embassy. He had fired a number of people and he was out to basically hire his own team. My name came up as a

potential candidate for political counselor. I interviewed Ambassador Luce and his special assistant and got along very well with him. He decided that I was the person he that he wanted and the Department told me, "This is in the best interest in the Foreign Service and it doesn't really matter to you whether you go to Mexico or Guatemala." I wasn't completely convinced because I thought Guatemala might be a better assignment but I accepted without much question and said, "Fine, if that's where you think I should go, that's where I'll go." I went to Mexico City and had a very, very positive tour. I enjoyed it and found that it was productive and useful.

Q: You were there from '77 to when?

PRYCE: I was there from '78 to '81.

Q: What was the political situation in Mexico from '78 to '81?

PRYCE: There were obviously strains. There are always strains in our bilateral relationship because we have so many individual interests along with sharing 2,000 miles of border. We had problems that we didn't talk all that much about publicly. We had human rights problems that we were trying to get the Mexicans to be more responsible on. We had border problems with the treatment of Mexican citizens in the United States. We had the whole gamut of Cuban problems; Mexico was sort of a protector or a special conduit to Castro. We had Mexico being involved in supporting the opposition in Salvador providing a place of refuge in Mexico City for the dissidents. We were trying to promote in legitimate ways the growth of democracy, more respect for the opposition parties which of course were completely dominated by the PRI. There again it was an interesting time which I enjoyed very, very much.

Q: Can we talk first about Ambassador Luce and a little about his background? He was sort of controversial.

PRYCE: He was controversial. He was a former governor of Wisconsin and I found him a very likable, intelligent and effective ambassador given his limitations. His principal limitation was that he couldn't speak Spanish and he wouldn't try. He had a Jesuit educational background and in fact I think he may have thought about being a priest at one point. Whatever it was, he studied Spanish intellectually. He didn't want to speak it if he didn't speak it correctly so he didn't speak it. I kept trying to tell him, "Mr. Ambassador you just get out there and try, it would be great."

He was very wise politically. He cultivated a close and very positive relationship with the foreign minister. He used his staff, I guess partly because he picked it. He accepted and looked for the advice that the political section gave him and I think he did the same thing for the economic section. He was a good administrator. He basically let you do your job and encouraged you in it and was knowledgeable. I found him to be a good ambassador. I must say of the political ambassadors that I've been involved with, someone who has been a politician is more likely to be a successful non-career ambassador.

Q: Yes, because they are both political environments.

PRYCE: That's right, they are both political environments. He of course had the U.S. president's ear. He could go to the president if he needed to, and the Mexicans appreciated that. He was, I thought, an effective ambassador.

Q: You mentioned his good relations with the foreign minister. I've never served in Mexico but I understand that the foreign affairs side of Mexican politics is usually where they put sort of the anti-Americans so that they can tweak our nose over Cuba or something like that. The foreign affairs apparatus tends to be more kind of left wing.

PRYCE: No question about it. You had Muñoz Ledo who was at the UN causing all sorts of problems. I had all kinds of problems with people like the office director and the equivalent of deputy assistant secretary in the Mexican foreign office who were constantly saying they were going to cooperate with us but at the last minute, fee-e-say, what do you know, the vote went the wrong way; the vote went against what the U.S. thought it ought to be. Certainly Mexico was a leader in the third world in the Group of 77 and there were many times when I think they had a deal frankly, I'm sure of it, with the Cubans and with the Soviets. They'd say, "OK we'll let you have your principal base." They had a huge Soviet embassy and the Cubans were operating out of Mexico all over Latin America but the deal was they left Mexico alone.

Basically the Mexican government was pretty conservative but people don't recognize the fact that they talked liberal and their international foreign policy was liberal. They were the one nation in the whole hemisphere that never broke relations with Castro so it was a problem for us. They would cooperate when they could but, yes, they took a decided leftist point of view.

Q: I would have thought that in a way, you talk about the implicit deal with the Soviet Union and Cuba, you know don't mess around; in a way we almost had an implicit deal. We didn't play up the fact that they were always voting the wrong way because in everything else, the relations were really very close. We were dealing on all sorts of things - treasury, FBI and what have you, across border things - and so in a way this was sort of your problem but in a way you were almost peripheral to the real relations on that.

PRYCE: The question there was we couldn't change. We had to deal with the fact and to try to keep close tabs on what was happening for example with the UN votes or what was happening in the international fora to try to make sure that we didn't get surprised. A lot of the day-to-day operations that we were involved with, I remember as the political counselor I had an unofficial role of trying to help coordinate the narcotics activity. We had a large narcotics operation there. We had a coordinator who was very effective, McBry, but I also helped him quite a bit in trying to smooth things over. One of the things I remember is that way back, this is 1978-81, one of the principal bones of contention between our DEA people and the Mexicans...

Q: DEA is the Drug Enforcement Agency.

PRYCE: Yes. It was just was it is today, can our people carry weapons and can our people be involved in law enforcement? We wanted our agents to be able to carry weapons and the Mexicans were absolutely adamant that no, our people did not have a law enforcement function

in Mexico. It is obviously a bone of contention right now and it's nothing new, it has been a bone of contention for 15 years or more, 20 years.

Q: I would have thought that there could have been some problems with our relations given the Carter administration with its strong emphasis on human rights which included a democracy. In a way it was much less tolerant of other countries which had their own ways of governing which did not seem to fit into what we would consider democratically...

PRYCE: That's true, there were problems.

Q: Can you talk about that while you were there?

PRYCE: I can tell you that, for example, we worked very hard at writing an objective human rights report. Of course an objective human rights report was one that was not looked upon with kindness by the Mexicans because we pointed out the problems there with human rights. Now in those days we tended to do it more quietly. We tended to go beat on the Mexicans not in the press but by quiet diplomacy both at the political counselor level and at the ambassadorial level pointing out problems, suggesting where improvements could be made. When our human rights reports would come out, we would say where the problems were and the Mexicans would always be very unhappy. I know we tried to soften the, I won't say to sugar coat the pill but to explain ahead of time what our human rights reports were going to say without using them as threat because it doesn't work. One thing you don't want to do with Mexicans is you don't want to be heavy handed. But they knew that we wanted to be able to point to improvements in the Mexican human rights situation and so by putting it in a positive way you had some effect but there were definite tensions.

Mexico had a very effective apparatus. I served in Mexico twice and my first time there, there were several times when the Mexicans were confronted with an insurgency which was dangerous to them. At one point they wanted to make sure they got the rebel band and the leaders so they went in and wiped out a little pueblo and just leveled the place. It was absolute brutal elimination. They got their man but they also got everybody else in the small community. They could be ruthless. The Mexican government could be very, very authoritarian.

I think that you will see really only today is there a real change in the question of Mexican democracy. I remember I used to give lectures to visiting Americans, or talks, reminding them that the PRI had been in power longer than any other party in the entire world with the sole exception of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. But things have changed now.

It is very interesting President Zedillo who with great frankness was up here not too long ago and the conversation that I was privy to he was saying, "You know the recent election in July was a free election and a fair election." He said, "Now my election was a free and honest election." He didn't say it was fair, and it wasn't. He talked about looking for a broader base of stability now which was not based on one party hegemony. In those days clearly Mexico was not a democracy and I think that even on our list we listed it in a gray area; not a dictatorship but clearly not a democracy either.

Q: As political counselor were you reaching out to the PAN and other areas?

PRYCE: Oh absolutely. We had a structured and organized work program which meant that we visited with all the opposition parties. We had them over to the house; we had lunches with them. Sometimes the PRI didn't like it. They always had to say, "We understand and we agree that you should see everybody." Of course they had a token opposition and they wanted it to be that way. We would have congressional delegations come down. You would always have the opposition there and have them participating in discussions but they were pretty helpless because there was complete control by the PRI. We reached out to all the parties of the left and of the right.

The PAN was probably the most effective party. It was basically their equivalent of the Christian Democratic Party. It is still one of the most viable opposition parties. There were also other leftist parties and other splinter parties. There was a military type party and there were five or six parties that we maintained open contact with. We also kept contact with the university. I knew the rector and used to go out and see him every so often. We would have breakfast with students. We were very close to student leaders.

Q: There had been a horrible massacre of students during the Olympics.

PRYCE: I think it was '68.

Q: I think it was '68. How were we seeing the students at that time because traditionally in Latin American countries the students are a force unto themselves and are usually quite leftist, the professors are leftist and all, and then they change when they graduate? Were we seeing change?

PRYCE: Yes. We had contacts with the student leaders who were often leftists. Even back in my first tour in Mexico in '61-'63 the ambassador was invited to a graduation party by the principal head of one of the leading student groups. Again it was partly because it was interesting to him, this student leader, but it was also interesting to the ambassador. It was through the embassy's workings that this happened, but we were always interested in what students were doing.

In my first tour, I don't remember if we talked about this before, I took a course at night at the national university. I was really a little bit scared about it at first and would wear sort of scruffy old clothes and go out there. It turned out that I had no problems. I had some heated arguments but no animosity and they treated me with respect. But it was a hotbed of leftism, no question about it. I was doing that on my own as a junior officer and I enjoyed it. The embassy consistently had people who reached out.

Q: Were we seeing a north-south split somewhat, or maybe it's not quite the term, but a Mexico City versus the north split in Mexico as far outlook and all?

PRYCE: Not so much. You had the Monterrey business oriented, more conservative group, which was more productive and it was the engine of growth. There was the feeling on the part of

the people, the norwegians, that they were providing the economic growth of Mexico and were doing all the hard work, and these guys down in Mexico City were not hard working and were frittering life away. There was this sort of tension between the two groups but certainly the Monterrey industrial group was all part of the political process and they made their peace with the party and they worked within the party. There wasn't the political split, there was a cultural attitude split in terms of being a conservative business oriented group in Monterrey.

Q: Were you able to reach out to I think it was the man who god knows how many years was the head of the union...

PRYCE: Sure, Fidel Velázquez.

Q: He died, didn't he?

PRYCE: He died just recently.

Q: He was the head of what?

PRYCE: He was the head of the CTM and he was a labor leader.

Q: CTM being?

PRYCE: The Confederation of Mexican Workers. He was a labor tsar and he ran that place with an iron hand. Nobody did anything without Fidel. I think he was in one sense a patriot. He tried to do what he thought was best for the country. He got his people taken care of. He was hand in glove with the government and often if he thought it was for the good of the country, he would get his people to accept fewer raises. To put it this way they would hold the line on wages in order to provide a growth pattern for their long-term stability. He definitely was very much a part of the apparatus. We knew him. Our labor attaché didn't see him every day but he could go and see him. We had an AFL-CIO. There was a regional office in Mexico City. We always had relationships with labor, yes.

Q: Where was the economy at this point? Mexico has gone through sort of a boom-bust thing and I'm just wondering where it was.

PRYCE: It was not at a bust situation. Oil prices were good, the economy was doing pretty well. They were trying not to become too oil dependent but they were not all that successful because they did depend very heavily on the revenues from the oil.

Q: This was during the time of OPEC.

PRYCE: Right, it was Mexico...

Q: We were really concerned...

PRYCE: We were really concerned but Mexico of course was not part of OPEC. They were simply getting a free ride. I remember one of the things that Warren Christopher, then secretary, negotiated was a gas agreement with Mexico at that point which was very advantageous both to them and to us. One of the problems we had then, which we've had since, is corruption. Certainly Lopez Portillo's regime had some of the corruption problems that other regimes have had especially in the last years of the regime.

Q: Lopez Portillo was the president during your time?

PRYCE: Yes, he was.

Q: How was he viewed by the embassy, by you?

PRYCE: He was viewed as a very intelligent person, someone we had to get along with. I think that there were worries that he wasn't pursuing the best economic policies that could be pursued. He was not viewed as basically unfriendly to the United States.

Q: Were there any repercussions to sort of the Carter turnaround? He had made getting along with the Soviet Union sort of a part of his agenda and then you had the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan where we switched completely. This must have caused some disruption for you all, didn't it?

PRYCE: Actually I guess we were able to rationalize it and it wasn't all that great a problem. It is funny you are thinking back to areas that caused problems. One of the greatest stress moments that I remember was when President Carter came to visit Mexico. He was tired and he came directly from the airport to a brief meeting with the president. Then he went to a luncheon at which I was at the bottom end of the list but because of friendship with people in the Foreign Office we had been invited. We were sitting way out in the boonies. The president began making this friendly joke about his honeymoon in Mexico City. All of a sudden you started to see where he was leading talking about how he had a hotel right near the zócalo and he kept going back and forth a little more often and that he had some little problems. He basically was describing his Montezuma's revenge.

Q: Which is diarrhea.

PRYCE: Yes, that he experienced on his honeymoon. Everyone was just sort of cringing. I remember looking at the people I was with saying, "Oh, he isn't going to do this. He is going to do this!" and he did. Aside from that it was a successful visit.

Q: Did you get involved in the gathering of support after Iran seized our embassy in '79 and trying to get hostages out because essentially Mexico was in foreign affairs of the left at that point but how did that work out?

PRYCE: I'm trying to remember now but basically I think our objective - and I'm a little hazy on this - was to sort of keep Mexico neutral. I think they basically did stay neutral. They didn't want

a role in that fight. They were not actively supportive of us but they were also not actively critical; that's my recollection.

Q: What about the Olympics? Did that come up? After the invasion of Afghanistan, we boycotted the 1980 Olympics in Moscow?

PRYCE: They thought that we took the wrong tack but it was not a major irritant as I recall.

Q: Were there any sort of major problems other than the normally sort of leftist view and things?

PRYCE: No, there were not major problems. Of course one of our jobs was to analyze what the stability was going to be; where Mexico was going to be going; how long pre-hegemony would last? People were saying would it last longer or not? There were people who felt back then that things were going to fall apart. I remember our section doing an analysis that held up very well in hindsight. We basically, it seems obvious now, said that at least for two more terms the party will be able to hold together; that there is at least a ten year period when we can count on the Mexican political system to become weaker but to stay intact. I remember that was one of the big projects that we did. Relations were not that acrimonious and you could make very good close personal friends with Mexicans.

Q: What about with your junior officers? I can't remember I might be putting the Gavin administration together with the Luce administration but I somehow think that there was word in the corridors that Luce had sort of his palace guard in the front office as did Gavin later on which made it very difficult for those who were not part of the court, you might say.

PRYCE: I think that's right. I think that did happen. When I came to Mexico I think there had been a palace guard and I think there had been problems with the whole Luce family.

Q: Mrs. Luce's fights with her husband were renowned I think.

PRYCE: Well, not so much but I think there was a question of a relationship with the staff and there was a tendency to not reach out. I guess there was dissatisfaction. I guess you forget those things now but I know that Luce was looking for a new team and he had somehow decided that I was part of the new team. I remember part of the palace guard or Bob Dunn who was his special assistant and had sort of run things, had come to the conclusion that OK we're going to do this differently. They had a new DCM.

Q: Who was that?

PRYCE: John Ferch. And we'll try to do things differently. I found I guess a different atmosphere. Luce was always available whenever I wanted to see him and in terms of usually clearing important cables Ferch was readily accessible. Dunn was much more open and would let us know what the ambassador was doing if he went on trips. I guess that we were able to establish a relationship which was very, very useful and very pleasant. As I say, things were better. Gavin...

Q: He was later under the Reagan administration.

PRYCE: I was there for the first six months. When Luce left Gavin came down and again the sort of palace guard relationship didn't develop until after I left. I was there for about six months and had a very good relationship with Gavin. I respected him and the fact he spoke beautiful Spanish...

Q: His mother was Mexican I think.

PRYCE: He did a very good job. He had a problem with the press; he really didn't like the press. I think this stemmed back from unfortunate experiences he had with the U.S. press who he felt had not treated him fairly in his movie days. He was very clear about defending U.S. interests. I had no problem and I enjoyed working with him. I guess somehow he developed into a sort of palace guard operation and I'm sorry to hear that. I did hear that that had happened.

Q: For the researcher, you had better explain that when we are talking about palace guard, what are we talking about?

PRYCE: We are talking about an ambassador who has maybe a special assistant and one or two other people in whom he confides and with whom he does most of his business. There is not a great deal of communication between the ambassador and the embassy as a whole. You had this sort of situation with Jim Baker as secretary of State. You had a group of maybe 10 to 15 people that he dealt with very closely and the assistant secretaries often did not have access to Jim Baker. I guess that at one point perhaps the counselors at the embassy did not have access to Gavin; I don't know because that happened after I left but certainly that wasn't the case for the six months that I spent with him.

Q: How about with your junior officers, was it easy to find work for them to do?

PRYCE: Oh yes, it certainly was. We had a wonderful group of junior officers. Each of the officers had various areas that they covered. Some were developing contacts with opposition parties, with people in the Foreign Office, at the university, or developing contacts with the press. There were a myriad of people that you could get to know that would give you a basis for the judgments that you are making in your political reporting cables. It was a fairly open society. You could get to know people if you reached out. We had some very good junior officers who rotated to the section and many of them have gone on to very responsible positions. That was one of the joys frankly for me being able to work with junior officers and help them develop, help them to learn to write, help them in working on their contacts. It wasn't a difficult time.

I served in the Soviet Union where getting to know people was very, very difficult but here I think there were problems with a large embassy. The political section didn't have them because it was interesting good work. We had a huge consular section where there was a visa mill and it could become debilitating after a while because it was grinding work and it wasn't all that interesting. What made it interesting for junior officers was what they did on their off time. We

encouraged people to do voluntary reporting and we also rotated people. We had a slot in the political section for a rotational officer who always came from the consular section and it worked out very well.

Q: What about the myriad of relationships with states and other departments and all between Mexico and the United States? In a way I think that would sort of get under your skin.

PRYCE: Sure, there was a lot [inaudible] fighting, as I say direct channels. This was a problem for the Department although it was less of a problem because when Luce was there we had sort of a Mexican tsar in Dick Kruger who Jimmy Carter appointed as his special coordinator for Mexico. Carter wanted all U.S. departments to report to Kruger. That was useful for Kruger and that was useful for the ambassador. During that period of time there was less individual relationships between various U.S. departments. But the Mexicans were masters at going directly to the sources of power; they always had been. They would not go just to the State Department, they would go to the Interior Department. Their agriculture people would go to Agriculture. They had friends on the Hill and they still do. They know us very, very well and they are very able. Sure, there was a certain amount of coordination but there was much less in the period that I was there the second time around because of the Kruger relationship in Washington and because Ambassador Luce had of course President Carter's support. At least ostensibly everyone tried to coordinate and didn't try to do things independently.

Q: You're talking about some countries understand that it's as important to have good ties with Congress as with the Department of State and I take it the Mexicans could play this to a pretty...

PRYCE: They certainly could. After I had come back from Mexico and I was working as special assistant to Tom Mann, there was a new Mexican inauguration. The Mexicans sent to every senior level official in the entire U.S. government invitations to come to the Mexican inauguration, including to the Supreme Court. They sent an invitation with a paid hotel reservation and a round-trip ticket on the Mexican airlines. I remember the office of one Supreme Court justice called up, he probably thought he shouldn't but he wondered if he could accept this. We said that if you were on the U.S. delegation to go to the inauguration, fine. This is just one little example of how they covered the waterfront in terms of establishing independent relationship with the Congress, with the Supreme Court, and with all other various cabinet areas.

Q: Did immigration, migrant workers and all, intrude on your...

PRYCE: It certainly did and I was very good friends with the head of the Immigration and Naturalization Service there. It was very useful both in terms of all the determinations involving visas and in getting people in that you wanted in but also he was our conduit to the border patrol. There were constant problems; problems of what happened on the border. I remember going up and visiting with INS along the border, going on helicopter rides at night to see the problems of really literally hundreds and in some points thousands of people trying to sneak across the border at night. I visited the INS detention centers. It was a major irritant in our relationship, certainly, and that was one of the things that the political section was very much involved in.

Q: There was no real solution to it, was there?

PRYCE: No, there wasn't. In those days we had this anti-narcotics effort and one of the big things we had was a little air force down there. Basically it was INM putting big money into supporting the Mexican air force which was spraying crops. Basically it was crop dusting to try and get rid of marijuana mostly. It was a difficult, difficult task and there were coordination problems as there are today. I mentioned earlier that we had the question of could U.S. people carry weapons and how much do we tell Mexicans because we were worried about sources and worried about people being in danger. We did have in many cases good cooperation with the Mexican Department of Government. In those days there had been a constant attempt to cooperate on anti-narcotic activities which has been also a constant problem with corruption.

Q: What was the role of the Mexican army because it always has struck me that in every other Latin American country the army is always a big factor but outside of problems of corruption and all the army never seems to...

PRYCE: No, you are right and that this is a perception. I always felt that what it amounted to was that the Mexican army played a much more important role than many people understood but the government came to an understanding with them. What people don't realize is that Mexico's first civilian president I think was an Allemande and he came in 1946. Up until about 1940 the PRI party had four elements; it had the popular, the agriculture, the labor and it had the military. The military was only separated from the political apparatus in the '40s and the Mexican president was a general for the first 40 years.

I'll tell you a little story told to me later on in the Tlatelolco riot. This was told to me by someone I think who was in a position to know. There was a time there when the civilian government was not in charge.

Q: You're talking about when?

PRYCE: I'm going back now, this is 1968; I was not there. It was during the Tlatelolco riot when anywhere from 200 to 5,000 people were killed. The stories I think were grossly exaggerated but what happened when there were these riots and there were great difficulties, was the president wanted things taken care of. The defense minister said, "We'll take care of it." The military told the civilian government, "We'll take care of this." Then for 24 hours they didn't answer their phone calls and the civilian government didn't know what was happening. What was happening was the rioters were being quelled and basically the Mexican military took over, handled the situation in their own way and then saluted and said, "Here it is sir, it is all taken care of." That was in 1968. It wasn't a coup but it was the military acting independently.

Q: Did we have good relations through our attachés during the time you were there?

PRYCE: We had good but formal relationships. The Mexicans were very diffident about having close relationships with our military. We were constantly working at it and individually I think we had the best attachés who made good inroads and there certainly was an interest in

Washington in having good relations with the Mexican military. We had people in their National Defense College and people down in the naval school in Topeka. The Mexicans did not want a really close relationship because of the history. If there were an enemy to defend against, it would be us. I think that we had effective attachés who had good personal relationships but we were held at a certain distance. We didn't really know what was going on in the Mexican military.

Q: The election of '80 in the United States was sort of one of these watersheds where Carter had earlier come in on a very liberal platform and then you had Ronald Reagan who came in in '81 with sort of a very conservative point of view. How did this...

PRYCE: Reagan was such a wonderful charmer and great communicator. I remember that he had a very good personal relationship with his Mexican counterpart. I think they met before the inauguration up on the border. I remember that the Mexicans gave him a horse and we were trying to figure out what the hell are we going to do with this horse, it isn't legal yet. The Mexicans adapted and there was always sort of a special relationship. There really was not a great deal of difficulty in making the adjustment.

Q: This wasn't where sort of the leftist element in the university went out storming around or anything like that?

PRYCE: No, I don't think so.

Q: I think it was handy that of course Reagan came from California and there was always that close relationship with Texas and California.

PRYCE: Reagan had a very positive attitude towards Mexico and as I say he reached out very early in the administration and the Mexicans reciprocated.

Q: Were there any sort of issues that you could see might change from Carter to Reagan, or not?

PRYCE: No, I think that our relationships with Mexico really were pretty nonpartisan or bipartisan and that the problems we confronted didn't change. Our basic attitudes towards trying to solve those problems didn't change; the problems of narcotics, the problems of investment climate; the problems with migration; the problems of dealing with them in the UN. All these problems and all these opportunities didn't change much and our policy didn't change and theirs didn't.

JOHN A. FERCH
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico City (1978-1982)

Ambassador John A. Ferch was born in Ohio in 1936 and graduated from Princeton University in 1958. He entered the Foreign Service the same year. In

addition to serving in Mexico, Ambassador Ferch served in Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Washington, DC, Cuba, and Honduras. This interview was conducted by William E. Knight in 1991.

FERCH: Pat Lucy was ambassador in Mexico. He had been Kennedy's campaign manager and also governor of Wisconsin. He wanted a new DCM and called a friend of his in Treasury, Tony Soloman, I think. Soloman called Francis Wilson to see if she could recommend someone for the DCM slot. She gave him my name and I went over and talked to Pat. He said, "I want you." Then the Department said that he couldn't take a guy of my rank to Mexico. I was at that time still a 0-3 and 41. He said, "Okay" and chose somebody else. And then that somebody else quit the Service. Pat again said that he wanted Ferch, that he wasn't going to put up with anymore of this. So I went to Mexico. I had been assigned to go as DCM to Quito. I was in the DCM course when I was told I was going to go to Mexico, which, of course, was a tremendous step up.

At that time it was the largest mission in the Foreign Service. We had 1200 people and a hand full of consulates. I spent four years there. A fabulous job. I really conceived of that job and carried it out as I think a DCM job should be conceived--an in-house job, managing the embassy, making it function. I had an opportunity to put into practice all sorts of ideas I had about really making reporting programs relate to policy and having reporting assignments reflected in the goals and objectives and officers' efficiency reports. I really got into trying to run a coherent embassy.

I worked for three ambassadors, three political appointees. Pat Lucy was the first one. He quit to run Ted Kennedy's campaign. Pat is still a very, very good friend of mine who I highly admire. Then there was a man by the name of Julian Nava who served only 11 months. He tested me no end because he did such things as bringing in a Rolls Royce and selling it before he even sat in it, for \$100,000. The Inspector General finally came down and he left for that reason, but most people didn't know that because it was also the change of administration. Then John Gavin came down and I worked for him until I left.

So I was there in Mexico from 1978-82. At one time towards the end, my name, although I am not sure how far along it was, was on the ambassadorial list for the DR, which really pleased me. The Ambassador, this was John Gavin, who by the way has a profound, extraordinary knowledge of Mexico and his Spanish was better than any Spanish I have ever heard, had a secretary who he wanted removed. John Ferch, the naive, who was focusing on the management of the Embassy, said that that was the DCM's job. She was a young black woman and brought a grievance against me, which did not hold. I was not charged with anything but doing my job. But during the course of the grievance, my name was removed from whatever stage it was in going to the DR. I was not too happy about that, as you can imagine. But Jack Gavin felt he had to help me out.

I was also involved in Mexico during the height of the petroleum boom, the years of López Portillo, when the Mexicans thought they had the world by the tail. In effect they only pulled their own tail over the edge. I was there when they fell over the edge in 1982 and was able to say

to many American bankers that this was the dance of the millions, turn around and get on an airplane and get out of here. This isn't going to last. The run up to the debt crisis. I saw it coming. I told people it was coming.

Let me say also in the management area, something that I found very satisfying. I found management satisfying. I found it intellectually challenging. But there is another aspect to that. I found the management of personnel development extraordinarily satisfying. The place where I have the fondest memories was in Mexico. Mexico, because of the consular workload, had an inordinately large number of junior officers. I would say that at any one time we probably had 25 to 40 junior officers...the visa mills. I, as DCM, was responsible for the development of these officers. I enjoyed that. I met everyone who came in. Every quarter I was suppose to write something on them so I would take them out to lunch, talk to them, find out how they were doing. Every month I would have a group of them over to my house and we would talk about the career and functioning in the Foreign Service. I found it very, very satisfying. I left Mexico in 1982. Many of those people are now really quite successful in the Foreign Service. Looking back like that you can see they are not successful because of me, but I had a hand in it.

ALLAN W. OTTO
Deputy Chief, Consular Section
Mexico City (1978-1982)

Allan W. Otto was born in Illinois in 1938. He graduated from Northwestern University in 1959. His Foreign Service career started in 1962 and included positions in Germany, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Poland, Mexico, and Washington, DC. Mr. Otto was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: Well, you left Warsaw in 1975 and you then went to work in the Operations Center for a couple of years. So we'll skip over that period so that we can concentrate on the visa side. You went to Mexico City, where you served from 1978 to 1981. Part of that time you were dealing with American Services, which is not concerned with visas.

OTTO: Right.

Q: But later you were deputy chief of the Consular Section. So I wonder if you could describe, from your viewpoint, the difference. You'd come from Poland, which had a difficult visa situation, to another post which is one of the largest, from the visa-issuing viewpoint. What were your principal problems in Mexico regarding visas?

OTTO: There was a problem of non-compliance -- I'm not sure you can exactly call it fraud. The border between the United States and Mexico is very interesting. In practical terms, it's an open border. Because of the fact that people still, apparently, like to have some documentation when

they cross borders, they came to us for visas. We refused many visas, but I don't think that the [refusal] rate was anywhere near what it was in Poland. My recollection is that it [the refusal rate] was more like 10-15%. We had better clientele in Mexico City than some of our Consulates have in Mexico. Look, Mexico at that time was in the middle of the oil boom. There were many Mexicans who had lots of money. A Mexican middle class already existed at that time. When those folks came in -- there were a lot of them -- there was no reason not to give them visas. They'd go for a weekend to shop in Houston or Dallas or San Antonio -- places like that.

The main problem was that, because of the perceived non-compliance or fraud problem, if you want to call it that -- there was a lot of document fraud -- it was determined that most Mexicans had to have personal interviews. There were three ways you got your non-immigrant visa. You came in person to the Embassy and you waited in line. You went to a consular officer and you had an interview, perhaps longer, perhaps shorter. I can talk about the organizational method of that, if that's a good thing to talk about. Or you went through a travel agent, whereby the travel agent presented the case for you in a prescribed format. You had to have a passport, valid for a certain time. The application had to be filled out. There had to be some indication of what the tour was going to be, or the time, or whatever. Or you came in through contacts, friends, and a referral system. But, obviously, the overwhelming number of people came in for personal interviews.

The difficulty on the organizational side was how to handle those people in a way which would allow for business to go on, because during the summer months in particular, when you had lots of people who wanted to travel, you would have lines that would go around a square block. You'd get to the Embassy from a front street off Reforma [boulevard] and you'd have to go through the non-immigrant visa waiting line, which went around the corner, down the side, and then around to the back of the Embassy, where people were actually being let into the [Consular] Section. The main problem was how do you handle people in such numbers in personal interviews and try and do a valid job in terms of implementing the law. Basically, we decided to provide training and guidance to our consular personnel. Our basic advice was, "Look at the totality of the person." Mexican passports, I should say, have the bearer's occupation noted in them. Our guidance continued, "Is that a guarantee that they are what they say? No, but it's a better indication than if you have nothing. A person might walk up to the consular section. Perhaps this person, say, is in his or her 20s, but well-dressed. The occupation listed in the passport shows that he or she is a professional person. The person brought some evidence of financial resources. Don't spend a lot of time with such a person. But, look at the hands. If this person is supposed to be an architect but has the hands of somebody who is not an architect, okay, then what you have to do is to say, 'You will need to have a more extensive interview,' and pass him [or her] on to some other folks in a different part of the operation.

But the idea was to have a very quick review by a consular officer for the purpose of making a decision within half a minute, as to whether this person was obviously a good case or whether there is something to ask questions about. There were enough good cases that we could, in effect, resolve all of them very quickly through this kind of screening process. Then, the cases that were not quite so clear, or third country nationals -- Central Americans, whatever -- would go on to a second interview. But a decision should be made quickly on them, also. We arranged the waiting

room with long benches where the applicants would come in and sit. They would move up as they got to the head of the queue. During that time we had FSN staff who would go up and down these benches to make sure that their applications were filled out, that they had their passports, and the supporting documentation, so that when they got to the consular officer, there was no question of, "Why didn't you answer all of the questions?" And so we had a system whereby we resolved these cases quickly. We didn't do the AVLOS check first...

Q: AVLOS is the automatic visa lookout system...

OTTO: Right.

Q: This is a computerized system which shows whether someone has been refused a visa or is on a wanted list, or something like that.

OTTO: We would run them through this interview process. If they made the first cut and didn't have to go through the second one, their passports would be taken to another part of the operation, and they would start through the AVLOS check. If they had to go to the second interview, they went to the second interview, and whatever happened, happened. But, in either case, the people to whom we were going to issue visas did not receive their visas immediately. We got them in, we got them out, told them to come back -- I think it was about 3:00 in the afternoon. So we cut the line off -- oh, I think it was about 11:30 AM, and we would make sure that we interviewed everybody who was there by the cutoff time. We publicized this. If you were in line by noon, you got to be interviewed. At 3:00 PM people would come back. We had boxes. We had a "ticking system." So when you were due to be issued a visa, one of these little notes was stamped and stapled to the passport. The other copy was given to the applicant to keep as a kind of receipt. And when the applicant came back, he or she had a ticket to receive the passport. Then we had numbers. The rows in the waiting room were numbered, and we had boxes at the end of the rows. And the rows would be numbered so that people would know where to go. And it never took more than an hour and 45 minutes. We could handle 1,500 to 2,500 passports.

But the main problem was document fraud. There was a kind of industry in Mexico City which could provide you with letterhead paper, false bank statements, and things of that nature. And so, again, we had to deal with a variation of what we had in Poland. In other words, you looked at the person, you tried to look at the totality of what they were telling you. If they had really convincing documentation, but for some reason you doubted that their occupation was what they claimed, because of just their dress or physical characteristics, the case took more time to resolve. Some of the Mexican people are in agriculture. They have certain things that they wear. And if they came to the Embassy wearing that and claiming to have a different occupation, you had a good basis for turning them down. This system seemed to work. We had Congressional inquiries, of course, but I don't remember that we had any kind of overwhelming problem with the Mexican people or with the Mexican Government on non-immigrant policy.

Q: You mentioned fraud. Were you able to work with the Mexican Government to keep the fraud down?

OTTO: To a certain extent. One of the problems that we had in doing visa work is that, if you have enough resources and you devote enough time to fraud, you can almost always find some. To the extent that you're in a situation where you don't have enough resources to handle the workload, then you become more production-oriented. And the level of your anti-fraud effort goes down. Because you just don't have the resources. We tried, at times, to close down a series of independent entrepreneurs who did things like typing up visa applications for people for a fee. Our concern was not only that they were typing up the visa form but also fabricating the documentation. There was just that kind of thing. And we did have one instance where we tried to put together a case. And, indeed, the Mexican Government closed down a whole number of these people for a couple of months. But the other thing about Mexico, just in a general sense, is that it is a country where corruption is a way of life. You have traffic policemen who get their positions, based on the amount of money that they can bring in in traffic violations, and it may go all the way up to the top. They also have bribery. You should not use those terms loosely. But when money or connections have a great deal of influence, then, of course, you have a situation where it's awfully hard to keep out certain types of things -- which are not necessarily crimes in Mexico...If you come in and try to present documentation which is fraudulent in an effort to get a United States visa, have you violated a Mexican law? My recollection is that, the answer is no, I don't think you have. And therefore, while what they're doing is something that they don't like, it's a little bit hard to keep up our vigilance. I don't know what the current situation is -- whether it's changed or not.

Q: What about the junior officers? It must be hard to make a 30-second decision on people and all this, over a period of time. How did you sort of keep them up to snuff and train them?

OTTO: We had a rotational program within the Consular Section. Our goal was that no one would ever spend more than about six months on the non-immigrant visa line. We had specific training for people so that they would be aware of these techniques that we thought were valid: passport, a review of the documentation, occupation, and financial situation. Also, we tried to show that this was something that was of interest to us all. So that, as the deputy -- I can't remember now how often, but maybe once a month -- I would go down and spend a couple of hours issuing visas. You have to show a continuing interest in what is going on. It also means that, sometimes, you have to back your people. There might be cases where you think, "Gee, this case is not too bad. If I were handling it myself, I might not be quite so hard." However, you're convinced that your vice-consul is trying to do a good job. Therefore, despite the fact that the Mexicans who have influence try to come in and get you to change, you hold tight. You also try to make sure that your supervisors are also doing that sort of thing.

We had a non-immigrant visa chief. Everybody's got to participate. This is not just a line officer function. Now, obviously, this was not a constant thing for supervisory staff, but there was not the attitude, "We don't care what you do -- just get the work done." Not that kind of attitude. We wanted to do the work as fairly and as well as we could. In addition to the training we tried to counsel people, too. Our people should not become jaded by the fact that some visa applicants will lie to you.

Q: It's one of the hardest things to get across because we're really talking about young,

successful people who passed all the exams in the Foreign Service and really have not been in what you might call "a lying mode." They've been able to get what they need without doing a lot of lying. It comes as a personal affront to them -- I think it's one of the hardest things for a supervisory consular officer to get his people to understand.

OTTO: I think it is. But I don't know that there's any -- I'm inclined to say that, based on my experience, it's one of those things that takes constant work. You can't say, "OK, I've done it. I've come in as a supervisor. I've done it. I don't have to worry about it any more." You just have to keep coming back. We also tried to consider how much time the work was taking, without making any formal time and motion studies on people. We did try to see what the work load of the individual line officers was. We did that -- not to say, "You have to do certain numbers of visas." But if people were not doing as much as their colleagues were, or somebody was doing an awful lot more than their colleagues, that's also an indication, perhaps, that things were not going exactly as they should be. We didn't have a specific quota but we thought that, given our situation, and depending on whether you were on what we called the "prescreening" side, where you make the snap decision, as compared to other duties, we thought that if we were going to get the work done, and the work was spread fairly and equally among the number of people that we had doing the work, then you had to do -- I can't remember exactly -- but about 150 to 200 visas a day, within a period which ran, usually, from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM. If you work this out mathematically, over five hours, you're doing 40 an hour. Which means that on the fast ones, you have to be fast. But I think, personally -- at least within the context of Mexico -- that there were some that were really easy. You had people, all kinds of professional people. There was no reason to believe that they would ever want to go to the United States to work. They were doing just fine and they had no special entree to the Embassy, so they wouldn't come in through the referral program. For whatever reason, they didn't want to go through a tourist agency -- maybe they weren't going on a tour, or something of that nature. Those are the people that would have been interesting to talk to or get their views. But when you're in a production mode...

And that information is not collected in any systematic way. Unless you know you want that information or have some use for it, it's hard to collect. I know of a study that was done in Mexico City. A questionnaire was developed for immigrant visa applicants, and these were collected for a period of about three months. The results of that survey were very interesting. Some of the things that one would have expected at the time were there, but there were other things that were also interesting. For example, just about everybody concerned was coming back from the United States to apply for an immigrant visa. They had gone illegally and established some kind of legal entitlement, whether it was marriage or job related. Then they stayed in the United States until their immigrant visa interview was ready and came back and got their visa. There was some information in this, however, that was also different. Some questions were asked about, "How long were you in the United States before you came back?" "How many years had gone by between the time when you went and your actual, immigrant visa interview?" "What kind of educational levels?" and "Why did you go to the United States in the first place?" It made interesting reading, though I don't recall the details. I don't know of many instances when that has been done. It's not something which has been required. If you do report something like that, who is really interested? People say, "Isn't that interesting?" Maybe there should be something done like that more often. As we get to the point where we do more things electronically, and files are

kept electronically, if we're wise enough in terms of how we set up our electronic file systems, we should be able to extract all kinds of data.

Q: There are two major factors worth considering in this connection. One is the factor of fairness. There is a general feeling that we should not have quotas. The other factor is the political imperatives of people from an Irish or a Polish constituency. They want to make sure that their relatives are taken care of.

OTTO: I think that's fair. Some studies have said that migration to the United States is largely a result of economic conditions within the United States, as well as economic conditions within the country from which these people come. I think that there's a good deal of truth in that. However, it's not a perfect correlation. Obviously, Mexicans, and to a certain extent, Central Americans can get to the United States a lot easier than can people from India. The nearness factor is very important. Take a look at the extent of legalization of illegal aliens that resulted from the 1986 Act. I think that something in excess of between 70 and 80% -- I don't remember the exact number -- were Mexicans. Well, that has to reflect something. That's not just...

What amazed me was that, time after time, when you would hear these anecdotal stories, they usually involved one or two or three people showing up at the same place every year at the same time, and being there to do the same work, or whole villages in certain parts of Mexico being used by either one or a very few, large growers, to do basically the same things. And what amazes me even more in retrospect is that all of this was basically outside the law. What I mean is that these people moved back and forth. They didn't get visas to do this. They just went across the border illegally. And in most instances, at least based on my experiences somewhat later, many of these people could actually qualify -- I've forgotten what the term is -- for permanent residence. They could prove that they had been involved in agricultural activity. I went down to Mexico for a week or two while I was still in the Visa Office in 1987 to look at the programs being implemented for people who were trying to qualify as agricultural workers for permanent residence. Many of these people who had been brought into the United States paid Social Security contributions. Not all, but a lot did. So they were working completely outside the system, but the way in which they were recruited, the way in which they moved, how they showed up, when they showed up -- was largely very informal. And it worked. Questions of standards of living, wage rates, and things like that are another matter. But obviously the Mexicans who came to work felt that it was in their best interests to do this, whatever the conditions might be. I'm not an advocate of bad conditions for migrant workers by any means. But they came and felt that they were going to be benefitted in some way. Obviously, the agricultural growers wanted them.

STEPHEN H. ROGERS
Counselor for Economic Affairs
Mexico City (1978-1982)

Ambassador Stephen H. Rogers was born in 1931 and grew up in Long Island,

New York. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in India, France, the United Kingdom (England), Mexico, and South Africa, Washington DC, and an ambassadorship to Swaziland. Ambassador Rogers was interviewed by Raymond C. Ewing in 1994.

Q: You were involved primarily in multilateral regional issues or also bilateral economic issues between the United States and Latin American countries?

ROGERS: We got somewhat involved in the bilateral issues, but it was more directed at those issues that extended to more than one country in Latin America. I remember we spent a lot of time working with other agencies and other parts of the department on the list of products that would be covered by the generalized scheme of preferences to try to make it as beneficial as possible within the context of US interests to Latin American countries.

Q: I don't suppose at that time there begun to be any consideration of what came after, much later, involving Mexico?

ROGERS: Right. To jump a head a little bit about that. That certainly came up in my next assignment when I was in Mexico. That was at the time of the second big oil price hike in 1979. Mexico didn't exactly discover it had oil at that point, because it had been a major oil producer back in the 1930s which led up to the nationalization of the oil industry, but rather there was new public recognition that Mexico had huge reserves of oil that had not yet been exploited. That hadn't been widely discussed publicly partly because they were of recent discovery in their magnitude and partly as a matter of policy because of the concern of what knowledge of such oil supplies would do in the domestic political scene. But we can come back to the NAFTA business later.

Q: And then after that, in 1978 you went to Mexico City as counselor for economic affairs. We talked briefly about what later became the North Atlantic Free Trade Area. I assume that you were primarily involved with trade issues in Mexico, or other issues as well?

ROGERS: It was trade, energy, environment, transport, communications, a whole range of different aspects of the relationship. You know the expression "Pobre México. Tan lejos del Dios, tan cerca de Los Estados Unidos," "So far from God and so close to the United States." That attitude was completely understandable. Mexico is so vulnerable to the United States if it chooses to see it that way, and if we choose to act in that way. Like Canada, it is in the position of sometimes being forgotten when we make our policy decisions and forget to realize to what a huge extent these two countries are economically dependent on the United States. So, I found a kind of understandable defensiveness on the part of the Mexicans on issues of all sorts where many of them felt we were taking advantage of them.

I guess the extreme case was when one of the prominent papers, I think it was Excelsior, at a time of drought in Mexico published a theoretically serious story about how they had discovered

that this was the result of a US plot--that we by seeding clouds had made sure that the rain fell elsewhere and not in Mexico. But, as I say, this was understandable.

At the time that oil became such a factor, in the Mexican economy and in its political consciousness, the Mexicans both felt pride and hope and became protective of this wealth that they had. And when there were proposals in the US Congress at that point for a North American Free Trade Area, the Mexicans naturally reacted that this was an attempt by the United States to get a hold of Mexico's oil reserves. I don't know what the motivation of the proposers was, but one can assume that that was a factor in their thinking, that it would make it easier for the United States to buy oil from Mexico, also giving Mexico an assured market in the United States, and that became a factor later. But the Mexicans saw this kind of proposal as another attack on their sovereignty, or some Mexicans did.

Q: Did you find the feeling that perhaps the United States paid more attention, took more into account, its other neighbor Canada, perhaps because of its higher standard of living, more developed economy, perhaps even greater integration than Mexico?

ROGERS: One would think that Canada and Mexico might have found common interests in trying to deal with the United States and I seem to recall one or two occasions when there were contacts between the two governments of that sort. My impression is that the Mexicans consider themselves in such a different situation from Canada's that it was just hard to find any comparability there. I don't recall that there was any jealousy or resentment of our policy toward Canada. I don't think that was the situation. I think Mexico felt it was not relevant.

Q: In the period that you were in Mexico City, 1978-82, a lot of American investment was taking place, especially in the border region...assembling plants, etc. Was that a particular issue for you? Did you spend quite a bit of time up along the border?

ROGERS: Well, I can't say that I spent a lot of time up there, but certainly we were very conscious of this, and the Mexicans were very conscious of the positive aspects of the maquiladora phenomenon. The industry grew very fast and I take it it has continued to grow very fast since. I suppose NAFTA put it into a different context which decreases the value of the maquiladoras except the geographical location is still important. Maquiladoras could be in other parts of Mexico, but the great bulk of them were near the US border.

Q: One other aspect perhaps of US-Mexican relations that I would like to touch on briefly. I know from my experience in dealing with Canada on a couple of different occasions, the issues are extremely concrete and specific and also involved domestic agencies of government which were perhaps not otherwise involved in international affairs...in environment and various aspects on the economic side. Did you find that was the case in Mexico too, and did other agencies try to interact directly with their counterparts in Mexico?

ROGERS: Fortunately, or unfortunately, the Mexicans speak Spanish and not English. But for other reasons too, there was much less of that with Mexico than with Canada. In fact, my recollection is that we tried to encourage this kind of contact on environmental matters for

instance, to get the EPA involved with their counterparts in Mexico. We have so many problems that affect both countries along the border and the oceans on both sides.

Q: When you went to Mexico City it was still the Carter Administration and you stayed under 1982, which was the first two years of the Reagan Administration. Who was the ambassador when you first went there?

ROGERS: It was Governor Pat Lucey. This is an interesting matter. Governor Lucey was former Governor of Wisconsin and was a very, very pleasant man. He was a man not of Foreign Service experience, but still he did well. Then President Carter decided to appoint Julián Nava as ambassador. Ambassador Nava was from Los Angeles and had been on the school board there. He was the first American Ambassador of Hispanic, Latino descent to be sent to Mexico. I don't recall that the Mexicans were all that excited about having the first Latino American sent there. In any case his tour was cut quite short by the arrival of Mr. Reagan in the White House. President Reagan sent John Gavin down there, another Latino American, in that his mother was born and raised in Mexico. Ambassador Gavin was an interesting person who made quite an impact, quite quickly in the press. He had no fear of the press. Apparently he had had a lot of experience with it. I think he perhaps succeeded, whether immediately or not, President Reagan in the Screen Actors Guild. So he had a lot of experience with the press. He took on the press quite cleverly, sometimes against the advice of his counselors, and held his own very well. The press was tough on the United States there. But he had good humor, his Spanish was a very nice and fluent. I served under him for a year or so, or more. He was quite impressive.

Q: There is a very large American community, of course, in Mexico. I assume there is a large chamber of commerce. Did you interact to a certain extent with that or with the American business community?

ROGERS: Yes. I was an honorary member of the board of the American Chamber and saw American businessmen often. There were issues, certainly, that we tried to help on. It is a very large community spread over a good deal of Mexico.

Q: How were the relations during that period between the embassy in Mexico City and the State Department in Washington, especially in the economic area?

ROGERS: Through most of the time I was there, they went quite well. The last year or so, things got a little tense. There were differences. The fact that Ambassador Gavin was close to President Reagan probably was a factor in that, but I wouldn't want to speculate just how that impacted. But it was the classic case of an ambassador with access that backstoppers in Washington didn't have in the same way. This had an impact on our relations with the Office of Mexican Affairs.

One other thing about Mexico. Mexico was fascinating for a variety of reasons. I won't go into the historical and cultural reasons, but they are deep. It is a far more interesting country than I think most Americans give it credit for being. But during that period from 1978-82 that I was there as economic counselor--I take neither pride or responsibility in the fact--it was a time of the rise and fall of the Mexican economy. When I got there in 1978 it was coming out of a serious

depression. President López Portillo was considered as having the right kinds of attitudes toward business, the economy, inflation, etc. Then the whole oil matter impacted on the economy, so Mexico had a period of growth and prosperity for a couple of years which seemed quite impressive. But in that time, oil rapidly became too dominant a factor. It was a sad thing to watch because the Mexicans knew what was happening, or many did. They had seen what happened in Venezuela, where the ability to export oil crowded out so much economic activity, including feeding themselves. This same sort of thing happened in Mexico, where oil became the great majority of Mexico's exports to the detriment of other parts of its own economy. And then the price of oil declined in the early eighties and by 1982 there was an oil glut. This had tremendous impact. A few months before I left the first crisis devaluation of the Mexican peso took place, and then things just got worse and fell apart. This became a sort of sparkplug for tremendous attention given to the problems of developing countries and their balance of payments in Washington.

Q: Was Mexico a member of OPEC?

ROGERS: Mexico is not a member of OPEC, but coordinated with OPEC and, of course, took advantage of OPEC's decisions to some extent.

Q: You weren't there later on, but as the Mexican economy became less dependent on its reliance on oil, it industrialized towards an almost developed country economy. I believe only recently Mexico has joined the OECD.

ROGERS: Well, to someone with my background in Mexico fifteen years ago, the recent events there are hard to believe. From the time that Mexico had this resentment towards the United States and defensiveness, for it to have agreed to the North American Free Trade arrangement, is just astounding and I think a very positive development. And I am not thinking just of the economic side, but as a reflection of a kind of maturity in the political relationship between Mexico and the United States. From my background in the Economic Bureau and my European experience, I am a little bit concerned about the development of regional economic blocs, unless there is some overwhelming economic, or more likely political, reason for it. But I think in this case the political reason was obvious. And the importance of Mexico's economic development to the United States is also obvious in terms of our illegal immigration problem and all. And now, as you mentioned, Mexico has joined the OECD and that is extraordinary.

Q: There have been some very significant developments in the last twelve years since you left.

ROGERS: That is right.

Q: It is certainly a very dynamic country, both on the economic and political side.

ROGERS: One other thing I would like to mention. By 1982 there was concern by the United States about what was happening to Mexico and also in other developing countries, but especially in Mexico. I give credit to the Reagan administration for trying to develop a set of measures that could help Mexico out of this. Ironically one of those measures was to contract

with Mexico for a certain amount of oil to be put into our strategic petroleum reserve. So in a very brief time, say 1980-82, there had been a kind of ironic flip-flop in the oil relationship where we were using oil to help Mexico instead of being a threat to Mexico.

STANLEY ZUCKERMAN
Counselor, Public Affairs
Mexico City (1978-1983)

Mr. Zuckerman was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and educated at the University of Wisconsin. After service in the US Army, followed by newspaper reporting and a position with the Governor of Wisconsin, he joined the USIA Foreign Service in 1965. He subsequently served as Information, Press and Public Affairs Counselor in Congo, Belgium, Mexico, Canada and Brazil. He also had several senior level assignments in Washington at USIA and the State Department. Mr. Zuckerman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q. How did the assignment to Mexico come about?

ZUCKERMAN: Well, while I was working at IMV I got a phone call from Governor Lucey who was in the middle of his second term. He told me that he was going to announce his resignation as governor the next day and would accept appointment as ambassador to Mexico, a post offered to him by newly elected President Carter. He said he wanted me to come down with him. I said, "Pat, we don't do things like that in the Foreign Service. Number one, I am the USIA representative to the American Foreign Service Association board. It's our union. We frown on ambassadors who come in and tried to replace their staff with old buddies. He said, laughing, "You know, I asked you to come back when I was elected governor, so I figured the only way I can get you to work for me again was to join the Foreign Service." I said, "That's very kind of you, but you should go down there and get to know your staff and work with them. If they are not doing what you want them to do, tell them what you want. If that doesn't work, you are free to make changes, but in doing so, you can talk to the director of the Foreign Service and to personnel. You can try to get the kind people you need, but you shouldn't do it without knowing first something about the abilities of the people who are now working there."

I happened to know the PAO, Len Baldyga, who was there at the time and was a friend of mine who had a very good record, and told Lucey he should keep an open mind about him and others on his staff. So Lucey went to Mexico but six months later he came back to Washington and we had dinner. He said that he had problems with his Country Team, that it seemed that Mexico for many years had been a retirement post. Not much had been going on, but that Mexico was changing. Not only was the population growing rapidly, but they suspected that there was a good deal more oil than had been thought in their offshore reserves. He said that the PAO was a very capable man but that he was laid low with a bad back and that his staff was not really giving the Ambassador the support he needed. He said it was true of virtually the entire Country Team, made up of the heads of key sections and other Agencies. I told him that I had accepted a request

by the Agency to go to New York to work for Elliot Richardson, who was going to be Ambassador to the sixth UN conference on the law of the sea. I had agreed to go up there to work for him in Washington and then go up to New York for the session until August, when I was to go into the Senior Seminar in National and International Affairs, a very prestigious year-long assignment. So I said there is no way I would be available. I was already in the 'midst of my senior seminar year, when he came back to Washington. He said he was going to make all the changes he had talked about, including most of the Country Team. He was really fond of Len Baldyga, who went on to very high level assignments, but thought that Len, whose interest was mainly in Eastern Europe, also might welcome a change. I said that decision was between him and the director of the Agency; that he would have to talk to John Reinhardt, the Director of the Agency under President Carter, and if Reinhardt wanted me to go to Mexico when I finished the Senior Seminar I would. Director Reinhardt agreed to the transfer, so at the end of the senior seminar I went to Mexico.

Q: This is during USIA?

ZUCKERMAN: Yes.

Q: OK, you were there from '78 until when?

ZUCKERMAN: 1983. It was my longest time at a post, and in retrospect the greatest opportunity I had had in my career to effect changes in perceptions in a complicated country. It was a time of great change in Mexico, in which there was great admiration for our democracy, as well as a strong underlying historical animosity. My time there spanned much of the terms of three ambassadors.

Q: When you went out there, I mean obviously with a friend, governor Lucey, as ambassador there, you had been hearing about this and all. What were you getting about Lucey and the USIA operation before you went there?

ZUCKERMAN: I knew that he was on very bad terms, not with the PAO who he liked, but with some of the staff. Len had very serious back problems at the time and for much of the time his deputy was running the post. There was a feeling that Ambassador Lucey expected the post to operate as his public affairs staff did when he was governor of Wisconsin, with press releases going out every couple of days. I told him when I heard about it that I thought that was a mistake. But by the time I got there the well had been a bit poisoned and the staff was in the doghouse. They felt that he didn't understand their program, and he felt they didn't understand his needs. It was a bad situation. When I went down, of course I was free to talk to him in a way that other counselors couldn't because they didn't have the long personal friendship with him that I had. I told him that he was probably harming himself by creating too high a profile, by being so prominent in the press, and it would be better to lower it somewhat. He did, and I asked him if would agree to meet with my staff, get to know some of them, and talk about what his problems were and how we could best support him, and let us exchange ideas on that.. He came down and he was pretty strong in stating what he thought we should be doing, laying out a level of activity that sounded like an election campaign. I went to him afterwards to talk it over, without doing it

in front of the staff, and told him that there were things we not only shouldn't do but in fact couldn't do. That we would work up a program that will help support the country plan's goals, and also try to help him communicate effectively with the Mexican public because when the U.S. ambassador to Mexico said something, he was listened to. But this also meant he couldn't expect to do that on a daily basis, because it would appear overbearing and meddlesome.

This was in early September or October, and we were beginning to turn some things around. We had some staff changes. I wanted to bring down a new press attaché/information officer because I thought that was one of the problems. The incumbent was quite competent, but had lost the ambassador's confidence. Lucey was upset because as governor he would travel around Wisconsin with one assistant who would handle press matters and also take notes for thank you letters and the like. But he had too many people traveling with him as ambassador and he thought it was a waste of money. He wanted the press attaché to travel with him but also to serve as an assistant for the note taking. The press attaché thought it wasn't his job to do so, and the ambassador said "Well either the press attaché will help do some staff work for me, or my staff assistant will do the press work." So the result was we lost a man traveling with the ambassador, which I thought was a setback since I wanted him to support our program and I thought we should do our best to support him. The Agency agreed that I could bring down Larry Ikels, a very able replacement who could do the job, and that problem was resolved. So we were getting things turned around when all of a sudden, we got word that President Carter would be coming to visit in February. You know what a presidential visit means; it displaces all other activity. But in this case the White House descended on us in early December and we were just upside down for the next three months in preparation for that visit. I had worked on President Nixon's visit to Brussels, but although I was a liaison to the White House press people I was not the PAO there. This one was a much bigger event because there was no real problem in our bilateral relationship in Brussels, but in Mexico, the oil issue had become very important.

The left in Mexico felt that a deal to sell oil and gas to the United States meant bargaining away Mexico's patrimony. Oil had been exploited by British and Americans in the early part of the 20th century when there were fields discovered in Tampico up on the Caribbean coast. The industry was nationalized by President Lazaro Cardenas who mobilized the oil workers to support his actions.. There is a major statue on the upper part of the Avenue Reforma, leading to the upscale neighborhood of Lomas, of Los Petroleros, the oil workers who led the drive to nationalize the oil industry. Oil and Mexican nationalism were identified as being one and the same. So the left raised a storm. Here was Jimmy Carter coming down and the papers were up in arms. "He is coming to steal our oil. They will take our oil; they want to take everything away from us". We were having country team meetings about the visit, and I said it was getting to be such a confrontational thing that we needed a cultural event of some kind to soften the confrontation, and to try to assure Mexicans that this is not a crisis situation, but a natural feature of a long term relationship.

At first we proposed that Vladimir Horowitz be invited to come down and play. The White House objected because he had played at the White House and then had released a record of that used the White House for what they felt was self-promotion. There were three symphony Orchestras in Mexico City, the National Symphony, the National University Orchestra, and the

Mexico City Philharmonic, which was founded by the wife of President Lopez Portillo. It was the best of the three, with internationally recruited members. The president's wife was herself a competent amateur pianist. Mexico was swimming in oil money then, and she had brought in Americans, Russians, Poles, Germans and French and had hired some of the best Mexican instrumentalists as well. It was an international orchestra, although the Mexican conductor was hired because of his friendship with Mrs. Lopez Portillo rather than for his talent. I suggested we ask Leonard Bernstein to conduct a concert with the orchestra, an invitational concert for the business community, diplomatic community, senior officials of the Mexican government, cultural figures and with the two Presidents and their major aides in attendance. I didn't know it at the time but Bernstein had celebrated his honeymoon in Acapulco, and had written "Trouble in Tahiti" while he was vacationing in Mexico. The White House liked the idea, and he agreed to do it for expenses only. Well we were delighted. Mrs. Lopez Portillo was delighted, although her first choice for a cultural event had been a grand exhibit of American art. I was told by my staff that during the US bicentennial celebration there was an exhibit arranged for travel to three posts, Warsaw, Paris and Mexico, It was called The World of Franklin and Jefferson, and contained splendid displays of that period. It was put on a train to come to Mexico City, but the train could not be found for about four days. It was carrying material borrowed from museums all over the US, and word of that fiasco made the White House back off. So we got Bernstein, but we promised Mrs. Lopez Portillo that we would try to organize an exhibit of American art when we could do so with the proper amount of planning, something that was impossible just before a Presidential visit.

Bernstein came down, but sent ahead a program for the concert. It consisted of a mix of American and Mexican music. I remember it included the Symphonia India by Carlos Chavez, El Salon Mexico by Aaron Copeland, Samuel Barber's Elegy for Strings and would conclude with the Bernstein Symphonic Dances from West Side Story. I was awakened at 2 a.m. shortly after we received the program by a fiery redhead with the title of ambassador who worked for Mrs. Lopez Portillo. She said, "Who decided on that program?" I said, "Why Leonard Bernstein of course." "But Mrs. Lopez Portillo was never asked," she said, and I said, "I don't think that Mr. Bernstein, who is conducting for nothing, and who as the conductor normally chooses the program, was aware that she wished to be consulted." The Ambassadors said President and Mrs. Lopez Portillo detested West Side Story because it showed the Hispanic population in a poor light. So that selection would have to go, and in any case she wanted the second part of the concert to be a classical symphony, preferably German. I said that that was above my pay grade, and we got Bernstein's agent Harry Kraut to come down to Mexico and to meet with Alfredo Elias, who was nominally the head of a non governmental charitable organization, an organization of Mrs. Lopez Portillo's, but really was a principal advisor to her, to come to my office. He said that the wife of the President has very strong opinions and in Mexico her word was law on cultural matters. Kraut said, "Well I don't know. Lenny was asked to conduct the concert in honor of the 20th anniversary of the consecration of the reign of Pope Paul VI. The Pope's staff sent up a list of music for Lenny to choose from and Lenny told the Pope he would take it under consideration." Well, Alfredo's face went pale. He got Mrs. Lopez Portillo on the phone and put her on with Kraut, who said, "I don't know. I guess we won't have a concert. I don't know how Lenny feels about this but I will leave it up to him" We thought the whole thing was off, but Bernstein sent word that he would take the West Side Story waltz's off the program

and perform Beethoven's Fifth Symphony instead. I couldn't believe it, but the fact was that he understood Mexico. He understood that this was important, and didn't want to create a diplomatic incident. He came down and he conducted a wonderful concert before a packed house of some of the most important people in Mexico, with the two presidents sitting there with their secretaries of state and national security advisors in the presidential box. The diplomatic corps, the cultural elite of Mexico, business leaders, it was wonderful.

At the end of the concert, Bernstein took a great bow, walked off in his resplendent white cutaway, and the applause continued awaiting his return for more bows. But instead, the orchestra's regular conductor appeared in a business suite and led the orchestra in the two national anthems and the concert came to a close. Afterwards there was a dinner at the ambassador's house with Lopez Portillo and Bernstein having a contest as to who could start a Latin American song that the other one couldn't finish. It went on until 1 a.m. After the dinner, I wanted Elias to meet Bernstein, and we went to the Presidential suite which the government had provided him in a superb hotel. Bernstein came in and told Elias that the orchestra's conductor had pushed his way past him in the wings of the stage, blocking him from returning for a bow and from having the orchestra receive a standing ovation as well. : "That conductor should be fired," he said, "not because of what he did to me, but because he does not love music."

You could tell the experience was a wonderful experience for the orchestra, and they really played their hearts out. They never sounded so good. Anyway, a year or so later, Mrs. Lopez Portillo reminded us that we had promised to follow through on a major art exhibit. We negotiated it and the Mexicans promised to bear a good share of the cost in security, transportation, a lot of things. So I went to Washington and told them we have to follow through on this. The Mexican relationship was becoming so important; oil and immigration, trade and drugs were major bilateral issues. There were so many issues that Lucey suggested that a meeting be held in Washington with the agencies that had interests and responsibilities for aspects of our relationship with Mexico. He went up there and he called me and said: "You want to know what happened when I walked into that room? There were 70 people there. Virtually every agency of the U.S. government had some part of this."

Q: Also telephone and personal relationships that completely bypass the embassy.

ZUCKERMAN: That happened a little later in Mexico, but I experienced that in Canada, where the embassy was a bystander, where EPA, you know they were buddies with their counterparts in the US. We started a series of binational meetings that involved the foreign minister and elements of Mexico's bureaucracy and ours that interfaced, from law enforcement to immigration to commerce to customs to agriculture to EPA, all of them. It was and still is a very intense interaction. And more so now of course since NAFTA. I remember one of my professors at SAIS, Isaiah Frank, a former deputy assistant secretary for economic affairs, stopped me on the street one day while I was visiting Washington. and said, "You know, a group of us floated this idea, maybe you have seen it. A group of us got together about the wisdom of looking for a free trade relationship with Mexico." I said, I didn't think it was politically possible at that time. I meant that they would see it as another attempt by the United States to dominate Mexico, draw it further away from Latin America to North America, which it was geographically but not

culturally or emotionally part of, but saw itself as distinctly different from the US-Canadian relationship.

Well it became a fact much sooner than I would have guessed. It became a fact not just because of significant changes in the Mexican government, but in the Mexican population. Mexico was slowly but surely developing a population of middle class, educated people, who could no longer abide not having the political freedom that should go along with the responsibilities they were holding in the private sector. This is a development that we may be seeing happen much more slowly in China. I am hoping it goes in the same direction. I do remember that one of the first people I really got to know in the academic community in Mexico was Pedro Aspe, who was then professor of economics, head of the economics department at a private university that was set up by the business community to counter the Marxist economic approach that the national university and most of the universities in Mexico displayed. This was not true of the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey or of several others. Aspe's students at ITAM, the Autonomous Technological Independent University of Mexico, were receiving a thoroughly modern education in economics and other social sciences. He told me he was graduating 48 students with majors in economics that year, of whom 26 had been accepted into first rate Ph.D. programs in the United States. They continue year after year, and other universities, other private universities began following suit. .

My wife taught at one of them, the University of the Americas in Cholula, outside of Puebla. Monterrey Tech was also turning out people with solid foundations in economics, and these people were going into first rate universities in the United States. The Minister of Agriculture was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, and formed a Wisconsin alumni association when Pat Lucey was there. He borrowed a plane from Lopez Portillo's fleet to fly a bunch of people up to a homecoming football game in Madison. In any case, Aspe later became Minister of Finance under Miguel de la Madrid. So the country has really begun to change.

To get back to Mrs. Lopez Portillo and the art exhibit, the Agency agreed and put up some money, but the Mexicans put up more. We agreed that to succeed, the exhibit needed a first rate curator. We decided it would be an exhibit of works from the five great museums of Washington, including the National Gallery, the Phillips. The Corcoran Gallery, the Museum of American Art, and the National Portrait Gallery. It was decided in Washington that the right man was professor emeritus of art history at the City University of New York, a prominent educator named Milton Brown. He was a wonderful gentleman. He came down and a group of us took him out to eat at a very traditional Mexican restaurant, Cafe Tacuba. We got to talking and I said, "Where are you from?" He said, "New York." I said, "Yes, I know, but where in New York." He said, "Brooklyn." I said, "Where in Brooklyn?" He said, "Bensonhurst." I said, "Where in Bensonhurst?" He said, "Bay Parkway." I said, "Where on Bay Parkway?" He said "The intersection of Bay Parkway and Bath Avenue." I said, "Which corner?" He had grown up diagonally across from me a generation earlier. Every store I knew by one name he knew by another.

He did a wonderful job. He talked those Washington museums into taking things off their walls that had never left the United States before, never even left those museums before. Samuel F.B.

Morse's huge portrait of the House of Representatives in the Corcoran, a great work historically and very important, was one of them. It and 89 other works starting from the colonial period up to Diebenkorn, hung at the Palace of Fine Arts for three months. The director of the Agency, John Reinhardt, came down to represent the President at the opening, and it was formally opened by the president of Mexico and his wife. The next president of Mexico was also there, but we didn't know who he was. But we knew he was there because he would be chosen by the outgoing President from among the cabinet members, all of whom were also there.

The exhibit enjoyed great success and drew large crowds, but being Mexico, it was criticized by the left for not exhibiting this person or that person or whoever. Mexico, I decided was one of the two countries where art was really politics. The other one is France. Mexico is like that. There were 16,000 working artists in Mexico at that time and many great museums. The Anthropology Museum of Mexico is the greatest of its kind in the world. The Museum of Modern Art is a wonderful museum. The visual arts are not my field; I was more interested in music, having played piano from childhood, but I really got an education, not only in the arts, the plastic and visual arts, but in the life style of artists, who in Mexico are wonderful, deeply involved in politics as well as in the arts, and more revered by their countrymen than in any other country that I'm familiar with.

Q: Well did you find in Mexico as in France that there is an intelligentsia, you know a group that sits around in cafes essentially but has great influence, somewhat of that nature or not?

ZUCKERMAN: Not in areas of policy that in most countries, including Mexico, were critical. The Mexican system at the time was very cynical. The PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary party of Mexico, had been in power longer than any other party in the world at that time except the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Eventually it was in power longer than the CPSU. After the revolution there was great infighting and war between generals who finally made peace on a cynical basis. That was the agreement that the president would serve for six years but could not be re-elected. What that meant was everybody would get his turn at the trough. The manner in which the powers came to be exercised involved the guarantee of government control of the key sectors of power. They controlled the economy through the ministry of finance. They controlled the ministry of the interior, which meant not what we mean by the ministry of the interior, the geological wealth, the mines, and the public parks. They are talking about the police, internal control, the army, forces of oppression when needed. Those things were the keys to power. The left, the people who sit around in cafes and complain, were allowed to play with the educational system, the media (as long as it never criticized the president), and foreign policy. Those areas were the playground of the intellectuals of the left.

Q: I have been told that the foreign office was sort of the playground of the left because it didn't mean that much in a way.

ZUCKERMAN: That is right, at least not for a long time. When I was there, nationalism was a major element in Mexican's relations with us. Everybody in public life had to be nationalistic, to ensure that they were perceived as defenders of La Patria. But to some it was a calling; to others it was performance. The Mexican school textbooks were outrageous in some respects. We tried

to undertake a program in which we would comment on each other's books' treatment of each other's society and history. The official who dealt with us on the textbook issue was actually one of the more sophisticated people in the Ministry of Education, but it was clearly a matter of great sensitivity within the educational community. We had some pro forma meetings and discussions, and we turned sets of some representative US high school social studies texts over to them. But we could never get them to turn their books over to us, although we were able to buy them in the open market. Then we sent them commentaries not by the State Department, but by American educators. They said "Thanks very much." I don't think anybody ever read them.

Outside of the sacrosanct areas like education or criticism of the president, there was a great deal of political freedom in Mexico. There were outrageous things in the Mexican press, as long as the limits were observed. There was a close contact of mine at the time who was director of the Institute of Fine Arts, although he was a career diplomat. His name was Juan Jose Bremer who later became Mexican Ambassador to the United States. But he suffered a terrible blow when somebody got access at night to the periodic newsletter that the Institute put out and surreptitiously inserted a scurrilous story about the Grand Poobah who was the Great Whore of Mexico that was recognized as a thinly disguised description of the President's wife. He was fired on the spot and was sent off to the frozen wastes (as the Mexicans pictured it) as Ambassador to Sweden. His career was apparently ruined, but his resurrection as Ambassador to Germany and to the US proves that Mexico has changed, at least to the extent that one administration doesn't feel obliged to punish those who have been castigated by a previous one. You could not take on the president or the first lady with impunity. That was the limit, but within that you had wide ranges of views in the Mexican press, and it ranged from left to right. The PRI tried to enfold all of these tendencies within its house. There was a left wing of the PRI and a center and a right. The left wing was represented by a newspaper called El Dia that was run by an extremely interesting man named Enrique Ramirez y Ramirez. We surprisingly became friends. There was growing interest, particularly along the border but even beyond that, among American newspapers about what was going on in Mexico. But they didn't know Mexico. There were a few correspondents in Mexico City at the time. Alan Riding, an Englishman, was there from the New York Times. He really knew Mexico, he and his Dutch wife Marlise Simmons, who was corresponding for the Washington Post. There were correspondents from both Dallas papers, and of course the US wire services were represented. The smaller towns along the border and the larger cities nearby, like San Antonio or San Diego, knew something of Mexico but mostly at the border. They didn't know the real Mexico, which was Mexico City.

I thought we needed to get media people together, and I called my friend Dick Leonard, the editor of the Milwaukee Journal, who also happened to be at the time president of the International Press Institute. I asked if they would co-sponsor with us a meeting between Mexican and American editors and publishers, suggesting that it could be held at the Wingspread Foundation in Racine, which was built by Frank Lloyd Wright as a home for the Johnson Wax family but had become a conference center for the Foundation. Now the Mexicans knew Miami. They knew Houston, San Diego and Los Angeles, and some of them knew New York. But they really didn't get very deep into the United States, certainly not into Wisconsin. Leonard was very interested and I was trying to then round up Mexicans to participate while Dick Leonard was trying to get a list of Americans to come along. He turned up a very impressive list of Americans, of American

publishers and editors. I was having trouble with the Mexican left.

I didn't want to have just the more business oriented papers. I went to Ramirez y Ramirez, the publisher of the most leftist newspaper in the country, the newspaper of the PRI's left wing, and he readily agreed to come. Once he agreed, everybody on the left then had cover. So another editor I was friendly with, Manuel Becerra Acosta, who was the editor of Unomasuno which was the newspaper that all the UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico) professors read, also agreed to come. These people were not overtly pro PRI, but gladly took the party's subsidies. They were emotionally for the PRD which was a socialist party. There was also the PAN which was a party which had its base in the north, a Catholic, conservative opposition party which eventually gained the presidency and shattered the PRI's monopoly. We flew to Chicago with difficulty. American Airlines graciously set aside the front rows of the cabin class section for our distinguished guests. The United States government never paid for business class for anybody, except for the first trip of ambassadors to their post. Other than that it was steerage class. But these guys were up in front and of course they all smoked as they would have on Mexicana Airlines. At the time, smoking was allowed only in the rear of the plane, but thankfully somehow the other passengers got the word and didn't complain.

Well we got to Chicago and we were whisked through immigration and customs with the help of pre-advised airport authorities, and had a very comfortable bus waiting to drive us to Racine, a drive of an hour or so. Mexicans are a very voluble people, and they were deep in discussions until we got out into the snowy March fields, at which time they fell silent as we entered through a landscape with which they were totally unfamiliar, with farmlands covered with snow, and farmhouses, simple white farmhouses and silos. They were fascinated. I think they were impressed by both the silence of the scene, and by the neatness and sturdiness of the farmlands and the image it conveyed of an organized agricultural society. We got into Racine and we went to the Howard Johnson hotel, which was the closest lodging we could find to the Johnson house. We had a reception that night before the blazing, three story fireplace that dominated the great room of Wingspread. We had a great three days. Ramirez y Ramirez gave a talk that people still talk about on why there is a difference in how Mexicans and Americans viewed the world, of how their greatly different historical experiences had brought this about. We had both Ambassadors speak, Lucey and Hugo Margain, Mexican ambassador to the US.. We had speakers from several universities, and American newspaper publishers and editors spoke as well. The two delegations really hit it off, although there were some cultural shocks. We drove into Milwaukee to have dinner as guests of the Milwaukee Press Club. We drove in along the freeway at about 6:30 p.m., when everybody who worked downtown was already home eating dinner. The Mexicans looked out on the city which to them looked like it had been hit by a neutron bomb. They said, "Where is everybody?" You know they are used to crowds in Mexico like in China or Japan, where the streets are always crowded. And when we arrived at the Press Club there was an organized demonstration by some group because of some recent Mexican injustice, which they took in good stride.

They then insisted on reciprocating the following year. They invited Mexican and American editors and publishers to come down to Mexico City with their wives, which was something we couldn't do, and took us to a resort outside of the city. This was at a time when Mexico was

swimming in oil money. Every night there was a different meal at a different restaurant with different gifts for the ladies. It was so splendid; it was way beyond the means provided by our representational funds. Then it ended back in Mexico City with a visit to Los Pinos, the Mexican White House, and an audience with President Lopez Portillo.

The next year was to be our turn again, and we knew we couldn't compete with the sumptuous offerings of the Mexicans, who merely had to contact Los Pinos or Pemex and the money would be forthcoming. We decided to have the next meeting in Washington. This was now the Reagan administration. Pat Lucey had left towards the end of the Carter administration. He was on the outs with President Carter, feeling that Carter had left the liberal part of the party behind, and he resigned to campaign for Ted Kennedy when Kennedy decided to challenge the President's re-election bid. Carter did offer him at that point either of two cabinet positions which Lucey turned down. He was replaced by Julian Nava whose father was Mexican born. Julian Nava had a Ph.D. from Harvard, was on the Los Angeles school board, and served for the remainder of Carter's term. President Reagan designated John Gavin, who was well known for his career as a movie actor, to be ambassador to Mexico. He had not yet been confirmed, but I called him and asked, because apparently he was a good friend of the President's, if he could help get us into the White House for at least a briefing by somebody on Mexican-American relations and, if at all possible, some sort of access to the new President. He said he would try.

We had the meeting in Washington here at a conference center and it went very well. We were hosted for lunch in Congress by Clem Zablocki, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs committee and an old friend from Wisconsin. But we weren't sure we could get into the White House until, at the last minute, it came through because of Gavin's efforts. One result was to increase my respect for the skill of people with an acting background to do things that had great psychological meaning to an audience. John Gavin, many people didn't recognize this, was part Mexican. His mother was from Sonora, and she came from a family of Californios, people who were in California when it was still Spanish. Gavin spoke exquisite Spanish, and could do so in a Mexican accent or a Castilian one. Lucey, although he didn't speak Spanish, had a lot of clout in Mexico because they knew he could call the President without having to go through the State Department. He got three or four votes out of the U.S. Senate when they were needed to pass the prisoner exchange bill, and did it on the phone. That was more important to the Mexican government than whether or not Lucey could speak Spanish, although it did limit his access to non-English speaking Mexicans.

For some reason, they weren't immediately impressed by Ambassador Gavin's Spanish ability because they resented the fact that he was an actor. They joked about sending the Mexican comedian Cantinflas to America as ambassador. They were forgetting that President Reagan himself was an actor, a fact that Gavin would mention now and then. And Gavin had made the contact that got our group of Mexican and American editors and publishers into the White House. We were ushered into the cabinet room, to be briefed by Richard Allen, who was then the National Security Advisor. Gavin was acting as master of ceremonies introducing him. The briefing began and continued for a while and then, as if it were by accident, the door opened, the connecting door to the oval office, and President Reagan came in. The editors got up, and even some of the most left-wing Mexicans rose and seemed genuinely impressed by being so near the

President. He said, “Oh,” as if he were surprised, and apologized: “I didn’t want to interrupt your meeting. Jack,” he said, and added, “could you come into my office when you’re finished. I want to talk about something.” Well that sent the signal to the Mexican editors that the ambassador they were getting was as close to this president as Pat Lucey had been to Carter, if not more so. It was a very shrewd way to handle the situation. The Mexicans were already planning a follow-up meeting for the next year, but before the time came the Mexican peso went from 22 to a dollar to 200 to a dollar in one day.

Q: Ouch!

ZUCKERMAN: Mexico was devastated because oil prices collapsed. They were borrowing money based on the expectation of oil at \$40 a barrel, as it is now. But in those days it rarely passed \$20 and was usually less. The debts they had incurred from the banks, that also had the expectation of \$40 to the barrel as collateral, could not be paid.

Q: Stan, I think this is a good place to stop. . We have a lot to cover. This is going to keep on for awhile. I would like you to talk about working with the various ambassadors, their styles and how they affected you. Then talk about your impressions of the two Presidents you worked with, Portillo and de la Madrid, and your dealings with the government, the effect of the peso collapse, the oil thing.

All right we will mention a number of things. Maybe we will kick this off. How about your ambassadors, how they used you and your impression of how they operated.

ZUCKERMAN: Well as I mentioned, when I got there, I got there knowing the incumbent ambassador who had already been there for a year and a half, Patrick J. Lucey, who had resigned the governorship of Wisconsin to take the ambassadorship. There was no period of getting to know each other. We had worked together when he was the Democratic Party chairman of Wisconsin, and stayed in touch over the years. We would see each other when he came to Washington during my time there or whenever I was in Wisconsin. When he arrived in Mexico he brought along with him a young man, Bob Dunn, who had been his chief of staff for a while, and then became director of administration of the State of Wisconsin. He was a lawyer by training, a very capable person and served as Lucey’s special assistant. So it was a very pleasant environment in which to work.

Lucey also had changed a good part of the country team. We were all new to the post. John Ferch, with a strong background as an economics officer and in Latin America, was the DCM. At that time he was easily the best DCM I had ever worked for. He really excelled in keeping close touch with every government agency represented in that very large embassy – not just the immediate foreign affairs family but a very extended family of U.S. agencies. He had regular quarterly meetings with every head of agency to prepare briefing papers for the Ambassador on how things were going and what problems each one faced. It was a remarkably good country team. The meetings, the staff meetings were very workmanlike, very issue-oriented, who was doing what or what was coming up and what was the ambassador needed for.

Although Ambassador Lucey didn't speak Spanish, he did try to learn and had mastered the usual polite phrases. Years later he told me a story that, after he left Mexico, he was invited to a very important wedding in Milwaukee, and was asked by the family of the marriage couple if he would join them in receiving their guests on the receiving line. A lady passing through said, in very American-accented Spanish, "Buenos Dias ; como esta Ambassador Lucey.?" And he said, "Muy bien y usted?" She turned to her husband and said, "You see, I told you he spoke fluent Spanish." He loved to tell stories on himself. Pat Lucey was a very interesting man. He was born in a tiny town in western Wisconsin called Ferryville, on the Mississippi River near La Crosse. His father was a butcher who owned a number of farms. Lucey was, among other things, an expert meat cutter, and also helped manage the farms. He had a Catholic education and graduated from Campion College in Minnesota. Two of his brothers were priests, one sister was a nun. Lucey was a Catholic liberal of the Jack Kennedy or Eugene McCarthy variety. He had very deep feelings about social justice. He and John Reynolds, the governor I worked for, helped organize the Wisconsin Democratic Party which had been the third party in the state of Wisconsin. The voters' decision was made in the Republican primary, which was always a contest between the Stalwarts and the Progressives of the old Robert La Follette tradition. Joe McCarthy drove the Progressives out of the Republican Party and they took over the Democratic party and made it a party which eventually elected William Proxmire as senator, Gaylord Nelson as governor, John Reynolds as attorney General and then governor, and Pat Lucey as governor, so it is a thriving two party state now. He came out of that tradition.

I saw him after the Carter victory, for which he had worked hard and succeeded in delivering the Wisconsin vote, just as he and John Reynolds had put together the Kennedy campaign in Wisconsin. We talked about what if anything he wanted to do in the Carter administration. He had just been re-elected to his second term as governor, but he said that his great focus of interest was on how the world was going to manage what was then seen as a crises of too many people and not enough food, and he wanted to play a role in managing that. Well we don't talk about it much now because food doesn't seem to be a problem in much of the world given the green revolution, given surpluses of the producing countries. He was on a short list for two cabinet positions, which went to others, but he was offered the ambassadorship to Mexico and, to everybody's surprise, he accepted it, resigning the governorship in the middle of his four-year term, because he felt that Mexico was as close as he could come to addressing his focus of interest.

Q: Well how about as a Catholic and dealing with population, because basically when you are talking about population you are talking about restricting it, I mean if you can.

ZUCKERMAN: He doesn't have those problems. His views were pretty much like Senator Kerry's announced views today, that whatever he thinks of abortion personally, he believes it is not an area where the government should control a woman's choice. So he had never had any problems on that score. In Mexico his relations were very good with President Lopez Portillo who was thought to be an intellectual, and who had been a professor of law who the PRI felt might add a touch of class to the presidency. My golfing partner was a Mexican who was sitting out the Lopez Portillo administration after having worked in the Banco Rural, the agricultural bank, for President Luis Echeverria, who preceded Lopez Portillo. After the Carter visit in February, 1979, when Lopez Portillo insulted President Carter to his face, I felt that Lopez

Portillo could have been elected by a landslide in a totally free election. He was very popular because he stood up to the Gringo president. This friend of mine said, "When he leaves office he will be the most hated president in Mexican history, because I know how much we stole when we were in office, and the guy who has taken my job is stealing 2 million dollars a month. I have that on good sources. And if he is stealing at that low level, you can imagine what is going on at the top."

Well Lopez Portillo was estimated to have amassed a fortune of over six billion dollars by the time he left office. Nonetheless, the venality of the regime was not thought by any of us to be different than what normally took place in Mexican sexennials, particularly in the last year of the administration's term. And despite the turmoil that occurs as the Mexican president's term reaches an end, there were still a number of issues that needed addressing, in which the Mexicans were very happy to have a person with the kinds of contacts in Washington that Pat Lucey had, including the prisoner exchange bill that I spoke of earlier.

Q: I would have thought that American prisoners in Mexican jails, I mean there was a reverse side, but speaking strictly from the American side, yes there has always been a real problem for us because you know, an awful lot of people get caught in drug things and all. A lot of young people get caught in the system, and it is a difficult system to play with, the legal system, you know, who do you pay off or not and how you are treated and then you are kind of left on your own once you are in jail.

ZUCKERMAN: Well there were more Mexicans by far in American jails than there were Americans in Mexican jails. Partly for the reasons you mentioned, there were extra judicial means of avoiding a prison sentence in Mexico, at least to a greater extent than might have been true in the U.S. But in that and on other issues, Lucey was of great help to the Mexicans in explaining to them how bilateral issues could be managed. He liked to do it without getting involved with the Mexican proclivity to shout first and negotiate afterwards.

Q: This is tape five, side one with Stan Zuckerman. You were talking about Lucey being on good terms with the foreign minister.

ZUCKERMAN: Yes. Santiago Roel was a politician himself from northern Mexico, from around Nuevo Laredo. They saw eye to eye on the need to improve US-Mexican relations, and when problems arose at lower levels of the relationship, where we would deal with our counterparts in the foreign ministry, Lucey had no problem in picking up the phone and trying to work out a solution. One day I was at the Ambassador's residence, waiting downstairs to leave with him to some event, when the phone rang and kept ringing. So I picked it up and a voice said: "Patrick, this is Santiago". I explained that the Ambassador was getting ready to leave but that I would have him return the call as soon as he came down. They were pretty obviously on close personal terms.

As for our own interactions, we dealt with a number of different elements of the foreign ministry, particularly the North American desk, the education ministry, the universities and the cultural entities, as well as, of course, with the media. The cultural entities were not at the cabinet level

but were very important in Mexican life, particularly the Institute of Fine Arts which managed the musical and plastic arts. The Prime Minister who succeeded Roel, Jorge Castaneda, had a son named Jorge Castaneda junior who later became foreign minister under president Vicente Fox, the current president. He also had a stepson, Andres Rosenthal, who was the American desk officer at that time. He was educated at the University of Pennsylvania. Like me he had an Argentine wife, spoke perfect English, and was very Americanized. As a consequence, because he looked so European and had studied in the US, he bent over backwards to make sure his nationalistic credentials were in order. His mother was a Russian Jew who, I was told, had served as a translator for Soviet UN Ambassador Vishinsky. Andres was a sophisticated and smart diplomat who later became deputy foreign minister. But on such stormy issues as immigration, which was a major part of the bilateral problem, he gave no quarter. The flow of Mexican immigrants to the United States was of great importance to Mexicans, not only because they had a natural interest in the well-being of their citizens, but those émigrés relieved, by their access to the American labor market, the pressure on Mexico to find jobs for their ever increasing population. Those workers also were a very strong source of hard currency for the Mexican government, because Mexican laborers, as do most Latin American laborers who come to the United States, sent remarkably high portions of their earnings back to their families. So they were very sophisticated in turning our complaints against us. They were quite right in saying there would be no huge flow of Mexican migrants into the United States labor market were it not for the demand. Of course we passed legislation which put the onus on the employer for making sure that a person had credentials, believing that businessmen respected the law and wouldn't violate it. Well it did nothing at all to change the flow, and the Mexicans were not going to help us. We were asking them to help stem the flow that was of importance and of benefit to their country, and they were not about to. So unless we really want to build a wall along 2000 miles of our border with Mexico, we have had to learn to live with the immigration problem, with what we call illegal and what they call undocumented workers.

Q: We are sticking to the Lucey period right now. How did Lucey deal with this?

ZUCKERMAN: He dealt with it straightforwardly, stated our needs, stated our position but was realistic about it. He told his counterparts in the American government in the INS and in the State Department and to the President himself that unless we really were able to get American employers to observe the law, and to vigorously monitor the working papers and the status of the people they employed, there would be no end to the problem. Unless we truly wanted to arm the border outside of the several crossing points at which we do make major efforts, it wasn't going to hold. I went up north for a visit to the border east of Tijuana in the San Diego area, and it was an extraordinary sight. I was driven at night along the top of sort of a levee by the border patrol. They suddenly turned on the spot lights on top of their vehicles and there, in this vast field, there were hundreds and hundreds of Mexicans huddled, sitting there waiting for the time when there would be nobody at that crossing point, and they could run across. We have put up fences now, and it has driven the border crossers further east of Tijuana, further west of Ciudad Juarez and further west of Brownsville.

Q: It is extremely inhospitable country.

ZUCKERMAN: Very dangerous country, and yet they come. We held a conference, I had mentioned this last time we met, in Wisconsin at Wingspread of American and Mexican publishers and editors. One of the American participants was the then director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Lionel Castillo, was himself of Mexican descent. He told a story directed to both the Mexicans and at the American participants about a young man from the deep interior of Mexico, around Oaxaca, who was picked up at the border and put on a bus back to Mexico. The young man was about 12 or 13 years old. They sent him all the way back to Oaxaca. The first time he was picked up in the Tijuana area. The second time they picked him up again in Juarez. Somehow they realized he was the same kid. They had fairly good records, and they sent him back home again. They picked him up a third time and sent him back home. After that they never saw him again. Castillo said, "I am certain he kept trying until he made it. As I think on it, it is Mexico's loss and our gain. Any kid of that age who had that kind of fortitude and that kind of desire to come to this country and work, is going to make it." And it is the story of American history. We get the best. The people with the greatest desire, the greatest energy to improve their lives come to us. When Mexico can keep those people, Mexico will have a better future.

Q: You mentioned I think it was Lucey's chief of staff, named Dunn I think it was.

ZUCKERMAN: Bob Dunn.

Q: Because at some point it becomes an issue of what we will call the Temple Dogs or whatever it is, I mean the guardians of the gate. In other words, was Dunn used as somebody to keep sort of the embassy away from the ambassador or not?

ZUCKERMAN: Not at all. Dunn was used as a contact for Lucey with certain people in the business community as well as with a number of government officials. He had a law degree, had been Director of Administration for the State of Wisconsin, and after working in the Carter White House became director of communications for Levi Strauss. He's now the head of a non-profit dedicated to encouraging ethical behavior in American business. He was not a typical political watchdog without anything to offer the process. On the contrary, he was a valuable asset. He tried to maintain cordial contact with the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico, the oldest and probably the biggest in the world of American expatriates at the time, who were of course very important in Mexico. Lucey incurred their wrath because they were lobbying Congress, with other American Chambers of Commerce abroad, for an increase in the deductibility of foreign earnings from their US income tax. They thought that Lucey, given his political clout, could be a great help to them with Carter, as he probably could have been. But he declined to help, because he thought they were adequately protected against double taxation, that they were living quite well, and that it was unfair to distort the tax code even further than it already was.

This caused him some problems when some unnamed members of the American community in Mexico bad mouthed him in the Wall Street Journal, saying he was not doing well as Ambassador but never mentioning what the real issue was. It was followed by a very hostile story in the Los Angeles Times saying that he was doing a disastrous job in Mexico. He got word from

friends, didn't know if it was true, but he had had some rough dealings with Bob Strauss, then head of the Democratic National Committee as I remember, especially during the 1960 convention when LBJ and John F. Kennedy were contesting the nomination down to the bitter end. He was told that the story was planted by Robert Strauss, although he didn't know if that were true. But the story was a very embarrassing one and, to anyone who knew the facts, clearly false. He called me up to his office to discuss it and asked what he could do about it. I said that if he had some powerful friends who could go to the New York Times or Los Angeles Times to dispute the story, that could help. But my concern was the effect it could have on his ability to do his job in Mexico and the danger of having Mexicans feel that his job was in danger.

We had mixed relations with Excelsior, which was the leading paper at the time. They were a mixed bag. They had some very hostile left wing commentators, but every once in awhile we would get a decent editorial. More often than not, they were stridently nationalistic. I called up the editor and offered Excelsior an exclusive interview with the Ambassador, something they had long sought, but only if they agreed that it would be conducted by a columnist we knew who was usually very straightforward and not a flag waving hyper-nationalist as were most of their stable. He wasn't a big fan of ours, but was even handed, and the editor agreed. He came to the Embassy the next day and conducted a very far-reaching interview on the major bilateral issues on our agenda. We always used as a basic tenet of our position vis a vis Mexico that there was no issue that one could point to in which the American position did not reflect the best interests of Mexico including, in the long run, immigration. The next morning Excelsior's front page had an eight column banner headline, a picture of Lucey and a story that ran half the front page and another inside page. It contained the most accurate, well balanced, thoughtful, thorough exploration of American policy that we had ever seen in a Mexican newspaper. Lucey got phone calls immediately from the Mexican desk in Washington, which saw Excelsior the same day as we did, congratulating him, and told him they were reproducing it for the American press. They told him the story just shut the door on any discussion on how he was doing in Mexico. So he was very gratified. The story that ran in the L.A. Times story didn't take hold in Mexico, and it allowed him to do his job without having to look over his shoulder.

Q: The reason I asked is I have talked to other people who have served at various times there and they were saying Mrs. Lucey was a problem. Was there a problem?

ZUCKERMAN: Well, I'll be seeing Ambassador and Mrs. Lucey next week in Wisconsin. They are both 86; their birthdays are a couple of weeks apart. Mrs. Lucey is a very outspoken Greek-American woman who was equally outspoken when he was governor. He was a liberal and she has a number of conservative views on social issues. They have had a marriage that has lasted 60 years or so. Yes, she is outspoken, but she did not create problems with the press or Mexican contacts, and was a gracious hostess. I think the problem is one that many staffs have with ambassador's wives who are demanding about their furnishings, their house, the staff and other matters that affect her life and her ability to fulfill her responsibilities. Since I knew her for many years I never had a problem, except for her objections to my cigars.

Q: Did you ever find yourself because you were close to Lucey called in to kind of cool things down?

ZUCKERMAN: Between them? No.

Q: No, not between the two of them, but I mean I am thinking between the embassy staff.

ZUCKERMAN: I can't remember any. Like most ambassador's wives she usually got her way. If she was asking for something that was not feasible, the ambassador would tell her to drop it. He took the heat.

Q: So I mean policy wise they were both on the same wavelength. Sometimes you have an ambassador's wife who is riding a hobby horse...

ZUCKERMAN: No. She never spoke publicly. They entertained a great deal and she certainly knew people in the business community. She was a very important contributor to the success of the real estate business that she and Ambassador Lucey established in Wisconsin. She also got on well with the Roels and other important contacts of the Ambassador. Sometimes, if they had no official dinners, they would invite an English-speaking couple over to a small dinner, and that included the great Mexican artist Ruffino Tamayo and the Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz.

Lucey was and remains a man of genuine intellectual interests. He is also the most remarkable political organizer I ever met. When John Kennedy was having problems with the disarray of the Democratic Party in Ohio, he asked Lucey to go in there and see what he could do to straighten them out. Senator Young was elected to the Senate at an extreme age by pledging he would serve only one term. Because he was only going to serve one term he was very frank with voters. He would get letters complaining of his votes and answer them by writing: "Dear Sir. Some idiot has written me a letter and signed your name to it. I feel I should warn you that someone is using your name in an effort to embarrass you." Well he decided he loved the job so much he wanted to run again. He showed Lucey those letters and said, "My God what am I going to do about these." Lucey said, "Let's put them together and publish them as a campaign book." He did, and he got re-elected. Lucey was the key to the building of the Democratic Party in Wisconsin. He would labor, and it was part of his business background, for hours and days over a mailing and how it would be put together, and where the pitch for funds would come and how it would be phrased. He was a superb fund raiser. He was somewhat more conservative than the governor I worked for; he was a fiscal conservative, whereas the governor I worked for had raised taxes and raised the budget by 25% to finance many needed improvements in state programs and facilities. But he wasn't re-elected, and Lucey was.

Q: What about, was Lucey able to work with the Chamber of Commerce? Was he able to get over that?

ZUCKERMAN: They did manage to do a number of things together, but he realized that they were working with him because they had to and he was doing the same. He had good friends within the chamber, although most of them were Republicans. They were an overseas business community which, as you know, wherever you find them, are interested mainly in the security of their firms and their investments. They are far less involved in issues of the American political

scene than their American business counterparts would be in the United States. They are part of a different universe, and live very well within Mexican society. But he had a number of strong supporters, and foremost among him was a man who was a leading member of the business community, Victor Agather. He held a big farewell lunch for Lucey at his home, and even if some in the business community resented Lucey's unwillingness to push for tax relief for the wealthy, Agather's standing in the American business community was such that everybody had to attend. He had a huge room in his house in which he could almost hold a ball, and he filled it up with long tables, and every seat was taken. At the end of the meal, he got up and toasted Lucey as the best U.S. ambassador he had ever known, and he had been in that country for a long time. He was not only a successful businessman – making and distributing Timex wristwatches world-wide - but also a World War II hero who piloted a B-29, one of which he and several friends of his owned and kept in Texas as part of the Confederate Air Force. Every once in awhile they would go up there and fly it, once even flying it up to Oshkosh, Wisconsin to the annual air show. When I was area director for Latin America I visited Mexico and the cultural attaché held a reception in my honor. By that time, Agather was quite ill, had to move about with a respirator and required a nurse in attendance at all times. But he came to the reception, and to a breakfast held the next morning for a group of artist friends of mine. He was a remarkable man, one of a kind, who understood that there were issues more important than the narrow commercial focus of most of his colleagues.

John Reinhardt was the Director of USIA at the time, and came down to Mexico to represent the President at the opening of the major art show that I spoke of earlier. I was with him on one of his visits to an official we dealt with when I got a phone call in the car from the Ambassador. He said, "You have to come back to the office." I said, "I'm with John Reinhardt", and he said "I know, but you have to come back, I'm resigning." I turned to Reinhardt and told him that I had to return to the embassy because the Ambassador was resigning and he said: "Go do your job. Others will take care of me." Lucey wanted me to help him with his resignation statement, which made no reference to the fact that he was planning to work for Ted Kennedy, who was going to challenge President Carter's re-election. When he got to Washington he was invited to lunch one on one with Carter, who knew what was up. Carter had told Lucey that he was going to offer him the cabinet-rank position of energy czar whenever Secretary Schlesinger left. Lucey had become greatly involved with energy issues while in Mexico and was on top of most of them, particularly those involving gas and oil. But when Schlesinger left the post Carter named someone else without ever saying a word to Lucey. He told me that at the White House lunch Carter had offered him one of two cabinet positions; I believe they were HUD and Commerce. Lucey told him that he had already made a commitment to work for Kennedy.

Q: Trying to pick this up, Carter bothered a lot of Americans and people involved in the political sphere but also regular Americans by making promises and then not doing it. The most egregious one was forcing the Germans to support the so-called Neutron bomb and then deciding not to do it leaving Helmut Schmidt dangling out there. He was detested for that. Was there a feeling, I mean you are close to sort of the politics, of concern about Carter and how he ran things?

ZUCKERMAN: There was disappointment among Democratic elected officials and party

workers that Carter appeared to be so vulnerable, that he had not reached out beyond Georgia, beyond the people from Georgia who surrounded him in the White House instead of using his office to establish strong ties across state lines with the Democrats in other regions. John F. Kennedy, I think I mentioned to you once, was as popular among Wisconsin Democrats as he was in Massachusetts. That was true in many other states. Lyndon Johnson had the same problem as Carter, because he was seen as so Texas bound. It was very hard for him to break into and form strong alliances in other parts of the country. With Johnson everything was transactional, whereas with Kennedy it was pure Irish politics. I help you not because I want something in return right now, but because I know that when I need help, you will be there.

With Kennedy, and then with Johnson, there was a federal judgeship vacant in Madison, and the senators and the governor were all behind a labor lawyer named Dave Rabinowitz from Sheboygan. Rabinowitz had been the lawyer for the United Auto Workers in the bitter Kohler strike that lasted for years, and Kennedy nominated him for the judgeship. He was primarily a bankruptcy lawyer although he handled labor cases as well. Well labor lawyers and bankruptcy lawyers were not the people who ran the American Bar Association. The Wisconsin chapter of the American Bar Association found him only marginally qualified. Kennedy said, in a famous statement, after the nomination had not been acted on by the judiciary committee and the question came up at a press conference as to whether Kennedy would re-submit Rabinowitz's name in the next congressional session. Kennedy said, "I'm for Dave." That is the kind of thing Wisconsin Democrats wanted to hear and just in the spirit that they welcomed. Not long after Kennedy died, Reynolds and Lucey both got phone calls early in the morning, about 6 a.m., from Lyndon Johnson wringing his hands. "Oh what should do about this nomination. You know it is really going to cause me problems." That wasn't the way Kennedy would have done it. It was clear Johnson was setting a price for that nomination that he would collect some day and he wanted Rabinowitz' sponsors to beg for it and know that something would be expected in return. It was the opposite of the way Kennedy had done it. I think that was what weakened Johnson. I think it may not have been the same with Carter, but it was a bloodless kind of relationship with most of the people in the party. It was distant.

When Carter came to Mexico in early 1978, Lucey went all out for him. This was only shortly after I had gotten there. Carter came down the steps of Air Force One looking terrible. It was the morning that Adolph Dubbs had been killed in Afghanistan, and when the U.S. embassy in Iran had been over run for the first time, the first effort to take over. He had been up since 3:00 in the morning. There was talk of canceling the visit, but he thought the meeting was too important to postpone. But when he got off the plane I thought he was terribly sick. He looked awful, and the schedule of course was brutal. It was from the airport to a meeting with President Lopez Portillo to a meeting with the foreign minister, and then there was a formal lunch at the foreign ministry. The issue hanging in the air for the meeting was all about oil, all about energy. A deal had been negotiated in which Lopez Portillo had to face down the left in Mexico who didn't want any kind of agreement with the United States about oil, about selling oil because of the history of American ownership and British ownership of Mexico's oil resources in the 1930's. He faced them down and there was a tentative agreement on the sale of natural gas to start with. Schlesinger became the Secretary of Energy and he rejected the deal because the price was above the world price. Lopez Portillo was known to have said, "The Americans have left me hanging by

my paint brush,” the image of a painter painting a ceiling and someone taking away the ladder. So that was in the air. At the end of the dinner, Carter was asked to speak. He made an unscripted, rambling kind of nostalgic memoir about his visit to Mexico as a young man with his wife when he had gotten Montezuma’s revenge along with a few other pleasant statements.

Q: You better tell what Montezuma’s revenge is.

ZUCKERMAN: Montezuma’s revenge was dysentery, said to be inflicted on those who had conquered Mexico as payback, and I was sitting with Mexicans and nobody at the table blinked an eye or snickered or frowned or anything at Carter’s reference to Montezuma’s revenge, but greeted it with murmured laughter. Lopez Portillo got up and gave an extremely nationalistic response. The key phrase was “We know who our friends really are by the way they treat us.” Every Mexican and all the foreign diplomats knew what that meant. There was an audible gasp from the audience. It was an insult to the American president, and I don’t think Jimmy Carter realized it at the time, because I think he was groggy. Afterwards, all the American press – at least those who weren’t based in Mexico -- wrote about the Montezuma’s revenge statement as if it were a huge gaffe, and I told them they were missing the story. The next day the Mexican press was full of praise for Lopez Portillo because he had stood up to the American president.

Q: In the Mexican context when you say our friends, how they treat us, what I mean was there something in the air immediately or was it just generic?

ZUCKERMAN: What was in the air was the gas deal. They were just outraged because Lopez Portillo in their view had stuck his neck out in order to make a deal that they saw as mutually beneficial. The delivery of Mexican gas would be good for the United States; the Mexicans were getting a better price than they could get elsewhere, and it would open the door to a more fulsome energy relationship. They were never going to allow ownership of Mexican production facilities, but they certainly were and are a major supplier and a dependable supplier of gas and petroleum products. That’s what was in the air, and every Mexican there and most of the Americans in the room outside of the press knew what he was saying. So Carter was not that popular in Mexico, but that was not the reason for Lucey’s disaffection. It was really first of all that if Teddy was going to run, Lucey was a Kennedy guy and always would be. He could have been in JFK’s cabinet if he wanted it. He knew that and LBJ knew it. It didn’t mean he was hostile. He supported Carter when he ran but in a race between a Kennedy and anybody else, he was for the Kennedy, as he was for Bobby Kennedy.

Q: How hard was it to work with the Mexicans in setting up the details of the President’s visit? Could they get their act together?

ZUCKERMAN: We had an embassy team assigned to work with our counterparts on the Mexican side. The key people for such an event was the Estado Mayor -- a professional military household operation at Los Pinos, the Presidential compound, which was extraordinarily effective. The first event was to be the arrival at the airport. You go there and they tell you exactly where the plane will come and exactly where it will stop and where a speech is being made and here were stands for 5,000 people. How many people do you expect in the stands?

They said there will be 5,000, and there were 5,000 people, with 50 peso notes in their pockets. Every place you went you would know exactly who would be there and how many and it never failed to work. They were in full control of everything. The Estado Mayor could get anything done it wanted to.

Once there was a space exhibit to which we had gotten NASA to send some models and posters. The Mexicans wanted the Ambassador to walk through it with President Lopez Portillo. Lucey thought he needed some technical backup if he were going to explain the space program to the President, and we called NASA in Houston and they sent us down an astronaut. He made a great hit. However the day before the exhibit we went to look at the arrangements and nothing was up – no stands, no exhibits, no posters, all of which we had supplied.. We were astonished because the Estado Mayor had to know that the President would be there, and apparently something had fallen through the cracks. We called the Estado Mayor and told them there would be a very embarrassing situation because it was hard to believe that the exhibit could be mounted overnight. They said: “We have already taken care of that. It will all be up.” The next day it looked like it had been built a week before. Everything was in its place. I learned that if you really needed something done in Mexico, you got it done through the Estado Mayor.

The visit in Brussels that I had worked on was very different. It was just honorific; there were no big issues. But a presidential visit opens the door for contacts that, if you are able to, you keep and will serve you well all during the rest of your time in the country you’re assigned to, and I found that true on Presidential visits elsewhere. I made friends with people in los Pinos, the Mexican White House, who afterwards would come to my house for dinner. A call from the top impresses people and helps move things along, and that’s true in many countries, including our own. So despite the mess it made of our program for three or four months, the visit was a helpful experience. But right after the visit the post was inspected, and received a terrible report. The inspection report noted that we lacked program activity, never mentioning that we had been tied up for a full three months in preparations for the President’s visit. I responded with a point by point refutation and asked for a new inspection. The Director threw out the inspection report and said you don’t need another inspection. It was a hatchet job and even Washington knew it.

Q: Well how about after Lucey went; you say you had almost an interim ambassador didn’t you?

ZUCKERMAN: Not for long. John Ferch was the charge but Bob Dunn called me and said, “What do you think of this? A top guy on the list is Julian Nava. He is an elected member of the Los Angeles board of education, a professor at one of the California state universities. He was an historian. His father, a barber, was born in Zacatecas and left during the Mexican revolution, as did many Mexicans. Nava was a pilot in WWII and then a Ph.D. in history from Harvard.” I said I thought the Mexican press will welcome it. Nava came down and we got on well. He spoke excellent Spanish, and he was liked by some of the Mexican left. He could talk to intellectuals, and did so. But he never really got a good welcome within the Mexican government, the top echelons of government. I think there were racial reasons. He was darker than anyone in the Mexican cabinet. He was truly a son of Mexico. The Mexican cabinet all talked about “Nosotros los Indios,” -- We Indians” -- but outside of the one or two junior ministers, it was a pretty solid European cabinet. Nava didn’t have the kind of political clout that Lucey had because his

political experience was purely local. He didn't have that kind of access in Washington that Lucey had and the Mexicans knew it. He was treated poorly for the worst of reasons by the Mexicans. The last time I saw him, he was in Mexico doing some representation for a US manufacturer, and seemed to be in good spirits. I don't think the time in Mexico hurt him. He did, however, make a big mistake when he arrived in Mexico. There was a notorious chief of police in Mexico who had built a mansion in Zihuatanejo and kept a string of polo ponies in Cuernavaca, all on a monthly salary of \$400. He was later tried and convicted of any number of things. When Julian Nava came to the airport, he was met there by this Mexican chief of police and rode off with him in his limousine in front of all of us and the press, a terrible mistake.

Q: Did he know, I mean normally the ambassador goes in his own car. I mean it sounds like no one had briefed the ambassador about you know, just the normal entry route.

ZUCKERMAN: I don't know. I think that Nava felt that he had better contacts with Mexico than we did, and the devil take the hindmost. You know, in the day to day work in the embassy, he did a fine job. In a larger sense though, I don't think he made use of the opportunities as best he could. At some point he thought he could actually stay on in a Reagan administration, but he didn't. It was again a period when a charge ran the Embassy, and John Ferch had gone on to Cuba as head of our mission there and later became our ambassador in Honduras, and there was a rather long gap before John Gavin, Reagan's appointee as Ambassador, was confirmed and arrived on the job. John Gavin's nomination by the president caused consternation and some disdain in the Mexican press and the public because he was identified as an actor. I think however, once he came down, although he did have some difficulties later on, he did impress a good deal of Mexican society with his superb knowledge of Spanish. His Spanish was impeccable. His mother was born in Mexico, in Sonora. I think I mentioned his mother's family had settled in California before California became a state. He was a cousin of one of the leading writers of Mexico, Carlos Fuentes, whom he called Charlie Fountain. They had spent a lot of time together as children.

He had a tendency shared by almost all politically appointed ambassadors, including Lucey at times, to sometimes speak out on Mexican affairs as if they were presidents of Mexico rather than Ambassadors to the country. It was appropriate to speak publicly about issues relating to our interests, but dangerous to tell Mexicans how to manage their own affairs, at least in public.

Problems became serious I think, for Gavin, in 1985, after the great earthquake in Mexico City, at a time that I was already in Ottawa.. The president was saying that they had lost 10,000 people, and Gavin made a public statement that there were 20,000 or more who had died. He may have been right, but being right was not necessarily the objective of diplomacy. He sometimes felt that you had to talk tough to Mexicans. On such issues as trade, they had a rather closed society. A businessman could for instance, decide that you were going to make Waring blenders in Mexico, so with a little clout he could get an exclusive license from the US manufacturer, a high tariff from the Mexican government, assemble the parts in Mexico and sell the blenders for three times the price they could be bought in the US. He could then play golf every day because all he had to do was check the office once in awhile to see that everything was going well.

So dealing with them was hard, and Gavin felt that sometimes you had to deal publicly with them. So did Lucey. But Lucey told me that he was once told by the late Meyer Rosenne, at the time the Israeli ambassador to Mexico, a man who had been a lieutenant –general in Israeli security and had served in Mexico for a long time, that his approach to Mexicans was wrong. After a speech that Lucey had given castigating the Mexicans for their restrictiveness in trade and investment, the Israeli ambassador told him: “Pat, you have to understand something. Think of Mexico as an adolescent boy. He is just becoming aware that he is attractive to females. He’s got a little money in his pocket for the first time. You come along and tell him he’s got pimples on his face and he ought to blow his nose and straighten his hair. The Mexicans will react like that adolescent boy would.” Lucey took it to heart. Gavin on the other hand, felt that Mexicans needed a kick in the butt once in awhile. And I remember that Harry Shlaudeman, who was a career ambassador of great experience, once told me that he thought that Gavin handled the Mexicans exactly as they should be. From our standpoint you know, it didn’t make our job easier.

Ambassador Gavin and I started off on very good terms. I was due to leave at the end of 1982, but after we had worked together for awhile he asked me to stay for a second year. That was helpful to me as well. My wife and I had separated. After a year, she agreed that my two younger children could come back to live with me. I knew that shortly after my next tour they would be going off to college, and I thought they would be unprepared for it, unprepared for living in the States. They had been overseas so much and protected from many things that school kids have to learn to do in the US, so that I wanted to get to a post that had good public schools, reliable public transportation, and a place where they could get jobs after school. The one place I could do that was Canada. A friend of mine was in Canada, and was extending for a year. At first the Agency wanted me to take over the post in Bangkok but I said I would not take two teenagers to Bangkok as a single father. They were very supportive, so I stayed the second year. But during that time, Gavin came to feel that I wasn’t being enough of a flack. I worked on his...

Q: What is a flack?

ZUCKERMAN: A flack is a personal publicity representative rather than someone with the extensive program we were carrying out. I got a call one day from our area director, Steve Dachi, asking me what had gone wrong with my relations with the ambassador. He said he thought we were on good terms. I said, “I thought so. He was at my house last night for dinner. Why do you say that?” “Well because he has told Charlie Wick he thinks it is time for a change in the PAO-ship.” I said, “That’s fascinating. Are you sure that it is right?” “Oh yeah. Don’t worry. We will take care of you. There is a job in Tampa.” It was in an advisory role to the newly established Delta Force for rapid deployment to hot spots. “No,” I said, “I will handle it down here.” I made an appointment to talk to the ambassador and told him that I understood that he had asked the Agency to replace me. He was obviously upset and surprised that I had learned this, and when he asked where this came from I told him something anyone in the government learns fairly soon, that there are few secrets in Washington, particularly when a good job is coming open. He said he was sure there was some misunderstanding, and the issue disappeared, but he did mention that he hoped I could put more staff time into supporting his public appearances, and I assured him we would continue to do all he needed where public affairs were concerned. And that was it. But

obviously there had been some damage to our relationship, although we worked the rest of the year together as best we could. Before I left he held a very nice farewell lunch for me with a large turnout of editors and people in education and the arts. He was very courteous, very gracious, and we've spoken since then.

Q: Well what about, one heard about Gavin having problems at the embassy. He changed DCM's a couple of times I have heard, and also he had so called temple dogs which were notorious, personal staff who sort of isolated the ambassador. Could you comment on that?

ZUCKERMAN: Well the only real problem was a young man who had been in the Foreign Service and was in Washington at the time that Gavin was awaiting confirmation and was doing the usual reading in and meeting different people in Washington who had an interest in Mexico, and becoming acquainted with the issues. The young man, I think he was a class 6 officer, quite new to the service, was assigned to assist Gavin's preparation for his confirmation hearings. He formed a friendship with him, resigned from the Foreign Service and came back in as special assistant to Gavin at the level of a senior officer, a Class 2, a rank that is now called a Counselor. From a class 6 officer to a counselor is a process that can take up most of a career with about five or six assignments in between. I think there was resentment, more resentment than there would have been had he come in from the outside because he was sharing in matters that were well above what he would have been dealing with had he not run into Gavin in Washington. We had some run-ins. I think a number of people did. I don't know whether it really affected the ambassador's ability to do his job.

The staff meetings were perhaps a little more restrictive than they might have been. Maybe not everybody talked with as much candor. But I think Gavin did, on the whole, as good a job as was possible under the circumstances. Reagan, of course, was not popular in Mexico. He became more popular later on. He came down to a big show that Lopez Portillo put on when he invited 22 presidents to gather in Cancun. Many of them wouldn't have come until they learned that President Reagan was willing to come down to it. Normally a president wouldn't want to come down if he was only one of 22, but he did. It was a good show of support for Mexico. I think relations warmed after that. But the same issues were there, and still are. I think there was an effort made to systematize the relationship, starting during the Carter administration but carried over into the Reagan administration, to systematize contacts at all levels between Mexico and the United States. We had these annual bilateral meetings which went beyond the foreign ministers. We brought together representatives from top levels of the branches of government that were part of this complicated interface between the two societies and it has helped to make relations flow more smoothly.

Gavin was a bit put out with the career people during the time I was able to observe him, because I think, he was used to being treated like a star and didn't feel he was getting that treatment in the embassy. I remember that he chewed out my information officer once because, at a speech he was giving before the American Chamber of Commerce, the waiters served coffee while he was still speaking and he could hear the cups rattle. We discussed it afterwards and I asked him to blame me if something goes wrong and not on someone who works for me. I added that if he wants us to handle all of the arrangements for his public appearances, rather than handle it

through his special assistant, we'd be happy to do it. But blaming a very experienced officer like my information officer for a waiter serving coffee while he was speaking was something we might not be able to control. He was good about that. But things like that came up now and again. As you know, ambassadors are treated with respect, but people who work for them also think they are professionals, and there was some feeling among some people in the embassy, not all, that Ambassador Gavin expected more than the normal political appointee might. But I am not aware of any real trouble with the Mexican government until that flare up with him in the administration of Miguel de la Madrid, successor to Lopez Portillo. I think his relations with Lopez Portillo were pretty good.

Q: Did you, this covers the entire time you were there, have a problem which I am sure will surface when we talk about your time in Canada, but the cultural effect of American media on Mexico? Did that bother the Mexicans?

ZUCKERMAN: Well Mexicans in the best areas of Mexico City had access to cable television, which brought in American news. It brought in American football which was becoming very popular. The Dallas Cowboys, you would think, were a Mexican team. I guess satellite and cable have become even more extensive now in Mexico. When there was a story in the American press about some failure of Mexican society or Mexican government, oh sure it would bring a barrage of responses from the Mexican press of all stripes. It didn't matter what the coloration of the press was, it was energized to defend the flag, and rabid nationalism was just below the surface. But below that surface of instant nationalism or nationalistic response, there was a great regard I think for American society, and a contempt for the inability of the Mexican government to care for the people at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, who were largely living in Indian communities. In some of those communities the first language wasn't Spanish, but Nahuatl, or one of the other pre-Hispanic languages. Middle class Mexicans, especially during the time when the peso was enormously overvalued -- when it was 22 to one before it fell one afternoon to 200 to one -- were living very well. If you got on the plane from Mexico City to San Antonio or Houston, there were even farm hands on the flight, who because of the exchange rate could afford to fly up there and buy Christmas gifts and bring them back to Mexico. There was an enormous amount of economic activity between Mexico and the US at that time. Mexicans were buying up Southwest property left and right. In San Diego there were high rise condominiums at Coronado Beach that were being bought by so many Mexicans that they were referred to as "Tortilla Towers" by the native Californians. Everybody was buying a safe haven for one or two reasons, the certainty that the peso would fall, and that it could be accompanied by a political crisis. This fellow who I told you had been deputy director of the Banco Rural owned three houses in San Diego. People were not only traveling to the US, not only watching American television, but were also angling in every way they could to acquire a green card. Everybody wanted the ability to go back and forth across the border freely. Many of the more substantial businessmen got them. They were almost dual citizens, members of both societies. Mexicans told jokes about themselves. They told about the fellow who went up to Tijuana and made his first trip across the border into San Diego. He said, "Oh now I know why America is so rich while we are so poor. You got the paved half."

They held a complicated view of America. Octavio Paz, who I met on a number of occasions and

who I regarded as the most remarkable Mexican, and perhaps one of the most remarkable men I had ever met, wrote a book, a classic called "The Labyrinth of Solitude". It attempts to explain the complicated psychological differences between Mexico and almost everyone else, but certainly between Mexicans and North Americans. Mexico he describes as another aspect of a Spanish culture, which is another aspect of western culture. The Mexican part of it is the Mestizo, the mixture of the Indian and the Spaniard. Even if it is not a genetic mixture in all circumstances, it becomes a psychological mixture, even among Creoles, Mexican families of pure European descent. And he describes the result as a mask over the face of the Mexican that obscures the real cultural difference between us and them. Americans expect people to be open because we are so open, whereas Mexicans reveal themselves only gradually and only when it is called for by their own moods.

This reveals itself in unexpected ways. I remember something that happened on one of the trips we were working on, one of the exchanges with Mexican and American editors. There was a sports writer in the group who we knew well, a convivial man who was very well regarded by the editors who wanted him to work with us on the arrangements. We were meeting to discuss speakers and their subjects and the like, and there was a dinner followed by a series of toasts, all of them the expected gracious complements on how important it was that we were establishing ties across the border and the like. This sports writer gets up and launches into a fiery nationalistic speech about Mexican patrimony and how we welcome American interests but we will always defend Mexico's freedom and integrity against all would be invaders. I thought what the hell was that all about? One of my Mexican friends took me aside and told me it was just like our reciting of the pledge of allegiance, a ritual of no great consequence. I think he was also making sure that the others stayed in line and didn't go overboard in making Americans think that there were no differences between them and us. And yet at the same time there is an enormous, deep familiarity of many Mexicans with American society. I remember when the Seattle Mariners came down to play an exhibition game in the baseball stadium with one of the Mexican league baseball teams. I was asked to throw out the first ball, but I wouldn't agree to do it unless they also let my 9 year old son David throw out a ball. Of course I threw my ball, as most people do when invited to do that ceremonial pitch, into the dirt. My son threw a perfect strike. The fans laughed at me and cheered for him, just as an American crowd in a baseball park would have done. It was a reaction that was common to both societies. I really feel there are no humans on the planet who know how to enjoy themselves more than Mexicans who have some spare money to spend. But our Mexican staff, who earned decent salaries but, with few exceptions, were barely in the middle class, were even more delightful to be with. I think I was closer to them personally than I was to any staff I ever worked with, even before I joined the Foreign Service. They were wonderful, thoughtful, and very warm human beings. We had a great time, great parties; any occasion would trigger one. We would go down to the basement shipping and storage area and see somebody off with carnitos and beer after working hours. It was a great group. Mexicans and Americans, no matter what they say, know how to get along. My closest relationship was with my driver, Salvador Lupercio. He was a sweet, gentle man, with a great sense of humor and a strong dedication to his job. He was eligible for retirement at the time the peso fell, and the longer he stayed on the weaker his pension became. But he refused to leave the job until I left that summer, no matter how hard I urged him to do so. I kept in touch with him for a long time but am afraid he's gone now.

Q: Well you know, in listening to you, I have a feeling there, I am sure there are more than two, but from the American point of view there are two Mexicos. One is Mexico City, and then there is northern Mexico. I am not talking about those Indian indigenous populations or the southern one. I am just talking about the two areas that affect us. One is Mexico City where power is concentrated, and then northern Mexico where most of the officials and all have got their own ties to California and Arizona and New Mexico, Texas. I mean they are almost running on, I mean did you find that being Mexico-centric that sometimes Northern Mexico was beyond your control or something.

ZUCKERMAN: All of Mexico was beyond my control, and really beyond US control. We had very good programs going in both Monterrey and Guadalajara, and also had a nice distribution of bi-national centers in a number of cities. I had never worked with bi-national centers before, but they were a tremendous asset, not only as English-teaching centers, but also as cultural programmers and in some cases libraries. They were chartered under Mexican law and were legally Mexican institutions. We helped them and tried to provide cultural programming and assistance as we could, particularly by bringing down experts in teaching English as a second language to help train their teachers. In Monterrey, we had an officer who was spending all of his time messing with the small library, which was housed in the consulate which nobody came to unless they needed a visa. We just took the whole collection and gave a grant to the bi-national center in Monterrey. They built a wing on to the center and we put a real library in there, and all of a sudden the library was well used.

Monterrey was vastly different from Mexico City. It always has been. It is a strong Catholic area, whereas Mexico City is still under the spell of the anti-Catholicism of the Mexican revolution. I was told by a left-wing editor that many people think Mexicans are Catholic because they go to church, pin little metal hearts, legs, arms, trucks, cows on a panel displaying the Virgin in hopes of a cure for whatever or whoever is ailing. They also, at the commemoration of the vision by a peasant of the Virgin, will crawl on their knees from Puebla to Mexico City as a way of showing reverence at the Cathedral built in her honor. But my friend said they are not Catholic, they are religious. They pray at churches that were built on the ruins of their old pyramids, and if the churches ever go, he said, they would still pray at those sites. At any rate, no president, at that time, would ever be photographed going to church. Vicente Fox is now in Mexico City and I don't know his practice. The north won that election because more of Mexico became northern-like, became interested in becoming an effective society. There is now a northern style newspaper, La Reforma, in Mexico City that wasn't there when I was there, which more closely displays a journalistic style and lack of front-page editorializing that is uncommon in Mexican journalism.

Q: How about when you were there? I mean was there a difference in your dealing or our efforts in Monterrey and elsewhere and in Mexico City?

ZUCKERMAN: Well in Monterrey, we had open access to Monterrey Tech, which was arguably the best university in Mexico. There were very strong, friendly newspapers. And Monterrey was also the best site, at a time when we had no post in Tijuana, to organize programs involving

communities on both sides of the border. We had programs between border newspapers and border universities. But after my time in Mexico, when I was area director, a post was established in Tijuana. Now the Mexicans were very aware of the dual nature of that part of their country, so they built a cultural center in Tijuana because it was their view that the northerners didn't realize they were Mexican. They would call a truck, "camion" in Spanish, a "troca".. Their language was being affected by English words, and beyond that, their proximity to American society was making them a different kind of Mexican, lacking the nationalistic fervor of those who lived closer to Mexico City and losing the mentality that saw the United States as a threat to Mexican sovereignty. We couldn't really cover the territory; it was just too huge. At one point we had a post in Hermosillo, where we had a consulate, but we couldn't maintain it. From time to time the PAO from Monterrey would make a visit there. Border towns like Brownsville and Matamoros were also out of reach. We had a good post in Guadalajara which people from Mexico will tell you is the most Mexican place in Mexico. If someone in Mexico said he was going to the US but could only visit one city and would want to go to the most American city of all, I'm not sure anyone could honestly designate one. But the state of Jalisco and its capital, Guadalajara, are considered very much the heart and soul of Mexico. Lopez Portillo was from there. His successor was from not far away. We had good programs there, not huge programs but good programs. We identified candidates for Fulbright grants, exchange grants. We had good relationships with the newspapers. We supported the consulate. But the fact of the matter is that while I was there, Mexico City, with its 20 million people, was a combination of New York and Washington, the political, cultural and financial center of the country, and that's where our programs were focused...

Q: What about the universities in Mexico City? One thinks of the Olympics that is coming back now. Who was the minister who was involved in the Olympic troubles?

ZUCKERMAN: Luis Echeverria, later President, was minister of the interior when the demonstrations took place. Recently I saw that he was absolved of responsibility for the deaths that occurred when the Army fired on demonstrating students.

Q: This was '68. I always think of universities as being quite radical and difficult to penetrate because as so many places in other parts of the world, heavily Marxist faculty and all of that. How did you find that?

ZUCKERMAN: UNAM, the Autonomous National University of Mexico which, with its preparatory school had over 360,000 students, was very hard for us to bring a speaker to. We had professors who were tops in their fields who their counterparts at UNAM were eager to invite, but were dissuaded because of the prospect of student demonstrations against an "imperialistic agent" coming to the campus. But we had a wonderful library in Mexico City, the Benjamin Franklin Library, which I believe was the first US government library established overseas. It attracted the students from the university, because the collection was good but, more importantly, the shelves were open. They could browse freely in our library and talk with us freely, but it was difficult for us to be on that campus. We could go on many other campuses. Certainly ITAM, the Autonomous Technical Institute of Mexico, was a place where we were welcome. There were several Catholic universities we had good relations with, as well as private institutions and some

with government affiliation. In fact we had relations with certain faculty members at UNAM, those who understood that they needed contact with us so that they could give their students the preparation to operate internationally and understand the changes that not only US and Canadian but also European and a number of Asian societies were undergoing.

There were enough foreign businesses established and growing in Mexico, with Mexican employees and in many cases managers, that a middle class was developing that was free of the cant of not only Marxism but of the revolution. That is the generation that has transformed Mexico into what it is now. It was not as open to us as it might have been, but even in Europe, including Belgium, we had to work carefully so as not to put the people we worked with in a difficult position. We had good relations with people on the left in the universities who were not excessively doctrinaire. Most had several identities. Few could exist on their academic salaries. They would write for the newspapers, sit on boards and commissions and lead issue groups. We could interact in that manner freely, away from the university proper, but it enabled us to talk about the day when we could really do things at UNAM of the kind that we were doing at Monterey Tech, ITAM and elsewhere -- bring the kind of American professors down that their counterparts at UNAM would have been delighted to meet and share with their students.. But many on the left changed over the years, as they have in the US. There was a very prominent leftist professor at UNAM, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, who was the brother in law of Manuel Becerra Acosta, editor of *Unomásuno*. He had studied at Harvard and was an outspoken critic of Mexico's energy policy towards the US. Surprisingly, he became a top aide to Vicente Fox when he became president, and eventually became Mexico's ambassador to the United Nations. Tragically, he died in an automobile accident in Mexico in his early 50's. He was a good example of the kind of person who had strongly antipathetic feelings towards the US, who nonetheless enjoyed a good argument over a beer and gave us an insight into what was going on in the university and in the intellectual world of Mexico. Dealing with the students was a matter of whether or not we could draw them into functions and into the library which they were free to come to, and many did.

Q: Was there a solid exodus of the Mexican children of sort of the ruling class going to American universities and coming back?

ZUCKERMAN: Very much so, particularly among the wealthier classes. But it was also increasingly the choice of the political classes as well. As I mentioned, the head of the American desk, whose stepfather was on the left of the PRI and became Foreign Minister, went to the University of Pennsylvania. The son of the darling of the left wing, Jesus Reyes Heróles, who was minister of the interior and the left's favorite to succeed Lopez Portillo, received a Fulbright scholarship, studied in the US, and became ambassador to the US. I think Mexico was re-orienting itself. For a long time the Mexican upper classes thought first of Europe when it came to educating their children. Spain, France, to some extent Britain had been the destinations of choice, but an American education had become the most desirable credential for success in the "new Mexico".

I did a paper when I was in my last year of the Foreign Service at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown, which took a look at the opportunities for study in the United States

open at that point to foreign students. And I took a look at the Fulbright program as a fraction of that. It turned out that the Fulbright program, funded mainly by the US government except in countries where there was bilateral financing, accounted for less than 1.5% of foreign students in American universities, which indicated the enormity of the private flow of foreign students to the United States. I argued that since our program was so comparatively small in proportion to the total flow of students, it should re-adopt the reason stated by the original proposal by Senator Fulbright for its enactment: to work for better international understanding and world peace. This would mean adopting a broader view than the Fulbright Board favored, of selecting only the very top scholars no matter what their fields, but also looking for the need to fill the need of universities in places that the eminent scholars didn't want to go to. The example I used was the request from the Jesuit Central American University in El Salvador, which had suffered the assassination of a number of its priests during the civil war, for a professor of journalism. At the time, El Salvador was still dangerous, but we found a young assistant professor of journalism who was willing to go there, and he made a difference greater than a lofty scholar who might have been willing to stay for a week rather than a year could possibly have done. He helped to reestablish relations between the US and the University that assumed that the killings could not have taken place without US acquiescence. The presence of foreign students was not only a great cultural advantage, both for the foreign students and the American students who studied with them, but an enormous source of income for the US. I pointed this out on many occasions to the people who were talking about the fear of having 30,000 Chinese students in the United States. But those first 30,000 students, most of whom already have returned to China, seem to be having an effect on Chinese society, from what I heard on a recent trip to China. Their American experience has given them new aspirations.

Q: Oh yes. Unfortunately we are at a period of time right now when we are inhibiting this because of security.

ZUCKERMAN: Yes, we are losing our greatest advantage in the ideas market. I was going to mention one other thing when we were talking about issues. There was one issue I had some flak on from Washington because of a decision we made when formulating the country plan. Drugs were a problem then as they are now in Mexico, but the Mexicans were most worried about marijuana because their kids were using it, and less worried about the cocaine and about poppies. We had very quietly gotten an agreement with the Mexican government in which we gave them planes and worked together so we would identify targets for their planes to spread crop destroying chemicals. I think it was a very quiet agreement that never appeared in the Mexican press, and the level of binational cooperation on drugs was never discussed lest it stir nationalistic protests. We were under pressure from Washington to have a major drug information program, but we thought better of it, that public information at that time on that issue would make it more difficult for Mexicans to maintain the kind of cooperation they were giving us. Because there was so much conflict in so many other areas, we thought that if this was working, we should leave well enough alone; leave it up to the Mexicans to educate their kids not to use drugs. That was the principal thrust of USIS anti-drug operations, to try to build resistance within that society to the use of drugs by their own kids, which was an inevitable by-product once they started producing them, as happened in Brazil. There we got governors' wives organized in each state's anti drug campaigns. But we didn't do it in Mexico. Later on, as things

really became bad, I am sure that the post had to start waging the kind of anti drug campaign that we waged elsewhere, but hopefully with the cooperation of the Mexican authorities.

Our country plan raised eyebrows on another matter, because along with dealing with immigration, trade, economic and political relations, we also identified a program activity that others thought too broad, too much of an amorphous catch-all. But we defended it because we thought it was at the heart of our contentious relationship with Mexico, and that was mutual misconceptions about each others' society, history, and motives. There were things which happened in America which were read by Mexicans in a way totally different than how we read it, and the same was true as to how we read Mexican events. We felt that the way to deal with that was in creating programs that were fully bi-national in conception, participation and execution. In other words we wouldn't just program to Mexicans, but would act as intermediaries in bringing Mexicans and Americans together, as we did with the press, as we were beginning to do with university groups. These were seminars in which ideas were exchanged between groups, rather than us lecturing to a passive audience. That is what we worked on more assiduously than anything else -- to try to figure out a means of communicating in such a way that people felt they were on equal footing, that we were listening as well as talking.

Q: Can you give an example perhaps of during the time you were there of sort of mutual misperceptions?

ZUCKERMAN: The most obvious one from the uninformed US side was the perception of Mexicans as a nation of Indian peasants controlled by a veneer of transplanted Europeans, peasants who were largely unsophisticated, uneducated, and violent. From our vantage point, we were witnessing a rapid expansion of the Mexican middle class, the beginnings of a political upheaval that would throw off the one-party monopoly of power held by the PRI, and an economic growth stimulated by an expansion in education and newly discovered oil reserves. From the Mexican side, there was a grudging admiration for our political system, economic prowess and perceived efficiency, but a resentment that our liberal democratic ideals were for internal use only, and didn't extend to our dealings with Mexicans and other developing countries. Furthermore, there was a tendency to see nefarious motives in anything we did in dealing with them. If we gave them the benefit of higher prices by selling oil and gas to us because of reduced delivery costs, we were trying to control their resources. When Secretary of Energy Schlesinger reneged on the gas agreement because it was well above world prices, we were attempting to undermine Mexico's economy. Also, we were stealing their manpower by luring Mexicans to work on our farms and in our factories by paying them higher wages than they could earn at home, but treating them as slave labor. When floods destroyed homes and farms in Tijuana, a friendly governor had to decline our offer to supply tents to house the displaced because it would be seen as interfering in Mexican internal affairs. The list is long.

Q: A couple of things just before we finish. Cuba. Did Cuba come up?

ZUCKERMAN: Yes. Cuba was a constant issue. When Fidel Castro and Che Guevara had to leave Cuba after the aborted first attempted revolutionary attack, they came to Mexico on a little boat call Granma. I was told by the director of Televisa, the privately owned, staunchly

independent and conservative television network, that Guevara and Castro had appeared in one of their novellas as doctors in white coats. He told me that if he had known that was going to happen, "I would have hired them and made them stars to keep them from getting back to Cuba." There was a great feeling of camaraderie between Cuba and Mexico, certainly in the left wing of the PRI. It was part of a way of putting a stick in Uncle Sam's eye, but it was also part of the way that the oligarchy that controlled the PRI and reaped the benefits thereof could demonstrate at very low cost, without giving up their mansions, chauffeured cars and *casas chicas*, that in their heart of hearts, they too were revolutionaries. They certainly were not going to upsetting the apple cart within Mexico, but had to bow to the widespread public approval of Castro, not because of what he was doing in Cuba, but because of how he had stood up to the colossus of the north. These days, however, relations between Mexico and Cuba are not as close as they once were.

Q: Well in a way your next post had the same thing didn't it, Canada. I mean just again the designated whipping boy or something like that.

ZUCKERMAN: I take great pleasure in pointing that out to people who say, "What are you doing in Canada for God's sake? They're just like us!" I point out to them that anti-Americanism was invented by the New England colonists who opposed the revolution and fled to Canada when independence became a fact. Because on a superficial level we see very little difference between ourselves and our cousins to the Great White North, we overlook the often subtle differences that make Canadian society somewhat different than our own. They pride themselves on having less violence, greater egalitarianism, and nicer cities in many cases. But many of the most talented of them seek their fortune in the US, in the media, in our universities, in our businesses. In many ways, the US plays the same role vis a vis Canada as France plays vis a vis Belgium. Ambitious Canadians know that the gold ring is on the US merry go round.

Q: Well finally before we leave Mexico, there are two issues. One, how about corruption? You know I think of the dinosaurs of the PRI, and you mentioned the chief of police at \$400 a month and living very well thank you and salting away his polo stables and all that. Did corruption play a part in what you were doing or did you have to work around it to get stories in? Anyway how about the whole corruption picture?

ZUCKERMAN: That never arose when it came to our dealings with the press. We never paid to place a story. Corruption existed at every level of Mexican society. You could be driving late at night and a policeman stops you and says, "You went through that light." You say, "What light? There is no light here." Well you can pay 200 pesos here or they take you down to the station and it is 1000 pesos. "I am a diplomat. You can see it on my license." "Yes well we can straighten it out down there. You are tired. You give me 200 pesos and you can go home." I had some wealthy friends who owned some land on which they got a permit to build a luxury apartment house. It was designed to contain 16 apartments. They determined that they miscalculated, that in order to make money on the project they would have to have 20 apartments, and add two stories. So they went to negotiate this with the official in charge of such things in the Mexico City bureaucracy. They worked it out. "How did you work it out?" They said, "He gets one apartment. We get three, we can make it." I said, "Well doesn't that drive you crazy?" He said, "Look you

have to understand Mexico. None of these people get paid very much. Every Mexican official has to raise his own taxes. He is the one who is responsible for bringing the income in that he lives on. It is unfortunate but it is a part of life.”

People in Mexico accept it, the mordida, the bite. He doesn't have to ask for it but you make it available. In a sense his view becomes your view. You are asking me to give you something that will enrich you. Why should I? I mean the law doesn't require me to do this. You are asking for an exception to the rule. What do you expect me to do? What would induce me to do such a thing?. You know what it is; he doesn't have to say it. So you have to come prepared to say the right thing at the right time.

Q: Stan, one last question on this unless you have something else you want to add. You were there when the Reagan administration came in. How, did you have a problem dealing with Reagan at first? You know here is a movie actor. I think all over the world I think we had a problem of somebody who is coming from the political field and had the reputation of being far right, in presenting him, and also the impact of Charlie Wick.

ZUCKERMAN: I didn't have any problems other than those I mentioned when the initial Mexican reaction to Reagan, in the press anyway, was that he was an actor and therefore unqualified to be president. They forgot about his being a governor of a state with a GNP much larger than their own. But I think the Mexican government obviously treated him with respect no matter what they may have said privately to each other. I didn't have a problem with Reagan; I had a problem with his staff at one point. When Reagan was going to come down to Cancun to attend a meeting of 22 presidents. that the Mexican president had arranged, I was awaiting an invitation from the White House advance team to work with them on press facilities and other things that we would normally be involved in when a President visits. Instead the advance team, the pre advance team, seized on a long-time Embassy staffer who was sort of a meeter and greeter for the embassy who had insinuated himself into the confidence of these young and idealistic people. Finally we began to have contacts with the White House press people, but there were still meetings on subjects that we'd have to be responsible for in which we were left out. Finally I talked to Ambassador Gavin during the meeting in Cancun. There was a mid-day break and he and I went for a swim, and I told him I was having a hard time dealing with the White House people, and wondered if he knew what the problem was. He said “Well let me ask you a couple of questions. Did you ever have Julian Nava stay at your house after he came back to visit?” I told him that Lucey had stayed at my house, but Nava had not.” Gavin said he knew that Lucey and I were friends, but they were concerned about Nava. He asked if I had written speeches for Nava that he had used in campaigning in the US for Carter during the election, and I said, truthfully, that I hadn't and that he had never asked me to. He acknowledged that those issues were the source of the problem, and that he would straighten things out. After that it became much better.

Q: Did the problem in Central America, I am speaking of the heavy Reagan involvement at the time you were there. Did that impact?

ZUCKERMAN: Yes. We had organized demonstrations in front of the embassy on many

occasions. Young people in designer jeans would parade denouncing our activities in El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Central America was close to Mexico, but when I got to know Central America more when I was traveling as area director, nothing frightened Central Americans more than their proximity to Mexico.

Q: The colossus to the north.

ZUCKERMAN: Colossus to the north, right. It never got out of hand, never got violent. I don't remember us ever having a rock thrown at the Benjamin Franklin Library or people not coming to English language classes at the Mexican American Institute. The demonstrations were pro forma, but we took them seriously for security reasons.

Q: I take it the papers would essentially support the Sandinistas.

ZUCKERMAN: Yes, but the greater focus at that point was Salvador. I am trying to remember the exact sequence of these conflicts, but clearly Salvador was the focus because it was the bloodiest at the time. The official line, the official position of the Mexican government, was that we were mishandling the situation. They weren't supporting the leftist regimes, but they felt there were other means to ameliorate the situation. The real problem was hunger. The real problem was the rigid class system, the oligarchy, which in the case of Mexico was the pot calling the kettle black. But it did not, and this was the important key point, it did not take precedence over the real issues that Mexico was concerned with in its bilateral relationship with us. Those were the economic and immigration and energy issues that were at the heart of their well being.

Q: All right, well I think, Stan this is a good place to stop, and if we don't, if you have anything to add, fine, on Mexico.

ZUCKERMAN: I wanted to respond to your request that I think about any specific examples of the aberrations in the Mexican press. I spoke to a good friend who was our information officer, who came down to Mexico with me, Larry Ikels. We compared notes last night, and we agreed that it wasn't so much any specific zaniness on any particular story. It was an overall atmosphere of paranoia which colored almost everything that appeared in the Mexican press vis a vis the bilateral relationship, because Mexicans are raised with their mother's milk, and certainly in their school system, to regard the United States as a threat to their sovereignty. One could argue they had reason to do so following the loss of much of what is now the American southwest to the United States after the war of 1848. But it was that paranoiac reaction that saw every gesture, every initiative of the United States vis a vis Mexico, as having a hidden agenda which was to compromise Mexican sovereignty and control of its energy, especially during the time I was there. There are a couple of incidents that Larry reminded me of that we were involved in, that didn't specifically relate only to the press but beyond it. But they do serve to illustrate the point.

One of them turned out to be an incident that probably was in my own memory the most shameful act I ever committed on behalf of public diplomacy. Mstislav Rostropovich was the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra. They came down to Mexico to perform at the Cervantino festival in the lovely old Spanish mining town of Guanajuato. At the end of the

concert he came out to conduct an encore. He conducted the Stars and Stripes Forever, and there was an uproar in the audience, with loud shouts of “down with American imperialism.” Because they saw that patriotic American march as a hostile gesture. When Rostropovich came down with the orchestra to Mexico City to perform, and ambassador Lucey had a small dinner in his honor, we were talking about the uproar at the concert in Guanajuato. I asked him what his encore would be at the concert in Mexico City. He said, “Well, we are playing the Pathetique symphony of Tchaikovsky, which ends on a religious note and usually isn’t followed by an encore. But if one is demanded, we would probably play the march from The Love for Three Oranges by Prokofiev. That, I suppose would be acceptable for a Mexican audience.” I said “Yes, of course,” ... and this is something I rue saying to this very day, “but it’s possible however, that the Mexican press would feel they taught you a lesson in Guanajuato.” And raising his eyebrows he said, “Oh?” The next night the concert was held and received tumultuous applause. He came out to do an encore and he conducted the Prokofiev march as he had indicated he would. Great applause followed, and he came out again and went right into a vigorous performance of the Stars and Stripes Forever. Half of the audience was on its feet shouting, “Viva Mexico.” The other half was applauding. Of course the newspapers went wild with it. I think he was delighted, but I really, I don’t think it was my job as a public affairs officer to induce a hostile reaction in a Mexican audience, even though it was not at the expense of the maestro who, as I say, thoroughly enjoyed it.

The other incident reflects upon the political venom which many Mexican columnists spewed when we undertook a program that was popular among most Mexicans. As I mentioned earlier, at the time of the Carter visit, the wife of President Lopez Portillo – Carmen Romano de Lopez Portillo -- wanted a large American art exhibit as a cultural highlight of the president’s visit. I think I mentioned that we told her it was something that we would be glad to entertain for the future, but we only had a few months before the president’s visit, and something like that takes a long time and a lot of preparation. After the visit was over, she didn’t let us forget about it. So we entered into negotiations. The Mexicans cooperated and assumed a very generous portion of the financial responsibility for an exhibit which was curated by a distinguished professor of art history from the City University of New York, Milton Brown. He accepted the assignment on the condition that the five great museums of Washington would contribute works to this exhibit, and would not in any way bar him from taking any works he wanted from their walls. He took 90 works starting with Copley and ending with Diebenkorn, spanning almost the entire history of American art.

It was a great success. Almost 200,000 Mexicans came to see it in the two months it was up. Excelsior, which was at that time the leading newspaper in Mexico and very nationalistic, chose to pick a violent critic of the United States to review the exhibit. He lashed out at it for what it did not contain, meaning a series of artists who should have been there if we had taken Mexico seriously. And to our delight, every artist he named was in fact part of the exhibit. We called on Milton Brown, who turned out to be an excellent polemicist, to respond, and he made Excelsior’s critic look like a fool. But that is an example of how, even in the cultural field, a Mexican newspaper, a leading one, would reach out to find someone who would find a political basis for criticism of the exhibit. It was one of the things that made me conclude that art is politics in Mexico as it is no where else, with the possible exception of France.

LOUIS F. LICHT III
Analyst, Middle America-Caribbean Division, INR
Washington, DC (1980-1982)

Mr. Licht was born in Maine and raised in New York. Educated at Yale University and the Fletcher School, he served in the US Army in Vietnam and joined the State Department in 1974. Mr. Licht served in Washington, dealing with Latin American Affairs as well as Arms Control and Nuclear matters. His foreign posts were Santo Domingo, Lima, Canberra, Yerevan and Chisnau (Moldova). Mr. Licht was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: You were there until 1980. Were you able to, was that your time, you went back to INR?

LICHT: That's right, I came back to INR/RAR (Office of Research and Analysis for American Republics) in the Middle America-Caribbean Division (RAR/MAC) after that to work on Mexico and Central America...that was the period when we were concentrating on Central America, though I never quite got into that. I spent the next three years there. This was the same office I had been in before but newly renamed.

Q: So this would be '80-'83? What about Mexico at this time? This was, the Reagan Administration was getting ready to come in and did come in and all. They were bent on one course which seemed to be the opposite one of which Mexico felt would be right in Central America.

LICHT: I don't recall so much of that, what we were thinking about Mexico in those years was a great deal of concern about the oil situation. And Mexico, as I remember, played a reasonably cagey game as far as keeping its relationship with the U.S. and still not totally abandoning solidarity with the rest of Latin America. And its relationship with Guatemala, I remember as being quite important at that time. But Mexico is not very easy to penetrate, as far as its political situation is concerned. It was so tied up with the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), it's very interesting to see it, looking as it's coming apart now.

Q: Did you get down to Mexico at all?

LICHT: I did at one time, yes. Gavin was the ambassador [Editor's Note: Ambassador John A. Gavin was confirmed by the Senate in May 1981, presented his credentials on June 5, 1981 and finished his tour in June 1986.] Sort of an unhappy embassy.

Q: What is the feeling you were getting from the reports and people you talked to about the Gavin time at the embassy?

LICHT: The reports you got from talking to people was they weren't very happy with the way he

was running the embassy. He was putting a great deal of responsibility on a very few people and was not fully using his embassy staff.

Q: He brought his own assistants with him.

LICHT: Exactly right. In fact I think, I do remember him not putting the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission, i.e., the second highest ranking embassy officer) in charge when he left, or putting somebody else in charge, much to everyone's distress. So I think he was considered pretty much an outsider as far as the Foreign Service was concerned, neglectful of it, disrespectful of it. So it wasn't a happy situation.

Q: Was the feeling, he had a Mexican mother and spoke Spanish and was glamorous, being a movie star and all that. Could you see, was that having an effect?

LICHT: People recognized that he had some real strengths, as far as relating to Mexicans. That isn't the same as being an effective chief of mission.

Q: Did you talk to the desk, the Mexican desk, and all?

LICHT: Yes, I was in regular contact with the Mexican desk. I remember talking to them about where Mexican oil was going and the Central American situation. I have to say it seems a long time ago now.

These were the years of the Panama Canal, too and I was Panama analyst for a while. That was when the treaty was actually concluded. So that was a pretty interesting time to be in INR, following those particular things. Ellsworth Bunker, who was the special negotiator, I used to brief Ellsworth Bunker. You would take him things, he would look at them and then you couldn't tell if he was asleep or not. It was very embarrassing. Here you're a junior officer, you give him this highly classified stuff and you can't tell if he was asleep or not. You don't know whether to cough or what.

Q: Was there sort of a feeling of, in INR, of people dealing with Latin American affairs and sort of "Thank God, we've finally lanced this boil" as far as the Panama Canal, it's being turned over? Or was there concern the Panamanians might foul it up?

LICHT: There was divided opinion, as far as I can remember, on whether this was a good idea or not. There were some people who were not very fond of President Carter anyway and thought this was one bad idea. But I think in general people thought this was something that was going to happen eventually and recognized that the canal's strategic value was not the same as it once was. INR played a somewhat peripheral role in all this, so we had some good intelligence that we analyzed.

Q: What about in Mexico? Was the feeling that the PRI would be there forever?

LICHT: There wasn't much of a feeling that it was losing grip in those years. There were still

two or three presidents to come. So, no and I had the feeling, talking to political officers there, it was pretty hard to find out what was going on. It was a closed system and it just rolled along very nicely.

Q: In January 1981 the Reagan Administration took over the administration brought with then some people who had very strong opinions about how we should deal with Latin America. This was a place where there was really quite a difference between the Carter Administration and the Reagan Administration. Did you find any sort of conflict there?

LICHT: Well INR shifted gears very nicely, as I remember it, though it was clear there were bodies being left in ARA. Jim Cheek, for instance, was put out, sent far away. I remember writing transition papers for the new administration.

Q: How did you find the intelligence coming in to you? Were you getting pretty good stuff from the CIA and from the military and elsewhere?

LICHT: There was good stuff and there was bad stuff. It's hard to characterize. Some was on the mark and some wasn't. What I can remember is not very accurate. Of course, I'm concerned about what I can say.

Q: Certainly, but I was just wondering about the intelligence mix, whether what came in from say the CIA and maybe the military was melded in or did you pretty much take sort of State Department reporting plus newspaper reporting...

LICHT: No, I think we tried to put it all together. And the Agency reports were important. It was always hard to decide when you got something from one source that was completely different from the other. And I guess we'd fall back on the State Department sources, because we seemed to know them. By the time you'd been there you probably had made a trip somewhere to talk with somebody, to get some perspective. The trouble with INR, of course, if you hadn't been there a long time it still took a lot of work to figure out what was real and what was off.

Those years I was working in the Dominican Republic, it amazed me how much information that was dependent on airgrams from the Dominican Republic. And it seemed as if the political wheels just went around a lot faster than other places, so that it ginned up all this interesting stuff in this little place. And in a way the stuff you got from there really overshadowed a lot of the stuff you got from places which were more important, like Mexico.

There were embassy officers in the Dominican Republic who just loved the place and they made very good contacts and being a small place you could touch base with a whole bunch of people. So is this the center of the world? No, by golly, but there's plenty to analyze.

Q: Well I would imagine, too, with Mexico there would be a problem since so many of the concerns were really being settled by cabinet-to-cabinet or by state-to-state or board-to-board. There are these border boards, like water agreements and all this.

LICHT: And there wasn't a vibrant political life that gave the embassy political reporters lots of insight into points of view because the partisan oppositionists were genuinely out, had never been in.

Q: How about Mexican foreign policy? Was this a burr under our saddle? They seem to take a certain amount of delight in at least making nice words about Castro and all that.

LICHT: Well, they do. We knew where they were coming from and they seemed pretty professional in keeping a single mind. We also knew that they had to be seen to be standing up to Uncle Sam. That was in our calculations. It was a little bit like Sovietology. They made a little shift here and this is really significant. They had a very constant line in the United Nations, on arms control issues and people who followed this for years and years. Garcia Robles was one of those people. So this is a real country with a real sort of developed foreign policy approach. So frustrating, yes, but frustration was expected. I don't think they were more fussed than they needed to be.

LAWRENCE I. PLOTKIN
USIA, Mexico and Central America Desk Officer
Washington DC (1980-1983)

Lawrence I. Plotkin was born in Chicago, Illinois and raised in Southern California. He attended the University of California at Los Angeles and joined USIA in 1973. His posts included Poland, Panama, Washington, DC, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Plotkin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: What sort of operation did we have in Mexico? One thinks of Mexico as being so plugged into the United States that it almost seems superfluous to work there.

PLOTKIN: You'd think the Canadians were plugged in too, but they certainly don't see things the way we do. It is far worse in Mexico. Our embassy there was, and probably still is the largest in Latin America and the USIS program was correspondingly large. Our Benjamin Franklin Library in Mexico City was one of the biggest USIS libraries in the world, and we had branches throughout the country, with Branch PAOs in Monterrey and Guadalajara. We had a huge student advising and International Visitors programs.

The most difficult job we had in Mexico was working with the media. The media was free, but even more undisciplined than that in Panama. Reporters often made up stories out of whole cloth on even major issues. One of my favorite headlines of the time was "U.S. Steals Mexican Rain." There was a major drought in the U.S. Southwest and in Northern Mexico. Nature, of course, could not have been responsible. For some, the U.S. had to be the villain for this and for any other ills Mexico might suffer. I don't know the situation today, but then the basic tendency was to blame every problem on us. For USIS and the Embassy, the job was to determine which stories to bother to respond to and which to ignore, hoping the usual would happen and the story

would fade away. It's an on-going problem in places where the media is so totally undisciplined. It's doubly a problem where such a media exists in a country where our influence is seen to be so great.

Of course there were also continuing border issues. Immigration issues were, and remain, very serious. One attempt at a solution was to create jobs in Mexico. The Mexican border area was one of the first places where U.S. businesses created offshore assembly plants. U.S. parts were shipped to Mexico for assembly and returned then to the U.S. for sale. No customs were involved because none of the materials were sold in Mexico.

I was on the scene as well for the collapse of the Mexican peso. The fall of the peso affected everything from international trade to the huge numbers of Mexican students in the United States who suddenly couldn't make their tuition payments.

Q: Did you get much feedback from the USIA posts in Mexico? Did you have to counter the sentiment that the United States is a huge monster that's trying to destroy Mexico?

PLOTKIN: I mentioned earlier our "theft" of Mexican rain. We often had to deal with stories like that. It may be worse now that the Soviet Union has gone and the world, for the time being, is not seen as bipolar, but it was bad enough in the early 1980s. Since the Monroe Doctrine, we have dominated Latin America and often provoked resentment by our 'bull in the china shop' manners. That resentment is there even when we are on our best behavior. It was evident both when I was stationed in Panama and from the vantage point of the American Republics Office. The U.S., our politicians, our military, and, of course, the CIA was blamed for everything. If the CIA had been as successful as the Latin Americans thought it was we probably would have been in much better shape. The CIA was seen as the invisible hand behind everything that went on that was not so obviously caused by something else that it couldn't be blamed on the CIA. Every economic shift, every government in the region people didn't like, even for the drought in Mexico was laid at our doorstep. It's hard to cope with that because frequently the facts don't matter. Conspiracy theories trump reality. Who shot Kennedy? Who wrote the plays of Shakespeare? Who supported the insurgents? There are always people, some of them in influential places, who won't accept what you and I might believe, even know to be the facts no matter how demonstrable or how persuasively presented.

Q: What about John Gavin, the movie actor who became ambassador to Mexico? He was supposed to be sort of a power unto himself.

PLOTKIN: Actually, the Mexican government was okay with Ambassador Gavin as I recall. While some saw him as something of a loose canon, and his actions were hardly innocent in that respect, they also knew he was well connected to the White House, that President Reagan would take his calls and that he could serve as a conduit to U.S. power that didn't have to go through State channels. By way of contrast, his successor was a Mexican-American from the Southwest. The Mexicans felt he wasn't as well connected as Gavin and there was actually some prejudiced against him for being a Mexican American: "Aren't we important enough to merit a WASP ambassador?" In fact, John Gavin had a Mexican mother and spoke Spanish fluently.

Q: Did you run across any imperial commands out of our embassy in Mexico City?.

PLOTKIN: I can't recall anything more dramatic out of Mexico City than typical ambassadorial demands from other countries, from both political appointees and FSOs.

Q: I understand that he had a number of deputy chiefs of mission, that he was a difficult person. Who was the PAO?

PLOTKIN: Stan Zuckerman. He was a good guy, but very demanding. He knew he was in the most important country in the region and expected AR's time and resources accordingly. I was his most direct contact in USIA and had a good working relationship with him. I don't recall ever having met or had a phone conversation with Ambassador Gavin or one of his DCMs. Everything the Embassy wanted from USIA came to us through the PAO. Just the normal way to do business.

Q: As the desk officer, did you get involved in policy meetings?

PLOTKIN: I attended a weekly interagency meeting at State with senior State officers, my State desk officer counterparts, AID, CIA and DOD representatives.

NADIA TONGOUR
Junior Officer
Mexico City (1980-1983)

Nadia Tongour was born in Turkey and raised in South Carolina. She was educated at William and Mary and Stanford Universities and taught at several colleges before joining the Foreign Service in 1980. Primarily a Political Officer, her Washington assignments were in the fields of Soviet and Soviet Bloc affairs as well as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Her foreign assignments include Brazil, Barbados and St. George's Grenada, where she was Principal Officer. Ms. Tongour was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

TONGOUR: Back to the Foreign Service and my first tour in Mexico City. Shortly after I arrived in Mexico, the country had its first currency devaluation in many years. In fact, within a matter of a few months the peso went from 26 to well over 100 to the dollar, and there was a lag of at least six months before prices began to catch up. What that meant was that a junior officer making a pittance by comparison to today could do almost anything. We could travel at very little cost all over the country, and we did. Flying to Acapulco cost roughly \$10 or the equivalent. We could eat out wherever we wanted -- and afford it. As a result we had a sort of a roving band of young people who got together to explore different aspects of the country, eating out frequently and traveling a great deal. It was a wonderful time for us in that regard. But it was fascinating in other respects as well. For example, within the Embassy context, we had a "play reading" group,

organized by four of us women who were from different agencies. We, the organizers, were quite junior in rank but over time we wound up inviting various people to take parts in the readings and we staged the events in the homes (generally larger) of more senior officers. We would rehearse the play over a weekend and then put on the show on a Sunday evening. These events were really quite popular. As a result we got to know a wide range of Embassy personnel and made many new friends in the process. One of our actors became quite famous, or perhaps I should say infamous, namely Rick (Aldrich) Ames, now known for his espionage activities, but then simply a good actor and one of those taking part in the readings.

Personally, this was a positive period, marked by a close circle of friends, a good social life, considerable travel all around the country -- not to mention some unusual and interesting assignments during the tour. The ambassador at the time was John Gavin, an actor and close friend of President Reagan; however some Mexican officials were not thrilled at the prospect of having a Spanish-speaking actor as the American ambassador. They had hoped for someone more "serious" or with more gravitas along the lines of Sen. Jacob Javits. Instead, they got Gavin, who came with two Special Assistants.

Q: The temple dogs, I think they were called.

TONGOUR: You have heard of this group.

Q: Talk about it.

TONGOUR: You mean the general impression?

Q: Yes, yes; talk about how this worked.

TONGOUR: The situation was somewhat unusual in that most ambassadors don't have two such assistants, who were also political appointees. One of the two was okay; he subsequently married a close friend of mine, and we remain on friendly terms. The other was more noteworthy in the negative sense because he created what could only be called a nightmarish situation for many of the staff. My involvement stemmed from the fact that he decided that the Front Office needed not only these special assistants but staff assistants, drawn from the junior officer pool, as well. These staff assistants would be comparable to staff assistants -- preparing "Night Notes", assembling papers, etc. The Special Assistants would pick from among the young consular officers and "honor" the designee by allowing the person selected to work in the Front Office for three or four months at a time. I was selected among the first crop to do this. However, it was not exactly a happy environment since one of the so-called "temple dogs" was without a doubt one of the meaner human beings I've run into; fortunately, he was not a career Foreign Service officer. Actually, he had started out in the Foreign Service, left, and then returned as a "Schedule C" appointee. He reduced a number of people to tears. In that regard, I was lucky. Still, as my tenure in that position was drawing to a close, he very pointedly told me that if I ever talked about anything I witnessed in the Front Office, he could ruin my Foreign Service career. Although there really wasn't that much to report, and after all these years the threat is meaningless, it, nevertheless, left a bad taste in my mouth. Fortunately, my last six months at post were spent in a

very different and much more satisfying office. I wound up working for the Consul General. Mexico City had an unusual organizational structure. First of all, there was the ambassador with his two special assistants and a staff assistant, and there there were two Consuls General -- both of whom were excellent.

Q: I understand that the special assistants sort of bypassed the DCM.

TONGOUR: Absolutely. And the DCM was an okay guy but he was often by-passed and not treated much better, from what I could see, than the lowly junior staff assistant. So it was not a happy situation. Paradoxically, the negative environment in the Front Office contribute to a great deal of bonding and good morale among the rest of the staff, with everyone else in agreement about how horrible the management was.

Q: What was your impression of Gavin and his operation? I realize this was your first time in the Foreign Service but what were you picking up?

TONGOUR: Gavin wanted to be taken seriously. He did not want to be seen as merely a handsome actor. Actually, Gavin had also gone to Stanford and there were several people other Embassy staff who had also attended Stanford, and Gavin took a picture with us as a group. Overall, he probably was not a bad ambassador, especially considering the expectations people had about him. I know he tried to bring high-ranking Administration officials, Senators and heads of Agencies to Mexico. I remember a visit by Charlie Wick, the head of USIA, as well as some "literati" such as James Michener and E.L. Doctorow who came down as part of a cultural exchange program.

There were a number of VIPs who came down for one reason or another, but I think you hit the nail on the head in noting that junior officers learn more about the dynamics of a post and perhaps less about the substance of bilateral policy. In other words, I was not privy to what the Ambassador might have said to the Foreign Ministry on any particular issue, and even in those instances where I might have had some insights, it was too long ago to remember the details. What I do recall is that he was a man very conscious of his surroundings and that which affected him personally. Let's put it this way. He would not have been my candidate for an assignment to a hardship post, because he did not deal well with discomfort. For example, he insisted on having the whole air filtration system of the Embassy modified so as to have only pure air in his office, and so on. Clearly, a certain degree of self-importance in this regard. But he was perfectly amiable to those whom he encountered. In terms of junior staff, that did not happen very often since he wasn't the type to spend much time down on the visa line. A lot of the scut work was left to the DCM.

Q: Was his wife a factor, Gavin's wife, or not?

TONGOUR: A factor? She came to visit periodically but she, Constance Powers, was a television soap opera star as well as an actress in various films. She definitely added a touch of glamour to the place and in that sense could be seen as a factor. I recall other celebrities coming down with her, such as Bianca Jagger, who had a genuine interest in Central America. So to be

sure, there was a certain air of glitziness that accompanied their presence at post.

Q: Okay. Let us get down in the trenches. In the first place, do you have any consular stories?

TONGOUR: Lots of consular stories.

Q: Well, let us have a few.

TONGOUR: First of all, let me tell you that the recent Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Maura Hardy was on the visa line with me then,. Interestingly enough, Maura was also one of the few women in our group who began her career as a political cone officer. However, she really enjoyed consular work and sought to switch cones. And of course, this was not difficult. Consular Affairs was delighted to have her. Meanwhile, among the consular stories I vividly recall was one having to do with the consular training we received at FSI. One day our trainer for visas told us that undoubtedly at some point in our visa experience we would break the law -- not necessarily out of fraud or for some other horrible reason, but we would break the rules all the same. His point was that we needed to understand what and why we were doing so. That made a strong impression on me. Frankly at first I wondered what he was talking about. I had no intention of breaking the law -- and apart from one possible exception, probably never did (at least not knowingly). Early on, however, I got what we called a "visa turnback", meaning I issued a visa to someone who was turned back at the border. It turns out I gave a visa to an old woman, who was turned back because she had a police record in Texas, where apparently she had been a prostitute in her youth. Well, my colleagues found this hysterically funny and teased me endlessly about my giving a visa to someone with a record of "moral turpitude".

Some months later, I was working away on the visa line when a young man applied for a non-immigrant visa. I remember he said he was from the state of Chiapas in the far south of Mexico. He also said he had walked all the way to Mexico City in hopes of obtaining a visa to spend three months picking lettuce in the Salinas Valley (California). I explained that we did not have visas for such work (the rules on that score have changed over the years but then there was no such category). He insisted he wanted to be "legal", that he could have paid a "coyote" to get him across but he had a new wife and wanted to return home and build here a house in Chiapas after working three or four months in California. I must say that rarely did I find myself believing stories of this type. I got to be savvy about spotting them for what they were. Yet for some reason I believed this young man truly wanted to come back to beautiful Chiapas and would try to do so; whether he would succeed or not was another story. I wound up giving him a one entry, three month visa, think to myself that the immigration authorities probably would not let him enter, but inwardly I wished him luck. I hoped he could fulfill his dream, work three months and then return home. So this was the one time in my Foreign Service career I may have not strictly adhered to the rules but I didn't feel too badly about it. .

Q: Well, we have all, I am a professional consular officer and more than once I have said oh, the hell with it.

TONGOUR: I know. And I am sure you have some wonderful stories to tell. One last anecdote to

pass on centered on an old woman or at least one who looked ancient but probably was no more than 45, and who said she had 14 or 15 children. When I jokingly asked whether she hoped to have more, she answered "whatever God will give me" and she seemed to mean it.

Q: Who else was on the line with you, do you recall any of the people?

TONGOUR: I actually do because a number of my co-workers have remained good friends, and that often may be one of the nicest aspects of first tours, because considerable bonding usually occurs among junior officers on the visa line. I mentioned my A-100 friend Frances Jones; she was also assigned to Mexico City. Jonathan Farrar, now our Chief of the Interest Section in Havana was recently my supervisor in the Bureau of Human Rights and Democracy (DRL) where he was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. A number of other friends have already retired, but we remain close.

Q: Did you find- was it a little hard at the beginning to say no?

TONGOUR: No, it was the other way around. At the beginning you are fresh out of training and filled with a sense of virtue. There is probably no one tougher on visa applicants than a brand new visa officer. We were sticking to the rules. It is only after you have been around for awhile and have heard so many cockamamie stories that on occasion you feel sympathetic. After a thousand people apply to "visit Chicago strictly to get to know the city in January", someone comes along that simply wants to pick lettuce, you sometimes soften and let them go. I think that you are harder in the beginning as well as slower because you do not trust your own judgment.

Q: Who was your consular general at the time?

TONGOUR: Well, after the less than edifying experience in the Front Office I had the good fortune to work for Larry Lane and MaryAnn Meysenburg who had a somewhat unusual division of responsibilities. Larry Lane was the overall supervisory Consul General for all 13 consulates in Mexico City, and MaryAnn Meysenburg had specific responsibility for Con Gen Merida. By the way, as an example of the "old" Foreign Service, Larry Lane's wife also served at Post but she had had to drop out of the Foreign Service years before because she had married her A-100 classmate, Larry. She was out for a number of years before being able to reenter the service.

Q: Did you get involved in any protection and welfare American services type thing?

TONGOUR: A little bit but basically after my stint in the Front Office, I basically acted as Larry Lane's special assistant, a somewhat unusual assignment as well, focusing more on constituent posts and less on Mexico City. Still, we all had to be duty officers and deal, unfortunately, with death cases and robberies. .

Q: How did, as duty officers how did you view sort of the Mexican system, police, etc., etc.? I mean, so many robberies, things of this nature, what was your impression?

TONGOUR: Well, I saw it more readily just living in Mexico not so much as a duty officer. I

mean, we were all very familiar with the issue of Mordida, which is the "bite" or the bribe, which many people wound up paying to avoid being ticketed for alleged moving violations and other minor infractions. Clearly, there was a lot of corruption at the time, which I am sure continues to exist.

Actually, I might mention as a sideline another anecdote about life in Mexico City, a very exciting place to live in those days. I happened to live very close to the Embassy but also near the area known as the Zona Rosa, which was filled with shops and restaurants. When I arrived, officers had to find their own apartments (this has subsequently changed). I do not recall how I stumbled onto my apartment, but I found a place that was only four blocks from the Embassy. When people asked where I would be living, I mentioned the name of the street. It so happened that all the streets in that neighborhood were named after rivers -- indeed throughout the city there seemed to be "themes" associated with the names of streets in particular areas. Yet whenever I mentioned the name of "my river", Mexicans would often smile in a somewhat strange manner, leading me to realize that there was something a bit odd about the street which no one seemed to want to explain. It took me a few weeks of living there to discover that only a couple of blocks away from my apartment was a famous rendezvous spot for street walkers. There were certainly other more reputable souls living in the area. Still, there was a fair bit of action in the neighborhood.

ELINOR CONSTABLE
Deputy Assistant Secretary, International Finance and Development
Economic Bureau
Washington, DC (1980-1986)

Ambassador Elinor Constable was born in San Diego, California in 1934. She graduated from Wellesley College in 1950 and entered the Foreign Service in 1955. She was in Spain and Honduras with her husband, who was a Foreign Service officer, and also served in Pakistan and was ambassador to Kenya. In Washington, DC, Ambassador Constable worked with the Economic Bureau and the Office of Investment Affairs. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

CONSTABLE: One other anecdote on this negotiation. We had a meeting in Mexico City where I tested a simple hypothesis. If the other fellow wants the result more than you do, you have him under your total control. And it's something we Americans just don't do very well. We go into negotiations with the idea that there's supposed to be a nice outcome, and our focus is on the nice outcome. No. The focus is how you get there. And if you want that nice outcome more than the fellow across the table, you're not going to get there.

This was a meeting of the commission. A working group did the negotiations, and then once or twice a year reported to the Commission on transnational corporations. The Mexicans wanted the Commission to meet in Mexico City. The then Mexican delegate was a fellow by the name of

Bernardo Sepulveda, who was the head of the Mexican treasury some years later. Bernardo cut quite a dashing figure, kind of the Jimmy Smits of Mexico City. He wanted to have a "declaration of Mexico City," a document that would come out of this negotiation. He didn't really care what was in it, as long as we had a consensus document that was more than a communiqué. The meeting lasted two weeks, and of course, if you have a two week UN meeting you don't get down to the serious stuff until a week and five days has passed. And a week and five days into this we got down to the real nitty-gritty, and did close to an all-nighter, it must have been 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning when this particular event occurred. We were almost there. We had agreed on almost the entire document, and I had enough flexibility to deal with what was left. But I was waiting for the right moment.

And the then Soviet delegate (this was before the disintegration of the Soviet Union), raised his flag, and he said, I would like to propose some additions to this document. Bernardo, who was chairing, said, what? All the proposals have long since been submitted, and thrashed over, and argued over, and we were down to a few brackets. And the Soviet delegate said, "I don't think"...the poor fellow, he had to speak in English, he didn't know Spanish. I don't know if we had translation in Russian or not. "I don't think there's enough about the problems associated with multinational corporations. I think we need more language in here about all the bad things they do." Everybody around the table groaned. It was late.

I raised my flag. They all looked at me. Okay, she'll take him on. And I said, I agree. What? I thought Bernardo was going to kill me. I said, I agree with my colleague. I can accept the document as it stands now. But you know, he's right we don't have enough in here about the activity of these companies. Now, I have here, and I reached in and I pulled up about a five pound document, I have a lot of information about all the good things they do. And I think what we should do here is draft a new paragraph that has language that my Soviet colleague wants to put in, and that I would like to put in about all the constructive things that these companies do. Of course, if you'd rather not make the addition, I can live with the document the way it is.

For the next two hours the entire room ganged up on this poor Russian fellow. Every once in a while somebody would raise a flag and say, Elinor, couldn't you take some of his language. And I said, sure, I'll take as much as he wants to put in, as long as we put some extra language on our side in. Otherwise I'll accept it the way it is. And they finally beat him into submission. I don't know whatever happened to him in Moscow.

About a year later, maybe less, I was in New York negotiating a completely different set of issues. It was late, we had a document almost ready to go, and the East German delegate...there was then still an East Germany, raised his flag, and asked to make an addition. My flag went up and I said, Mr. Chairman, I think he's absolutely right. We don't have enough in this document on this issue, and I have some stuff, and I was ready to roll again. From the gallery came this hysterical laughter from a Canadian delegate who had been with me in Mexico City, and knew exactly what I was doing. I looked at him as if to say, shut up. He did. Then I did exactly the same thing, and the entire room pulverized this poor fellow. Now, it's not something I could do every week. But these things were just...I sort of made them up as I went along and it was fun. I've always loved that. I had a lawyer with me in Mexico, and at one point he put his head in his

hands, and I thought, oh, oh, I've done something wrong here. And when we were through I said, what's the problem? And he said, no, I was just in awe, that was just so brilliant. I've never seen anything like that before. You have to come up with different things, but it was fun. Anyway, enough of that.

In the case of Mexico in the '80s there was a loss of confidence in the government because of economic management, and this resulted among other things, in capital flight.

But the important point about capital flight is that if you're dealing with a non-convertible currency, the capital flight is going to be in a convertible currency. So the United States would lend dollars to Mexico, and as those dollars worked their way into the system, and into the hands of somebody who didn't have confidence in the Mexican government, those dollars went right back out, and didn't result in any constructive, or permanent, or useful economic change, or economic activity within the country. So you had a very complicated set of problems with liquidity as one of the principal factors in one group of debtor countries.

JOHN DAVID GLASSMAN
Deputy Chief, Political Section
Mexico City (1981)

Mr. Glassman graduated from the University of Southern California and Columbia University. He served in numerous posts including Madrid, Moscow, Havana and Kabul. He was named ambassador to Paraguay in 1991. He was interviewed by Peter Moffat in 1997.

Q: You moved yet again going to Mexico City; that must have been something of a relief after Havana.

GLASSMAN: Right, I was made the Deputy Chief of the political section in Mexico City. I was responsible for Mexican foreign relations in Mexico. One day, I received a call from Washington from the Office of Assistant Secretary William Bowdler. The Archbishop in El Salvador had been assassinated by some people. It was later thought that right wing elements had killed the Archbishop. The leftist groups had become quite active and since I had been in Cuba and had some good rapport there, Bowdler asked that I go to El Salvador and try to find out what these leftist groups were about. We had no contact with them. I flew down to El Salvador one week after Archbishop Romero was killed, was picked up at the airport, driven in at night by some people in the car with guns leaning out, obviously a tense atmosphere.

Through some of my press contacts from Mexico who were there, I asked to be introduced to the leftist groups. I was first taken to the National University of El Salvador. Within days of my arrival, they were announcing the formation of what they called the FDR (Democratic Revolutionary Front) which was going to be the political front of the leftist groups. I went in and I didn't want to make myself too particularly conspicuous. When signing in I simply wrote Jon

Glassman - America. I went in there and I thought I was being very clever until people came up and started photographing me. I thought that was rather strange. The next day the leftist paper, which was the only one there, published my photograph under the title of "CIA person attends the inauguration of FDR."

Later, as the days passed, we tried to get the word out that we wanted to meet with the leftist people. The leftist groups said they had to consult and subsequently the answer came back a few weeks later. They had a meeting in Mexico among the groups and had decided they would not meet with me unless the United States government made certain concessions such as breaking relations with the Salvadoran government and other conditions that were obviously unacceptable. One of the groups later offered to meet with me separately under circumstances which I thought were rather dangerous. I wouldn't do it but, notwithstanding that, I remained around El Salvador for a few weeks - about six weeks actually and established some contacts with what they referred to as the "progressive" elements of the Salvador military. The military had made a coup against the previous dictator Romero, and there were some military people there we would consider democratic elements. At this time, however, another coup attempt took place led by far right elements led by Major Roberto D'Aubuisson. Because of my contacts with the more moderate individuals in the military, we were able to mobilize units of armed forces to resist the coup. The coup was put down.

The other thing we did on this first trip was to put together the business groups. The leftists had tried to make inroads into particularly small business operations, trying to establish a so-called united front, using some of the things like small bus lines, small shopkeepers as a means to divide the moderate non-guerrilla groups similar to a tactic they'd used in Nicaragua against Somoza. We organized what we called the Alianza, which was a unit across the business sector oriented against the guerrillas and that pretty much sustained itself so the guerrillas never were able to do what they had done in Nicaragua. Six or so weeks doing that, I went back to Mexico to resume my duties.

Subsequently, in January 1981, the Salvadoran guerrillas launched what they called the "final offensive." Their goal was to overthrow the Salvadoran government before Reagan's inauguration because they sensed that when Reagan came into power the Salvadoran regime would be backed by the U.S. government. So they should try to achieve immediate success. I believe that on January 16, 1981, the reason I recall this, it was the last National Security Council meeting of the Carter administration, Bowdler's people again called me and said they would like me to go back to El Salvador and find out whether any foreign groups were backing this final offensive. At that time U.S. Ambassador Robert White was still there. He had been there during my first trip and I knew him well, a very active person. He, however, had made a critical error at the Carter-Reagan transition. He had done an interview with *Newsweek* in which he had condemned Reagan which wasn't good. I went there, White assembled his country team and asked that they help me. I said, "Look, the first thing I'm going to do, I'm going to go visit each of the military and police elements of Salvador and see what they've come up with, what kind of evidence they have re the external ties of the guerrillas." The CIA station chief said, "Oh, we have very close relations with the General Staff, there's nothing else, nothing to learn." I said, "Oh, I just want to do it." So I began calling on people, the Salvadoran National Guard, the

National Police, the Treasury Police, the joint staff, the armed forces and one day I received a telephone call from Pat Lasbury Hall, a consular officer. She said she had just come from National Police headquarters; they just made an arrest of the propaganda commission of the ERP (The Revolutionary Popular Army), which was one of the guerrilla groups. She said, "Go on down there - see what's happening." So I went down to National Police headquarters, went and talked to Colonel Lopez Nuila, who was running the police. He said, "Yes, we got these prisoners." I said, "Did you pick up any papers?" He said, "Oh, yes, we have lots of papers, always a bunch of papers." I said, "Why don't you just give me the papers." So I just took all these documents and I took them back to Mark Dion's house who was Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission. I started going through the papers. I had seen some reports on captured guerrilla documents in the past and I had read some DIA reports on them. I knew that they used code names to identify places and one of them which I had seen previously was Esmeralda (Emerald). I remembered a DIA report which I had read in Mexico that said perhaps they were talking about an Ecuadorian port called Esmeralda. Maybe this was a place where the guerrillas were bringing in arms but I started reading these documents and I began seeing things which to me were fairly obvious. For instance, the guerrilla documents referred to Lagos - I knew they weren't talking about Nigeria. I knew that Nicaragua has two big lakes - Lagos might be Nicaragua. The Esmeralda thing also began to emerge more and more as a place where a lot of things were going on - movements to and through Esmeralda. The question was what is Esmeralda. I started to read one document, I noticed they had a meeting in Lagos which again, in my judgment was probably Nicaragua with "Comrades from Esmeralda." They had met with one person called capital letter 'C,' then two little letters 'en,' and then capital 'F,' (C en F) then with another person 'M. Br,' and then another person whose name now escapes me. I remembered that, in Cuba, one of Castro's titles was Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro. I thought, perhaps they're referring to the Sandinista inauguration ceremony that had taken place last year and "C en F" referred to Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro. I did a check and asked, what Cubans had attended Sandinista inauguration ceremonies? Castro, of course, was there, but the way they tipped it off and made it clear was that Miguel Brugueras who was the Cuban ambassador in Panama (M.Br.) was also there. So it was clear that Esmeralda was Cuba and, if you'd backtrack it through all the documents, then you'd see how Cuba stood out. There were documents in there, for example, that showed how the Secretary General of the Salvadoran Communist Party, a man named Shafik Handal, had gone to Moscow and how they had sent him on to Viet Nam. Viet Nam then sent their arms to "Esmeralda," which sent them to "Lagos." So what you can see from these documents, later collected at military headquarters, was a clear picture. What had happened was the Cubans had put together the Salvadoran guerrilla groups. Then they had one of the representative groups go to Moscow, the Russians had told them to go to Viet Nam to get help, the Vietnamese had given them help, they had shipped the arms to Cuba which in turn shipped them to Nicaragua, then in turn to El Salvador.

When I figured this out, this was all on a Saturday, I told Mark Dion. He said, "This is very important, we have to go see the Ambassador." We went to Ambassador White's residence, he said, "This is fantastic." He said, "What a Godsend, they're about to remove me as Ambassador for criticism. Now we will send in a cable." We have discovered that the Cubans are supporting this. You've written up this very factual thing, but I'm going to write the summary of this cable to make it more dramatic, emphasizing the guerrillas contacts with Castro, Yasser Arafat, etc."

So he writes up the summary, gives it to me, we send it in. It's a big thing because, if I'm not mistaken, this was a day or two after Reagan's inauguration. White was to have been called on the carpet the following Tuesday in Washington for his criticism of Reagan. So he got the cable off and he departed El Salvador. Subsequently, I got a few more documents. Basically we had the goods on the guerrillas and this became a very important moment because it turned out that Haig, who had become the Secretary of State days before, had wanted to dramatize Soviet involvement in overseas aggression. This tends to confirm his thesis. White went to Washington but was fired. He wanted to be named Ambassador to Sweden and they said, "No way, we'll send you as Consul General to Bermuda but you'll never get an Ambassadorship," and he turned sour on the Administration. The reason this is of interest is because he denied knowing subsequently from where I got the guerrilla documents. He, of course, not only knew but wrote the summary on the cable which went in under his signature. Wayne Smith, who we talked about before, was another person who said he didn't know. But of course, he also knew since a cable had been sent to Washington.

After these cables were sent, I collected the documents, and journeyed back to Mexico. I got a call from Washington, saying, "The Secretary of State wants you to come to Washington and to bring the documents." By this time I'd accumulated about 18 pounds of documents. So I came up to Washington in late January-early February 1981. They'd formed a little working group - INR Phil Wilcox and Luigi Einaudi were there, as were David Simcox and other Foreign Service Officers. They were working up for Haig a Salvadoran White Paper. They wanted to merge information from the documents and previously classified information, and put out an expose. Haig's idea was to spread it internationally to discredit the Soviets and to develop resistance to them. We began assembling the paper but, before it was completed, Haig sent for Larry Eagleburger who was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. "Larry, you go to Europe - meet with the principal Allies, meet with the North Atlantic Council, go to Germany, France, UK at the Ministerial level and tell them what we found and how we have to confront the Soviets in Central America." Since I knew the most about the documents, I was asked to accompany Eagleburger. So Eagleburger and I took off for Europe. This was a pretty heavy thing for me. I was 37 years old and all of a sudden I was having lunch and dinner with the foreign ministers in London, Paris and Bonn. By the time we got to Brussels, however, the basic reaction to the mission was that the Europeans said yes - we don't like the Soviets but the Soviet problem is here, it's in the Middle East, it isn't in Central America.

While we were out there Eagleburger sent a cable to Haig saying that he liked me. Meantime in parallel, I had received an offer to join the Policy Planning Staff at State under my old friend Paul Wolfowitz. And back in Washington the Salvadoran White Paper was being written. The actual people who wrote the White Paper are David Simcox and Luigi Einaudi with inputs from Philip Wilcox. They wrote it in a kind of extravagant language using terms like "this is a textbook case of communist aggression" which infuriated people on the left who thought the Salvadoran rebels were land reformers. We got back from Europe and Haig wanted to hold a press conference to release the White Paper. So they prevailed on me since I knew the most about the documents to go out and be the spokesman. I appeared before the press corps. A number of very complimentary articles were initially written including one on the front page of *The Washington Post* comparing me to "Smiley's People." I was also written up in *Time Magazine* which I thought

was great. But this later proved not to be such a happy experience.

Months passed and the Administration geared up its efforts to help the Salvadoran government. We sent down some military trainers and, unknown to us, a counterattack began to shape up. Obviously our expose was a very damaging thing to the Soviets and Cubans. Number one, what had become public was what was supposed to have been a covert operation. The Soviets were taking the heat for it. The Cubans were taking the heat for it and they didn't like it. It was causing great problems so certain things began to happen - for instance, the newspaper *Excelsior*, the biggest paper in Mexico, ran a three part series on me for three days in a row by a man named Manuel Buendia, who was on the Cuban payroll (and was later murdered in Mexico for unrelated reasons). Basically, the Cubans had done great research into my past, they talked about my time in school, they invented a story about my attitudes and this and that, then the bottom line after three days front page story in the biggest newspaper in Mexico was that I was a professor of torture and that I had taught the Salvadorans how to torture to produce the White Paper. This was a total fabrication, of course. I said okay this was an attempt to discredit, but very interesting, it turns out that virtually at the same the story was coming out in Mexico, Philip Agee, a defector from the CIA, then residing under control of East Germany, published a very closed paper which was later published in a book called 'White Paper Whitewash' under Agee's name. This paper attempted to expose contradictions in the White Paper. It was an attempt to divert attention to alleged detailed discrepancies rather than engaging the total picture. When the Agee piece came out, I was totally unaware. I received a call about four or five months after the White Paper in June from a man named Jonathan Kwitny of *The Wall Street Journal*. He wanted to interview me; fine I'd done many other interviews. He said he wanted the interview to be not for attribution or background. When he came in, he asked me a lot of detailed questions which I responded to. The article appeared on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*, criticizing the White Paper. He quoted me as saying that we stretched the facts too far. He used my reaction to a particular detail to characterize my attitude to the whole product. Haig saw the *Journal* article and was furious. He wanted me fired as it appeared I had criticized a product I had played a part in producing. I issued a statement that day pointing out that Kwitny had quoted out of context. The Salvadoran White Paper was accurate, notwithstanding the problems we might have with some of its language. The facts were true, the flow of arms had come from Cuba and Nicaragua. Kwitny's story was damaging. The very next day, *The Washington Post* published another huge article written by Karen De Young and Bob Kaiser attacking details and exposing alleged mistakes. It didn't quote me by name but again pointed out allegedly wrong details. Later we discovered that both the Kwitny piece in the *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* piece by Kaiser/De Young not only borrowed extensively from the Agee piece but used very similar language without attribution. This disclosure appeared in some of the right wing press which documented this. The words were almost identical to the Agee piece. Frederick Taylor, who at that time was one of the editors of *The Wall Street Journal*, ran an editorial piece saying, "Yes, Kwitny did have access to the Agee piece; he did do it but he paid for xeroxing." That was the excuse no attribution was necessary because he paid for the xerox copying.

LAWRENCE COHEN

**Consular Officer
Monterrey (1981-1983)**

Mr. Cohen was born and raised in Pennsylvania and was educated at Dickinson College, and the Universities of Pennsylvania, Tel Aviv, Chicago and Northwestern. Entering the Foreign Service in 1980, he served variously as Economic, Political and Political/Military Officer at posts in Mexico, Honduras, India, Hungary, Nigeria and Brazil. In his assignments at the State Department in Washington Mr. Cohen dealt with Foreign Assistance and Environmental and Scientific matters. His last post was in Afghanistan, where he had two assignments with Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Mr. Cohen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: You were there from when to when?

COHEN: I arrived in Monterey in August 1981 and served there until February 1983.

Q: Who was the consul general?

COHEN: Consul General Frank Tucker was a man who, in my view, had outlived his Foreign Service prime. He was tall, well over six feet, and stocky. He chain smoked and possessed very stained teeth. Tucker kept secluded in his second floor office. In my entire time at the consulate, I remember him visiting the non-immigrant visa (NIV) section once. The immigrant and NIV sections and ACS (American Citizens Services) occupied almost the entire ground floor of the consulate. The consulate had only two floors. From the main entry, steps ascended to the second floor. One could avoid passing the NIV section, but it was tough to ignore the hoards of visa applicants. The one time he deigned to visit us worker bees was while escorting a VIP (very important person) from the embassy. It was either the embassy supervisory Consul General Ruth McLendon or perhaps the DCM (deputy chief of mission.)

Q: Well, it is not quite the same but I spent a year with George Kennan in Belgrade. He never came to the consular section although he had to pass by- we were on the first floor and he was on the third.

COHEN: If he were your consul general, I would be shocked. But at least being the ambassador he had a weak excuse.

Monterrey then had eighteen Foreign Service Officers; twelve were first-tour junior officers. Almost all were on the visa line or adjudicating immigrant visas. Monterrey was very much a JO (junior officer) post. Consular services and visas were the real reason for its existence. We had a consul general who showed no interest even in observing consular operations. Yet, our *esprit d'corps* was quite good. Work was hard, but when it ended in the afternoon, it was truly over. We hung out together constantly. We dined, had parties, and traveled around northern Mexico and across the border to Laredo and McAllen, Texas. I took friends on short caving trips around Monterrey and into the nearby Sierra Madre Occidental. I visited Larry Walker in Mexico City

and he came to Monterrey. We met up with Chris Dell from the second A-100 class who was stationed in Matamoros. Caver friends came south and stayed in my apartment. I went to "Texas Old-timers Reunions" -- caving gatherings in Texas. I camped with Texas cavers in wild Bustamante Canyon, about two hours north of Monterrey. I even went to a Grateful Dead concert in Austin, Texas.

Q: What about the consular staff? Who was your supervisor? How did you find it?

COHEN: The FSO who had the most influence on the junior officers, many of whom are still in the Foreign Service, was Consul Larry Rivera. Larry was a savvy, old time consular officer. He was at least sixty, or looked it.

On the admin side, the chief was John Mounotis who was of the same generation as Larry Rivera. Both had been around the Foreign Service a long time. They were joyful to be around. Both were World War II veterans. In fact, Larry and John discovered they both served in the Pacific. At the end of the war in 1945, both were stationed on the same obscure island, possibly in the middle of the Dutch East Indies, although they never met each other. Both would have been on the landing boats in the upcoming invasion of Japan. John told me he appreciated President Truman's decision to drop the atom bomb!

Larry Rivera was very friendly and well-liked. "The secret to being a good consular officer," he once told me, "is to be able to say no and make the applicant walk away with a smile on their face." Larry was great at this. He could say no, but did it in such a way as to extend deep respect and deference. "I *really* wanted to give the visa, I know you are an honorable person, but other factors prevent me from issuing the visa." Larry made us better consular officers.

In those days, visa work in Monterrey was feast or famine. When the peso was strong, for example during the months immediately after I arrived, and before Christmas, the consular section was packed. The lines snaked out the door. Other days, particularly after the collapse of the peso in the summer of 1982, the waiting room would be quite empty. When I got to Mexico in August 1981, the peso exchange rate was twenty-four to the dollar. It took six weeks for me to find an apartment. The rent was right at the top end of the housing allowance, \$600 a month. That did not include utilities for which I would be out of pocket. That was \$600 a month for an apartment that was stripped! It consisted of three bedrooms but no light fixtures, curtain rods or curtains, stove, or hot water heater. The consulate provided the washer-drier and the refrigerator. I had to shell out dearly for light fixtures, curtains, and the rest, even the stove and hot water heater. I bought everything and was not reimbursed. Since the peso was so overvalued, these items were not cheap.

I felt lucky to find this apartment. As admin chief, John offered the landlord one year rent in advance, \$7,200, if the contract could be written in dollars. The landlord turned us down. He felt he could do better with a peso-denominated contract.

When Mexico's economic crisis hit, I went from being a pauper to being somewhat wealthy from one day to the next. The landlord asked if we would now pay the rent in dollars. The answer was

no. The lease stipulated pesos, 15,000 pesos a month. By that time 15,000 pesos had fallen from \$600 to about \$150. New officers just arriving in country rented palatial mansions, some with swimming pools, for less money than my original rent.

Our workload reflected the mid-1982 collapse of the peso. During good times, it made sense for Mexicans to apply for visas. With a strong peso, grocery prices in Laredo and McAllen were cheap for Mexicans. Once the economy collapsed, our visa denial rate shot up correspondingly.

When I readied to leave Mexico in early 1983, I owned curtains, light fixtures, a stove, and a hot water heater. Because the peso had depreciated so dramatically, I received only pennies on the dollar for these items. No Mexican could touch the prices I really wanted. My first assignment was a wash financially.

I also took it on the chin since I could not go caving as much as I wanted. While caver friends frequently visited, I was unable to take one or two week-long expeditions. I did conduct short one-two day trips to Carvajal, Bustamante Canyon, Cueva de la Boca, and the other caves around Monterrey.

Q: Who were the people coming to you for visas? How did you find dealing with visa work?

COHEN: Our visa denial rate was relatively low. The feeling was, and I think justifiably so, that for most of the time we were there, it made perfect sense for Mexicans to travel to the border towns. U.S. prices along the border were lower than for comparable goods in Mexico. And the quality of goods was far higher. Even for the lower middle class, the cost of a few dollars to go to the border on a bus was affordable. As far as we were concerned, the economic hurdle of the Immigration and Naturalization Act, section 214(b), was not insurmountable for most Mexicans. The bulk of Monterrey's visa applicants were factory workers – *obreros* -- or small *comerciantes*. We interviewed few *campesinos*; we did not get many small farmers coming to Monterrey which was an industrial town.

Although our visa denial rate was relatively low, we wanted to assist the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) officers at the border. If we had any suspicions about an applicant who otherwise seemed okay, we annotated the visa in a way that the INS officer at the port-of-entry would understand. For example, "brohou" meant "brother in Houston." The vice consuls were issuing visas that specifically said "border." We also felt it important in certain cases to limit visa validity. At the time, the maximum validity for visas was either five years or indefinite.

Issuing maximum validity visas was a means – in the view of the powers that be -- of reducing workload. The vice consuls in Monterrey disagreed. We felt that a visa applicant who is young may not be a good visa applicant for the rest of his life! Allowing one entry to America should not automatically allow for an indefinite *carte blanche* or a five-year visa. There was an implicit understanding with INS at the border that we would do it this way. If the INS officer saw the annotated visa, he could ask questions to the visitor a certain way. If suspicions persisted, the visa holder could be taken to secondary. We tried to help.

Mexico City did not like this. The embassy was going through its own period of retrenchment. Six or so junior officers adjudicated up to 2,000 or more non-immigrant visas each day. How to reduce workload was their mantra. Consulates were also almost always short staffed. Visa workloads continued to rise. The embassy argued that if an applicant deserved a visa, they deserved the maximum validity visa no matter what. That way, we would not see the visa holder again in a consulate's visa line. However, the Border Patrol and INS might become busier down the road.

We thought this was preposterous and took issue with it. In January 1982, Frank Tucker called a meeting to 'discuss' our use of 'border' visas. Every vice consul, even Joe Salazar, the INS chief in Monterrey spoke in favor of their use. We were fighting a losing battle. A bunch of junior officers going up against the supervisory Consul General in Mexico City, the Ambassador, and perhaps even Washington was not going to change things. In addition, we had a consul general who did care about visas. Frank Tucker's principal visa concern was whether his favorite people got their visas. Morale at the consulate took a hit.

One incident speaks volumes. At the window an applicant appeared who was not qualified for a non-immigrant visa. He was a *campesino* with no visible means of support. But he had a referral from a Texas congressman, perhaps Kika de la Garza. His visa application said specifically that the applicant was going to Texas to work on a ranch. If I remember, the referral came through the consul general who sent it to the non-immigrant visa section chief, Chuck Robertson, a fellow junior officer. Chuck denied the visa. How could he issue a visa knowing the applicant planned to work in the states? That would violate INA (Immigration & Nationality Act) Section 214(b) which states that every alien is "presumed to be an intending immigrant" until proven otherwise to the consular officer's satisfaction.

Tucker demanded Chuck issue that visa. The applicant appeared again a day later at the window. He possessed a brand new passport since his old passport had been marked with the visa denial annotation. Mexican passports were expensive. No doubt, his *padrone* footed the bill. When asked, the applicant admitted he intended to work. Chuck wanted to ascertain a bit more about the applicant. He asked basic questions about horse ranching. "Can you tell me what kind of work you are going to do? With what kind of animals will you be working?" The applicant had no clue about the workings of a ranch. He knew nothing about horses or anything else. As ordered, Chuck issued the visa. He annotated the visa precisely with what the applicant said. The visa indicated his intention to work on this ranch in central Texas.

The visa holder reached the border. The INS officer took one look at his passport with the annotated visa and literally rolled off his chair. I met up with INS in Laredo right after this happened. "What is going on with you vice consuls in Monterrey?" they asked me. Of course, the man was denied entry and sent back. Tucker goes ballistic. He orders Chuck again to issue the visa -- without any annotations or other tricks! The fellow comes in with a brand new passport *again* and received his visa. I am certain some well-connected family member in Texas was behind the entire episode.

That was the kind of shit that we took in Monterrey. That kind of pressure forced us to develop

close bonds amongst ourselves.

Q: Did you get involved in any protection and welfare type things?

COHEN: Rarely. A couple of occasions are noteworthy. In May 1982 I was assigned for a one month TDY (Temporary Duty) in the consulate in Hermosillo, Sonora. I was making the trip by car. I stopped over in Torreon, Coahuila. The head of the ACS (American Citizen Services) unit asked me to visit a new prisoner in the Torreon jail. I went to the jail and met the police chief. Then I met the prisoner, a scraggly, odoriferous fellow named Steven! There could have been things growing in his hair that had not yet been defined by science. Apparently, the prisoner smelled so bad, the other prisoners, Mexicans all, were complaining. The guy was obviously a bit tinged. The police chief offered to release the prisoner to me if I paid \$50 for his transportation to the border. Perhaps, the head of the ACS unit in Monterrey would have approved. But I said no, I was not going to pay \$50. Then, the chief asked for \$25. No way. I knew a bus ride to El Paso was about \$6. "If you want him to go to the border," I said, "you send him." I gave the prisoner a 700 peso restitution loan and he was released.

By the way I served two stints at other consulates. In March 1982, Chris Dell, our colleague in Matamoros, was in a severe car accident while on his way to visit us in Monterrey. His girlfriend Imagen was killed, Chris suffered a severe broken leg. For two weeks, I worked Chris' job at the small consulate there under the consul, Wayne Griffith. That May I went to Hermosillo consulate which was shorthanded. I drove about 2,000 miles in my diesel VW Rabbit and paid only about six dollars for fuel. Diesel in Mexico was highly subsidized and cost one peso (\$0.04) per liter.

Another consular adventure occurred when I was the weekend duty officer. I received a phone call from a journalist with The Dallas Morning Call. A highly publicized welfare and whereabouts case had put the spotlight on Mexico. I had little familiarity dealing with journalists. I could not say anything to the journalist about the case. So he asked general questions. I noted something to the effect that when an American crosses the border, constitutional rights are left behind. Which was true; you cannot claim U.S. constitutional protections when in Mexico. I said this and The Dallas Morning Call published it, using my name. I was called on the carpet, but it was nothing compared to what happened with Ron Kramer.

Ron was another junior officer in Monterrey, a former Jesuit priest who married a nun -- guy you may want to interview some day. During his tour, Ron went on TDY to run the tiny consulate in Mazatlan, a two-person post. While he was in Mazatlan, an American professor from either Arizona State University or the University of Arizona was driving alone in his SUV (sport utility vehicle) down to Guadalajara. Somewhere near Culiacan in Sinaloa, the professor disappeared. A big search failed to find him. This was in 1982.

Eventually, the vehicle was located in a village in the mountains. The local sheriff was driving it. The professor's clothing was also found, being worn by the sheriff! It was evident, even to the uninformed, what happened. A journalist with Associated Press (AP) contacted Ron and asked for information. The AP quoted Ron that the case exemplified the justice delivered by the stereotypical Georgia sheriff with reflective sunglasses -- Southern justice. The quote went out on

the wires. The shit hit the fan. The Georgia Sheriff Protective Association got into the act. Washington went nuts. Ron denied that these were his words but the damage was done.

Those were some examples of the nonsense we faced. All of us were inexperienced, a bunch of first tour junior officers with no real instructional supervision. We worked hard. For a while, I held the Monterrey record for the most NIV cases adjudicated in a day, 418. Down in Mexico City, they were up in the 700s. Their record was a different story. Mexico City utilized a pre-screening system which cleaned out good cases quickly. On our busy days, we went straight through from early morning until 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon. After we finished, we would have lunch.

Lunches often were taken at a nearby residence about two blocks from the consulate. The *senora* cooked typical local food. Usually, a group of maybe six or eight of us lunched there. She placed the food on the table as we walked in the door

Q: Larry, you wanted to finish up about Mexico.

COHEN: Mexico was my first Foreign Service assignment, most of it spent in the NIV and immigrant visa sections. However, for the last four months of my assignment, I served in the Consulate's economic/commercial section. I wrote a few interesting reports, one on Mexico's petro-chemical sector, another on Monterrey's steel industries, still another on Monterrey's chronic water shortages.

Reports were usually drafted on "greens." This was long before computers. Communications equipment in Monterrey was really ancient. The communications machine used ticker tape. Someone mentioned he saw the same equipment in the Smithsonian's Hall of Industry and Technology! I have little doubt that this was true. Another method of conveying reports to Washington was by airgrams. Airgrams went to Washington in the diplomatic pouch, I assume by air, hence the name. Most of what I wrote was not time sensitive.

Q: Airgrams were designed because cable traffic was expensive. You wrote in telegraph-ese but it was sent by pouch.

COHEN: Mexico to Washington was a relatively short pouch run.

I'd like to tell a couple of stories. In late 1982, I escorted some visitors from the Department of Commerce. I took them to Monterrey's famous *Cervezeria*, the Cuauhtémoc Brewery. The brewery, a Monterrey landmark owned by the Garza Sada family, brewed Bohemia, Tecate, and Carta Blanca; all are among my favorite beers. Another great tasting product, Kloster, came only in a keg. An art museum which belonged to the brewery contained really quality art. We visited the museum and next door took the brewery tour. Afterwards, we sat in the beer garden drinking pitchers of Kloster. It was a great way to pass the afternoon.

We heard sirens. A motorcade pulled up in front of the museum. Police on motorcycles surrounded a huge bus. Everyone, security and all, piled into the museum. We observed

everything from perhaps 60 feet away. About 45 minutes later, the pack emerged from the museum. The security personnel were carrying some of the museum's best artwork. They remounted the bus and sped away. The VIP on the bus was Mrs. Lopez Portillo, the president's – soon to be former president -- wife. The inauguration of Mexico's next president, Miguel de la Madrid, was a week or two away. We had witnessed Mexico's First Lady strip the museum *de flagrante* of its outstanding pieces. That was a sad saga from the last days of the Lopez Portillo administration.

Q: Oh my God. Yes, later there was quite a thing about her, was there not?

COHEN: Among the pantheon of Mexican presidents, Lopez Portillo was no slouch when it came to corruption. To have committed this flagrant act in front of an American diplomat and visitors from Washington made it extra galling.

The second story I wanted to relate about my Monterrey, tour concerned my pastime which I mentioned earlier, cave exploring. During my 20 months in Monterrey I hosted numerous caving visitors, usually from Texas. They were my friends or became my friends. I occasionally went caving with them.

In July 1982, I met a caving group from Texas at Bustamante Canyon, about two hours north of Monterrey. The town clings to the entrance of the canyon which emerges from the Sierra Madre. It is a beautiful canyon with a running stream. Although the canyon road was a bit rough, the canyon itself possessed nice trees and good camping areas. Except for cavers, Bustamante was pretty much undiscovered and unvisited. High on a mountain along the canyon was a huge cave, *Cueva del Palmito*. Everyone called it Bustamante Caverns. The Foreign Service Institute's Old Main building could fit inside the main chamber with plenty of room to spare. The ceiling must have been 60 to 80 feet high, the room maybe a few hundred feet wide and 600 to 800 feet long; an immense room. The steep climb to the cave entrance zigzagged uphill through scrawny scrub brush. A trip to Bustamante was a wonderful way to pass time.

My friends and I caved that afternoon, a typically hot day. A group of us emerged early from the cave, the rest remained inside. We hiked down the mountain, built up a good sweat, and drove back to our canyon campsite.

When we left camp that morning, we were the only ones camped in the canyon. We had pitched our tents next to a spring. We got back to the campsite, stripped off our clothes, and jumped into the cool spring. In the interim, a Mexican family set up camp perhaps 30 meters away from both us and the spring. Perhaps while enjoying their beers, they were looking for a bit of action, or trouble. While we skinny dipped in the nice spring waters, the head of the group started shouting obscenities at us. The shouting deteriorated. They took umbrage at our skinny dipping, and probably just our presence. One of the overly *macho* men started shooting a pistol. That really got our attention. We jumped out of the spring, grabbed our clothes and escaped behind the spring into the brush.

The fear that these drunks might shoot us was not so farfetched. The intimidation seemed to go

on interminably. It was getting towards dusk when the rest of our group arrived from *Palmito*. On their arrival, we emerged from our hiding places. To their everlasting shame some cavers hastily split the scene without investigating what was going on. They departed Bustamante Canyon and drove back to Texas! They even skedaddled with the personal possessions and passports of some who remained behind. The Mexican instigator and two of his cohorts came over from their campsite. I stood between two caver buddies. What ensued was a classic Mexican standoff. I was in the middle, a caver on each side of me. The Mexican with his 22 caliber pistol had a man on each side of him. Three on three, we faced each other, maybe three feet apart. The man with the gun cursed at me in Spanish, *pendejo* and *cabron*. He stuck the pistol in my belly. I tried to negotiate our way out of this situation.

Eventually a police car from Bustamante town showed up. We all had to go into town to speak with the police chief. We drove into Bustamante. The police chief spoke first with the Mexican instigator, they obviously knew each other. Then, I met alone with the police chief. He expressed typical indignation with us and put up a show of anger. He tried to be threatening.

Bustamante did not get many visitors. Cavers visiting the canyon brought money to the town. I wanted to reduce the tension and diplomatically exit the scene. But the chief remained very accusatory. Finally, after taking quite a bit of shit, I brought up the subject of the weapon and its being fired. In Mexico, private ownership of weapons is illegal. Everybody in town probably knew who had them. However, to use a firearm publicly and especially to draw it on somebody, on foreigners no less, certainly crossed the line. The police chief called in the guy and chewed him out in front of me. Now, the police chief needed a diplomatic way out of this impasse. He said he still had to fine us for the incident. He said he would fine us each one dollar. There were six of us, six dollars. I said I did not think that was it was right we pay a fine. He asked why not? I replied that instead of paying a fine, the money we collect should go to the upkeep of the dirt road into Bustamante Canyon which was always in very bad shape. The police chief agreed. "We will put the money into fixing the road." We forked over the six dollars and went back to Bustamante Canyon, to a different campsite!

As I mentioned, a group of cavers had skedaddled to Texas without waiting around to see what was happening. They took personal items of the people who were with me, including wallets, passports, and Mexican entry documents. They left their colleagues stranded in Mexico with no travel documents or money. Those cavers without travel papers hid under a bunch of dirty caving equipment and clothes and got out of Mexico that way.

There are numerous caver adventures in Mexico worth retelling.

Q: Was there such a thing as a spelunker's newsletter?

COHEN: Absolutely.

Q: Say these guys are not to be trusted.

COHEN: Among Texas cavers, the Association for Mexican Cave Studies (AMCS) is an

umbrella group for all who caved in Mexico. There are numerous chapters, or grottos, of the National Speleological Society (NSS). The Texas caving community publishes a monthly newsletter called the Texas Caver. Soon after the incident, the editor of the Texas Caver, who happened to be one of the people who had fled the scene, published an edition which gave his version of what happened at Bustamante. It was not complimentary of us. On the back cover, the editor placed a picture of an American sitting in a jail. The caption under the picture said "Bustamante 1982." The person sitting in the jail looked a lot like me. This caused a huge stir in Texas amongst the cavers. For years, and even now when we get around a campfire at our annual conventions, we will talk about the Bustamante incident.

Caving has been a fun hobby. I caved in Mexico and continued during my next assignment, Honduras.

STEPHEN BOSWORTH
Principle Deputy, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Washington, DC (1981-1983)

Ambassador Bosworth was born and raised in Michigan and educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1961 he served abroad in Panama, Madrid and Paris before becoming Ambassador to Tunisia, where he served from 1979 to 1981, to the Philippines (1984-1987) and to the Republic of Korea (1997-2000). The Ambassador also was a member of the Department's Policy Planning Staff, and he played a major role in the US-Japan Foundation and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. In 2009 Ambassador Bosworth was named the President's Special Representative for North Korean Policy. He was interviewed by Michael Mahoney in 2003.

Q: All right, we're here again with Ambassador Stephen Bosworth. This is the 22nd of May and we're going to do some follow up questions to the parts of the oral interview that we've already conducted. One thing I wanted to ask you about sir is that we missed is the Mexican debt crisis which I think sort of sprung up in the summer of 1982 or so. Could you give a little background to that and then kind of tell us what happened?

BOSWORTH: At the time I was the principal deputy in the Bureau of American Affairs and we had been concentrating very heavily on Central America because of the civil war that was underway there. The situation in Mexico began in the summer or the spring actually to be a source of concern and it became clear to me. I went over to the Treasury Department at one point and met with the under secretary for International Affairs and it became clear that no one really knew how much money the Mexicans had borrowed. They had in fact borrowed a lot more than anybody had thought they had. So, suddenly one day in the summer of 1982 I think it was the Mexicans announced they were not able to pay it. They had run out of money.

Q: Who did they borrow it from?

BOSWORTH: They borrowed it largely from private banks all over the world. Many, a good deal from the U.S.

Q: This was despite the fact that with the big oil price jump in the '70s presumably they should have been taking in a lot more money than. Was their oil industry?

BOSWORTH: Their oil industry was underway, but they had shown an ability to borrow and spend a lot more than anybody ever expected.

Q: What did they spend it on?

BOSWORTH: They spent it on all sorts of things including condominiums in the United States. I mean there was a great excess in Mexico at that point. The political system was not in great shape. They borrowed money for public works, some of which did get built, some of which didn't get built. They were using the money to support a very strong Peso and the wealthy Mexicans were taking advantage of that strong Peso making investments in the United States.

Q: You think a lot of that money kind of drained away?

BOSWORTH: A lot of it came back as capital or went away as capital flight, yes.

Q: Because I have an image of a story that in effect a Mexican delegation came to Washington one day in the summer and basically said we're broke.

BOSWORTH: Yes, that's almost exactly what happened. Our ambassador in Mexico at the time was an old friend of Ronald Reagan's former actor, John Gavin. I think he was taken totally by surprise as well. This then began a period of intensity, which changes with the Mexicans involving our private banks and the U.S. government treasury department, and to some extent the State Department although then as now these issues tend to be dominated not by the State Department, but by the Treasury Department.

Q: So, what happened?

BOSWORTH: Well, what happened was that they had to go on a very strict regime and we arranged for some loans to be made to them. It was a long time ago, but as I recall they went on an IMF program. We bought some oil futures and paid for future deliveries of oil paying them now or paying them then. So, they made it through only of course to come a cropper again in 1995, '94 and '95 when the same thing in effect happened. They had borrowed too much, lived too high and used the money unwisely.

Q: Were they the first country that sort of, maybe post-World War II period that introduced this question of now what seems to be known as moral hazard where there's a debate that if you bail them out then it just encourages other people to do it?

BOSWORTH: There was something of that, yes. This was symptomatic, I mean there were other debt problems throughout Latin America many of which were a hangover from the oil price rise of the early and mid 1970s.

Q: These were countries who didn't have oil and so they had to pay huge.

BOSWORTH: They had to pay a lot and of course Mexico didn't have all that much oil and they weren't producing heavily until the late '70s.

Q: Were you personally involved much in this?

BOSWORTH: Well, to the extent that the State Department was involved, I was the person who was involved on behalf of the State Department.

Q: I mean how did Treasury feel about it initially? Did they want to sort of let the Mexicans stew or were they immediately prepared to?

BOSWORTH: No, they immediately recognized that it was a threat to the sovereignty of some large American banks.

Q: Had the banks been pushing too?

BOSWORTH: Yes. This was really the beginning of a severe debt crisis throughout all of Latin America as these petrodollars that had been recycled. The oil producing countries were earning tremendous sums during the '70s and early '80s. They then were depositing those monies with international banks including many of the U.S. banks. The banks then turned around and loaned the money to governments and particularly developing country governments who had suddenly experienced this severe deterioration in their balance of payments because of the increase of the price for oil. This was called recycling of petrodollars. The problem was that the new debtor countries didn't in many cases have the ability to service that debt over a long period of time.

Q: Treasury immediately in effect took control of this problem. The State Department I take it was in favor of helping the Mexicans out.

BOSWORTH: Yes. Right.

THOMAS F. JOHNSON
Assistant Information Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1981-1984)

Thomas F. Johnson was born in Illinois and was educated at Union College and the Free University of Berlin. He entered the Foreign Service in 1967 and has

served in various posts in Paraguay, Germany, Liberia, Mexico and Singapore. In Washington, DC, Johnson served in the USIA as Inspector, Deputy Director of Acquisitions and Area Personnel Officer for Europe. Mr. Johnson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: What did you think of Mexico?

JOHNSON: It is the most exotic country I have ever served in. I soon realized that I would never figure out the Mexicans no matter how many times I read Octavio Paz's The Labyrinth of Solitude, a penetrating analysis of the Mexican national character. And of course the country offers stunning landscapes. Its culture is fascinating. Mexicans are world class wood and stone carvers and create items of unparalleled beauty out of cloth and clay. The clash and accommodation of Indian, European and foreign cultures is fascinating. The country has a delightful climate and the authentic (not Tex-Mex) cuisine cannot be topped.

Perhaps what really enthralled me is the complexity of US-Mexican relations.

Q: How did you travel to Mexico City?

JOHNSON: I sold our trusty 71 VW station wagon and purchased a new Chrysler Lebaron station wagon, the most comfortable car I have ever owned. We drove across the country to El Paso and then down to Mexico City. The Mexican customs officials in Ciudad Juarez treated us very cordially. When I told the senior inspector that we were headed for the "DF" (Distrito Federal) i.e. Mexico City, he drew me aside and said, "Senior, I was born there and I am very sorry for anyone who must live there." I asked him to be more specific. He winked and said, "You will find out soon enough," and laughed.

We spent a couple days in Chihuahua and visited the Pancho Villa museum, which contains the open touring car he was riding in when he was assassinated by a jealous husband in 1923. Ironically the very day of our visit, Villa's widow was being laid to rest at the edge of town. It is not that she was that old when she died, it was that she was so young when she married the bandit-revolutionary.

Our next stop told us more about Mexico: Zacatecas, when we toured a silver mine where the Spanish worked natives under conditions as bad as in a Nazi concentration camp. There were five levels in the mine and many Indians allegedly never again saw the light of day once they entered the mine. Our guide was a university student. Since I didn't know what his political sentiments were, I did not tell him that I was an American diplomat. However I tipped him generously when we got back to the surface. I was really glad to be out of those tunnels.

The following day we arrived in the DF and found our way through the traffic to the embassy. We took up residence in an apartment in the Zona Rosa, a few blocks from the chancellery.

Q: What was USIA like and what did your job consist of?

JOHNSON: The great Stan Zuckerman was the PAO. Stan was a wheeler and dealer and great fun to work for. He told me that my predecessor had been more interested in the fine arts than in her job and that I was free to expand the duties of my position. When I checked with the post Executive Officer, Jim Romano, I learned that although the fiscal year that was fast coming to an end, only 20% of my budget had been even obligated. In the ensuing weeks I spent thousands dollars modernizing the embassy's radio/television studio, which I was in charge of. I don't remember how I used up the rest of my budget but my operation soaked up available resources from other sections in USIA.

Consul General Larry Lane told me that he would appreciate more attention from USIA and so I became the embassy spokesman for consular issues: missing and dead Americans, car crashes and plane crashes. Ambassador Gavin asked me to read the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act and to be ready to advise my colleagues on their application. I had a lot to learn.

During my first week on the job, the embassy received a bomb scare. Bomb threats were common but the Regional Security Officer advised the DCM to send everyone home early that day. Just as I was going out the front gate behind, Perry Steele, the INS chief, stumbled backward holding his chest. I could see blood seeping through his fingers. Meanwhile the Mexican police guards were beating a man on the sidewalk. Perry had been stabbed. A Marine guard rushed him up to the medical unit where it was determined that the wound was superficial. Welcome to Mexico City.

That night we went to dinner at the home of the sister of a Foreign Service classmate. She served a lovely pasta. That night I lay awake. It felt like a cement block was on my stomach. Moral of the story: Until you are accustomed to the altitude, don't eat heavy dinners and expect to sleep. Welcome to Mexico City.

Because of the terrible traffic and the numerous family obligations that Mexicans, most substantive contact was over lunch. A typical lunch started at 2:00 or 2:30 and lasted three or four hours. I hosted one lunch in the Zona Rosa which consumed six hours. When I returned home Carolyn had prepared my favorite dinner of pork chops smothered in onions and tomatoes. I could only look at them. Welcome to Mexico City.

On another occasion, the ambassador, Stan and I had lunch in a private dining room of Televisa. A senior vice president opened a 60 year old bottle of cognac. The others begged off and returned to the embassy. To uphold the honor of my country I matched the VP sip for sip of the wonderfully smooth cognac. I did not return to the embassy but several hours of quality contact time, took a taxi home. The next morning I did not have a hangover. Welcome to Mexico City.

Q: Didn't the Mexican economy suffer a serious recession while you were there?

JOHNSON: Yes. In 1981 the Peso was way over valued, 24 to the dollar. The first year we received a cost of living allowance because Mexico City was more expensive than Washington, DC. Unfortunately the economic model which the Lopez Portillo regime was following expected the value of a barrel of oil to rise to \$70; instead it was in the teens. Combined with a lot of other

bad economic news, the peso plummeted and economy tanked and many Mexicans had to sell off real estate in the United States because they could not afford the mortgages which were of course in dollars. One weekend we were in southern Mexico and the banks were closed because of the economic crisis. We were stranded without money. Somehow we got home.

Q: What was your housing like?

JOHNSON: I lost out to a colleague in the political section for a lovely house. I was so discouraged that evening I decided to go to bed early lest something else go wrong. I confused Suzanne's diaper ointment with tooth paste. Carolyn answered my cries of repulsion with comforting words.

A couple days later we took the ugly duckling of houses which no one wanted. It was huge villa near the Museum of Anthropology. We had the vines covering it ripped down, the house repainted and cleaned. We were very happy there for the next three years. Our sons destroyed two mattresses by riding them down the marble staircase into the living room which had 18 foot high ceilings. Meanwhile the house we wanted so badly turned out to have incurable plumbing problems.

We lived in Polanco, one of the two Jewish neighborhoods. There were four synagogues but only two churches within walking distance of our house. Although our gentile neighbors ignored us, a Jewish lady across the street welcomed us. One evening during the Jewish holy days I was walking our dog, Turbo. A Mercedes pulled up with two couples inside. One of the men asked, "Can you tell me where the synagogue is?"

"Which one", I responded, "conservative or orthodox?"

"Conservative."

"Which one, the one with the dome or without the dome?"

"With the dome."

"Next right and it's on your right in the third block."

Jews have lived in Mexico for centuries. Many arrived in the late 1800s. Enrique Strauss, a journalist, told me that in the 1880s his ancestral clan had departed Bremerhaven in two boats. One landed in Baltimore and one in Vera Cruz. One of the descendents of the Baltimore group was Robert Strauss, chairman of the Democratic Party and ambassador to Moscow. "My great grandfather got the wrong boat," Enrique remarked with a smile.

After World War II President Miguel Aleman opened the nation's doors to survivors of the holocaust, which provided Mexico with a major infusion of talent.

I organized a synagogue tour for my embassy colleagues. We were received very warmly by the

rabbis who explained Jewish doctrine to us and led us through their houses of worship.

Mexicans are remarkably tolerant. During the siege of Mexico City by the US Army in 1848 the Union Church, a protestant congregation which included some Americans, continued to hold services without interference by the authorities.

Q: How good was the cooperation between the various sections in the embassy?

JOHNSON: Numerous government agencies were represented in the embassy and we all worked together very well. Probably 60 or 70 officers attended monthly staff meetings. USIA coordinated press interviews with numerous offices. Most reporters wanted to talk to State officers in the consular, political and economic sections but we had requests for appointments with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Agency and others agencies.

Q: Next question: how well did the cultural and information portions of USIA collaborate.

JOHNSON: I was of course part of the information section, but I became good friends with Diane Stanley, the Cultural Affairs Officer. Diane was a delightful person with a remarkable understanding of American culture and an abiding interest in Mexico. She had terrific contacts. I participated in her programs whenever I could. One of Diane's most endearing characteristics was that she was unflappable. For example, the post was returning a major art exhibit to a New York museum. She insisted on going to the airport to make sure the crates were loaded safely onto the airplane. To everyone's chagrin, the crates did not fit into the cargo hold of the commercial carrier. There had been no problem getting the exhibit to Mexico by air. Lesson: Not all cargo doors are the same size. Diane swung into action and hired carpenters to make slightly smaller crates and the problem was solved. I don't know if the museum noticed the difference. Sadly Diane died of cancer soon after she retired.

Q: Was Mexico City a hardship post?

JOHNSON: In spite of the terrible air pollution there was no hardship pay which Ambassador Gavin agreed was unfair. Several million residents had no potable water. The air was laden with dried feces. Gavin was ill several times.

Q: Did you suffer from the pollution?

JOHNSON: About my second year at post I came down with a virus which was much more serious than the embassy physician or I realized. I should have taken two weeks off to stay with a friend outside of the DF. Instead I went back to work.

Q: Did the virus leave you with any lasting effects?

JOHNSON: The virus attacked the part of my heart that controls the rhythm. A surgeon tried to correct the problem, but the operation failed. I will be on medication for the foreseeable future.

Q: Did anyone else in your family suffer from the altitude or pollution?

JOHNSON: Not that we are aware of.

Q: Back to Gavin: being a former actor, Jack Gavin was very sensitive to publicity. As the former head of the Screen Actors' Guild, he was known as a difficult person. How was he to work for?

JOHNSON: In many ways I admired Gavin and his grasp of Mexican culture. Gavin was also very sensitive to his image in the press. In spite of his good looks and the prestige of his position, he was insecure. He was very wary of the Mexican press, which he accused of being hostile to him. He asked us in USIA to compile a list of lies about him that appeared in the media. His suspicion of the media was almost Nixonian. We reminded him for generations the Mexican press has often been hostile to the American ambassador.

Gavin's mother was from Sonora. He grew up speaking flawless Spanish. He knew the country well, including its politics and economy. I don't think the US has ever sent an ambassador to Mexico who was better versed in the country.

He was very smart and could absorb most complex briefing notes with a single reading and then respond knowledgeably on the subject in a press interview. He handled television appearances with aplomb. I produced a number of TV spots with him in the USIA studio. All he needed was a couple of cue cards and he was good to go.

Gavin knew a lot of the top people in the media and was personal friends with the owners of the largest television network in the country. The family is also the major stockholder in SIN, the Spanish International Network in the US. He could charm almost any reporter and was well read.

He was touchy about having his picture taken. I once accompanied him to a lunch at the American Chamber of Commerce. I sat with a table of Mexican reporters whom I briefed regarding photos: no pictures of Gavin while he is eating. Sure enough, half way through lunch a photographer got up from our table and headed toward Gavin. I impulsively reached out and grabbed the back of her blouse, which parted company with the rest of her blouse with a resounding rip. She spun around enraged, but with one hand on her back and the other on her camera she could only make a mad dash for the door. Afterwards Gavin asked me, "What was that applause at your table about?"

Q: Did you handle any of the ambassador's correspondence?

JOHNSON: Gavin got a lot of mail but the embassy was so big that each section handled its specialty. Reporters didn't write to Gavin, although they sometimes wrote about him. Several artists presented the embassy with portraits of President Reagan. Carol Ludwig, a colleague, and I replied to the painters with courteous notes. One day a truly hideously bad portrait of our beloved leader arrived. Carol kept putting off writing the poor fellow. When she was transferred

to Tokyo, the portrait was still in her office. I dashed off a polite note to the painter and air pouched the portrait to a buddy in USIA Tokyo. The painting was hanging in Carol's office when she took up her new duties.

Q: Did Gavin receive many important visitors?

JOHNSON: When George Bush was Vice President he visited Mexico City. Gavin threw a big dinner for him. At least half a dozen cabinet members and a couple dozen members of the US Senate and House of Representatives made junkets to Mexico during the three years I was there. Gavin was an articulate briefer and, as I have already stated, had a very broad grasp of the problems facing Mexico.

Four members of the Reagan cabinet were in town at one time. Gavin gave an elegant dinner party for them, which we spear carriers did the leg work for. Afterwards Gavin gave each of us a framed copy of the menu. Thanks, Jack!

When John Glenn was testing the waters for a presidential bid, he spent several days in Mexico City. The ambassador accompanied Glenn and his fellow Senator Christopher Dodd to appointments with high government officials. I had the pleasure of taking care of Annie Glenn, a thoroughly delightful lady. She told me she had had a terrible stutter and that she had cured herself by going silent each time she began to stutter. As soon as she regained her composure, she resumed talking. When I told her that I used to stutter badly, she nodded appreciatively.

One afternoon I took Annie shopping in the Zona Rosa and two young men began to follow us. I stared at them and unbuttoned my jacket and reached menacingly reached inside. They took the hint and turned away.

Incidentally, Jesse Jackson also visited Mexico under the guise of possible presidential candidate. The de la Madrid regime which had replaced the Lopez Portillo bandits did not take Jackson seriously. As I recall, no senior officials received him.

Occasionally celebrities dropped by the chancellery for a chat with the ambassador. For example Los Angeles pitcher Fernando Valenzuela arrived with a body guard. I met them at the front entrance. I told the athlete that he would be quite safe without his gun toting companion who seemed intent on remaining at his master's side. A very tall Marine guard joined me and announced firmly, "Only Marines carry arms in this building." Valenzuela accompanied me to the ambassador's office for a pleasant chat and a ball signing. His guard sullenly took up a position outside the gate.

Q: Did you ever travel with Gavin?

JOHNSON: A couple of times to consulates. He was thoroughly agreeable one-on-one. We talked about Mexican politics and also about his days as an actor. He told me about working with Hitchcock and other directors. I asked him which his favorite role was. I expected him to respond the good guy in "Psycho". No he responded that it was his role in "Thoroughly Modern Millie"

with Julie Andrews.

Q: Did Gavin take pride in his acting career?

JOHNSON: He used to joke that he had more than 20 films in the can to prove he was no actor. He once told me that someone had complained to President Reagan about his appointment as ambassador. Apparently the malcontent declared, "But he's an actor." The Gipper then curtly reminded the caller who he was talking to.

Q: Mrs. Gavin was actress, wasn't she?

JOHNSON: During the three years I was in Mexico City she was acting in a soap opera in the United States, so she didn't spend much time at post.

Speaking of soap operas, a Mexican journalist told me that during their exile years in Mexico before the Cuban revolution, Fidel and Raul Castro acted in soap operas. That was before the time Mexico had video tape and none of the low budget episodes was filmed. I can't vouch for the truth of the allegation, but it has always intrigued me.

Q: Mexicans love soap operas?

JOHNSON: They adore soap operas, many of which are now made in this country. Soaps are part of their culture which does not prize understatement. The biggest hit from Hollywood during my tenure in the DF was "Officer and a Gentleman-" a super soap.

Q: How would you describe that section of the Mexican electronic media?

JOHNSON: Radio was the medium which was accessible to even those Mexicans living in remote villages. The radio networks were mainly privately owned and had very modern facilities, particularly in Mexico City. Numerous independent radio stations made do with basic equipment. Radio was very profitable and there was a great variety of stations. However I don't think there was much broadcasting in the Indian languages. The audiences were probably too small and financially marginal.

The government operated Channel 11 in Mexico City which paled in comparison to Televisa, the commercial network. As I noted above Televisa owns or owned most or perhaps all of the Spanish International Network in the United States. Televisa was careful not to exceed FCC regulation governing foreign ownership of TV stations in the United States. Televisa executives were continually asking me to provide them with the latest FCC rulings.

The Mexicans had their own version of PBS, Channel 8, which was woefully under funded and reached only a very narrow audience. The chief executive of the channel and I were good buddies. I provided him with some video material.

Q: We have these talk shows particularly on Sundays where people in the government get up,

ambassadors or other people get up, and state positions which seem to then spread out to the rest of the media. Was there an equivalent of that?

JOHNSON: No, I don't recall a Mexican version of "Meet the Press" or "Face the Nation". Few senior Mexican politicians would have allowed themselves to be questioned by reporters in a substantive fashion. On the other hand, most foreign dignitaries, including ambassadors, were fair game.

I think most people in Mexico City slept in on Sunday morning or went to church. Moreover politicians and business leaders were not accountable to the nation via the press as they are here in the US. Televisa broadcast something called "Sixty Minutes," including the ticking watch, but it was badly made and dreadfully boring. Televisa and, as I recall, also Channel 11 had hour long newscasts week nights but because of inadequate funding and a lack of professionalism, the shows consisted almost entirely of talking heads- very dull. I didn't even bother to report on their contents to Washington.

Q: The press was not in the position of looking for the latest government scandal and exposing it?

JOHNSON: No. Press freedom in Mexico was limited. Most censorship was largely self-imposed. Reporters usually knew how far they could go before they got in trouble. With a high unemployment rate among even the educated, few were willing to risk their livelihood for the public good. Moreover Mexicans are not taught to think critically in school or in the university. Conformity made careers; moreover, most Mexican reporters were not well trained and seemed content to print government press releases as their own copy. Politicians routinely bribed reporters to carry favorable material.

The government could shut off the power to radio and television stations that carried material it deemed offensive. Moreover the government had a monopoly on the importation of newsprint, which meant it could close down the presses of any newspaper or magazine.

For several months rumors circulated in Mexico City that the government planned to nationalize Televisa. The owners called the regime's bluff or persuaded it to back down. In Mexico such delicate matters are resolved behind tightly closed doors. Mexico is a country of many walls.

Censorship was also exercised by non-government organizations. A newspaperman told me how he had received a call at home late one night with the following message: "We know your children stand at the corner of X and Y street every weekday morning waiting for a bus. It would be a shame if a truck were to go out of control and run over them."

Sometimes threats were followed by violence and sometimes violence was not preceded by a threat. One morning I was having breakfast in a café in the Zona Rosa with a contact from television. Sitting at a table near the door was Mexico's leading newspaper columnist, Manuel Buendia - a fearless maverick. He was a man with many enemies. My companion suggested we pay our respects to Buendia. I demurred. A few hours later Buendia was retrieving some files

from the trunk of his car when two men shot him to death from close range. According to a recent search I did on Goggle, the assassins have not been caught.

Q: Do you recall foreign correspondents being subjected to pressure?

JOHNSON: No, but then their material was destined for export and did not threaten the status quo. American foreign correspondents were regular visitors to our embassy, which was so well staffed that we could brief them on almost any subject. I sometimes wondered if the American public knew how much information they received from foreign correspondents on Mexico was provided by the embassy.

Q: Did third country correspondents ask for interviews or material from USIA?

JOHNSON: I had one regular visitor, a Chinese reporter from a major PRC daily whose beat included Central America. I told him that if he went to El Salvador he would probably be killed by a right-wing death squad. "I realize that," he replied, "So could you please provide me with material on the conflict?"

So every week I provided him with a thick packet of USIA wireless stories. I have no idea how he reworked the material in writing his articles and I never asked him. When I was transferred to Frankfurt he invited Carolyn and me to his home for a fabulous dinner of innumerable courses which he and a Chinese student prepared. We will never forget that evening.

Q: Was information plentiful in Mexico?

JOHNSON: Soft stuff, sure. The government could tell you how many tourists enjoyed the country's pristine beaches. However I was never able to learn how many demonstrators were killed by the police and/or military in 1968 at Tlatelolco. As in China, uncomfortable data is swept under the rug. Other information, such as simple statistics regarding traffic fatalities was not kept or if it was compiled the validity of the figures was questionable.

Q: Was the United States the designated whipping boy in the media?

JOHNSON: Often. The Mexicans are prone to blaming others for their short comings and so do we gringos. Certainly, when they needed a scapegoat they looked often north. The Mexicans have never forgiven the French for imposing Maximilian as emperor. As far as I know, Mexico is the only country in the world that has a Museum of the Interventions, which depicts how the country has been subjected to foreign interference in its internal affairs. Even the language embodies this notion of violation. Mexicans often use the vulgar verb "chingar" (sodomize) or the noun "chingada" (screwed).

For a bitter-sweet glimpse of Mexican profanity, I suggest you see the film "El Norte," which tells the story of a Guatemalan brother and sister fleeing their native land for safety in the United States.

The cover of a major magazine depicted then Secretary of State Al Haig as a cave man lumbering into Mexico carrying a huge club. I had the cartoon framed and it hung my office in Mexico City and Frankfurt. Eventually I offered Haig the picture. He gratefully accepted the gift. Today I believe the cover hangs in his office on K Street.

Shortly after I arrived at post Enrique Esteineu, my senior local, and I lunched with several Televisa executives, one of whom, Felix Cortez, had studied in Germany and had been married to a German. We conversed in German and found we had a lot in common. At the end of the meal, Felix said to me, "I enjoyed our conversation today and I look forward to working with you, but I must warn you, the time will come when I turn on you." I let the remark pass. Afterwards on the way back to the embassy I recounted the journalist's remark to Enrique and asked what he made of the warning. Enrique shook his head and said, "We will find out."

Months later I negotiated with Felix placement with Televisa "Let Poland Be Poland", a major USIA production about that country's efforts to win a measure of independence from Moscow. The documentary was to run at prime time. The Friday morning of the day the documentary was to be aired, I called Felix to confirm that there were no hitches. The journalist responded coldly, "I don't know what you are talking about. There is no such arrangement." I was stunned. I reminded him of our meetings regarding the placement and he replied again, "I have no idea what you are talking about." Then he said something about a meeting and hung up. When I told Enrique what Felix had said, my colleague responded, "He warned us."

Q: Did you tell Ambassador Gavin about your problem?

JOHNSON: Yes. His response was, "Welcome to the club." He gamely endured his share of disappointments dealing with Mexicans.

Q: What happened to your relationship with Felix?

JOHNSON: We cooperated on other endeavors but never discussed "Let Poland Be Poland." I am sure the decision not to air the documentary came from his superiors. The Mexicans were very sensitive to any situation in which it appeared they were doing our bidding. The Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz once remarked, "Poor Mexico, so close to the United States and so far from God."

Q: Are Mexicans nationalistic?

JOHNSON: Their nationalism vis-a-vis the US has a defensive quality. Mexicans look down on the Central Americans and regard themselves as North Americans. Meanwhile they have an inferiority complex regarding their position vis-a-vis the US. Mexicans are nationalistic but not patriotic. Although Mexicans spout nationalistic rhetoric, they are usually unwilling to make sacrifices for their nation, in part because of their Spanish/Indian heritage and because they rightly see corruption eating up tax revenues.

If I may digress for a moment, I will offer Tom Johnson's model of patriotism. Let's assume we

have three concentric circles with the individual as the center circle, the family or clan as the middle circle and the nation as the outside circle. In a totalitarian society such as Nazi Germany or Stalinist USSR the individual accounts for very little, thus the innermost circle is very small. The family or clan is accorded lip service by the state but is very secondary importance thus the middle circle is thin. Most of the space in the model is taken up by the outside circle of the state for which no sacrifice is too great.

In a Latin American country, for example, Mexico, and in Africa, the individual may be important, but his or her personal interests are usually subservient to those of the family or clan whose circle takes up most of the space. Meanwhile the outer circle, the state, is thin, i.e. there is not much genuine nationalism.

In the US and in much of Western Europe, the innermost circle is large because individualism is important and nurtured, sometimes even to the detriment of society. The family or clan plays a far smaller role in society than in Latin America or Africa so the second ring is only modestly wide. The state plays a significant but not overpowering role and its ring is likewise only moderately wide.

Q: Did Mexicans ever complain to you about immigration issues?

JOHNSON: I am not sure I would characterize their remarks as complaints. One of our senior FSNs in USIA Mexico had been in the US illegally for several years. He worked as a newsman in Los Angeles and had an understanding of the differences between US and Mexican journalism which we found invaluable. Mexicans pointed out to me on more than one occasion that land concessions contained in the treaty that ended the Mexican-American War had been forced down Mexico's throat by an expansionist USA. "Do you Americans consider a contract binding that was signed under duress?" one Mexican reporter asked me at lunch. "You dictated the location of the border," he continued softly, "and you must not be angry if we sometimes visit lands that your ancestors robbed from our ancestors."

Q: Overall you got a lot of placement.

JOHNSON: Absolutely, particularly with non-attributed material from VOA on radio. USIA material was well done and the Mexican stations and networks were glad to get it. My main regret was that funds were not available for me to travel all over the country to place material. Meanwhile I did not brag to counterparts in other embassies about our success in placing material.

One innovation which the much maligned USIA Director Charlie Wick introduced was "WorldNet", live satellite interviews with top US officials and recognized experts. The first "WorldNet" USIA Mexico City participated in was with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger at the end of the US invasion of Grenada. As I recall, USIA posts in two other Latin American countries participated in the interview. Senior reporters questioned the Secretary from our embassy studio. Before "WorldNets" became a very useful tool of communication for USIA Mexico, the post had to calm the ruffled feathers of Yolanda Sanchez, Televisa's senior

correspondent in Washington, who claimed the interviews undercut her position.

Q: What did you think of Wick as a USIA Director?

JOHNSON: He was imaginative and energetic, but he was also crude and tactless. When I introduced him to an ambassador at a reception in Mexico City, Wick's opener was to tell a tasteless ethnic joke. The ambassador stared at him in disbelief. I was embarrassed for my country.

Q: Was there much in the way of the American presence in the television or radio of Mexico or was this maybe they would send somebody down as needed?

JOHNSON: There were a couple dozen foreign correspondents in Mexico City. In addition there were numerous stringers. Some reporters used Mexico as a base to cover the conflicts in Central America. We in the embassy press section spent a lot of time with them. And, of course, any good interview is one that you learn as much as you give.

Q: During this period from 1981-84, were there any major stories? Well I guess Central America would certainly be on your plate.

JOHNSON: El Salvador and Nicaragua were both in the headlines. The Mexican government was very concerned with rumors that the US would intervene in Nicaragua to oust the Sandinistas. We in the embassy kept reassuring them that we had no intention of invading Nicaragua. I spent several months on detail to the press section of the American Embassy in El Salvador during that country's elections. One day I was sitting beside a hotel swimming pool talking with a Mexican businessman, and I said, "Look, I am telling you we are not going into Nicaragua. But suppose we did, what would your reaction be?"

He thought for a moment and responded, "I would denounce you in the street and sleep much better that night."

I think that's the way a lot of Mexicans felt. The Mexican government, which pretended to still be revolutionary, talked leftist and acted rightist. They espoused the homey proletarianism of the likes of Fidel Castro and Daniel Ortega. Meanwhile when the Communists won an election fair and square in a little town in the southeastern Mexico, the federal government in Mexico City declared the election null and void and took over the municipal government.

In another case, a Puerto Rican terrorist was arrested in a shoot out with Mexican authorities. I don't know what he was doing in Mexico. His name was Willie Morales, Willie Guillermo Morales – in Spanish, Guillermo means William so we called him Willie-Willie and No-fingers Willie because he had blown most of his fingers off making bombs. US authorities wanted him to stand trial this country in the worst way. After a year or two in jail, the Mexicans allowed Willie to fly to Cuba. The embassy was not pleased. I hope Willie still in Cuba. By the way, Willie refused to talk to American consular officers, insisting that he was a citizen of Puerto Rico, not the US.

Q: Was there a media difference say up to the north of where ties with the various American states were so close? Did this make for a difference in attitude, a different world almost?

JOHNSON: Sometimes in the embassy we thought we were dealing with three countries: the south part of Mexico with Mexico City in the center, the northern and eastern part of the United States with perhaps Chicago in the middle and a border nation of the northern states of Mexico and the southwest US states with the Rio Grande in the center. Certainly after the sudden devaluation of the Peso in 1982 the northern states of Mexico were restless. I don't know how popular separatism may have been in places like Monterrey, because I didn't travel much in the north. I was pretty busy in Mexico City and on the west coast and in the south. By the way, Mexicans living in northern Mexico who were within range of American television and radio stations were much better informed than their compatriots further south. Although sometimes Mexican television stations would pirate programs from US stations and rebroadcast them. Once I was talking to the news director of a station in Texas and I told him how much I enjoyed a documentary I assumed he had sold to a Mexican station. The American was speechless. "Where did you see the film?" he asked in amazement.

"Last night here on -----." I replied innocently.

"I don't know anything about that," he stuttered. "I will call our attorney tomorrow."

"Please leave my name out of it," I said defensively.

"Don't worry, but thanks for telling me." he said and hung up.

Q: Was corruption a major problem in Mexico?

JOHNSON: Corruption was everywhere in Mexico, starting with the first family. When President Jose Lopez Portillo left office in 1982, reliable sources estimated that he and his clan were two billion dollars richer. The state owned oil company PEMEX was full of graft. Hundreds of non-existent workers, "paracaidistas" (parachutists) were on the roles. One petroleum expert told me that corruption had made the extraction of crude oil in Mexico the most expensive in the world.

If nepotism is corruption, I found that every time I went to the Foreign Ministry I saw it in an amusing form. The halls were crowded with surplus employees. While the clerks were not paid very much, the Foreign Ministry would probably have worked more efficiently if they had been "paracaidistas" and not shown up for work.

Police corruption was commonplace. When Lopez Portillo left office Arturo Durazo, the nation's police chief was indicted for a variety of transgressions. He was finally captured in the US and extradited to Mexico for, as I recall, arms trafficking. Durazo's chief of staff published a best seller "Lo Negro del Negro" (The Black of the Black). Durazo was dark skinned, a distinct disadvantage in Mexican high society. The author begins the expose with a simple confession,

“... I started killing at the age of 28 and have on my conscience a number exceeding 50 individuals whom I have sent to the other world...” It is quite a book.

A more mundane problem with police corruption concerned robberies of American citizens by police in uniform. One of the Marines assigned to the embassy was grabbed by police, shoved onto the floor of the squad car, robbed and let go in a large park near the embassy. A foreign correspondent had the same experience. Although both men were trained to be observant and to react calmly under pressure, they were so traumatized by the experience of armed robbery that they were unable to note or remember the 12 inch high four digit number which appears on the doors, trunk and hood of the vehicle.

One case of a police robbery was downright funny. A colleague from the State Department was in Mexico on temporary duty when he was nabbed by the DF's finest and relieved of his material possessions during a ride to a nearby park. One of the policemen apparently noticed that the book of matches taken from the gringo's pocket was from a government ministry. “How did you get these?” demanded a cop.

“I'm here for consultations with,” and he reeled the names of a number of high officials.

The police realized they had made a very big mistake. Property was returned to the American and apologies made. The police took him back to the Zona Rosa and sped away. The Embassy was furious and demanded that the culprits be caught and punished, but I don't know if justice was very done.

Q: Did your work in the consular section involve cases of corruption?

JOHNSON: The consular case which took more of my time than any other was the result of police corruption in the state of Sinaloa in western Mexico. Nicholas Schrock, a university professor from the University of Denver, disappeared on his way to Guadalajara. Our consulate in Mazatlan was alerted and after a few weeks one of the Mexican employees discovered Schrock's jeep parked next to the Culiacan police station. The jeep was decked out with the government party's campaign placards. The consul confronted the police and got the vehicle back. I flew to Mazatlan with some journalists. A few miles outside of Mazatlan, the reporters and I found a suspect hooked up to a car battery being questioned by the police. It was clear to us that the poor guy had no idea where the Schrock's body was buried. A few days later the police released the suspect.

Meanwhile the suspect and car battery story made news in the US. I received lots of phone calls from journalists in the United States. Although disgusted with the Sinaloa police, I tried to be as diplomatic as possible. One night I received a call from ambassador Gavin. “Tom, I am in Tucson and the local paper says you stated the Mexican police are torturing prisoners.”

“Well, Mr. Ambassador, I don't think I said anything that strong.”

“Well, what did you say?”

“She asked why the prisoner confessed and as I recall, I responded, ‘Perhaps he wanted to avoid further discomfort.’”

“I understand reporters are calling you day and night but you are not making my job any easier.”

A few weeks later I made a second trip to Mazatlan when the police announced that they had found Professor Schrock’s body. Our consular section offered to provide the Mexican authorities with the deceased’s blood type and dental records. The police responded that they had made a positive indemnification and that they didn’t need any help from the embassy. Professor Schrock’s cadaver was flown to Denver.

A few days later, a peaceful Friday afternoon, I got a call from Stan Zuckerman. Stan said, “The Mexicans sent the wrong body to Denver.” At first I thought Stan was kidding. He replied, “I hope you don’t have any plans for this evening. You are going to be busy.”

During the next five hours I responded to more than 80 calls from correspondents in Mexico City and from reporters from all over the western part of the United States. There was little I could say other than the Sinaloa authorities had screwed up. I soon learned that the corpse in Denver belonged to Jesus Valenzuela, a carpenter, who had died about a year earlier. Because the area there around Culiacan is very dry the body was basically mummified. Wrong height, wrong weight, wrong complexion, wrong everything. Perhaps the Mexican police thought the gringos would bury the missing professor without even peeping into the coffin. The debacle was the object of a lot of newspaper coverage. A piece in a Mexican paper provided us with a laugh. The brother of Mr. Valenzuela was quoted in the daily as stating, “Poor Jesus, he always wanted to go to the United States, and now the gringos, they are sending him back.”

In spite of pressure from our embassy, the Mexicans were in no hurry to solve the mystery. About a year later a violent thunder storm washed a skull out of a shallow grave. The skull was positively identified as that of Nicholas Schrock. A policeman was eventually convicted of the robbery-murder.

Q: Did your work with the consular section concern visas?

JOHNSON: I did not issue visas but I facilitated the issuance of many visas to journalists. I did become involved in a very interesting visa case. It concerned the writer Octavio Paz, who at that time was Mexico’s leading author. In his younger days he flirted with the Communists, although I do not believe that he was a member of the party. In any case, his close association with radical leftists put him on a watch list that required a waiver every time to get a visa. He traveled to the United States on a fairly regular basis. The embassy granted Paz a waiver and a visa but the whole procedure was time consuming and, given Paz’s importance, embarrassing. I think he considered it our problem, not his. Paz was a good friend of the United States and very critical of Fidel Castro. Ambassador Gavin asked if there were a way to get Paz off the waiver list. The Consul General came up with an ingenious solution: have Paz declared a defector. I was tasked with drafting a long telegram to Washington containing extensive quotes from his writing and

other evidence that Paz had renounced his support of leftist causes. Over a period of a couple of weeks I analyzed his writings from the previous ten to twelve years and in a lengthy report I documented his alienation from Castro and Communism. I believe I also included coverage of Paz's meetings with prominent Americans. In a few weeks the Treasury Department informed us that Paz had been approved as defector. The next time Paz applied for a visa, he was given a multiple entry visa. Paz never said a word. As far as he was concerned, his status on the waiver list, was our problem, not his. I met Paz at a luncheon in Frankfurt in 1986 when he received the Book Prize of the German Publishing Industry. He was kind enough to pretend that he remembered me. In 1990 the Mexican writer was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Carlos Fuentes, another famous Mexican author, was related to Jack Gavin. I believe they were cousins.

Q: You mentioned that you found yourself the spokesman for the consular section. I'm an old consular type. I was wondering, Mexico always has so many tourists coming down, including visiting professors who get into trouble one way or another and get killed or arrested. What sort of things were you dealing with?

JOHNSON: I handled press inquiries regarding several fatal crashes of private planes.

Several tourists died in scuba diving accidents: two from carbon monoxide poisoning when their tanks were filled with air down wind from a gasoline operated compressor and three or four divers who apparently disturbed "sleeping" sharks in a cave. I had to try real hard not to use the word "stupid" responding to the press interest in the shark case.

Of course lots of Americans were arrested in Mexico every year. Under the constraints of the Privacy Act I was prohibited from giving out the names of our countrymen under arrest. Once they were convicted, I could confirm their status as a prisoner. Dead people waive their coverage under the Privacy Act, although the embassy was sensitive to the feelings of the family in cases of bizarre deaths.

I don't recall how many missing persons we had on our look-out-for list, but there were many, including runaways and disappearing spouses with/without children. One missing person, I remember, had been missing for two years. One day she walked into the consular section to get a new passport. The consular officer said, "We've been looking for you."

"Who's we?" she wanted to know.

"Your brother is very worried about you. He is calling us all the time," declared the vice consul.

"Oh, that son-of-a-bitch," she shouted. "Don't you dare tell him where I am."

"OK," the vice consul reassured the irate visitor.

So the next time he called the embassy, the consular office said, "We know where your sister is

and she's fine."

"What's her address and telephone number?" demanded the brother.

"We can't tell you that," replied the consular officer.

"What do you mean, you can't tell me?" growled the brother.

"I can't give you any more information because your sister has made it very clear to us that she does not wish to see or hear from you," came the reply.

Missing adults have the right to stay missing and keep their whereabouts private. The sister, incidentally, had been living within two blocks of the embassy.

We had another missing persons case, more tragic. The embassy had been alerted to the disappearance of a wealthy young American with a drug problem. One day we received word from the police that there was a completely brain wasted Americano living at the edge of the sprawling city dump. The consular section alerted the missing boy's father who flew to Mexico City. He returned home the same day after stating that although the young man at the dump looked like his son, he was someone else. About a week later the person living at the dump was dead. We never learned who he was nor even if he was a US citizen.

Q: I assume lots of Americans die in Mexico, particularly the elderly.

JOHNSON: I don't recall the number, but every few months the embassy sold unclaimed personal effects of the deceased. One cause of deaths was the failure of the elderly to take into account the effect of the altitude and pollution on their health. I recall several cases of Americans arriving at the airport and collapsing of heart attacks because they insisted on carrying their own luggage. Famous last words: "Can't trust them thieving Mexicans."

The most famous American to die in Mexico City while I was there was Marty Feldman, the comedian. He was working on a film when he succumbed to a heart attack one Thursday night. I received a call from the film's director the following morning with the news of Feldman's unexpected passing and an urgent request to help to repatriate his body to Los Angeles. The filmmaker told me Feldman was an orthodox Jew and had left instructions in case of his death that he not be moved on the Sabbath which of course began at sundown. Meanwhile Mexican law required that all cadavers be in the ground or cremated within 48 hours. There was no space available for the coffin on any flight leaving Mexico City until Sunday. I briefed the ambassador Gavin who used his extensive contacts in the airline industry to get an afternoon flight diverted from Guadalajara to Mexico City. As the sun began to set the coffin with the funny eyes slowly entered the cargo bay of a DC-9. Marty, it was the best we could do.

One afternoon I was leaving the embassy and noticed a tall black man speaking to the guard at the gate. I approached him and he told me that he had lost his passport when a violent thunder storm had carried away his tent. I immediately recognized him: Lou Gossett. I escorted him to the

consular section. And for the next couple of hours while his passport was being issued, the actor entertained several of us with stories about making films.

While we are still on film, John Huston had a home in Mexico. He made his last film, Under the Volcano, in and around Cuernavaca. One bit of film trivia: the hookers in the film were professionals from Mexico City bordellos. I persuaded the ambassador to invite Huston to travel to Mexico City to speak to a small audience of filmmakers. Huston declined for health reasons. He died in emphysema 1987.

Q: How about American snow birds, did they have any problems while you were at post?

JOHNSON: As you are aware thousands of Americans live in Mexico, particularly retirees. In 1984 a trailer park full of out countrymen found itself literally in the cross fire of a land dispute. In the northwestern state of Sonora some very poor campesinos got into a dispute with local authorities regarding a small parcel of land and a stretch of dirt road. Shots were exchanged and several bullets hit trailers belonging to the American snow birds, whom neither party wished ill. The Americans lay on the floors of their trailers and called for help. Needless to say the incident made news in the US, particularly since the site of the trailer park happened to be El Alamo. I was getting calls from newsmen late into the night. After a few days the Mexican Army made a show of force and the dispute was settled. More than one reporter wanted to know if the officer commanding the Mexican unit was named Santa Ana. Regrettably the captain's name was something very pedestrian, such as Lopez or Gomez.

Q: Was there a lot of crime against American tourists in Mexico City?

JOHNSON: I was robbed on a Saturday morning three blocks from our embassy and my colleague who handled the welfare of American citizens was the victim of an armed car jacking. Most Americans who came to the embassy to complain of criminal acts were victims of purse snatchings and pick pockets. However thieves could be violent if the stakes were high. Most banks had guards armed with shot guns. Robbers gunned down the guard outside of West German Embassy when he tried to stop them from looting a villa in our neighborhood. Most crime concerned property.

Q: Did you try to keep Americans from getting into trouble?

JOHNSON: Parts of Mexico were very lawless. One day an American correspondent called me and stated that she had a possible lead on either the private papers or the diaries - I don't recall which - of SS Chief Heinrich Himmler. She said that according to her source, the papers had been smuggled out of Germany after the war and were in a village in the state of Durango. We finally located the village on the map. It was at the end of a long canyon. I told her that as far as I knew, of the top Nazis only Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels had kept a diary. I suggested that if she wanted to pursue the lead she should take a dozen well armed body guards with her. The next morning she called me to tell me that she had had second thoughts about the diaries and was not going to pursue the story. A few months later she and her El Salvadorian guide were stopped in a contested area of that war-torn country. The soldiers executed her guide whom they

suspected of being a rebel sympathizer.

James Michener came to Mexico City in 1982. He was writing his book on Texas. Michener told me he wanted to go to a small town near Veracruz and do research. I checked with the consular section and learned that the area was frequented by robbers and carjackers. Stay out of there, I was told. I offered to hire body guards and go with Michener. He responded, "I can't operate that way." As far as I know he never made the trip.

Q: For the Americans who did get in trouble how bad were Mexican jail and prisons?

JOHNSON: Mexican police routinely beat up anyone they arrested. The embassy continually pressured the Mexican government to treat American prisoners humanely and for the most part they did. However I recall one morning getting a call from the Consul General that an American who had been arrested for setting his mattress on fire in a hotel had been hospitalized after a beating. Ambassador Gavin hit the roof and ordered me and a consular officer to go to the hospital and to take along the USIA photographer to shoot pictures of the old man's injuries. Just as we were leaving the embassy we learned that the prisoner had just died. Now Gavin was really steamed. However when the family was notified, the bereaved told us in no uncertain terms that the deceased had been asking for trouble for a long time and that he had finally gotten his due. They stated they wanted no investigation of the incident and that we were to have the old man cremated and were to ship his ashes back to wherever it was they lived.

The US negotiated an agreement in about 1980 which allows Mexicans incarcerated in US prisons to be transferred back to Mexico to be closer to their families while they serve out their sentences. Likewise US citizens are eligible for transfer back to this country. The agreement has some limitations on which crimes it covers and predictably most of the prisoner traffic flows north and not south.

Prison conditions in Mexico varied greatly from facility to facility. Some Americans slept on concrete floors while others lived quite comfortably. There was a prison on an island off the west coast of Mexico where families were permitted to stay with the prisoners. As a rule, I don't think Americans were discriminated against. If the prisoner had money he/she could receive better food and even female companionship.

Sometimes prisoners in Mexico can buy the ultimate luxury: freedom. A twin engine plane landed at an isolated field in Yucatan. When soldiers investigated they found not only cocaine but also automatic weapons. Perhaps the soldiers thought the guns were destined for insurgents. In any case, they treated their captives, including at least one American rather rudely. I don't remember if their case was ever tried, but the four men were placed in a prison. One night the power failed and three escaped, including at least one American. One of the smugglers apparently lost his way in the dark and was still inside the wall when power was restored. I don't think he relished being in the spotlight. Clearly someone(s) was paid off. I don't know if DEA and the FBI ever caught the fugitives who were thought to have made it back to the United States.

Q: Did Mexicans cooperate in interdicting drug smuggling?

JOHNSON: There were levels of cooperation and corruption. There were some completely honest "narcs". Smuggling went both north and south and, although under funded, the Mexican customs service developed some innovative means for catching the bad guys. Admittedly sometimes the confiscated drugs quickly found their way back onto the streets. As in Paraguay, smugglers used everything from single engine puddle jumpers to four engine jets. Typically smugglers headed north with a load marijuana would file a false flight plan or no flight plan, try to fly under Mexican and US radar and land in remote areas in southwestern states. The pot would be offloaded and luxury goods or blank cassette tapes would be put aboard. Again a false flight plan or no flight plan would be filed and the airplane would head south to an airfield in northern or central Mexico. If the machine was picked up on radar by the Mexicans, a customs plane with an Aero-Mexico pilot would be scrambled to intercept the smugglers, preferably over land. Once sighted the customs plane would attempt to contact the contrabandist by radio. If that failed, it would fly alongside the smuggler and hold up a sign ordering him to land at a nearby airfield. If there was no reaction to the attempt at visual or electronic communication, the customs officers were authorized to open fire with automatic weapons. The customs officers tried to disable the smuggler's aircraft by hitting it in the engine. Since the customs officer and the Aero-Mexico pilot received a portion of the value of the recovered goods, careful marksmanship was essential to their operation. The cassette tapes, by the way, would be dubbed with music in clandestine studios and sold in Mexico.

DEA agents were always telling us about the latest tricks the smugglers employed using automobiles and trucks. For a while steering columns were a favorite hiding place for cocaine.

Q: Speaking about the south of Mexico City, Chiapas and other places, or course you in Yucatan you had the ruins and all that, but the other parts, was this sort of a blank area for American interests? In other words, did we have many people down there other than tourists?

JOHNSON: Other than tourism, no. In fact, the most dangerous areas in Mexico were the ones where drug trafficking was going on. Yucatan, Durango and Culiacan, were hot beds of drug dealing. Young Americans who saw "Easy Rider" might conclude that they could go to Mexico with a few thousand dollars, buy cocaine, bring it back to the US and make a bundle. Accordingly they would go into a buying situation with a briefcase of money and the Mexican dealers had a choice: take the money and give them the drugs, or take the money and kill them. We had a case of two brothers who disappeared in the state of Durango. We sent a consular officer up there, and the consular officer reported that the brothers had been last seen at the end of a long canyon. The Consul General looked at the map and said, "Don't risk it." We never found out what happened to the brothers. They were probably dead. How many Americans died in Mexico trafficking drugs no one knows.

Q: What about the students in the universities in Mexico particularly? Were they involved in your particular contacts?

JOHNSON: That was more the responsibility of the cultural section. However I did organize a

mini-film festival at an institute of cinematography. The festival was a great hit, and was attracting many of our important contacts. Then the university went on strike very unexpectedly. The whole university closed, including the institute. Unfortunately the films were scheduled to be shipped to USIA Lima. I called the director the film institute and asked when I could retrieve the films. He was very apologetic as he explained that not he was able to get into the university and that I would be well advised to stay away from the institute. It seemed that Mexicans had a quaint custom of sometimes shooting at people who crossed their picket lines.

Q: Did university students demonstrate in front of the embassy very often?

JOHNSON: I don't recall any student demonstrations and the other demonstrations were very lame. Half of the protestors would be wearing NFL tee-shirts. The Dallas Cowboys was their favorite team. One day a colleague handed out Philadelphia Eagles shirts to provide a bit more variety. Demonstrators, like journalists, were often paid.

Q: Did you run across the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which seem to be almost the designated anti-American element of the Mexican government? We had a lot of cooperation in a lot of other fields. It was just the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that seemed to be the odd person out.

JOHNSON: I'm sure the Ministry of Foreign Affairs never did anything that it wasn't told to do so by the President. It may have been the good guy, bad guy, and in that case maybe sometimes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the heavy. I had only a few dealings with the ministry which were quite cordial.

Q: Did you have any feel for the Mexican film industry?

JOHNSON: Sad, sad. Up until the late 1950s or early 1960s Mexican studios pretty well dominated the Latin American market. Only Argentina had significant production capability. But then US filmmakers began making films for the Spanish speaking audience on a large scale. Combined with a superior hemisphere-wide distribution system, Hollywood soon dominated the market all the way to the Tierra del Fuego.

The Mexicans exacted a modicum of revenge by requiring all foreign films to be subtitled and shown in the cinemas with the sound track down so low that it was hard to understand.

During a UNESCO conference, I was the escort officer for Charlton Heston, who was one of our ambassadors. I took Heston to meet President Lopez Portillo's sister Margarita who was head of the government film board. The woman had a grotesque attachment to cosmetics. Prior to our appointment, I told Heston that Margarita had a reputation for active incompetence. His meeting with Margarita was polite and inconsequential. As we left Heston was shaking his head in disbelief at her appearance.

Q: How did you get along with that towering personality?

JOHNSON: Heston obviously has a healthy ego. I don't see how he could have played the epic

roles he did so convincing without an enormous sense of self. And yet he was delightful, as was his wife Lydia. In between appointments and sessions of the UNESCO conference we toured my favorite haunts of Mexico City and talked about film. I floated an idea I had of making a Biblical biography of the life of Christ from the viewpoint of the temple elders. Heston considered my proposal for a long moment and announced his support of the project which he said no studio would ever touch. We agreed that any movie that infuriated conservative Christians and Jews would not do well at the box office.

Heston and I got along famously until the trip to the airport and the subject of home security came up. Heston described the elaborate security system he had in his home and the guns he had ready to protect his property. I listened politely and said, "It seems to me that you are describing a fortress complete with guns. (Meanwhile Mrs. Heston is motioning for me to say no more.) Aren't you giving up your most important possession: your personal freedom?" At that point Moses threw the stone tablets at me. He erupted in righteous indignation. I had not realized that he was Mr. NRA. A few weeks later he sent me a telegram asking my assistance in expediting the issuance of a new passport for his daughter who was in Paris. I called the embassy and asked a consular officer to treat the young lady with utmost courtesy, which he did. For several years the Hestons sent me Christmas cards.

Q: Did the President visit Mexico while you were there?

JOHNSON: Yes, twice. Vice President Bush came down for the national day in 1981. Soon after I arrived in 1981 Reagan attended a multi nation conference in Cancun. To support our imperial presidency, the US spent more money than the Mexican hosts. The Air Force flew down presidential helicopters and armored limos. The US Navy was present in force, although out of sight. The White House press corps realized the conference was rather farcical and used the time to water ski and parasail. As with any presidential visit, security is of paramount importance. At US insistence press access to the hotel where the chiefs of state were residing was highly restricted. Then someone realized that tight controls meant RR might not be on the evening news. Since the Mexicans would not relent, we had to smuggle reporters in to see the President. I hung a camera around the neck of Helen Thomas, the dean of the press corps, and marched her past security as an official White House photographer. Thomas kept a straight face and the Mexican security officers nodded knowingly.

The Cancun conference gave me a chance to thank the German government for providing me with a subsidized graduate program. While waiting for a reporter to finish an interview with a Secretary Al Haig, Helmut Schmidt wandered past me. I introduced myself and we had a very congenial conversation about Germany until the chancellor looked at his watch and before turning away said, "My allotment of freedom is up."

Q: Did you travel to other countries in the area?

JOHNSON: I spent several months in Central America. I filled in for the press attaché in Tegucigalpa for six weeks and helped handle VIPs and the press during the elections in El Salvador. Our main concern in Honduras was victory of the Sandinistas across the border in

Nicaragua. I took several Honduran helicopters full of journalists to visit a relief project for Nicaraguan refugees USAID was funding. The following day Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger visited an airfield providing supplies to the refugees. As the secretary was speaking a C-130 with no markings rolled out onto the runway and then flew away into the twilight. Every still and TV camera followed the plane as it turned south toward Nicaragua. Imagine that, the United States supporting the contras?! Later I wondered why I never crossed paths with Lt. Col. Ollie North. I gather he kept a low profile. Besides, in the US military lieutenant colonels are a dime a dozen.

On another occasion I escorted a team of VOA technicians to the Honduran coast to look for a good site for an antenna field. The spot VOA was considering was a muddy flood plain. If the antennas did not sink into the soft ground, they probably would have been blown up by leftist guerrillas heading back and forth between nearby Nicaragua and El Salvador. That's right, Washington had not realized that the intended location was in the middle of an infiltration route. VOA did not build the antenna field and somehow we still won the Cold War.

The Nicaraguans tried to destabilize the Honduran government by recruiting about a hundred campesinos, training them in guerrilla tactics in Cuba and then infiltrating them back into Honduras. The attempt to foment an insurgency failed miserably. Although the guerrillas carried more than enough arms and ammunition to start a moderate size civil war, they were desperately short of provisions and in triple canopy jungle, where nothing grows on the ground, most starved to death. I took three Honduran helicopters with six newsmen in each to see the base camp the Honduran Army had discovered. In addition to the ammunition and dozens of M-16 assault rifles there were numerous personal effects of the insurgents including a chalice that had belonged to their chaplain, an American priest. The M-16s were traced back to stocks of weapons we left in Vietnam in the mid-70s.

On the way back we ran into a thunder storm. One of the cameramen, who was getting soaked, signaled me to close the sliding door of the chopper. I would have had to unbuckle my seat belt and inch my way along the door way to the latch and then pull it shut while the helicopter was rocking back and forth. I gave the cameraman a gesture that was universally understood.

When we arrived back at the airbase, I realized that only three choppers had landed. Loss of a helicopter looks bad in a Foreign Service Officer's annual efficiency report. I was told not to worry. The machine had run out of gas and had landed safely in a clearing. Another helicopter with extra fuel was ordered to the rescue. I declined to go along.

Q: Was Honduras a dangerous place for Americans?

JOHNSON: Not really, although one day I was walking through a market and a grape fruit whizzed past my face. I never saw the assailant, but it was a hell of a throw. I decided to see a movie that evening. The people at the hotel told me that it was not within walking distance and called a taxi for me. I told the driver the name of the cinema and off we went. Suddenly we found ourselves on a dark road going through cane fields. I asked the driver how much farther it was to the theater. He just grunted. Remembering my training in anti-terrorism and the characteristics of

a kidnapping, I was alarmed. I prepared to take the driver out with a fist to the back of the neck and ride out the crash in the back seat when suddenly a modern shopping center appeared around the next turn. I breathed a deep sigh of relief. I had come very close to causing a serious incident. The following morning I told the Regional Security Officer about my ride. He responded, "You see why we do not encourage people to carry guns?"

Q: Let's talk about El Salvador. What was your role at the embassy?

JOHNSON: Before we get to that, I did not carry a side arm while I was in El Salvador, although the PAO kept a pistol with him whenever he left the heavily fortified embassy compound. I told him that by the time he got his gat out of its zip bag he would be very dead. Gun fire was a common occurrence in San Salvador. Most mornings the insurgents awakened the populace with a bomb blast at 7:00. A utility pole or some other non-essential object was usually destroyed, but the main purpose of the blasts was to remind everyone that the guerrillas were at hand.

Most of my work concerned escorting American VIPs visiting El Salvador to observe the elections. Senators and Representatives came down for briefings and tours. I took then representative Olympia Snow out into the campo to watch the El Salvadorians exercise their suffrage under the threat of death from the leftist insurgents. Our driver took a wrong turn. After about ten minutes on a road that went through a contested area, he got us to our destination.

I also briefed visiting journalists. In fact, I lived in the Hotel Camino Real with the reporters and spent a lot of time with them. One day as I was returning to the hotel from a meeting at the embassy, I was almost knocked over by a dozen reporters rushing to their cars. I asked them where they were headed in such a hurry. "Five decapitated bodies have been discovered on the road in from the airport!" I was on third beer when the group of newsmen returned. Predictably there were no corpses, not even any blood.

Q: So you observed a herd mentality among members of the fourth estate?

JOHNSON: A lot of coverage for that awful civil war was written by consensus in the bar in the Camino Real. Going out with the El Salvadorian Army was dangerous and inconvenient. Soldiers get up early and they go looking for trouble. One morning I shared an elevator with a newsman who was dead an hour later, the victim of a stray bullet fired in a skirmish between rebels and an elite unit of the El Salvadorian Army. His death was probably an accident, since neither the rebels nor the army targeted newsmen. A minority of the press corps pursued independent leads aggressively. Many reporters did not speak Spanish well and, in some cases, not at all. Most tiring were what I would term "groupie reporters," young men and women in their early 20s who went to El Salvador for adventure and to try to become news correspondents without really learning the language, culture, history and politics of the war-torn country. When the first question from a recent arrival was something very basic, such as "How big is El Salvador compared to the United States?" I usually responded, "Don't waste my time. Go home. You are going to get hurt."

Q: Sounds a bit cruel.

JOHNSON: Hey, El Salvador was dangerous and those kids had no business being there. One morning I was riding in a taxi up the ambassador's residence when I noticed a man lying on the side walk. I thought perhaps he had fallen down drunk, but there was a TV camera team standing near him. Of course it dawned on me that the man was another victim of a death squad. A few days later I passed a crowd standing in front of a primary school looking at two corpses on the sidewalk. Rebels had gunned down a conservative member of parliament as he was letting his little daughter out of his car. The child had taken several bullets. I was making a lot of extra money from danger pay but there was a good reason for not allowing the American staff to bring their dependents to San Salvador.

Q: Were foreign newsmen targeted in El Salvador?

JOHNSON: Not to my knowledge. I was acquainted with a reporter in San Salvador who was killed in a fire fight, although probably not intentionally. Two correspondents based in Mexico City lost their lives when their jeep ran over a land mine on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. We surmised that the mine had been planted by Sandinistas on a back road used by contras. I knew another reporter who had lived in Mexico City and moved to Costa Rica to write for the Tico Times. She was covering a press conference of a contra commander when her legs were blown off by a bomb which had evidently been planted by a KGB or Sandinista agent. She bled to death. The contra leader, by the way, escaped serious injury. He was shielded from the blast by an assistant who was bending over serving him coffee.

Q: Was the embassy in San Salvador a fortress?

JOHNSON: Oh yeah. The Marines had a machine gun bunker on the roof and everyone was asked to check his/her gun at the back door. I did not spend much time at the embassy. My place was with the newsmen. I dressed like them and talked like them. They were my best protection.

Q: Are you aware of any US Embassy personnel who were killed in El Salvador?

JOHNSON: Three or four Marine guards were gunned down as they sat in an outdoor restaurant and a Navy officer who was advising the El Salvadorian coast guard was assassinated as he waiting for his girl friend to get out of class at the university. The killings were preventable. Marines should not have allowed themselves to be such easy targets and the Navy officer, we learned later, followed a routine that made him an easy mark.

Q: The city of San Salvador is rather drab, isn't?

JOHNSON: There are some lovely residential areas but there is nothing picturesque about the downtown. Salvadorians are hard workers and prone to violence. However they also have a sense of humor. One of the cottage industries was civil war tee-shirts. Nearly all the buyers were foreigners, mostly Americans. Of course there were no pro-rebel logos. To demonstrate any sympathy for the rebels, such as by printing or selling leftist shirts, was to invite a nighttime visit by men in an SUV with tinted windows, the favorite vehicle of the right-wing death squads. The

anti-communist tee-shirts depicted the El Salvadorian military getting the better of the rebels. My favorite tee-shirt and one that my daughter still wears shows a frightened TV cameraman caught between guns from the left and right and with the caption, No Dispare! Soy Periodista! (Don't shoot. I'm a journalist.) The proceeds from the sale of the shirt went to support an orphanage.

Q: Did you travel elsewhere in Latin America while in Mexico?

JOHNSON: I visited Managua for several days. I was shocked by how little had been rebuilt from the earthquake. The center of the city looked like a subtropical Hiroshima.

Don Besom, my former personnel officer, invited me to visit him in Havana. The chief of our interest section was John Ferch, who had been DCM in Mexico my first year there. Don asked me to bring him a brass chicken which he wanted to give his wife Kay for her birthday. He paid me in Cuban Pesos which I had a hard time spending since there was so little to buy. John asked that I bring him a bundle of his favorite Mexican stogies, which he preferred to Cuba cigars.

I spent about ten days wandering around Havana, which reminded me of a tropical Prague in that the old city was decaying as Prague did in the 60s and 70s. In both Havana and Prague one had to be careful not to be hit by falling masonry from dilapidated building. I quickly learned to enjoy the "Mojito", national mixed drink which is made with white rum, soda water, sugar and fresh mint. We took a couple of day trips into the countryside. We discovered just off a main highway a Soviet memorial guarded by a Russian soldier, unfortunately he spoke only Russian, thus we never found out how the Soviets were killed. Incidentally the Soviets were building a huge block house style embassy- a looming a grey fortress. I wonder if they ever completed it.

Q: Were you followed while you were in Havana?

JOHNSON: Not as far as I can tell. Any time I approached our interest section (our old embassy) Cuban police tried to stop me but I ignored them. Early one morning I had a very interesting conversation with a priest in a small church in the old city. He told me about the pressure that authorities put on him to hew the government line. After about ten minutes of whispering, he directed me to leave by a side entrance.

Q: What do you think about our foreign policy toward Cuba?

JOHNSON: It is a hostage to Florida politics and the state's very politically powerful Cuban émigré community. I wish we would normalize relations and then Castro would have no one to blame for the mess he has made of Cuba.

Q: Speaking of émigrés, how powerful was the Cuban émigré populace in Mexico?

JOHNSON: Carolyn and I met a number of Cuban exiles in Mexico. Most identified more with the US than with Cuba. I once asked a prosperous exile how many Mexican-Cubans would return to Cuba if Castro suddenly disappeared. Without hesitation she replied, "Pero ninguno!" (Not a one.)

One émigré group which amused us and vexed us was the Argentine exile community, many of whom were journalists. One lovely Sunday afternoon during the Falklands War, my family I were picnicking with a half dozen Argentine reporters and their wives and children when suddenly the Argentines began berating us for supporting the British. I was stunned by the vehemence of their attack. “Wait a minute,” I shouted, “You are here in Mexico because you fled your homeland which is being terrorized by a military junta which is torturing and killing anyone it suspects might oppose it, particularly from the left. Right?”

“Yes,” they replied.

“This same junta has blundered into a war with Great Britain, which may not be the nation it once was but is now in the process of kicking the butt of the Argentine army and navy. Hundreds of your countrymen have died in this ill conceived venture. Right?” I continued.

“No! No! No! The Malvinas are Argentine,” they declared.

“Why don’t you go back to Buenos Aires, join the army and fight the Brits?” I suggested.

“We can’t do that,” they replied softly.

“Yes, and we know why you can’t do that, don’t we?” I shot back angrily.

Sometimes there is no reasoning with the Argentines. Paraguayans refer to them as “Italians who speak bad Spanish.”

THEODORE WILKINSON
Deputy Political Counselor
Mexico City (1981-1984)

Chief Political Officer
Mexico City (1991-1994)

Born in Washington, DC in 1934, Theodore Wilkinson received a bachelor’s degree from Yale University and a master’s degree from George Washington University. In 1961, he joined the Foreign Service, serving in Venezuela, Sweden, Belgium, Mexico, Honduras, Brazil, and Washington, DC. Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

WILKINSON: Yes, that’s right, very similar situation. And I was offered a couple of posts in the Far East for which I would have had to learn the language, and the deputy political counselor in Mexico. And so, I said, “Well, you know, Mexico has always been... I’ve never been to Mexico. You now, 20 years in the Foreign Service and I’d never been to a neighbor country, except across

the border maybe once or twice to Tijuana when I was in the Navy, for no good purpose. And I incidentally had an ancestor named James Wilkinson, who died in Mexico City after conspiring with Aaron Burr to try to get Mexico away from-

Q: *Oh, yes. He was commander in chief of the army or something like that.*

WILKINSON: He was.

Q: *The big Mississippi Conspiracy.*

WILKINSON: That's right. He conspired with Aaron Burr, and sent Burr's letters to Jefferson. They were subpoenaed for Aaron Burr's treason trial, because he wrote to Jefferson in code, and Jefferson said, "I won't send them to you." And Marshall sustained him, which was the beginning of the doctrine of Executive Privilege, so he has his place in history. But Wilkinson died much later in Mexico City after writing that he didn't know why he was wasting his time in this "filthy, idolatrous place." Despite that, I decided that the Mexico assignment was the one that I wanted, and I went there in the summer of '81.

Q: *And you were there till when?*

WILKINSON: Till '84.

Q: *You were deputy political officer?*

WILKINSON: Deputy political counselor.

Q: *Counselor.*

WILKINSON: Yes, it's the deputy chief of the Political Section. And at that point I was freshly remarried. My divorce from Lee Ford was final in early '81. We had been separated for several years. And I married another Foreign Service officer, Xenia Vunovic, and she had to decide between going to Cairo as the peace negotiations officer which she was tentatively assigned to, or going to Mexico with me, and learning Spanish, with no Foreign Service job right away. She agonized over that but eventually decided to cast her lot with me. I called Bill Price, who was the acting DCM. He was political counselor, but he was acting as DCM at the time - and said, "When do we need to be there?" And he said August 3rd. So we had a five-day honeymoon that consisted of driving, being married on July 29th and driving five straight days to get to Mexico City by August 3rd, and my wife subsequently has asked herself a number of times whether she really made the right decision, because it was not fun doing a forced march for your honeymoon. Then we got there on August 2, and I came in duly the next morning and reported for duty, and Bill Price said, "Oh, you're here. Why are you here so early?" At which point I had to ask whether this was the profession that I wanted to be in.

But it was a fascinating three years. I very much enjoyed work in Mexico, and I did it twice, in fact. I went back again in 1991. I served from 1981 to '84 and again from '91 to '94. We'll come

back to that later.

Q: Well, now, could you talk about first the embassy and the atmosphere of the embassy and all and talk about what your job was?

WILKINSON: Sure, well, my first impression, not only was I not overjoyed coming to the embassy and find that I really didn't need to get there as fast as all that, but driving in to Mexico City late the previous day and running into an interminable traffic jam. Life in Mexico City is one set of traffic jams after another in which you are probably inhaling enough pollution to shorten your life considerably. Then going into the embassy's temporary quarters, which are pretty primitive - all of these things are not a great first impression. But I love Mexico, and I soon got over those. My wife took a little bit longer. She didn't know any Spanish, and she spent her first year in Mexico going to Spanish language training instead of working, and then at the end of the first year she got a job, all because the ambassador liked her and prevailed on USIA to give her a job as the exchanges officer. But Mexico City then and even now is kind of a nightmare from the standpoint of urban problems. People who served there in the '60s say it was the most wonderful place in the world, and I can believe it because that was before it got overgrown and overpopulated and over-polluted.

I came at the time of the Presidency of López Portillo, who was probably the last "dinosaur." "Dinosaurs" is what they call the PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, old-timers who grew up in the tradition where the PRI really ran the country and there wasn't any opposition, and elections were window dressing. The PRI candidate always won, and López Portillo was certainly one of those types. When Reagan was elected, for instance, he found a white stallion to give him as an election present, and what Reagan found a way to accept it, and they both seemed to understand each other very well. López Portillo lived that way. He built himself a gigantic estate on a hill over Mexico to which he retired, and his police chief had a similar estate in the south part of Mexico City, with a dog track and a race track and guest quarters for two or three hundred people, and houses all around the country. So corruption was . . . it wasn't even corruption - it was just understood that part of the income of the state was for leaders' private maintenance accounts. It was a different era in Mexico from what it is today.

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

WILKINSON: The ambassador was John Gavin. John Gavin had gotten there a few months before I did and was still feeling his way. As an ambassador, he was an amateur, fluent in Spanish, criticized by some of the Mexicans for having been doing rum commercials in Spanish in Mexico shortly before he became ambassador. The Mexicans are critical of anybody you name as ambassador. They're very fussy about their Americans. They don't like having Mexican-American *Chicanos*, and the previous ambassador had been a *Chicano*. Gavin wasn't a *Chicano*. His mother had Mexican and Spanish blood, and he spent his summers on a ranch in Sonora and learned the most . . . he could swear in Spanish better than anybody. His Spanish was very good, although the Spanish teachers in the embassy told me that he wasn't a 5/5 because he couldn't use the subjunctive. He didn't like that. He thought he was a 5/5. He was very vain.

I got along very well with him. I guess I fit his image of what a Foreign Service officer ought to be, because I could speak pretty good Spanish and I kind of liked to do things in a stylish way also, but you had to be very careful, because he took offense at the least slight. He was very protocol-conscious. And in the end... Well, he had a wonderful sense of humor. For instance, when he was testifying about his nomination, somebody said, "You're a movie actor. How can you expect to go and be an ambassador?" And he said, "Well, I've got 70,000 feet of movie tape, and I can't find anything in that tape that shows that I'm a particularly good actor." So he says, "Maybe I can be a better ambassador." And that got him a lot of points there. They liked that. Actually I think his best movie is one in Spanish called *Pedro Páramo*, and I think he is good in *Pedro Páramo*, which is a sort of magical realism Mexican epic.

Q: Did you run across or were there any repercussions because if I recall he went through a series of DCMs and had what is known in the corridors as "temple guards."

WILKINSON: Palace dogs? Yes. Temple dogs.

Q: Temple dogs.

WILKINSON: Yes, he did. You spoke to a lot of people. Well, he had a guy named Don Lyman that nobody liked, who had been an FSO a bit, led him through the confirmation process, was working on the Desk, and he liked Lyman because Lyman was good at flattering his ego, and also at playing on his paranoia, which was immense. And so he told Lyman, you know, "Quit the Foreign Service. I'll get you a double promotion and come down as an FSR" - you know, UN FS-5 - "you can come down and work as my staff aide. I'll make you an FSR-3." I think that's right. So he did, Lyman did that, and became the staff aide. Now, John French was his deputy chief of mission, who stayed for a year and left amicably, went on to be chargé in Cuba. And then George High came up from being DCM in Brazil and was there for a year, and he did not get along terribly well with Gavin, so he left after a little over a year and went back to be country director for Mexico, and that was pretty acceptable.

But the man who really suffered at Gavin's hands was Frank Crigler, who was the previous director of Mexican affairs, and Crigler and he just simply did not get along. I remember going with... Crigler came down and we made a trip together to southern Mexico, and then we came back, and he went in to debrief the ambassador and started to tell him how he ought to be running his embassy. And Gavin did not think that country directors in Washington told ambassadors how to run their embassies. He had this misguided feeling that he was the President's personal emissary. Incidentally, he was there from '81 to '86. He served five years. After three years, I was told that he got a call from someone in the White House, maybe the chief of staff, who called him and said, "Jack, your three years are up. It's time to leave." And he said, "Fine, just ask Ron to call me and tell me, and I'll leave." And of course, Reagan didn't do that, so he stayed two more years. That was his style, and he tried to operate that way with the Mexicans. He could be very, very arrogant. He was a great friend at first of Bernardo Sepúlveda's, the foreign minister. They got along beautifully. I had met Sepúlveda, and he was my contact at first, because this was before Miguel de la Madrid became president and Sepúlveda was his foreign affairs guy; but he wasn't cabinet level, so I was introduced to him by Gabriel Guerra, who was there before me and

who became ambassador in Chile, who knew Sepúlveda. Then Miguel de la Madrid became the *destapado*, nominee of the PRI for the presidency in 1981 or early '82, and the ambassador immediately said, "Well, this Sepúlveda is going to be the foreign minister, so he becomes my contact." Which is perfectly normal and natural. But later the relationship between these two very sensitive and arrogant people broke down, and after a couple of years, they just didn't talk to each other, the Mexican Foreign Ministry and our ambassador. And Gavin had difficulty with a lot of people because he tended to . . . he was charming and disarming and very good at telling stories, very good in small groups, but he did not like to work behind the scenes. When something wasn't going right - or even when it was going right and he wanted to make a record of it - he would go public. And that just... The Mexican press is barbaric, and would try to hack him to death. Anyway, if there was a disagreement, he would immediately start talking about it and the press would pick it up. Instead of trying to smooth it over and solve it, it usually got exacerbated when Gavin got his hands on it. That was a problem.

Q: Well, did you have a particular slice?

WILKINSON: I did, but let me go back to the palace dogs with Don Lyman. Eventually, after George High left, before his assignment was soon to be finished, there was a year before a new DCM would come, and it was proposed to have Perry Shankle, who was the political counselor, become the DCM, and I would become - Gavin told me - the political counselor. And something went sour during the summer of 1983. I don't know what, but Perry Shankle didn't get the job as the DCM, and it was in fact left vacant for a while, and then Don Lyman moved into it, first *de facto*, and then by name. He was actually designated as the acting DCM until a new DCM would arrive in the summer of 1984. It was Roger Gamble, who eventually arrived a year later. And I think during that time Don Lyman - of course Perry was disappointed; I was disappointed; but practically everybody else in the embassy was angry, because Lyman was such a conniving, devious person. You couldn't trust him to tell the ambassador what was going on. He would give the ambassador a different version of what was actually happening, which would pander to either his vanity or, as I mentioned earlier, his paranoia. And so it was a very unhappy period.

Q: Hoo boy. Well, did you find that the embassy -

WILKINSON: After Gavin left, of course, Lyman disappeared and when to work for IBM in Florida and has never come close to the State Department since.

Q: Well, did you find when you have a situation like this, a bureaucracy often adjusts and you start moving around, in a way you're kind of doing the same thing except you're almost - it sounds bad, but I don't mean it that way - almost unplugging the ambassador and his DCM, but you go ahead and carry on the business of the embassy?

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: Or did things just stop?

WILKINSON: No. No, life went on. The embassy didn't cease to function to a certain degree.

Well, let's leave that and talk about substance, which really. . . I don't think it had a great deal of effect on the external face of the embassy, except, as I mentioned earlier, Gavin's relationship with the Mexicans was not good. During that whole period the U.S. bilateral relationship with Mexico suffered as a result. We had a habit, I discovered, and I've seen it repeatedly in Mexico but since then in Brazil and other countries, that we're always at the peak of our relationship bilaterally and last year wasn't perfect, but it's for that reason, although last year we were supposedly also at the peak. During those years I don't think we were even saying we were at the peak. And one of the principal reasons for our difficulties with Mexico was the Central American situation. And almost immediately after I got to Mexico in the summer of '81 - in fact on August 28th, three weeks later - the Mexicans completely surprised us with a joint declaration, developed with the new Mitterrand Government in France, new since the spring of 1981, that the rebels in Salvador were - they were declaring them - a legitimate political force, and in fact, recognizing a state of insurgency in legal terms in Salvador, giving political and legal recognition to the rebellion, which, of course, was totally in contrast to the American position. Even at the end of the Carter Administration we were not very sympathetic to either the political or the military elements of the insurgency in Salvador, and of course, *a fortiori*, during the Reagan Administration we were totally aligned with what was at that point increasingly conservative military. Well, Duarte plus were a military government. And so the Mexicans were, in effect, in full knowledge, taking a different position from the United States, facing us down, and seeking the support of the French. We found out later that, in fact, it was Jorge Castañeda, Jr., the son of López Portillo's foreign minister, who had drafted that declaration during a visit to Paris in the spring - the Castañeda who is now very recognized author about Latin American affairs, a professor at Princeton. And so it started in the fall of 1981, Mexico was, in effect, telling us we were wrong about Central American, telling us that the rebels knew what they were doing and that they were trying to get rid of corruption, and that they were not proxies for the Cubans or the Russians, that they were independent. They were casting serious doubt on the argument which was being made by John Glassman, my predecessor in my job in Mexico, who had gone down to Salvador on leaving Mexico and found documents which he claimed, in a white paper which was published by the State Department, showed that Cuba was supporting the revolution in Salvador. This white paper was subsequently shown to be not very well put together, and Glassman was, in fact, named as the subject of a weeklong series of Doonesbury cartoons, in which he's questioned about his sources for the paper and Trudeau mocks his answers. Anyway, whatever the truth of the matter may have been about the extent of Cuban support for the revolution in Salvador, it was a big issue between us and Mexico and continued to be a big issue throughout my few years in Mexico at this time. And with your permission, I would like to come back to that.

Q: All right. Let me put it here. We're in the midst of talking about your time 1981-84 as a deputy political counselor in Mexico. We've talked about the Gavin rule and the problems with Ambassador Gavin, and we've just started talking about the political situation in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and we'll continue that. Of that, you've talked about the joint French and Mexican recognition of the rebel movement there, and so when we pick this up, we'll continue to talk about that. One question I would like to ask at this time, which we'll answer when we get together again, is how did you find the Mexican Foreign Ministry as a foreign office? What did they call it?

WILKINSON: The Chancery, the Mexican Foreign Ministry.

Q: Foreign Ministry - because I've heard again and again that whereas basic relations with the United States and Mexico are going rather nicely, in foreign affairs it used to be the place where you could really show that you were sticking it to the colossus to the north.

WILKINSON: It's funny, you know, I just underlined what I was going to talk about next, and it was exactly that.

Q: Ted, if I recall, the last thing I mentioned was how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Foreign Ministry or whatever they called it - what did they?

WILKINSON: Well, they often call it Tlatelolco, because that's where it sits in the middle of Mexico City in what was the old center of Tenochtitlan, the lake where the Aztec civilization centered.

Q: Well, anyway, it's the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

WILKINSON: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Q: About dealing with them.

WILKINSON: It's not hard to see why there were differences between our outlooks because most of the people in the Mexican Foreign Ministry tend to be aristocrats of long Mexican heritage. Many of them have parents and grandparents who have been foreign ministers, so it's very much of an elite group that runs the Foreign Ministry, and they get very angry at being lectured by Americans because they think they're better educated. And not only that, they're educated in the tradition that goes back to post-revolutionaries Vazconcelos and Lázaro Cárdenas, who was heavily influenced by socialists in the '20s and '30s, and certainly the Marxist element in Mexican education has always been highly influential, at least until quite recently. Things are changing in Mexico, not only with NAFTA but before NAFTA. So a major part of my job in Mexico was trying to interpret the Mexican attitudes, to show logical ways to take the emotionalism out of it, why they differed with us and how, if necessary or if possible, we could accommodate these differences. Where Mexicans, I think, differed with us particularly was on Central American policy in the early '80s because, as I mentioned last time, they did not believe that the revolution in Salvador was being supplied principally by Cuba and the Soviet Union. They thought it was more home-grown. They also took strong exception to what was becoming increasingly public in the early '80s, which was our assistance to the *Contras* - first of all, Argentine assistance and then eventually American assistance in the early '80s to the *Contras* to overthrow the Sandinistas. And they thought they knew more about Central America than we did. In fact, I don't think the Mexicans knew very much about Central America at all. When I served there later, I never saw a Mexican come to visit. There were thousands of Americans who came through Central America to try to find out what was going on, and Mexicans assumed they knew

it *a priori* from the fact that they were fellow Latin Americans, but they never came down to doing the on-the-ground research with possibly one exception, and that was a man that I think very highly of named Adolfo Aguilar, who is now a maverick opposition senator in the Mexican Senate but at that time was a young research director at the Third World Institute, which was run by Luis Echeverría in Mexico City and whom I often talked to and visited with.

Q: In the first place, you were in Mexico from when to when? I just-

WILKINSON: Oh, I'm sorry. I went there in the summer of '81 and I stayed there till 1984, and then later I came back and served another three years in the early '90s, but we'll come back to that.

Q: Well, in '81-84, was there a feeling at this time in the Political Section of trying to separate, you might say, the Foreign Ministry attitude and maybe the attitude of the elite from the middle class or other areas, doing polls or something, about where things stood vis-à-vis the United States? Or did you feel that (1) it wasn't important what, you might say, the middle class or the low class felt, or (2) really they were all in line?

WILKINSON: Well, I think it certainly was important to try to capture public sentiment in Mexico and separate it from the elite opinion with regard to bilateral issues between the U.S. and Mexico, where for instance, the basis for the ultimate decision of Raúl Salinas later to join the free trade area with the U.S. and Canada. It was a courageous departure from traditional Mexican elite thinking, which was basically you need to go it alone because otherwise you'll get swallowed by the U.S.

But Mexico's foreign policy was designed and run by the elite, and the polls really never showed any deviation in popular opinion with what their leaders were telling them, because that's what the public line was and they accepted it.

Q: You were saying, would you-

WILKINSON: Yes, I was talking a little bit about Mexican attitudes toward Central American, the domination by the elite of Mexican foreign policy, how it differed from ours, our attitudes. I was using the explanations of Adolfo Aguilar, who simply said Mexico is dominated by the U.S. from the north and has a long frontier, which can be crossed any time by American forces, but it's never been surrounded by Americans. If the U.S. were to become directly involved militarily in Central America, Mexico would have American military on both sides of it and would feel even more vulnerable and weak, and for that reason Mexico didn't want to see any greater U.S. involvement, certainly not any military involvement by the United States in Central America, regardless of the reasons of the uprisings from both the left and the right. At any rate, this was clearly the underlying rationale of Mexican foreign policy for the entire period that I was there, and what began with an effort to line up support from other countries in the declaration that Mexico made with France in 1991, recognizing the legitimacy of the insurgency in Salvador, evolved into what was called the Contadora Group. The Contadora Group lasted for some years. It was an attempt to consolidate the mainstream of Latin American thinking, to seek to conciliate,

and in many respects to provide a counterweight to what Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and eventually others thought was an overbearing and perhaps misguided American policy in Central America.

Q: Again, going back to this '81-84 period, how influential did we see Mexico in the Latin American sphere. Again, I've never served there, but I've sort of had the feeling that Mexico was considered sort of "North American" by a lot of the rest of the continent, in a way sort of overbearing and really not a player by the Southern Hemisphere.

WILKINSON: No, I don't really think that's true. I think even today there is a persistent Latin American identity which resists American attempts to unify the hemisphere and produce common positions which we've been pursuing in the Clinton Administration summit meetings; and the Latins have their own - what used to be the Contadora Group has now become the Rio Group - and even today the Mexican influence within that group is quite important, and Mexicans are recognized as perhaps elitist but also as very skilled and adept diplomats. And so I don't think Mexico's influence is discounted. Now, of course, Mexico doesn't carry quite the same weight as Brazil.

At any rate, Mexicans then certainly had a considerable diplomatic influence in the Latin American groups and they tried to provide this - they almost desperately cast around for support in resisting American intervention.

Q: Well, how did you view our dealing with the Foreign Ministry? Was it sort of a dialogue with the deaf when you were involved there?

WILKINSON: Well, since I did most of the foreign affairs business for the Political Section, most of the bilateral business, I saw my role as interpreting to Washington why there was a logic to Mexican points of view, and the Washington attitude, particularly during the Reagan Administration - it exists even now - was the Mexicans are only useful when they're on our side and when they understand the rightness of the American position, and the rest of the time they're crazy and irrelevant. I tried to show why the Mexicans were neither crazy nor irrelevant, to the point where I was told that I was getting a reputation as an advocate for the Mexican point of view, whatever it was. We at this point were paying lip service to the efforts of the Contadora Group and eventually also the Central American presidents, in a series of meetings that they had beginning at Esquipulas in the mid-'80s, to solve the Central American problems themselves, and to develop a Latin American solution that would basically conciliate both sides, whereas Washington saw the only right course as an absolute rejection of communism in the hemisphere and defeat of the rebels in Salvador and victory by *Contra* insurgents in Nicaragua. So in order to deal with this situation, the administration appointed a series of special ambassadors; Dick Stone, Harry Shlaudeman, and Phil Habib served in turn as special American ambassadors for Central America, and they came through and attempted to woo the individual Foreign Ministries, including Mexicans, away from these solidarity expressions of the Contadora Group - with very little success. Our position was somewhat... I may have mentioned last time that our own argument that these régimes and rebels in Central America were being fueled and encouraged by the Communists was somewhat undermined by faulty intelligence, which was eventually

discredited, claiming that we had proof that large arms shipments were coming in from Cuba. The intelligence just wasn't very good and wasn't sustainable.

Q: Well, talking about intelligence, a question I often ask, did you find as you were going sort of what was coming out of the CIA, particularly in dealing with Central America, was this of any use, or how did you all feel about what was...?

WILKINSON: Neither the CIA nor my predecessor, John Glassman, who was in Central America, nor any other document that I ever saw produced strong evidence that there was significant Soviet or Cuban involvement in Central America. So from the intelligence standpoint, we really weren't able to document this convincingly, but of course the Reagan Administration, Reagan himself, said we must beware of the situation where we had what he called "feet people" - not boat people, but feet people - arriving in the United States being driven out by political instability caused by Communist leftist insurgencies. So it was more a political issue than an intelligence question that we were debating with the Mexicans. And in the end, 10 years after all of this passed, one has to wonder to what extent both sides exaggerated the importance of the issues, and what real national interests of either the U.S. or Mexico were involved.

Q: Were there problems within Mexico, or ones we were concerned about, by being that "feet people," people leaving Nicaragua or El Salvador and coming up into Mexico to get away from the fighting, or not? Was this causing any problem there?

WILKINSON: Not really in Mexico, because they tended to go right through Mexico as fast as they could. There were a few people that stayed in Mexico, and of course the Mexicans don't like refugees. Nobody wants a bunch of refugees, but they were willing to accept a limited number of Central American who wanted to stay in Mexico but not very willingly. The UNHCR had an office there, and there were tensions between it and Gobernación, the Interior Ministry that handled internal security.

Q: Well, did we have any feel for were the Mexicans sort of saying, "Be our guest, and there's the way to the north," and just sort of opening up, or was it a problem?

WILKINSON: We could never prove that they pushed Central Americans out of Mexico and into the United States. We did debate from time to time whether they couldn't control better the northward flows of Mexicans, who constitute a far greater influx - a hundred Mexicans for any one Central American that might come into the United States illegally - and the Mexicans would always tell you that their constitution precludes any controls on movements by Mexicans leaving the country, which is from a legal standpoint certainly correct. Politically, whether they could have done anything more, it's debatable, but of course any attempt to discourage emigration to the United States, which provides a major source of income to Mexicans then and now and takes pressure off unemployment, would be politically disastrous, so no Mexican has understandably never accepted that kind of proposal. And we haven't, to be fair, pushed them to do something that would be so difficult.

Q: Yes. Coming back to reporting you were doing, and this was a time of high ideology,

particularly in the early part of the Reagan Administration and with John Gavin as ambassador, did you feel any constraints, or maybe your colleagues, about what you could report about political positions of the Mexicans, or was this not a problem?

WILKINSON: Never, never. To the credit of John Gavin and all others who... I never felt any constraints, and I always felt that John Gavin understood and supported what I was doing. I did have an interesting series of interviews with the former chief of state of El Salvador, a man, an army colonel named Adolfo Majano, who had been the head of a *junta* that took power along with Duarte in late '80. In 1981, Majano had to flee the country for his life because there were conservative elements in the military who were concerned that he was too liberal, too willing to talk to the political wing of the guerillas, so one night there was an assassination attempt, and he was told that if he didn't get out of the country he would be dead. But he came to Mexico and wanted to talk to the embassy, and I spent four or five long evenings with him similar to the kinds of conversations we're having, going through his history and what his attitudes were about what was going on in Salvador. I took a lot of notes and reported them - which caused angry cable comments from Dean Hinton's people in San Salvador, saying that Majano was telling lies, that none of the stories I reported from him was true. The embassy in Salvador was super-protective of the reputations of these people, the military, who were controlling Duarte in El Salvador at the time. And Majano, for instance, would talk about the "nun's case" as a travesty that the Salvandoran military should be ashamed of.

Q: These are nuns who were raped and killed and buried.

WILKINSON: Talk about things like that and you want an independent accounting of this kind of incident in Salvadoran history, and the embassy in Salvador was very upset that this kind of information was filtering in to another place that might be used to raise questions about our absolute support for the governing *junta*.

Q: Of course. I mean, this is of course the problem, the political atmosphere in the United States being what it is, if you do report that, it will reach parties who will be opposed to whatever we're doing, and you're caught in a dilemma. How much do you report? I mean, there's always selective reporting in the post, because they can't report overly on corruption and things; otherwise, you might lose complete support, and so when a post from outside comes in with a perfectly valid independent report, it becomes a tool of the opposition, in a way. I'm not saying it's a good thing to be concerned about this, but it's a fact of political life.

WILKINSON: Well, that's right, and the question, I think, was... The legitimate question is, How much reporting about what's going on in one country should one be doing from another post. I was reporting about an issue of current importance in Washington, but from their perspective, it wasn't necessarily welcome, either in Salvador or perhaps also in ARA.

I guess I achieved a certain amount of notoriety in Mexico in 1981 and 1982 because in 1983 Excelsior, at that point the largest and most widely read Mexican newspaper, a columnist named Manuel Buendía one day surprisingly put a front page article in about me as the head of the CIA operations, not only in Mexico but throughout Central America. He had pulled together all kinds

of evidence to support this, including the fact that I often went visiting other ministries, and not just the Foreign Ministry, where I ought to be, and how I pretended not to speak Spanish as well as I actually did, and how I lived in the south and had a big house with lots of parties - which of course wasn't true - at least, I didn't live in the south, etc. And this caused quite a stir, and the ambassador after that arranged that our house have 24-hour police protection. And later that day, I guess, Steve Solarz was coming, and I called the ex-president's office, López Portillo had left office, I called his office to make an arrangement for a meeting with Congressman Solarz, and when I called back later in the day, López Portillo's spokesman said the ex-president said I shouldn't worry about what was in the press about me because the same thing had happened to him in the Mexican press, and you see, any good person could be excoriated by the Mexican press, including me, just like him. That made me feel good.

Q: Usually, these articles don't just happen. It sounds like there's something behind it, either to discredit, disinformation, or - did you ever try to figure out what was behind this?

WILKINSON: Well, it's a funny story, sort of tragic in the end because Buendía was murdered a year later, a few weeks before we left Mexico for good. Some friends even made bad jokes like: you had to get out, didn't you? Buendía was murdered by a short man on a motorcycle, and probably because of a story that he was supposedly about to print about high-level corruption. However, one of his pet subjects was the CIA, and he also had from time to time in the past exposed other people who were allegedly involved with the CIA, so I wasn't the first, and he published a book called *The CIA in Mexico*, which has a series of articles about alleged CIA operations and operatives. I suspect that he got information about me from a friend named Luís Ortíz Monasterio, who was the head in the Interior Ministry for refugees, who subsequently told me that he was a friend of Buendía's and he'd like me to meet the man, but Buendía must have drawn the CIA connection himself. I believe Luís new better. I saw a lot of Luís Ortiz Monasterio because he was the director for refugees in Mexico, and that brings me to another topic I'd like to talk a little bit about.

Q: Okay, but while we're still on the foreign affairs side, I can't remember the last time - did Grenada or the Malvinas, the Falklands, come up?

WILKINSON: Indeed, and it's very good that you mentioned them. Mexico was an interesting case in the Malvinas situation because Mexico and Argentina are opposite poles in the hemisphere. Argentina was still under military rule, obviously, very conservative and very suspicious of the Mexicans. The Mexicans, in turn, thought the Argentines were clumsy and stupid and that they had committed a gross stupidity in the Malvinas. They never said anything publicly, but privately they sympathized, I think, with the British. Mexico was certainly one country where Argentina didn't get much support. Similarly, to their credit, they didn't make a big fuss about our intervention in Grenada, which took place in close to the same time frame. They told us privately that they understood the situation, and they concurred that it was a case where the whole hemisphere might come down on our heads publicly, but the criticism would be insincere, pro forma stuff.

Q: Yes, well, then, moving on to this other side of things...

WILKINSON: Well, I was going to mention, actually it's another sort of foreign policy issue, where early in the time that I was in Mexico, the southern state of Chiapas, which subsequently became notorious for the rebellion of the Zapatistas, but that was later. The state of Chiapas was invaded by hordes of Guatemalan refugees - *hordes* I say, I think at the peak there were 50,000 or more who had come to Mexico. There would have been a lot more except for the fact that they were all getting killed in Guatemala. And the true story of what happened in Guatemala in that period is just now becoming public. In fact, there's a story in today's *Washington Post* about the report of the truth commission, which was established by the peace agreement between the rebels and the government in Guatemala last year. And the truth commission report says that probably 200,000 people died, principally Mayan Indians that live in the highlands and were being systematically eliminated by the military government of Guatemala under a general named Ríos Montt, who set up a campaign called "Beans or Bullets," *Fusiles o Frijoles*, under which either you joined the government forces and put your flag up in front of your village and created a local defense force which would go out and hunt the guerillas, or you would be exterminated. There was a pretty serious campaign, and so many, many Guatemalan refugees, bemused and bewildered by all of this, just took to the hills and eventually migrated to Mexico after wandering around homeless for weeks. And of course, American refugee policy, but more generally American foreign policy interests were involved in this, as they are in all diasporas like that, and so we followed the situation very closely, and I spent a lot of time with the refugee people, including the head of it, arranging for international visitors to go down and talk to these people and find out what was happening to them.

Q: Well, were you running across somewhat the same problem that you had with El Salvador, and that was that as one found out what was happening, we were supporting the military rule in Guatemala mainly because of our Central American policy there and they didn't want to hear what was going on.

WILKINSON: Yes, there was a distinction there, and it's an interesting one. The situation in Guatemala never became a domestic political issue in the United States to the extent that Salvador and Nicaragua did, and I think it was partly because the Guatemalans were so blatantly involved in repression and in ways that alienated Washington to the point where we had cut off military assistance, largely because of human rights issues. And although there was still a lot of military-to-military liaison. I remember that our ambassador, Fred Chapin, complained bitterly that CINCSOUTH General Gorman had been pursuing military cooperation, even visiting Guatemala without his knowledge even after as a policy matter we had cut off military cooperation, so that the military links died last and died hardest. We had begun to distance ourselves already from the Guatemalan military, but it was never clear, even to the Mexicans in that era, exactly what was going on in the highlands. These Mayan Indians were incapable of communicating anything clear to anybody. Luís told me, I remember once, that when he asked them how long they had been wandering around in the hills, they couldn't tell you how many days they had been; it was how many moons they had been in the highlands. So they came illiterate, not speaking Spanish, only various obscure dialects of Mayan that made it very hard to communicate with them. I remember taking Doc Long, our congressman from Maryland. Some years back he was active on the State Appropriations Committee, a very important congressman,

who wanted to visit, and I went down to Chiapas with him to see the refugees. The Mexicans arranged for him to talk to a group of these Indians in a school house along the river border between Mexico and Guatemala. Old Doc Long begins by telling them in English a story, a League of Women Voters type joke, which I had to translate into Spanish, and of course most of them didn't even understand the Spanish after I had translated it, and at the end I said, "Now, for God's sake, please laugh." Or do something, show some animation, because the congressman has just told a story. And I could see that about five out of 50 understood even that! So the communication with these people in the forests of Chiapas was very difficult.

Q: Well, now. When you were dealing with Mexico, I realize you were dealing with external affairs. Now you were in the Political Section. At this time, '81-84, was there any feeling about two elements that seemed to be in place, and that is, the problem of Chiapas and some of the poor southern areas and a feeling of disconnect with the central government, and also the northern tier of Mexican states, where they almost are looking more north than south. Were we looking at that?

WILKINSON: Sure, really there are three Mexicos: the northern, what is sometimes called *Borderlandia*, where Tex-Mex food prevails on both sides of the frontier, and people's main source of income is in the States and their place of residence is in Mexico, where they either cross daily or they cross for a couple of months and then come back in the winter as long as they can do it legally and, as often as not, illegally; and then there's the sort of Central Highlands, which is the heart of the old Aztec kingdom of Mexico, which is still very different from the United States, with an aristocracy that is very fiercely proud, educated, sophisticated, with some landowners (although large estates are prohibited); and then there's the poor, largely rural, Indian south. And so every time you talk about Mexico, you really have to look at it in the context of what region you're talking about. Regionalism is more prevalent in a large country like the United States than in a small one, but in Mexico it's even more prevalent because of the isolation of some parts of the country, which have never been exposed to centralized government in the sense that we know it.

Q: What about your contact with the PRI? What was our feeling, that this was the way Mexico is and always will be and we deal with it as the permanent revolutionary party, or were we looking for other parties, the PAN or what have you, that might give a different cast to our relations?

WILKINSON: In the elections in the '80s and even through the early '90s the most important, the most significant party of the opposition was the PAN in national elections, a conservative party, a little to the right of the PRI, very nationalist, but from an economic standpoint less Marxist, and traditionally got 15 to 20 percent of the vote. And parties of the left collectively got 10 percent. And so, if you were looking at the possibility of an eventual bipolarization of Mexican politics, it looked as if the PRI would become the more liberal, probably more to the left, and the PAN would become the more conservative party. That's not necessarily true any more with the opposition on the left apparently gaining significantly. It now holds the mayorship of Mexico and it's won a couple of governorships. But in the early '80s, the PRI was still very dominant, and its dominance was, I would guess, 80 percent, simply because it was a monolithic party that had learned how to coopt leaderships and retain their loyalty and obtain the loyalty of

the people. Let's speculate that the other 20 percent of the PRI's election victories came from ballot box stuffing and other election distortions. Sure there was some of that, particularly to make sure they never lost a gubernatorial election, but I don't think they ever, in fact, came close to losing a national election, even if the elections had been 100 percent squeaky clean, until perhaps 1988. But even in the early '80s, there were people who wanted to modernize the PRI and make it a genuinely democratic party and not just an institution. It's called the Revolutionary Institutional Party, but today it is much more institutional than revolutionary. There are people that want to make it a grassroots organization instead of one, which depends on controlling labor from the top and working in cooperation with business. Because they can't afford to alienate the party in power, the biggest businessmen have tended to cooperate with the PRI. One PRI leader, the international affairs secretary of the party - he was another HHH like Hubert Humphrey: Humberto Hernández Haddad - asked me for all the information about our absentee voting so that Mexicans in the United States and elsewhere could vote in an election, which the Mexicans don't have absentee voting. Eventually when he talked with the rest of the PRI, to the so-called "dinosaurs", the old people in the PRI, the conservative traditionalists, they said, "No, because more of the absentees would vote for the opposition. We don't want that, God forbid. They left for the United States because they don't like the PRI. I mean they left Mexico, so if they don't like it here, they'll vote for the opposition." So there was always a struggle within the PRI between those who wanted to modernize the party and make it more responsive and those who believed that modernization would erode their own control and perhaps their livelihoods.

Q: Well, our policy over the years has been to promote democracy, and here you had this government which, at least, oh there were, you mentioned, other forces going there. You did have ballot box stuffing and controls. Was there any effort during this time or concern about reporting about how Mexico, the governing party controlled things and preaching democracy and more democracy, or not, or were we just sort of saying, Well, this is the way it is, and let's not rock the boat?

WILKINSON: Well, I think there was actually more of the preaching and more efforts to democratize the process in the '90s than there were in the '80s. Once the process had begun in Mexico, the United States jumped on the bandwagon and encouraged it to accelerate and encouraged all the people who were promoting it. To have done so in the '80s, certainly in the López Portillo Administration, and even in the one that followed it, de la Madrid, would have been taken by the Mexican press as domestic intervention, and that was verboten. Frankly, think that the elections were democratic enough so that it would have been gilding the lily to go in and complain about local vote tampering. Mexico was, after all, a slightly different state from ours, but there's no question that the people chose their government.

Q: Well, Ted, is there anything else we should discuss about Mexico before we move on?

WILKINSON: Well, I had a couple of other notes. I got to know Ex-President Luís Echeverría a little bit, and subsequently, on my next tour, saw him from time to time. I think I've already talked about John Gavin. One other person who subsequently became notorious and ill-fated. That was Rick Ames, whom I knew quite well at the time. He worked, in name, under my supervision in the Political Section in Mexico. He was working under Political Section cover and

actually had some regular assignments with us. He was in the process of a divorce. I had gotten to know his eventual second wife, Rosario, before he did, and I might have even introduced them to each other at one of the monthly diplomatic corps luncheons. I certainly knew them both and thought very highly of Rosario. She was the Colombian cultural attaché, and she was one of the few women diplomats from other Latin countries serving in Mexico, and certainly one of the most intelligent and articulate ones, and I thought it was a terrible tragedy that the two of them got involved in what they did get involved in after they married and came to the U.S.

Q: Could you explain to somebody who doesn't know about the Ames situation?

WILKINSON: Well, it's public knowledge, Ames, after leaving Mexico, allegedly became an agent or was being paid by richly by the Soviets to expose information about CIA spies. He's now serving a life sentence. I remember once having gone out to dinner with him and Rosario and one other couple here in Washington in about 1988, to an expensive Mexican restaurant. Rick was being very expansive - more so than seemed necessary - and insisted on paying for all six of us. The incident seemed odd enough to me to come back to my recollection five years later when we learned that he'd been a spy. And needless to say that after this period in Mexico when we knew them well and were quite fond of them, we were upset that this happened.

Q: Well, then, you left Mexico in 1984.

WILKINSON: A process that's very different from Mexico City, because here, obviously, we were dealing with, if you will, a client state. Mexico certainly is not a client state. We might be able to overwhelm Mexico economically, but we can't push them around, and the few occasions when we've tried to do that we've had to send troops in, and that's left a bitter legacy in Mexico.

Then another anecdote involves my relationship with John Gavin when he was ambassador to Mexico and when I was serving there from 1981 to 1984, actually before he went down there he was still having his briefings, Gavin came in to see Assistant Secretary Jim Malone, and Jim Malone was rather new to the job, but one of his responsibilities was peaceful nuclear matters, and we had a discussion going on with Mexico about how we would interrelate with the building of their reactors. They had two peaceful nuclear reactors under construction in the Veracruz area, and because they respected the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they thought they should get favorable benefits and treatment and that we should be willing to negotiate with them on a number of issues like assurances that we would always provide them enriched uranium fuel. So Malone told Gavin, in effect, give them a public line that "of course, we'll give them everything they ask for" and then privately don't do it. Words to that effect. In other words, he was telling Gavin to string the Mexicans along. And Gavin said, "That's not the way I operate. I want the Mexicans to say, '*Este es un hombre sincero.*'" I remembered that exchange later-

Q: "This is a man of honor?"

WILKINSON: "I am a man of honor." So I remembered this, and as Gavin had a little farewell lunch for me and my wife, both of whom had worked in the embassy, and when I got up to reply to his toast, I said I'd have to remember that he came down here with the intention of being seen by the Mexicans as an honest man. In fact, he even said, "*Yo soy un hombre sincero*." And I guess you would add the words, "*de donde crece la palma*," which is the lyric from the song "*Guantanamera*," because he was from California. But I neglected to add at the end of that what I wanted to say, but my wife precluded me from saying, which was that Gavin was known as one of the more handsome movie actors around, and he really doesn't [want] me to stay in Mexico any longer because I'm the only person in the embassy who's tall enough to see his bald spot. And when I told my wife I was going to say that, she said, "If you persist in that, I'm getting out of this car right now and will not go into that building with you." So I never said that. So much for Mexico.

Q: *All right. You were there from '91 to when?*

WILKINSON: To '94.

Q: *All right, can you tell me how you got the job, what you did, and let's talk about Mexico in '91?*

WILKINSON: Great. Okay, I had hoped at the end of my AFSA tour to get a job as a deputy chief of mission. Several appeared to be open and available. One was in Lima, Peru, and I at one point thought that I was in running for that job but something strange happened - to this day, I don't know what - and Ambassador Tony Quainton stopped contact with me, at which point an opening occurred in Argentina, and Ed Perkins, the Director General, tried very hard with Terry Todman, to help me get that job, but again, Todman had his own choice. So I was given the option at John Negroponte's invitation to come back to Mexico and work as his minister counselor for political affairs. And although from a career standpoint that didn't seem as good an option as the DCM jobs, it certainly was an attractive offer because we liked Mexico and because I knew Negroponte and thought I would be able to work as well with him in that job as I had in the past. The man who was the political counselor who preceded me in that job was, again, the person who had preceded me at the OES Bureau in 1986, Allan Sessoms, who in the meantime had been science counselor in Paris and then minister counselor for political affairs in Mexico. And Negroponte had arranged for him to be promoted to be deputy chief of mission. So he stayed in Mexico and I came to Mexico to take his place as Political Section chief. The first thing that I ran into in coming to Mexico, unfortunately, was that the house that usually had been the political counselor's was being occupied by Sessoms, and there was no house available for me, which normally didn't need to be a problem. I was free to go out on the market and find one, which the embassy would pay for, but the new regulations that had just gone into effect put not only a money limitation but a space limitation on the type of housing that we could have, and I ran into tremendous difficulties finding a decent house that fit those space qualifications. So that's merely an administrative problem; everybody goes through it, but the Foreign Buildings

Association office...

Q: What happened to the DCM house?

WILKINSON: The DCM house had been, when it was emptied by the previous incumbent, Bob Pastorino, the embassy had determined that it was too expensive and they gave it up, so there was nothing available for me when I arrived. This went on for six months. One house after another was proposed, and then either my wife didn't like it or it was too expensive or it was too big, and FBO was being particularly tough because the embassy had already gotten a waiver for the commercial counselor, who was a previous undersecretary of Commerce, Roger Wallace, who had gotten a large and expensive house, violating the precepts, and they weren't going to allow any more exceptions for Mexico. So I ended up being a guinea pig for the new and very strict regulations. And finally my wife spoke to Diana Negroponte about it, saying this is an intolerable situation, which made Negroponte angry because she was using the "wives channel," and it made our reentry into Mexico very difficult. Compounding this was, after five months in temporary quarters, we came home on Saturday night and were held up at gun point, being robbed of our car and our money and everything we had in the car on the street, and in the street only a few blocks from the embassy and right across the street from the residence of the foreign minister. We got the car back. The ambassador brought it up with the foreign minister, but again, it was a difficult passage.

Q: What was the political setup in Mexico at that time, '91?

WILKINSON: Well, it's interesting the change. Mexico was modernizing, although not yet part of the North American Free Trade Area. The influence of American market culture had pervaded, so that there were supermarkets with everything on the shelves that you could find in American supermarkets, much more so than 10 years earlier. But apart from society and culture, our relationship with Central America was no longer an issue between the United States and Mexico, and Communism was no longer an issue. The Soviet Bloc was either disintegrating or had completely disintegrated. The Soviet Union was about to disintegrate when we got there. Mexican relations with Cuba were still an irritant, but not anywhere near as difficult an irritant as Mexican relationships with Central America had been in the previous decade. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the president, had made the decision, courageous decision, for Mexico to negotiate a broadening of the Free Trade Area that had already been agreed between the U.S. and Canada. Mexico having rejected the idea of a free trade area with the United States before Salinas, reversed course under Salinas to embrace the idea and to want to negotiate it. The negotiations were already underway when we got there. I think Salinas certainly understood, as most educated Mexicans did, the economic consequences of the NAFTA, that it would subject Mexicans' antiquated or archaic ways of doing business to much more modern competition, which would have a negative impact on some old, established ways, but in the long run would benefit Mexico economically, revitalize its economy. Whether Salinas also understood fully the social consequences, I wonder, because the social consequences are really more hard to perceive, and they're still being played out, even today, five or six years later, inasmuch as the sort of rural peasant economy, which constitutes still a major part of Mexican society, can't survive the competition from modern American agriculture. There was no way that the inefficient production

of corn and beans and staples in the Mexican countryside can economically continue to exist when foreign basic commodities can enter free from the United States at costs which are well below the cost of production in Mexico. So the result socially is a tremendously accelerated migration from the country to the towns and ultimately also out to the States. It had been going on for a long time, but it accelerated in the mid-'90s, and it's still very high. Everything the Mexicans did diplomatically was through the NAFTA optic. The U.S. could have rejected it. It was an uncertain time for America participation in NAFTA. It was by no means certain that it would be approved. Ross Perot, running in the 1992 election, garnered almost 20 percent of the U.S. vote, which showed how strong the anti-NAFTA sentiment was. Taking this into account, newly elected President Clinton insisted on two additional conditions for the North American Free Trade Area which he felt were essential in order to get the agreement through Congress. There should be provisions to ensure minimum labor standards in Mexico, and there must be provisions on the environment. Both of these features were not in the original agreement to the extent that the new administration wanted them, and they were difficult for Mexico and Canada to accept. And even when they were negotiated in mutually acceptable ways, it wasn't clear that it would be enough to get the agreement through the U.S. Congress. So during that entire period when I was in Mexico, from 1991 to 1994, the uncertainty of NAFTA approval by the U.S. guaranteed us high-level access whenever we needed it in the Mexican administration in ways that we had never really perhaps had in dealing with the proud and nationalistic Mexican Government in years gone by. Because of Salinas' commitment to succeeding with NAFTA, they were very tractable most of the time and on most issues.

Q: Well, I was just wondering, I've just finished reading a book about a recent ambassador to Canada, James Glatcher, and he talks about the Canadian bureaucracy. You have your political leaders, but you have your Canadian bureaucracy who had been fighting, you might say, their own particular battle, which was to sort of put the Americans in their place, and that administrations came and administrations went, but these bureaucrats were continuing to fight the battle - it was basically anti-American - and stop anything from happening. So it was very difficult for the political leaders in the Canadian Government to bypass them. Did you see a comparable set of bureaucrats within the Mexican Government?

WILKINSON: No. I didn't, and I think the difference - I don't know Canada, but I suspect the difference is that the PRI mechanism in Mexico is powerful enough and exercises enough political control so that recalcitrant bureaucrats are crushed. There were no recalcitrant bureaucrats. A political decision had been made, and if there was any problem in implementing it, we could get to the political level to solve it. We didn't have any trouble with second-level officials who wanted to block it. There may have been some. There may have even been some who recognized that it was going to be not a certain blessing for Mexico, which in fact many still question and can now adduce evidence to make an argument that at least in the short run it was difficult for Mexico. I personally believe that in the long run, it did Mexico good and that this will become evident in due course, if not immediately. But, you know, the book is not finished on the subject. We had many, many visits. I wrote an article for the *Foreign Service Journal* a couple of years ago at the request of the editors about how the negotiation of the NAFTA affected the operations of the embassy. And it affected them in a number of ways, one of which was to give us the high-level access that we really couldn't normally demand. Even at the mid-

level at the embassy one could go and see a cabinet minister, whereas before when probably even the ambassador might have had difficulty getting to see the same person. Also it meant that we were a focus of U.S. congressional attention. Virtually every member of the Congress felt that he or she had, as they so often do, to be able to tell his constituency that he had been there on this issue, so that meant to come to Mexico and say, "We have seen at first hand what the situation was that made it necessary to vote for the NAFTA or, conversely, vote against the NAFTA. Some of them would come and go out on the streets and see beggars and unsanitary conditions in the factories and immediately say, that proves that NAFTA is the wrong thing for the United States, and go back and vote that way. So all of them came, allegedly, with open minds, and I think the majority of the ones that came with genuinely open minds went away with a favorable impression, certainly the ones that were brought out by Republican Jim Colby and Democrat Bill Richardson, who were the respective floor leaders managing the NAFTA, and brought groups of congressmen down on several occasions and worked very hard to convince the undecided to go for the NAFTA. And then, of course, the ultimate vote did come out the right way on November 17th, 1993, a year and a half into the Clinton Administration, when the agreement was finally approved by the House.

Q: Did you work up an itinerary? Congressmen, or Congressmen/women, want to come and see something. Did you and your staff work out places for them to go see, or did they just sort of come on their own?

WILKINSON: Well, I think there was a fairly complicated procedure, because each group came down with a little different amount of time available, a little different focus of interest. One or two members had heard something they wanted to look into. So each group we really handled a little differently. I think the one standard part of the package was a tour of Mexico City and, of course, the ritual embassy country team briefing, in which we got to quite deft at giving a short overview briefing to congressmen, even more so than most embassy teams do. They all have to deal with VIP visitors some once or twice or month, but we were doing it maybe once or twice a week for long periods of time. Then we had I guess, one other impact of the NAFTA or one other overlay on the embassy in Mexico, was that when John Negroponte left to be ambassador to the Philippines. His successor was picked particularly to finish the NAFTA. The administration wanted a person who could appeal to economic actors in the States, who in turn could influence their congressmen to vote for the NAFTA. So Jim Jones, at that time president of the American Stock Exchange, was asked to come be the ambassador, and did so in mid-1993 and stayed through '95. I worked with him for the next year until I left in the middle of '94. And of course we had also, as I've mentioned, a very varied group of congressmen. One visit that I recall vividly was by Congressman Torricelli (now Senator), who came with his lady friend, Bianca Jagger. They are no longer an "item," but they were known to be... uh... quote, "together," unquote, during that period, and we had a breakfast for them, at which Torricelli was holding court in one room and Bianca Jagger was meeting a whole bunch of different people, mostly human rights activists, in another room, and breakfast was being served in the third, and it was a circus. They just sort of took over in our own house while they were there. But the reason that Torricelli was so controversial was because he was the author of the 1992 so-called Torricelli Law, which extended the embargo against American exports and trade with Cuba to cover American subsidiaries abroad, and the Mexicans were furious about that law. Later, the Torricelli Law was

succeeded by the so-called Helmes-Burton Law, which is even more severe, and Torricelli's role has faded. But at the time Torricelli was the target of a great deal of resentment on the Mexicans' part, so his visit had to be handled very carefully, particularly since we wanted him to support NAFTA and to vote for it. We had to protect him from angry Mexicans.

Q: Was there any concern during the election of '92, George Bush versus Clinton versus Ross Perot, about what the results of this election might have on NAFTA? I mean you had both Clinton and Bush essentially supporting it, but there were people within Clinton's group, like Richard Gephardt, the House leader, who opposed it strongly, for unions. I mean, I'd like to get the attitude of the embassy as you watched this develop.

WILKINSON: Well, the embassy, of course, at the time, was at first representing a Republican administration, and an administration that was dedicated to getting NAFTA through and finishing negotiations and making sure that the whole operation was a success, so if there was a tilt it was in favor of the existing administration's policy, which is perfectly natural for any embassy. The Mexicans, on the other hand, were extraordinarily clever, and I must say I think it's a great pity what has happened to Carlos Salinas de Gortari, because he was quite an impressive operator as president. While professing admiration and personal friendship for George Bush, the Mexicans began to sense by late September, early October of 1992 that he might lose. And they had to figure out what to do, so they quietly sent their ambassador in Washington on a secret mission to Little Rock, where he met with Clinton all by himself in a back room and said, you know, "We want to make it a concordat with you about this agreement that we're involved in, in case you should win this presidency, and would you please promise that your first foreign visitor will be Carlos Salinas de Gortari?" And Clinton, caught unawares, said, "I guess. Sounds reasonable to me," and in fact that's what happened. So the Mexicans were well prepared for a Clinton victory, and there was a very smooth transition. Clinton embraced the NAFTA, as he had during the campaign, but with these additional conditions, and then in the negotiations with the additional conditions, they were brought down from absolutes to levels where they were *desiderata* that the Mexicans could live with. And so now really the NAFTA looks to a Mexican as much a product of the Clinton Administration as it does of the Bush Administration, where it was actually originated.

Q: Did this affect the politics of Mexico as you were watching it? Was this a problem with the PRI, because we're looking at a gradual change in Mexico to what we would call sort of an open democracy instead of a one-party system, which was going since, what, 1920-something or other

WILKINSON: Right, 1928.

Q: Were we seeing this, the NAFTA, as being one of a series of things which were bringing Mexico into a fuller political society?

WILKINSON: That's a very interesting question. I'm not sure if I have a good answer to it, whether and how it affected Mexican domestic politics. I guess one would have to say that there has been an effect because, up to and including 1992, Mexican elections have tended to end up with the PRI winning and the party to the right of the PRI, that's the PAN (not very much to the

right and in some respects not to the right at all, but at least identified as the more conservative pro-business party), in second place, and the left (either fragmented or all together) in the distant third place, because the PRI was seen as in the middle or a little bit left of center. With the NAFTA and with Carlos Salinas identification with big business, not just through the NAFTA but also because of the privatization program and because of a famous meeting at which he brought all the leading businessmen together and allegedly had his campaign chief ask each one of them for 25 million for the PRI's 1994 electoral campaign, his identification with big business - PRI seemed to be moving to the right and taking ground away from the PAN, and the left was filling in, and that is still the case today. I think that in the year 2000, which is the next election in Mexico, the PAN is going to have great difficulty winning an election against the PRI candidate - it's always hard to beat the PRI - but if the opposition wins, I think very possibly the left, Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, the mayor of Mexico City, has a better chance of winning than the PAN does. So it has affected... I think the answer to the question, yes, in subtle way the NAFTA has changed the playing field. NAFTA along with other factors has changed the political playing field in Mexico.

I wanted to move on to talk about a unique issue that transcended our bilateral relationship throughout this period and yet wasn't directly tied to the NAFTA. That was an issue on which I spent at least half of my professional time in Mexico as political counselor, and maybe the toughest political issue I've had to handle, and it concerned a doctor named Humberto Álvarez Machain who was believed to have been present at the murder of a DEA agent named Enrique Camarena in Mexico in 1985.

Q: This was an American DEA agent.

WILKINSON: An American DEA agent who was working on exposing narcotics rings in the Guadalajara area and got too close to one of them, was kidnaped and tortured and died while he was being tortured. This doctor was considered by the DEA to have been keeping Camarena alive and conscious while he was being tortured by injecting drugs - a scumbag, in the words of some other Mexican doctors that I knew. So the DEA wanted him, and they got him in 1990 by arranging for him to be kidnaped from Mexico and smuggled across the U.S. border in the trunk of a car. And they wanted him brought before justice. So he was arraigned, was held prisoner, at the request of U.S. law enforcement agencies for complicity in the murder of Enrique Camarena and brought to trial in late '90 or early '91. And of course, the first issue for the courts was whether the court had jurisdiction because of the way he had been brought before the court. He had been kidnaped. Was it legal to present an accused felon after kidnaping him from foreign country, and his lawyers, hired by the Mexican embassy, argued that the proper route to proceed with a felon in another country is to ask the law enforcement agencies of that country to arrest him and then to extradite him, which of course is true. But the DEA claimed that they would never get him back that way, that they had tested the waters of that extradition and been told that no way are you ever going to extradite a Mexican citizen, so the only route left open for them to achieve justice was to kidnap him. The case was appealed and eventually went to the Supreme Court, and in July of 1992 the Supreme Court ruled in a six-to-three decision that it didn't matter how he got to the court, he could be tried because the crime was a crime against an American and U.S. courts had jurisdiction. This was over the *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs

submitted not only by Mexico but also by Canada, which had the same concerns about people being kidnaped and tried in the United States and caused a cry of indignation throughout not just the Americas, but the legal world were all upset about this Supreme Court decision, which appeared to ignore the provenance of a felon before the court and just turn a blind eye to the procedural aspect of the whole case.

In reaction, the Mexicans called the ambassador in immediately - I went with him - and they said, "Your DEA has to get out of the country, now. We don't want any more DEA agents in Mexico." And the ambassador said, "Yes, I can understand your sentiments, but think of the signal that you are sending to Washington. It sounds not as if you are against DEA's misconduct; it sounds as if you are against their mission here. It will sound as if you don't want any help and you don't want to prosecute drug offenders in Mexico." Of course, all of this reverberates today because it's still very much an issue. And we argued for an hour with Andrés Rosenthal, the under secretary of the Foreign Ministry, about this, and eventually, I think, the ambassador was effective in talking him into going a little bit slower and at least reflecting on the situation before they threw the DEA out. We went back to the embassy that night and reported this angry discussion, and the newspapers the next morning reported that the DEA had been thrown out of the country because the content of the *démarche* had been leaked before the *démarche* itself, which made the situation worse.

We spent the next year and a half having weekly visits with Washington trying to save the DEA in Mexico, to change the rules of the game under which they operated, to rein them in, to make them more accountable, to curtail their freedom of action in the country, but to save their right to operate in Mexico, and in the end we negotiated new rules of the game which, I suspect, the DEA promptly threw in their desk and ignored, because it was very hard to tell them anything. But we did succeed in keeping them in the country. The Mexicans were still angry, and because of the fact that they had not achieved anything decisive in the area of retaliation against the DEA for illegal acts in Mexico, they went to international organizations and introduced a resolution in the UN asking for an international study of the issue, which we tried to block and failed to block, and the study was commissioned.

This work was so consuming that the entire Political Section was involved in various aspects of it, but we got a superior honor award, a group section, for having done what we did, which was partially successful. And of course, although DEA is still there, the drug situation in Mexico hasn't gotten any better, and we can't say that we've solved the problem because it's still there.

Q: Had there been precedents for extraditing both ways - from the United States to Mexico and from Mexico to the United States?

WILKINSON: There are very, very few cases of extradition. We have extradited recently, since then, one major notorious Mexican drug dealer and we were prepared to extradite one former under secretary of the Ministry of Justice, who was involved in all kinds of drug corruption issues. His name was Mario Ruiz Massieu, whose brother was murdered ostensibly by the Raúl Salinas, the brother of the ex-president - a very complicated situation. But Mario Ruiz Massieu committed suicide before he could be sent back. And we in turn have asked the Mexicans to extradite Mexicans. There is a legal provision allowing the Mexican president to waive the

provisions of their constitution and extradite a Mexican citizen if the crime is sufficiently grave, but we have never been able to get the Mexicans to do that. Even today, I don't think there's any case of any Mexican president feeling strong enough politically to override that provision of the constitution that grants immunity from extradition to Mexican citizens. So that issue continues, and it's one of the major issues between us - one of the irritants that stimulates many in the U.S. Congress today to favor suspending Mexico's certification.

Q: Were you and your section monitoring the effect that drug money had on the political process? Not only the political process, but the judicial process and all that in Mexico, because it would seem that this was really becoming a matter of real concern.

WILKINSON: No. And the answer to that is that we didn't have the tools to monitor... We didn't know where... how much drug money was coming into Mexico, where it was going or even how many drugs were flowing through Mexico. I remember a case, even in the early '80s, when Congressman Rangel from New York, who was the head of the Joint Anti-Narcotics Committee of the Congress, came and was briefed in Mexico City and asked the question, How many Mexican drugs are going into the United States? And the chief of the Narcotics Assistance Section, Mike Yohn, couldn't answer the question. And the ambassador fired him. Gavin fired him because he didn't know the answer. Well, nobody knew the answer. And I don't think anybody knew the answer when I was there 10 years later. I suspect they still don't know. They can tell that a lot of it is going over land, but they can't tell how much, what percentage. And similarly, it was very difficult, even harder, to know what was happening with drug money. Now there was a sting operation in which we infiltrated the Mexican banks not too long ago, infiltrated them, used intelligence sources to find out what was going on, and arrested or indicted a number of Mexican bankers for illegal bank operations, which caused a great stir, which still resounds, in U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations because the Mexicans claim we were illegally operating an intelligence scheme without telling them. And of course, we don't trust the Mexican police, and with good reason, so it's very, very hard to deal with.

When I was working in Mexico last - and as you can tell, I'm still interested and keep up on Mexican affairs - I got to know fairly well the head of the Human Rights Commission and his deputy. That was Jorge Carpizo. He was the head of the Mexican Human Rights Commission, and his deputy was a man named Jorge Madrazo. Carpizo eventually became justice minister and became responsible for the administration of justice in Mexico and later, currently, Madrazo also became minister of justice, responsible for trying to do something about corruption among the Mexican police and, in general, of the Mexican Government. Carpizo is a brilliant intellect, former rector of the university, head of the law school, a man of total integrity - as is his former deputy, Jorge Madrazo, both of them. I got to know them particularly well at first because of an incident that took place on November 7, 1991, shortly after I got there, in which a plane loaded with civilian policemen from the national police landed on what appeared to be a small landing strip being used by drug smugglers in pursuit of a supposed drug smuggling scheme. The policemen got off the plane and were shot and killed by the Mexican army. And a second plane still in the air, a U.S. customs airplane, had taken pictures of what was going on on the ground, using infrared photography. It started late, just at dawn, and continued after daylight, but they didn't have regular photography; they were using infrared photography, which still works in the

daylight. So this was a national incident, obviously, the army shooting the police and the army claiming that the police were in collusion with the drug smugglers and that they shot them because they were there to collect their money, and the police saying that the army was waiting to welcome the drug smugglers and as soon as they got on the ground took their load and disappeared with it, both of them pointing fingers at the other and saying they were in collusion. What really happened? And the Mexicans came to us and said, "Well, you must know, because you were the United States; you had this customs airplane operating under an agreement with Mexico, you were up there taking pictures." So we at that point took the pictures and went through them one by one and tried to figure out what had really happened, and the answer was you couldn't tell. They weren't clear enough in the infrared. They showed certain things - they showed some cows and they showed the airplane landing - but they couldn't tell what had happened after it landed. One of the things that the Mexican investigators were trying to establish was whether the airplane had been signaled in by somebody on the ground who was there beforehand who was in collusion with the alleged drug smuggling operation. So at any rate, they had to prepare a report on this, and they eventually prepared a report saying that the army appeared to have acted improperly. They couldn't say for sure that the army was working with drug smugglers, but they had certainly acted incorrectly in shooting these policemen on the ground. But in the process, both Carpizo and Madrazo were sucked more and more into the police work area, and eventually, Carpizo was asked to take over the Justice Ministry and clean up the federal police - Mexico's rough equivalent of the FBI.

This is sort of a long answer to a short question, but Carpizo tried to reform the Mexican police. He knew they were corrupt, so he said, We're going to set aside the whole existing police force, and we're going to create a new one, and we're going to call it the Institute of Mexican Police, and we're going to recruit new people and educate them and train them, and we're going to put the old people aside. Well, of course, it didn't work, because the old people knew where the skeletons were buried, and pretty soon the new police, who were trained at this academy, started going to the old police and saying, How do you do this, that, and the other thing? And before you knew it the two services were so interrelated and interdependent that whatever infection had existed before had spread to all of the new people. And Carpizo, after a year in the job, was moved to another even tougher job - Minister of Interior. That effort has been tried several times since then, and then the Mexicans eventually turned to the army, because they gave up on the possibility of reforming the police; and now the army is corrupted by the same contagion - simply because the pay in government is too bad, and the money in drugs is too good. And so there doesn't seem to be an easy recipe for reforming the system or the situation. I mention that all because of what is the impact of drug money in Mexico? Well, the answer is it corrupts everybody who comes close to it. And the police were often all working for the drug barons, I mean, one faction of the drug smugglers' cartels would be paying one faction of the police, and another drug ring would be paying another faction, and you'd have police wars, with the two police forces shooting each other up in bars and on the streets. So much for drugs and drug corruption.

Central America was over as an issue between the U.S. and Mexico, but we were still involved, during those years, in the endgame of putting to rest the U.S. involvement of the 1980s in Central America. With regard to El Salvador, Pete Romero, who's now the acting assistant secretary for

Western Hemisphere Affairs, came to Mexico as an office director in that period, and worked with Salvadoran negotiators on the peace agreement there. He and I and a few other Americans attended the Chapultepec ceremony that formally ended the Salvador guerrilla war, with the president of El Salvador and all the guerilla commanders and all the Presidents of Central America, a solemn and quite moving occasion in Mexico City to formally sign an agreement that provided certain actions by the UN to monitor the situation, disarmament and reorganization, creation of the police academy, all of these elements of a package agreement.

In Guatemala, the peace process was still ongoing. Mexico City was also the venue for many of the meetings because that's where the so-called friends of the peace process would meet with both sides in Guatemala and with the UN. Mediation had been under the aegis of the Catholic Church until 1992, and then it was turned over to the United Nations. A United Nations mediator was named, and he was given the assistance and whatever he needed, help from the outside. A group of "friendly" friends of the Guatemala peace process were called into action., and they consisted of the U.S. and Norway, in addition to Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Spain. And we would meet with the guerrilla chiefs, and at one point the Guatemalan president came and discusses the issues that were still dividing the two sides - the terms for a cease-fire, for disarmament, and for a truth commission that would assess responsibility for the civil war, not to call for justice or retribution but simply to assess responsibility; and that commission has now finally published its report.

The agreement wasn't achieved while I was there, in 1993-94. The level of participation in the other countries was ambassadorial, but all the meetings were in Spanish, and our ambassador did not go and sent me instead. So I represented the U.S. in these meetings until I left, at which point the ARA picked it up, and the coordinator for Cuban affairs was given that responsibility and came down and went to those meetings after I left. The person who was the Mexican representative in the talks and really the leader of the mediation effort, as far as national representation and liaison with Mexico, was Rosario Green, who is now the Mexican foreign minister. I had known her since 1981, always admired her. She's a very bright woman, but she's also very tough and basically not very friendly to the United States, very much of a nationalist and very angry about any perceived U.S. meddling in Mexican Affairs.

Q: I can't remember now, did Chiapas and all that take place while you were there?

WILKINSON: Chiapas is next.

Q: Okay.

WILKINSON: You're wonderful. You always foresee directly what I've got down in my notes.

Q: This is obviously something that's still there.

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: But Rosario - what was her -

WILKINSON: Green.

Q: - Green, how did you find dealing with somebody like that? You know, as a diplomat, you're up against the people who, fair enough, are nationalists, but also have a problem with the United States, a big chip on their shoulder. How does one work with someone like that?

WILKINSON: Well, the answer is that when you're at my level at an embassy you don't. It happened that I knew Rosario and had dealt with her, I'd say, as an equal in the '80s, when I was there before. I certainly was no longer at the same level in 1991-94 to be able to level with her, in effect, and tell her what I thought. And she recognized that, so we didn't have any... No, that's not true. We did sit next to each other at dinner one night and I had a long conversation with her mostly about the Álvarez Machain case, when she just told me how badly the United States had behaved, and all I could say was, "Yes, you're right." I mean, there was no question in my mind that our handling of Álvarez Machain was wrong. I didn't mention the ultimate outcome of that case, which was that, having been upheld on jurisdictional basis by the Supreme Court, the case went back to courts in Los Angeles, and the judge - I think it was the same judge who had initially ruled that it could be heard and had the supreme court sustain him, then took up the case on its merits and threw it out. He said there's no case against this guy. It may be that you have a right to try him, but you don't have any evidence to convict him. You have hearsay that shows that he went to the house at the time that Camarena was being held there. He went to the front door, and when he went to the front door, he says that he knocked and somebody came to the door and said, "You're not needed at this time." And he went away. And you, the DEA, had no evidence to prove that what he says is not true. And they didn't. They had some kind of a second-hand story that he had been present and administering drugs to Enrique Camarena, but they couldn't prove it. And I don't know, frankly, from what I know whether... I don't know who to believe. But at any rate, the case against him couldn't be proved, so he was freed and he went back to Mexico, where he lives now a free man. The Mexicans certainly won't be able to try him. So that's what happened in that case, and you know, we took our lumps diplomatically for the activities collectively of our law enforcement agencies, which were... They were acting like cowboys.

Q: One of the things in looking at American diplomacy dealing with narcotics is that there really is a broad divergence between the Foreign Service and the DEA as far as procedure and all that, isn't there. I mean, the DEA sort of operates on its own, and you are constrained by international law and how we deal with that.

WILKINSON: That's right. They are too, when they operate abroad, supposedly, and the embassy has to answer to it, and there are times when we wish we didn't.

Q: Oh, yes. Way back in the '70s I had problems with... heh heh... Well, okay, now to Chiapas. Could you explain what this is all about?

WILKINSON: I wish you'd ask me another question. I was on vacation in Valle de Bravo, which is about two hours drive west of Mexico City and a place where we spent a lot of our time, not

only because we liked it but to get out of Mexico City, which wasn't good for our health. On New Year's Day, 1994, when having come off the tennis court, a doctor friend said, "You know that there's a revolution, at least a revolt, going on in Chiapas?" Not the capital of the state but San Cristóbal, the second city (and perhaps more important city because it's a religious center) of southern Mexico, has been taken by the rebels. It's called San Cristóbal de las Casas (which is named for Bartolomeo de las Casas, the monk who came in and wanted to try to civilize the Mexican Indians), and it was taken and held briefly by Indian revolutionaries and by a funny, pipe-smoking masked figure named Comandante Marcos. I went back to Mexico City late that day and found that my deputy political counselor, Ross Rogers, had taken the initiative, quite rightly, to get on the first plane he could to Chiapas and, in fact, got to San Cristóbal, borrowed a car from an American animal and plant inspection service facility down in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the capital of the state of Chiapas, and took the car, drove the car to San Cristóbal, and got there before the army, so that the American embassy, true to form, was on the scene before the police came in to clean up the action. He got there - there was no action, luckily - he got there after the rebels had left the city. They came in, they took the place, and then they beat a strategic retreat; and when Ross Rogers got there, they had already left, but they had made their political statement. A number of people had been wounded and some killed in the brief action, and they went back into the forest, an inaccessible region of the Lacandona Forest and adjacent areas in the heart of Chiapas, which is still undeveloped, and they're still there. Why are they still there and why hasn't the Mexican army come in and simply wiped them up, which they're perfectly capable of doing? The answer to that is that, one, they had a lot of support and sympathy from, you might call him, the "Red Bishop" of southern Mexico, whose name is Samuel Ruiz, who, as the religious leader of the region has a lot of resonance on the political left not only in Mexico but throughout Latin America. Ruiz felt they had legitimate claims and for years had been telling them that. So one could even say that he helped instigate this revolt by encouraging the Indians to believe that they were not treated justly by the Mexican Government. That's one reason. A second reason is that no sooner had the news of this revolt spread throughout the world than hundreds of reporters and human rights organizations descended on San Cristóbal to make sure that the Indians weren't mistreated by the Mexican army when it came in to clean up the place. So the Mexicans, Salinas's government, which was already close to on its way out of office, because his term ended in 1994, decided that for political reasons it didn't make any sense to simply come in and wipe these Indians out. Let them have their heartland of the Lacandona Forest (it has no strategic importance in Mexico; Tzotzil rather than Spanish is the language there). And a number of high-level negotiators were appointed, all of whom sincerely tried to find some kind of a solution, whether to allow them nominal autonomy, some special provisions in the State Charter for their councils to be elected in a different way, for their taxes to be treated differently so as to respect their communal traditions. All of these efforts have failed to date, not just because the government hasn't been willing to cede them local sovereignty or to rescind the 1994 elections or to take some national step that they demand or to agree to some exaggerated position on the part of the rebels, but also because the Indians themselves don't really seem to know what they want. They're divided; they're obviously very difficult to negotiate with. So there's a stalemate, and it continues even today, five years later.

Q: Did you find yourself under pressure because this thing gained so much notoriety in the media and all, and obviously within the media and within the, I don't know, the ranks of the

chattering class, or whatever you want to call it in the United States, that there would be a great deal of sympathy for the Indians? Did you find that it was difficult to operate in this particular arena as a political officer?

WILKINSON. No, by no means. This is one of those few issues where the United States wasn't such a directly involved player that we were forced, for some political reason, to take a position that was difficult to sustain in the local context. Washington, of course, wanted to be sure that no human rights were violated, and for that reason we, I think, we kept somebody down there for a long time. Ross Rogers stayed for two weeks. My local Mexican assistant went down to help him and arrange appointments for him. I went down and spent a couple of weeks there in the end of January. I was succeeded by other people from the Political Section. And eventually I told our ambassador, Jim Jones, "Look, this doesn't make any more sense. We've been down there for six weeks or eight weeks; nothing is changing; this is a static situation; let's come back and just visit occasionally." So he went back to Washington and said, "We're going to withdraw our semi-permanent position. We're not going to keep somebody reporting down there, just watching things all this time." And Washington said, "No, we need somebody down there. It doesn't matter whether anything is happening or not. We want to be able to tell Congress that we're on top of this and we've got somebody down there watching it." So we kept somebody there for maybe six months, on a rotational basis, even though, you know, there were little flurries of isolated aggravation. Maybe somebody would shoot a bullet out of the woods at soldiers, but there were no pitched battles any more. The Mexicans had been constrained not to go into the forest and wipe these people out, and the guerrillas in the forest knew very well that if they went out of the area, if they tried another sortie, they would be decimated. The people who complained the loudest and who suffered the most, I found, already when I was down there in the second two weeks, were the law-abiding citizens who were neither Indians nor representatives of the government, who said, "Law and order have disappeared. These people have come and taken our cows. What are we supposed to do about it? Can't you provide us some police protection?" These were people living on the edge of the guerrilla area, and they eventually organized themselves into vigilante groups, and that has caused a series of separate problems. Some vigilantes a couple of months ago shot up a village and killed about 34 of the people and, again, quite naturally there was a great outcry from the human rights organizations - there's no justification for shooting 34 people - but on the other hand, in order to maintain law and order, they have no recourse other than to form their own vigilantes.

I have another anecdote from the days that I was down there, which I guess was probably the peak of public interest and press involvement. There were still several hundred reporters down there looking for news, when there wasn't any, trying to create it. And there were also all sorts of human rights activists, including Ramsey Clark. Ever since being Attorney General under Lyndon Johnson, Clark has given himself to all kinds of liberal causes and was down there on behalf of one group and had a press conference in which he denounced alleged violations by the government of Indian rights. And later in the day, somebody came up to me and said, "That was a brilliant speech you gave this morning." And I said, "I didn't give any speech. Who do you think I am?" And they said, "Aren't you Ramsey Clark?" And later in the day, I stood next to Ramsey Clark, and oh my God, he and I really do look like each other. We're the same height, about the same size, and we were both dressed in lumberjack shirts and... I've got to be careful - I

might get zapped by some loose rightist. So...

Q: Were we watching for similar types of movements in Mexico, particularly southern Mexico, groups that were encouraged, you might say, who felt they'd been left out and wanted to draw attention to themselves?

WILKINSON: This revolt in Chiapas in January, 1994, came as a complete surprise, certainly to me. I had spent a week in Chiapas the year before, in 1993, traveling around talking to people, mayors. I talked to the governor. The governor was an old-school... what's usually known in Mexico as a "dinosaur," one of the old-school PRI politicians who believes very strongly in tough law and order but who, at the same time, said that he was very conscious of their need to develop the Indian heartland of the state and made all the right noises - no suspicion that anything was going on, brooding down there. The attachés had been down once or twice, and they had one report that a patrol of army people had come across an armed camp somewhere in the forest and reported back that there was something going on, but this was one isolated report and it got filed away and nobody paid any attention to it. So even though Comandante Marcos had allegedly been training down there in the forest for some months, if not years - years, I think - nobody had really come across them, and if they had they wrote them off as crazies, as you might write off some militia group in the United States, just a bunch of crazies who would never amount to anything. Oh, and when they did revolt and publish their manifesto, even leftists like Gabriel García Márquez, who at least used to be a sympathizer of the revolutionary left, people like that said this is archaic, these Zapatistas are talking about some kind of revolution that died with Che Guevara. This is classic Maoist revolution-rises-in-the-countryside, which has been proven to be fruitless - it doesn't work. It's a dead ideology, and it will never get anywhere. So disregard it; they'll wither on the vine. Don't worry about it. And what's more, it's the only place in Mexico where this kind of dissidence exists. This was 1994 or 1995. Now in 1997, 98, you have other groups claiming to represent the revolutionary left arising in other states in Mexico, in the south. In Oaxaca and in Guerrero and even in Puebla, there are elements of several revolutionary groups, although they seem to be very fragmentary. But by 1994 none of these organizations had done anything, if in fact they existed then, and nobody had ever heard of any other revolutionary left in Mexico since the '70s, when there was a small rural armed guerrilla group in Guerrero state.

Q: Were you seeing any change in the north-south relationship? I'm talking about north Mexico and south Mexico. We've mentioned this before, as NAFTA comes in and all, that the north becomes more almost removed from Central Mexico, Mexico City and all. Did you see any development in that way?

WILKINSON: I don't think I have anything new there. I talked before about the division of Mexico into political parts and economic parts, and that certainly hasn't changed. People said that Chiapas really had been left behind, even by the other southern states of Mexico, that there was a more enlightened régime in Oaxaca, for instance, for dealing with Indians, for respecting their communal traditions, more so than in Chiapas, which was really feudal. And of course, the state of Chiapas wasn't even a part of Mexico for 10 or 15 years, immediately after the revolution. It was part of Guatemala, I believe, or separate somehow, and then there was a

plebiscite to find out where it belonged, and the people, to the extent they voted at all, they voted to go into Mexico, and it reverted to Mexico in, like, 1840. So it was always different. And southern Mexico is backward, but if southern Mexico is a century behind the rest of Mexico, Chiapas may be two centuries behind the rest of Mexico, so there is that distinction. It's a beautiful state. I love it. It has wonderful natural beauty. It has a forest which we were trying desperately in the early '90s to preserve as one of the regions of biodiversity of the world, and of course, once there was a revolution there and it became a political issue, then all the efforts to preserve the forest were completely forgotten, because how can you create a UN sanctuary in an area half of which is occupied by rebels and the other half by the army? So that sort of got forgotten and probably still has been forgotten.

Q: At one point - I don't know if it was true at this point - there was a sizable Guatemalan refugee population down there.

WILKINSON: Well, I talked about that the last time. And I talked about going down and meeting those refugees in there, and they came across in the '80s, principally. They started in late '81 and kept coming *en masse* until late '82. This was at the peak of the Guatemalan army and President Rios Montt's "beans or bullets" - you know, you either cooperated with the government and got beans, or you got shot. It was "*frijoles o fusiles*" in Spanish. And so they all came across, and they were about 50,000. There were no more after '84. Rios Montt left, and the campaign was over. The peak of that cleaning-up-the-countryside campaign in Guatemala was in those years, and that's what created the refugees. They stayed there until the war was over, and then when I was there in the '90s, they started going back, in trickles and then eventually in thousands. And the elected Guatemalan in the '90s government had a very liberal policy. They found tracts, places for them to stay; they provided them with agricultural infrastructure, seeds. And I went in Guatemala and visited some of the places that they were going to go to, and they had really thought through exactly what they were going to do on the other side. So that problem is pretty much over. I think their refugee population in Chiapas is now largely gone. I hope - I don't know for sure.

Q: You left in '94. Had NAFTA taken hold by then, or was it still in the sort of implementation stage?

WILKINSON: No, the NAFTA took effect on the 1st of January, 1994, and that was the beginning date, and there were many, many provisions that didn't go into full effect, some for 15 years. Some went into effect immediately, but others were phased because they would have more impact and would be felt more deeply socially, like the ones I mentioned that would, in effect, depopulate the countryside. The Mexicans realized that they were important measures, but I'm not sure that they realized how far-reaching they would eventually be. We don't really even know yet because they're not fully in effect. They won't be until the year 2009.

Another impact of the NAFTA, somewhat indirect, was on the Mexican elections of 1994. The Mexican Government, although NAFTA was signed, sealed, and delivered, in effect were still in a mode where they were sensitive to the demands of the NAFTA, both political and economic. And for that reason, they not only were pressed by us and others, but felt themselves that they

ought to have clean elections and they ought to have a better, more transparent electoral system. And there were many efforts to achieve constitutional and legislative electoral reform in '93 and '94. The Mexicans passed a series of laws. Each time they were told it's not enough, that's a step in the right direction, but you need to do more. And they kept going back to the drawing board and doing more things, with the end result that the elections of '94 were demonstrably clean, and fraud was practically nonexistent, certainly in the national elections, even to a major extent in state and local elections that took place at the same time. Now there are state elections at various times for governors and state legislatures that since then have taken place with some allegations of fraud, but basically I don't think even in those subsequent elections anybody's been able to prove that there was substantial fraud. One of the many reasons for this was the fact that the Mexicans for the first time began using state-of-the-art photo ID cards, which have 14 different types of identifications on them. They have thumb-prints, they have holograms, they have photographs, they have bar codes, they have all kinds of stuff on them so you can't possibly falsify them - I guess you can falsify anything, but it would be very difficult to falsify. And they were designed by Xerox and IBM, if I recall correctly, at a cost of almost a billion dollars. And most of it was paid, I must say, to American firms. It was a nice export package that we put together from a trade standpoint to do these ID cards. But also to place the supervisory electoral commission under independent authority, to provide, for the first time, for the election of the Mayor of Mexico, which is a highly political and important post, always appointed previously by the president, and now elected, elected for the first time in 1997 and won by the left, by the former presidential candidate of the left, the son of Lázaro Cárdenas, who just yesterday announced himself as candidate for the presidency in the year 2000.

Q: Was he a figure when you were there?

WILKINSON: Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas? Absolutely.

Q: How did we view him at that point? I'm talking about when you were there.

WILKINSON: Well, I knew him fairly well, and I also knew Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, who was the president of the Revolutionary Party. And I arranged for them to come and meet our ambassador. They came and had breakfast at our house. I did that for all of the presidential candidates. They came and met privately with our ambassador in our house for breakfast. It was not something that would attract attention as it might have if they went to the residence. And Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas is a - I wouldn't call him a strong person - he's a nice person. He is not a brilliant intellect. He's decent. He is the prisoner of the ideology of the left, but his instincts are PRI centrist. And he has said that if he's elected president - at least he said in 1994, and I assume that the same would be true if he runs in 2000 - that he would want to renegotiate parts of the NAFTA. But in fact, I think he's indicated privately that that would be a token renegotiation which wouldn't be a substantive change. Now I'm not sure. That was the case in '94. That might no longer be the case because the impact of the NAFTA in some ways may have been difficult for Mexico, and there may be some genuine renegotiation that they would seek. But at the time it didn't look as if it would be a problem that we could not surmount - not that he was likely to win the election. In '94, the PRI had a very strong candidate named Luis Donaldo Colosio, who had always seemed to me as the best potential candidate because he had the combination of political skills and

political experience as the head of the party with technocratic credentials as the head of the combined Ministry of Development and Environment, which is the job he had for his last year alive, just before he was nominated, and months before he was assassinated in the spring. He was assassinated by, as far as I can tell, a crazy. No one has ever been able to prove a plot, although most Mexicans believe there was a plot to have him killed, and some even ascribe it to the previous president, Salinas. According to this theory, Salinas arranged to have him nominated but then some people said, Well, he got out of hand, and the president got tired of listening to him saying how things would be different, so he had him done away with. Well, that doesn't make any sense to me.

Q: Those things sound like the usual people who believe in plots.

WILKINSON: The problem was that, you know, when you look at the high-level of Mexican assassinations, when you see what happened to Francisco Ruiz Marciú, which they have now convicted Raul Salinas of being the intellectual author of that (whether there really was a plot or not I don't know). But if the president's brother was responsible for having the chief of the PRI party killed - and he was convicted and is in jail for it - then you have to wonder, who might have arranged to have the presidential candidate killed. Anyway, I was with a bunch of other people from the embassy out on a poker cruise when Colosio was killed. We had taken a beautiful sailing boat up the Bay of California and were sailing in the bay and playing poker at night. I'm happy to admit that I like that kind of thing, and my wife arranged for us to be called by radio and told about the assassination, at which point we were about as far away from port as we could possibly get, and we all sat there and talked about it and decided there was not a damned thing we could do about it, so we took our time getting back. And we got back a couple of days after his assassination. And at that point, the runner up in the PRI presidential sweepstakes, Zedillo, was called on to step in and fill his shoes. And Zedillo, for all his honesty and financial experience and wizardry with numbers, was not a capable politician and ran a lackluster campaign and just barely won the election. And he won it without the same kind of control and clout that a new candidate would have normally. He would take over all of the reins of power, but he had to rely a lot on an organization bequeathed to him by a previous presidential candidate and an outgoing president, so he was picking up the droppings, if you will, and as a result, he wasn't able to have enough influence over financial policy. The Mexican peso was artificially sustained throughout the year during his campaign by people over whom he had no control, while Carlos Salinas, the outgoing president, was interested in his own future in history and maybe in getting some great international job like UN Secretary General or something afterwards, for which a devaluation at the end of his administration would look bad, so there was no devaluation, and then Zedillo was elected and, *boom*, the bottom fell out of the Mexican market, and there was the crash of December, 1994, in which the peso just fell like a skyrocket because no preventive steps had been taken before then.

Q: And you left when?

WILKINSON: I left in the summer of 1994, and I'm projecting a little bit after I left.

Q: Was there anything else we should cover on Mexico?

WILKINSON: Yes, I've got some other notes on odds and ends of things, which I'll just sort of tick off if that's all right with you, and then I think maybe I'm imposing a lot on your time, and we'll try to finish.

Well, we were talking about Mexico. And although we covered the main themes, or most of the main themes, about Mexico in the early '90s, when I was serving there as the minister counselor for political affairs, we didn't touch on a few. One was a contact that I had rather frequently with Manuel Bartlett. Bartlett was at that time, and until very recently, was the governor of the state of Puebla in Mexico. And he's on a wanted list in the United States. At the same time, he is a political leader, came very close to getting the PRI presidential nomination in 1988 and is again a serious contender for the PRI presidential nomination next year.

Q: *Why is he on the wanted list?*

WILKINSON: He's on the wanted list because there is evidence, which I have never seen, but alleged evidence, linking him to a cover-up in the Camarena case, that he at that time was the secretary of Gobernación, which is in Mexico similar to the vice-presidency, a very important post that controls the security forces of the country, and that although he probably didn't or most certainly didn't know before hand about what was happening to Camarena, that there was official knowledge, maybe even complicity in the covering up the murder after it took place in 1994.

Q: *I can't remember, did you go into the Camarena case before?*

WILKINSON: Yes, I did.

Q: *Okay, then we don't have to go back over it. I was just thinking if somebody weren't in this...so it's all right.*

WILKINSON: We covered the Camarena case and the Álvarez Machain relationship to it. But Bartlett was a friend of personal friends and came to me and said, "How can I clear my name? This is unacceptable that I am on the U.S. wanted list and I'm governor of Puebla. I still have political ambitions." And I arranged for him to meet with the ambassador, but nothing came of it, and I'm told recently that he is still, that he would probably be in trouble if he came to this country, that he would have trouble getting a visa. He was not tried to come to the United States since this information, whatever it is, fell into U.S. hands indicating that he knew about the case and tried to cover it up, so that's still out there as an issue.

Another incident which was very humorous that I wanted to make note of was in a brief period - I believe it was in early or mid-1993 - when both the ambassador and the DCM were away and I was chargé for a week or 10 days. I got a call from an assistant to the drug czar, the Mexican equivalent of our drug czar, whose name was Carillo Olea, saying that a "Mexican security agent" was in trouble in Miami and could we arrange to get him released? And I asked for more

details and never got another phone call. But separately, I learned from American authorities that a Mexican agent had indeed been arrested in Miami for attempting to smuggle out a gorilla, an animal, out of the United States. And it turned out that this man was not really a security agent; he was an employee of the state of Mexico where a gorilla had died in the zoo, and the state of Mexico sent one of its agents to Miami to try to buy illegally, on the illegal animal market, a gorilla from a zoo. And the FBI got wind of this and decided to go ahead with a scam, or a sting, and they dressed an FBI agent up in a gorilla suit and they actually loaded him on the airplane, and the Mexicans were all ready to take off, and then they sprung the trap on these guys. So they were-

Q: I can see the gorilla pointing with his finger: "I accuse!"

WILKINSON: *J'accuse!* So the Mexican so-called security agent that they had called to ask me to help with was actually a gorilla smuggler, and he went to jail in Miami.

I don't know really where it fits in, but I wanted to talk a little bit about the level of American financial interest in Mexico in those NAFTA days. I had an intern in the early '80s named John Blum, and John Blum was very successful and is now a principal at Morgan Stanley.

Q: This is a financial institution.

WILKINSON: And John came to visit with a group in early '94 as we were getting ready for the election and asked me to set up a lunch to have a political briefing for these people, which I was quite happy to do. And we went to an elegant restaurant, the Hacienda de los Moales, and I got three people who were not part of the establishment, who were not PRI and who were not happy with the way political reform was going, even though the Mexicans were pursuing a much cleaner election and developing a system that was going to be much more transparent than earlier systems. I got Adolfo Aguilar, who is a still independent opposition, now a senator; a human rights activist named Sergio Aguayo; and the organizer of an umbrella organization of election observers named Julio Fesler. The three of them came for lunch and briefed these financial representatives of the investment banking world, of whom there were about seven or eight, all quite young. It seemed to me they were probably in their early to mid-30s and just out of curiosity I went around the table and asked them to identify the level of financial interest that they represented, and collectively around the table there were \$60 billion of investments, people who had that much money *at their fingertips* to invest. I was just amazed at how important, from a financial standpoint, these American "masters of the universe," if you will, who were sitting around talking to these people. And then afterwards, according to John, their eyes were opened considerably to talk to some of the opposition in Mexico because up to that point they had been dealing only with establishment people.

Q: Well, did you see a pattern in what American investment was at that period? Was it cheap labor? Was it diversification? Was it something different than in the United States? What did you find were the motivators?

WILKINSON: Well, you know, I don't really know. I just never focused on exactly... it's hard

to... There are two kinds of investment: one is portfolio investment, and the other is direct, people looking actually at opportunities to build a factory or produce automobiles. The people I was dealing with at this time were clearly portfolio investors. They were money managers. They were people that were moving money back and forth in short-term securities between countries, so what people were looking for in terms of -

Q: That would be a different.

WILKINSON: Yes, but it's that kind of people who today are the ones who decide on the fate of nations, because what's happened in Brazil last fall, what's happening in Ecuador right now is that the country is a prisoner of these short-term financial movements, which drive the value of the currency up or down and lead to rigid financial measures and inflation, etc.

Anyway, moving on to a couple of other things that I wanted to talk about. I had an opportunity to watch the PRI at work at actually being a revolutionary party in the throes of change. It had been ruled by a traditionalist, very politically structured threefold organization based on a workers' movement, a peasants' movement, and a so-called public sector of bureaucrats, professors, and others who weren't either blue collar or peasant. Those were the three classic supports of the PRI, and they always used to depend only on a kind of top-down organization, where they would coopt the leaders and tell them what the PRI was going to do, and the leaders would go out and more or less tell their followers, their unions, who the candidate was going to be and how the PRI would act. That was changing to a much more grassroots kind of organization, with the growth of the middle class in Mexico. For them, it was necessary not just to tell but also to listen and have people feed up their concerns and have a more responsive leadership in order to win an election, as opposed to simply impose a candidate and know he would win. So with that background, I watched the PRI, went to the PRI's convention in 1992, which was a prelude to the nomination of Donaldo Colosio, the first nominee for the 1994 election, who was subsequently assassinated, and I found that a fascinating experience. I spent a week in Aguascalientes, where that convention took place. I met there and became very close to a woman named Silvia Montes Montañez, who was working for the leader of the PRI and then moved to the Mexican Institute of Social Security, and she was able to arrange visits for me later to see the governor and to stay, in effect, as the guest of the governor of Zacatecas. I also stayed in the governor's mansion in Tlaxcala and later was able to attend the nominating convention for Colosio himself. And so I got to know the political leaders pretty well, and when Ambassador Jones came, he asked me to arrange meetings for him with the presidential candidates, which I did. They came and had breakfast at our house, and the ambassador was able to meet them sort of quietly, without any publicity, and hear not only from the PRI candidate but also from the PAN candidate on the right and from Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, the candidate of the left party, the Party of Revolutionary Democracy. In the embassy at that time we had a highly-motivated Political Section, I thought a group of excellent people. We had some people on loan from the Agency - not part of the normal operations directorate but rather the intelligence directorate, and they would take a tour abroad just to get to know Mexico, in particular a woman named Janet Anderson and a man named Tim Langford, who were both experts in Mexico and had more benefit than most Foreign Service officers of years and years of study and background on Mexico, so that they knew all the names of players when they came and wrote wonderful reports.

And I arranged to have awards for both of their reporting. I had some excellent interns. Among regular FSO political officers, I had Stuart Symington, the grandson of the senator, who was so good that I wrote his review statement in poetry, which the selection board kind of was amused by. That was the first time they had ever seen a review statement in double dactylic. And I thought that we had a very successful three or four years there. It was not quite so successful for John Negroponte, who was the ambassador, because I didn't think that his DCM did him any good. He had, as I mentioned earlier, a DCM named Allan Sessoms, who had come in laterally in the senior ranks and who has now gotten himself into a couple of paternity suits which stem from that period. He was too busy chasing women to pay much attention to the embassy. I don't think the ambassador recognized this. And he got gigged by the inspectors on poor management, and although Negroponte didn't really suffer (he got another ambassadorship; he went to the Philippines, but after that he was competing for Korea more recently and lost out to Steve Bosworth, who had left the Service and came back. I don't think Negroponte was fully conscious of how little attention his DCM was paying to his job in the embassy.

So I think that pretty well covers it. We also had some wonderful recreational avocations in Mexico. I used to organize the diplomatic tennis tournaments for the diplomatic community there. We frequently spent weekends and vacations at Valle de Bravo, which is about two hours west of Mexico, and at one point I organized a sailing trip that is described above.

Q: *Just one thing.*

WILKINSON: Yes.

Q: *I mean, serving in Mexico, how did we treat the Mexican-American War? I mean there must be commemorations and things of this nature, ones we don't observe, but what about with the Mexicans? Was this a difficult time each time, or was this the bloody shirt that was waved in our face once a year or something of this, Chapultepec Day?*

WILKINSON: Ironically, the Mexicans have a statue to what they call the *Niños Heroes*, the "Hero Children," the young men who allegedly threw themselves off a cliff rather than surrender to the Americans at the hill of Chapultepec Fortress in 1846, before the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war and ceded California and all of the territories of Texas and New Mexico and Arizona to the United States. And whenever a senior military or senior statesman comes to visit Mexico, it is traditional for them to go and lay a wreath at the statue of the *Niños Heroes*, which was a symbol to Mexico's honor being preserved in the face of United States aggression. We've gotten in the habit of going and laying wreaths ourselves. We just sort of look the other way and lay a wreath there, so whenever our visiting dignitaries come we do the same thing. It's sort of a joke because historians say that in fact this sacrifice of jumping off a cliff probably never took place. I used to be very quiet in Mexico about my own antecedents because my father got the Medal of Honor at Veracruz in 1914. The Medal of Honor was awarded at the time to 55 people.

Q: *That was quite a to-do later on, wasn't it? They tried to straighten that one out.*

WILKINSON: Well, I never heard that they wanted to take his Medal of Honor away.

Q: *Oh, no, but I think they put more strict-*

WILKINSON: Oh, yes, there are much stricter conditions on the Medal of Honor later. There's no question about the fact that that was not as... The terms have changed for the award of the Medal of Honor.

Q: *Well, we didn't have many medals in those days.*

WILKINSON: I don't know - I -

Q: *I think a lot of the medals, the Navy Cross and other things, I think -*

WILKINSON: - have been invented since then?

Q: *I think from... I think this is the problem: you had either/or, or something.*

WILKINSON: At any rate, he did lead a shore party under fire, so he deserves some kind of recognition, but probably under today's terms it certainly wouldn't have been the Medal of Honor.

But that's not the kind of thing you brag about when you're serving as a diplomat in Mexico.

GEORGE B. HIGH
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico City (1982-1983)

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

Q: *Well then, let's move to Mexico. How did you luck out and get this Mexican appointment?*

HIGH: I don't know whether it was a luck out or not. When I was in the Inspection Corps there was a senior inspector with us who in 1978 was offered assignment to Mexico City as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the time the ambassador to Mexico was former governor of Wisconsin Patrick Lucey.

Q: *His wife was considered to be hell on wheels.*

HIGH: I don't know about the wife, but another complication was that Lucey had brought to Mexico City with him a young staffer who had been in charge of the governor's office in Madison. This fellow became his right arm while he was ambassador to Mexico, as well. The question for anybody considering going there as DCM was: what would be the relationship between the DCM, the ambassador, and the very special, special assistant.

You know, anybody in his right mind would lust for the job of DCM in Mexico City. The senior inspector offered the job was a very sharp Foreign Service officer, but he did not lust. In fact, he was quite concerned about what he could accomplish when there obviously was this right arm special assistant to complicate front office relationships, somebody who already had a deep relationship with the ambassador and who might be turned to for advice more often than the DCM. Can a DCM operate effectively in that kind of environment? His conclusion was negative, and he turned down the assignment. At the time, I thought he was mad.

I came up to Washington for an interview with Ambassador John Gavin in the spring of 1982. I talked with various people about the embassy. I had a pretty good conversation with Gavin, talking a lot about management. I saw the DCM position in Mexico as having some substantive responsibility, particularly as an alter ego to the ambassador. But in a big mission like Mexico City, I saw the DCM management role as being his central focus.

Gavin had gone to Mexico City about a year earlier. The DCM, John Ferch, had been at post for four years (he had survived the Lucey period), and had remained on for Gavin's first year there. He was very well established before John Gavin arrived.

I would be arriving brand new but enthusiastic because I had always wanted a Mexico assignment. I also sensed that there was a need for stronger management in the embassy and this would give special purpose to the posting.

But there wasn't just one very special assistant, there were two, whom I later discovered from a staffer in the embassy were referred to by many as the "temple dogs." One was an able, ambitious young Foreign Service officer who had planned to leave the service but had impressed Gavin. Gavin induced him to go to Mexico City as his special assistant. He had to complete his resignation from the service before going to post as a political appointee.

The other special assistant, a young Hispanic American out of Colorado Republican politics, had been a staffer on the Department's transition team following the election. His reward was to go to Mexico City in this position. One of the special assistants dealt with the ambassador's ties with relations with agencies in Washington, the ambassador's program and substantive matters the ambassador wanted to pursue. The other had rather ambiguous duties, one of which was to keep track of the narcotics program and contacts with the U.S. Justice Department.

I thought that I could make a contribution to the management of the mission and I always wanted to serve there. Here was the opportunity; why turn it down? This was an ambassador who looked like he needed support, particularly in management, and I had something to offer.

Gavin had had his own frustrations with the Department in his appointment to Mexico. The American Foreign Service Association, which in those days rarely commented on ambassadorial nominations, raised with Congress questions about Gavin's credentials for this post. It questioned his background (in Hollywood) and his ability to handle this appointment. Gavin felt that was particularly gratuitous. He had a Mexican mother and had lived in Mexico for part of his life. He spoke Spanish fluently. He had done business in Mexico. He had gone to private schools in California with Mexicans who had become very prominent in their country. AFSA's opposition to the nomination did not start our his relationship with the Foreign Service on a positive note. Gavin seemed mistrustful of the service, though I did not feel that personally.

I arrived in Mexico City in September 1982 as DCM. There was agreement that I would play a major role in management of the staff and posts. I became a buffer between the ambassador and the other sections of the embassy that were not in his favor, a natural role for the DCM to play in those circumstances.

The ambassador certainly had frustrations from time to time with different elements of the embassy. I sought to encourage the sections to meet the ambassador's expectations, particularly when they were justified. When that wasn't the case, I tried to find a compromise and went back to the ambassador to talk about it.

It was a very challenging and interesting time in Mexico. The economy hit bottom with the financial crisis of the summer and fall of 1982. The Mexican peso was devalued several times during the year, and this was José López Portillo's last of six years as president. López Portillo just had nationalized the banking system to court favor with nationalists. The U.S. wisely, even in these circumstances, provided loan guarantees and supported loans from foreign governments and international institutions to support the peso. (We had hope and assurances of more responsible leadership and policies when the new government would come into power in December.)

John Gavin was a major supporter of those policy decisions. It was rather remarkable that we showed such good sense, particularly when López Portillo was not well liked or respected in Washington. The U.S. government made its decisions looking at the larger picture of Mexican stability and the impact a collapse would have on the country and on us.

As Mexico enjoyed the oil boom of the 1970s, it got deeper and deeper into difficulty with profligate use of those profits and the borrowing oil money permitted. In 1982 with large service payments on its debt, Mexico faced the results of a steep decline in the world price for petroleum. It faced insolvency and the end of its "economic miracle."

Gavin and the U.S. government recognized that it didn't make sense to see Mexico economically prostrate. Gavin worked well with Treasury and the Federal Reserve in Washington and with the Mexican government to help keep Mexico afloat. I'm sure the principal negotiations and the deals were the responsibility of Treasury and the Federal Reserve, and apparently some other agencies brought into the act, but John Gavin's positive influence with the White House was important to security the settlement.

John Gavin was certainly very bright and knowledgeable about Mexico, but he also had a few hangups. He was not about to sit quietly by while Mexican leaders or politicians played the "game" of U.S. bashing, blaming us for everything that was going wrong in Mexico. He refused to turn the other cheek. He said we had been doing that for decades and it hadn't done any good. So he was going to speak up. And he did, much to the annoyance of many Mexicans, and the pleasure of a few.

He regarded his ambassadorship as the central position to determine and coordinate U.S. policy toward Mexico. In general terms, it had the blessing of President Reagan, with whom he had a special relationship from Hollywood days and Republican politics. He also had a special relationship with Bill Clark, the head of the national security council at the time. They played football together in prep school, as I understood it. He made heavy use of the phone to major figures at the State Department and the other agencies, as well. (To a degree, that would be true for any ambassador in Mexico City, but I doubt that his predecessors had such an entree or used these connections nearly as much. He really played the telephone as a symphony director would use his baton.)

U.S. policy toward Mexico was coordinated out of the ambassador's office in Mexico City. It wasn't coordinated by the State Department, which was more often concerned with crises elsewhere and which didn't have or use a comparable opening to front offices throughout Washington. The White House didn't have the capability or the day-to-day interest in it, either. But because of Gavin's special relationships in the White House and being able to turn to key officials and use his own influence to get their support, he could, if he had to, brow beat or threaten departments and agencies to get his way. He had control of the communications and had the interest and desire to use it. It took a lot of work on his part, a lot of support from one of his special assistants. They worked hard.

Gavin was unhappy whenever he discovered that somebody in Washington had spoken out on Mexico without Gavin being aware before hand. He wanted to be the spokesperson whenever possible, or at least to orchestrate an announcement. He wanted to inform Mexican principals the same time statements were released or made in Washington. He also wanted to be sure that what was said was consistent with what he was saying and doing, a natural preoccupation of any ambassador. Most agencies learned that, both directly in Washington and through their representatives in the embassy, and to a remarkable extent the diverse agencies in Washington fell into line.

The only place where there was occasional frustration was the Treasury Department which necessarily prided itself in the privacy of its communications on very sensitive matters. It maintained the integrity of its own communications. Even then, the ambassador's strong influence was generally felt and heeded.

That is the way the embassy functioned. Gavin took great pride in claiming to know everything that went on under the roof of the embassy. That wasn't always the case if only because of the enormous size of the embassy. But by force of personality, style and energy he exercised an

impressive amount of influence over his staff and with Washington. It wasn't always easy to live with, either in Mexico City or Washington. But professionally we owed him our support and he received it.

Q: What were you doing? Was he letting you manage?

HIGH: It was more of a matter of letting me try to put out fires and there were fires to put out. And to try to give support and encouragement both to the ambassador and to the staff. When Gavin became mistrustful of what he perceived a section or agency was doing, I would go over and talk to the section leader to determine what was happening, to try to correct misperceptions, and at least to pass on the ambassador's concerns. I believe that narrowed the range of misperceptions and bad feelings.

Most sections, for example the political and economic sections, did their work as they perceived they had to. I didn't sense they shaded their reporting in any way. Moreover, the front office was generally consumed with coordinating policy with Washington agencies, the time it could devote to micro manage did have its limits.

But if there was a misunderstanding with the ambassador, it tended to become personal and a matter of loyalty and trust. The ambassador and his special assistants were inclined to marginalize the misbehaving party. His special assistants were very astute in playing one organization off against another and bringing dirty tales back to the ambassador of this not being done right or that being an unforgivable mistake.

I remember the case of one of our section leaders, an experienced officer... We went to lunch with some people from the American Chamber of Commerce and at one point the embassy officer was perhaps a little bit more candid than judicious in saying what it was like to work for John Gavin. I think he was saying it a little bit tongue in cheek, trying to get a smile. One of the special assistants brought back the account to the ambassador, describing the comment as an indication of disrespect and disloyalty. That blew the incident well out of proportion. It took some explaining and a certain amount of abject apology by the officer to begin to get back into the good graces of the ambassador so that he could return to his work.

The ambassador and his assistants were often critical of the administrative support he received. It seemed that nothing was done right. Fault was almost sought after. Eventually that took its toll and necessitated an early transfer of a key officer.

Another of my tasks was to coordinate the operations of the constituent posts. The consular work of those posts was coordinated by the consul general in Mexico City. The posts we supervised were large consulates general in Monterrey, Guadalajara, Ciudad Juarez, and Tijuana, consulates in Hermosillo, Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Mazatlan, and Merida, and consular agents in Acapulco and Oaxaca. You can see it was an enormous mission.

During my period in Mexico, I visited all of the consulates and consulates general and the agent in Acapulco. Later, from the Mexican affairs office, I visited Oaxaca. Those were familiarization

visits. I also wanted to hold at least yearly mission meetings in Mexico City, with the principal officers from the posts and the office and agency heads in Mexico City. This needed to include the ambassador, both so that he could exercise his leadership of the mission and so that he and the country team could learn from the constituent posts. That meeting never took place. The ambassador was out of Mexico City often, frequently visiting the United States to hold meetings or give speeches. We could not get a firm commitment of his time, and without the ambassador's presence unfortunate messages would be sent to the staff.

One incident during those consulate visits is worth recounting. In early 1983, I visited our small consulate at Hermosillo in northern Mexico. The program worked out by the consul was similar to my visits to other posts. We paid calls on government and community leaders, political party representatives, business leaders. In Hermosillo, we met with the governor and some of his principal deputies. These often were the leaders of the governing PRI party, and I was interested in their views. One evening the consul also arranged a dinner with a few of the leaders of the main opposition party -- the Party of National Action (PAN), and the city's archbishop.

The conversation at dinner that night was similar to the conversations I had had earlier with the government and PRI leaders. The PAN representatives briefly stated that they were hopeful with honest elections of winning the gubernatorial contest in Chihuahua state. The party leader stated his plan to walk throughout the state to carry his message to the voters. But by far the main subject of discussion was U.S. policy toward Mexico and suggestions of how the United States could be more helpful to Mexico in these difficult times. The archbishop didn't have much to contribute, as I recall.

Imagine our surprise several days later when the Hermosillo press reported that a high American government official had held a conspiratorial meeting at the American consul's residence with the political opposition and the archbishop, another case of American interference in Mexican internal politics.

Subsequently, the press report sparked further imaginative reporting of the dinner and this appeared throughout Mexico, enlivened by condemnatory statements from the PRI national leadership. We were not happy, and this cheap political gimmick to embarrass us and the PAN encouraged Ambassador Gavin to initiate his own public relations campaign to clarify the record and condemn cheap politics in statements to the press and government and PRI party leaders. (As a matter of fact, he visited Hermosillo the next year at the time of the elections and took pains to meet with opposition and church officials.)

I discovered in the process that there was a sizeable volume of Mexican literature allegedly exposing decades of American intervention in the north of Mexico. Names, real or imagined, are named, the Central Intelligence Agency is a particular target of disclosure, the literature was extensive as well as misintended. The thesis was that the United States has long had ambitions to takeover Mexico's northern states, and these conspiratorial activities with the opposition and the Church were part of that campaign.

The involvement of the archbishop in the dinner was well intentioned, to get the Church's

perspective of the society, but probably unfortunate. The difficulty was that Church-State relations in Mexico have always been very sensitive, wars have been fought over the role and power of the Church, and the modern Mexican government has been very secular.

The ambassador had another problem. The country director in the State Department, who held that position for several years, had some of his own ideas of what needed to be done in Mexico and how to go about doing them. He was interviewed by Mexican journalists stationed in Washington, and quoted from time to time in the Mexican press. Too often, the Ambassador, not aware of those interviews beforehand, was not pleased by what he read in the press. At one point the ambassador simply called the Department and demanded the removal of the country director. That matter went back and forth for a few days and then the director moved on. (Fortunately, his career flourished in other areas.) But after that transfer, it became difficult to attract a replacement office director. It was filled on an interim basis for some time.

This was back in the spring of 1983. We were planning the annual meeting between the country presidents. At one point Gavin came into my office and said something like, "George, I know you have only been here nine or ten months, but would you consider going back to Washington and heading the Mexican office?"

I thought about it for a few days. What it came down to was a feeling that there were very severe limitations on what a DCM could do in Mexico City; perhaps more could be accomplished with the embassy at a distance. Gavin certainly needed support from the Department, the bureau needed support with him, and I knew him. We had a fairly good personal relationship, I think.

My wife had found it difficult to make the transition from Brasilia, where she loved it and found satisfying professional work, to Mexico City where she was still engaged in switching her Portuguese to Spanish and hadn't yet developed enough contacts to get into professional circles in Mexico City -- those contacts take time abroad. Moreover, she prospered in her professional life in Washington.

By that time Tony Motley had been appointed assistant secretary for ARA to replace Tom Enders. And with all those things put together, I said, "Sure."

We came back to Washington in July 1983. I was DCM for about ten months. At the end of my time in Mexico City, I was in charge of the embassy team that was working with the White House in setting that up in Mexico. In Washington, I worked on the sending end of the visit, particularly the preparation of papers for the meeting.

Q: Okay, you returned to Washington where you served as Country Director from 1983-85. How did you find ARA at that time? This was still high Reagan and ARA was still a bit of a playpen of Jesse Helms and the right wing, at least that was sort of the impression one had, or had that begun to change?

HIGH: I am not sure it was. It seemed to me that that came more into being with Elliott Abrams as the assistant secretary. I came into ARA just as Tom Eiders was leaving and my understanding

of Tom's departure was that he had stepped on toes in the White House and had been a little bit too outspoken as far as people in the White House were concerned.

He was replaced with Tony Motley, who had been my boss in Brasilia. Tony was very solid, composed, and collected. He was very much of a person's person. He walked through the Bureau. When he had time, he had lunch downstairs in the main cafeteria; that's pretty rare for an assistant secretary.

In terms of your question, he wasn't really ideological although he was a good Republican. He wasn't, at least in 1983, hung up over Jesse Helms and the right wing. I'm sure he had difficulty with them as most people did with foreign policy, whether Democrat or Republican. My perspective from Mexican affairs may have been skewed. There was discussion of Central America in weekly bureau staff meetings that Motley led, but important policy matters on that region were reserved to front office discussion.

Bureau meeting were not wrapped up in ideology. Central America was tangential for most of our work on Mexico except when we were preparing for Presidential or Secretarial meetings with counterparts. Then, talking points on unhappiness with Mexico's policy were generally drafted by the Central America office, and if and how those points were used was generally held to the meeting room. We didn't get much feedback.

Now it is true that the principal quandary on Tony Motley's plate was Central America, and that had all kinds of White House and Congressional aspects to it. But that was rather distant from me in Mexican Affairs.

DALE V. SLAGHT
Mexico Desk Officer, Department of Commerce
Washington, DC (1982-1984)

Mr. Slaght was born in Oregon in 1943. After serving in various capacities on Capitol Hill and in the Department of Commerce, he joined the State Department under the Commerce-State Exchange Program. As expert in commercial and trade policy, Mr. Slaght had assignments as Commercial Attaché and Minister Counselor at US Embassies and Consulates in Uruguay, Panama, Germany, Canada, Soviet Union and Mexico. He also served as Mexico Desk Officer at the Department of Commerce. Mr. Slaght attained the rank of Career Minister. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Tell me a bit about the Mexico thing. What precipitated the problem that you spent most of your time dealing with?

SLAGHT: This was 1982. Mexico had for most of its -- here in the Twentieth Century -- what is called an Import Substitution Policy. That is, they had very high tariffs to protect industries,

many of which were owned by the Mexican government. It was very hard getting goods into Mexico. You needed an import permit from the government before you imported anything there. Industries grew. They developed a pretty good auto assembly industry and other industries, and things were all right until the bottom fell out of the oil market in the early '80's, and they lost the revenues that they had been receiving from their oil exports. They realized that over time, their import substitution policy was not sustainable. They eventually jettisoned it and joined the GATT in 1986 and have been active free traders since. They have many more free trade agreements than the United States has today. In 1982 they hadn't reached that domestic consensus yet and were trying to hold on, so they didn't have the wherewithal to import in the levels that they needed, and the economy was adversely affected.

Q: What were some of the issues that would involve State Commerce and Treasury?

SLAGHT: I can't think of one at the moment, but I know we had them all the time. We had Mary Chavez of Treasury and John Rosenbloom of USTR and several people out of State. We all would meet at our level, and then there was above ours the DAS's (Deputy Assistant Secretaries) counterpart would meet. I can't remember one issue, but I know they were constant. These kind of turf issues: Who was going to do what, who was to take the lead. For me it was just an unpleasant period.

Q: From your perspective, who gets the credit or who gets the action as opposed to what are we going to do about it?

SLAGHT: The issues were not the larger issue of what our relationship with Mexico should be. It's who would implement it? Who would take the steps necessary to implement whatever policy had been agreed to? It was a real shock to me.

Q: A learning experience.

SLAGHT: Yes. It was for that reason that when I left Mexico on my last assignment, I did not want to come back to the Commerce Department. I think probably I could have been the DAS or the Acting Assistant, the Deputy to the Director General. Those jobs at my rank were open to me, and there were few available, few other officers at that rank to take them. I knew what kind of issues I would deal with, and it just wasn't for me.

ROBERT L. CHATTEN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1983-1985)

Born in Kentucky in 1934, Robert L. Chatten received a BA from the University of New Mexico and an MA from Stanford University. He joined USIS in 1959 and served in the Philippines, Japan, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, and Ecuador. Mr. Chatten was interviewed in 1994 by Fred A. Coffey, Jr.

CHATTEN: At the conclusion of a year, PAO Zuckerman was supposed to leave Mexico. Wanting desperately to stay, he had thrown himself on the Ambassador's mercy and was told that, "Yes, you could stay for a fifth year." USIA management acceded. I really didn't have the stomach for doing it longer, if I had any alternatives. The answer to the dilemma was the Senior Seminar, a classic case of doing the right thing for the wrong reasons, a phenomenon in which life in Washington abounds. I knew I was taking the chance that Stan Zuckerman would get on the dark side of Ambassador Jack Gavin again, as he and many others in the Mission had. It was very easy to get on the dark side of Ambassador Jack Gavin in those days and get yourself thrown out of the country, quietly and unceremoniously. And if that were to happen in the middle of my senior seminar year I was going to be SOL for going to Mexico. It didn't. Whenever I did a Seminar study, or a paper, or I interviewed people and did my research project, I was able to focus it upon Mexico. It turned out to be an enormous benefit, a great leg up for me when I finally got there.

Q: Which was approximately what year, Bob?

CHATTEN: I was in Mexico from 1983-1985. Again, the externals and the internals of that were unique. I thought then and I think now that PAO to Mexico is the Ph.D. course in PAO studies, certainly for the area but maybe worldwide. Unlike relations with some of the other places that matter a lot to us, there is no end to the dimensions of the relationship. There is no major US domestic problem - education, agriculture, drugs, crime, welfare, you name it - that does not have a significant Mexican dimension to it. So your interaction with the United States is a terribly complicated matter. By contrast, compare it with the Soviet Union in those days, in which the relationship with them was a life or death matter of security, but it was primarily unidimensional. It didn't have a 2,000 mile border and Mexico's endless complexities mixed in.

One of the things that happens as a consequence is that if things are going as they should, you deal directly with the portion of the United States Government that is most relevant to the nature of your problem in the binational relationship. If the problem was with the Treasury or with the narcs, we didn't go to USIA to intervene for us, just as the Ambassador did not go to the State Department to intervene on his behalf. We dealt directly with that portion of the US Government that was affecting us and the relationship, or in which the Mexicans had an interest.

It was quite clear that the border was important, as viewed from Mexican side and from the US side in terms of the State Governments and the academic, political, economic and other institutions along the frontier. Then, as now, this unique dimension to the relationship was fascinating. I was most eager to get a closer look at a program approach that had been begun earlier when I was in the Area Office, a border affairs officer. There was a staff member who was concentrated exclusively on developing programs around the unique nature of the relationship between Mexico and the US at the border.

Drugs, of course, constituted a huge overlay in the program. I found myself there, as I had been in two other posts, a member of the inner working group that met regularly, often weekly, to review what was new on the drug scene. And what was to be done about it. Narcotics related

agencies aren't noted for cooperating with each other, but we could at least be aware of the direction that things were going. That period has come to be characterized by the abduction and murder of DEA agent Kiki Camarena, but that was just one dimension to it. There was tremendous interest on the part of the Administration and Congress, both on merit and in terms of the resources that we were trying to put into drug programs through the narcotics action unit and the DEA, and customs, and the station, and us and all the other dimensions of the mission that got involved.

Simultaneously, Mexico was dealing with the effects of a monumental devaluation and huge foreign debt. US banks and the USG had major interests in stabilizing the economy and seeing to it that their debt got paid or postponed. Socially, the economy's problems added complexity to the US private sector's problems in Mexico and a dramatic impetus to problems of immigration. All these, needless to say, were dynamic engines of public affairs problems we had to address.

A great good news, bad news dimension to this era was the fact that Jack Gavin was Ambassador. Gavin, of course, had been head of the Screen Actors Guild, as President Reagan had been. He had been a leader in Republican party circles in California, he knew the President personally and well, he had been a prep school football teammate with the National Security Advisor and was able to get the people in the White House to answer the phone. In a surreal scene, he interviewed me, before consenting to my coming, in the underground situation room of the White House. He certainly didn't need the State Department to intervene with anybody for him, and indeed did not hold the State Department in particularly high esteem. Tony Motley, who was Assistant Secretary at the time, had the good sense to not want to touch Mexico with a long stick. The second person whom Gavin had inherited from State as DCM had been rooted out of the DCMship by a schedule C executive assistant to Gavin, a young ex-FSO whom he brought with him. The DCM was sent up to State ARA to be the Office Director, so that the Ambassador and his assistant would have somebody they felt they could trust in Washington. There was constant emphasis, bordering on paranoia, upon enemies in Washington, in the Mexican government, and in the media, US and Mexican. Personal loyalty to the Ambassador was seen as highly important. The executive assistant, not coincidentally, became acting DCM as a consequence of ousting the DCM, and moved into his house as well as his office. He was right out of Central Casting for the lead in "What Makes Sammy Run."

Q: Who was the DCM that they uprooted?

CHATTEN: A good, gray, earnest servant of the Department, George High. It got to the point where Gavin didn't want people in the various sections of the Embassy to report substantive things in cable traffic because he feared they would be leaked by enemies in Washington, to his detriment. It was an ugly time. Even with that, my own take on Gavin, is that he was, on balance, a good ambassador. Being ambassador to Mexico is always a study in tradeoffs. Whatever you do, on whatever issue, it automatically generates opposition both within the United States and most particularly, within Mexico. The best you can ever hope for in US-Mexican relations is sixty-forty. As in personnel work, happiness is a sixty-forty decision because your world is filled with fifty one-forty nines. Gavin spoke beautiful Spanish. He had been in and out of Mexico his whole life. His mother had been born Mexican, and he had a world of important and useful

contacts who had been developed before he became ambassador. The primary thing, in my estimation, that stood between Jack Gavin and being as good an ambassador as you're ever going to get in Mexico, was his ego, which was monumental. It was essentially an actor's ego. The press, in his experience, was the entertainment industry press, full of critics and celebrity chasers who gave you good marks for your performance or who panned you. If you did not like a critic, you didn't invite him to press conferences. He seemingly had never had an occasion to deal with political and economic reporters, or reporters whose primary task was to deal with hard news. From the word "go", he had a fractious relationship with the American press dealing with Mexico, and an extremely difficult relationship with the Mexican press.

Q: What was USIS doing in terms of promoting the idea of a general loosening of trade restrictions between Mexico and the United States, that preceded all the new treaties?

CHATTEN: It was interesting at the time and in retrospect, maybe even more significant than we knew. While economic relations had been on the table for a long time, the need for updating the nature of the relationship between Mexico and the United States, and Mexico and the world, in economic terms was in an embryonic stage then that I think eventually helped pave the way for passage of NAFTA. One of the messages that the mission was putting out and that we conducted public affairs programs around was that Mexico was more a player on the world economic stage than the internal rhetoric would lead you to believe. Much of the political rhetoric within Mexico at that time featured a poor underdeveloped country, always being taken advantaged of by the developed world. It held that they had to protect domestic markets and producers. That Mexico deserved special treatment and ought not be subject to the competition of the cold world.

Our message was contrary to that. We saw that Mexico was the twelfth largest economy of the world, and the second or third largest trading partner with the United States. It was an important supplier of petroleum products to the United States. One of the things that Gavin, to his credit frequently talked about in his discussions with Mexicans was the necessity for them ultimately to be a member of GATT. This was considered politically impossible for the leadership of Mexico, even though they believed in it at the palace. They could not or would not talk about it openly because there was so much domestic political opposition to it. In our programs of sending people back and forth to the United States, in the exposure that we gave to our speakers and specialists through our economic program officer, or the programs of the border affairs officer, we were continually emphasizing the other side of that message. Our perspective was of a Mexico that was big, important, and already integrated into the world economy. The interrelationship between the United States and Mexico was such that the only reasonable way for it to go was to become more and more open. I don't think many envisioned a NAFTA Treaty taking precisely the form that it did or coming quite as soon as it did. In the mid-1980s it would have been difficult to say that within ten years, there would be not only an acceptance of this politically, domestically within Mexico, but indeed an advocacy on the part of the people in the palace and the people in public life.

There is reason to assume that we played a respectable role in leading up to it and achieving the kind of public affairs climate that made it possible.

One of the things that I did there, as I had done regularly since Bolivia was to work carefully and closely with the American business community. I was a member of committees of the American Chamber of Commerce, as some, though not all, of my predecessors had been. We couldn't and didn't run their public affairs programs, but we tried to coordinate ours with theirs and tried to demonstrate to Mexican opinion leaders that it was in Mexico's interest and certainly in the interest of the bilateral relationship to be more open minded about foreign investment. Remember that American investment there was already huge, and a mixed bag of good corporate citizenship you must always look at that in the historical context of the second half of the nineteenth century and most of the first half of the twentieth century, during which Mexicans saw themselves as being victimized by foreign investment, most of it American, and that this led to foreign intervention, most of it American.

Q: And victimized by a few land grabs.

CHATTEN: No question about it. One of the enduring truths of dealing with Mexico and that is that Americans, in general, and the American Government very often, tend to look at what is important today and what's going to happen tomorrow. History from this perspective, is sort of interesting but something to be put behind us while we get on with the real work at hand. Meanwhile the real work at hand, from the Mexican's view, has everything to do with history. Americans, in dealing with Mexico, ignore history to their enormous peril. You cannot get away with evaluating the nature of the relationship or a deal that you make or a policy you are pursuing without taking their historical perspective into account. Their orthodoxy is that they have been screwed by outsiders - Spanish conquistadores, Rome-oriented clergy, French emperors and, in recent history, us. History is full of political hang ups about allowing us or any foreigners to have too much to do with what they consider "their affairs." Other forces and orthodoxies are taking hold but, much as our own traditions encourage doing so, history can't be put in a box and out of sight when dealing with Mexico.

Q: Are you saying there is an underlying suspicion then, of most things American dealing with Mexico? Underlying suspicion of the motivation of those actions?

CHATTEN: At official levels, quite clearly. In dealing with Mexico, you've got to have a high tolerance for ambiguity. If you're putting together USIS programs, one of your great assets is that there is a great affinity for the United States at most popular levels. Despite the fact that in the media and some parts of the government and academe, it is almost irresistible to use the United States as a whipping boy, to be blamed for whatever ill may befall them, there is an enormous reservoir of good will toward the United States. In many cases, and among many audiences, this is backed by real understanding about the United States. It is very difficult, from the highest levels of government all the way down to the humblest levels of agricultural society, to deal with an individual Mexican for very long without finding out that he has some meaningful, personal relationship with the United States. He has waded the Rio Bravo himself to be an agricultural worker or earned a graduate degree there, as in the case of the last three Presidents. Those constitute both hang ups and huge advantages that we don't have with other places and it's part of the sea in which you swim when you're doing USIS work in Mexico. It's part of what makes it the ultimate graduate course in what USIS does. It's terribly complicated and fun.

Q: Would you say that's the apex, or the most exciting USIS program that you were involved in?

CHATTEN: Oh, sure. And it has partly to do, I suppose, with my own personal history of having grown up partly near the border and having contemplated Mexico from afar as a kid without any understanding whatever of it. No question about it.

Q: I understand it that the health situation in Mexico City was pretty taxing on a lot of Americans working there. How did it affect you and your staff, the terrible pollution, the conditions there that prevail?

CHATTEN: Mexico was well on its way to becoming what it is now, a hardship post. For the first time, a systematic effort was being made to establish in the mind of the State Department, which calls the shots on such things, the seriousness of the health hazards that were present there. While we were there, Gavin, who was something of a hypochondriac anyway, really took this one to heart as a personal project. He got the EPA from the United States to come down and test the air and other parts of our environment. EPA came up with hard data that said that a canary will not live very long in the Embassy garage that we were in and out of constantly, if for no other reason than to go to the commissary.

Groundwork began being laid at that time for what has now become fairly common knowledge that is that this is a genuine hardship post. Other embassies were way ahead of us, as were some businesses, in decreeing shorter tours, and in cases of some European embassies, an unaccompanied post. I was medically evacuated because of a cough that I contracted there about half way through my first tour. The medics wanted to make sure that my cough and fever and other symptoms were not something more sinister. Now, ten years after it began, the cough is there to greet me every morning when I wake up. It has become chronic bronchitis. It is a great success of American medical science in that it has transferred a great deal of money from me and my insurance companies to the pockets of a lot of physicians, but it has not defined what the hell it is or what to do about it.

Q: This very serious ailment, -- did it have anything to do with your leaving Mexico?

CHATTEN: It did in part. I loved USIS there. I had spent a lifetime building up to what I considered the job I was, in a sense, born for, which is only a little bit of an overstatement. But I had just come back from home leave after my first tour when the invitation came to go back to the Voice of America as Deputy Director. I was at that point past fifty. It was possible for me to take the money and run. My kids were out of school, and things were coming together that give you a whole different perspective on your own life. So I very reluctantly left, but I had pretty much decided as a consequence of my medical evacuation earlier that it might be necessary for me to leave for that reason anyway. So it was just coincidental, I suppose, that the opportunity to become the senior career person at VOA arose at that time.

Q: When did you check out of Mexico?

CHATTEN: In August of 1985.

LANGHORNE A. MOTLEY
Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs
Washington, DC (1983-1985)

Ambassador Langhorne A. Motley was born and raised in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He moved to Alaska while in the U.S. Air Force. During the Reagan administration, he was appointed ambassador to Brazil from 1982-1983, and later became Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs from 1983-1985. Ambassador Motley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

MOTLEY: In Mexico, which is run by the PRI, there is a left wing of the Party that wants to do things that the President doesn't want to do. The left wing of the PRI is more leftist than most Mexican Presidents. What they do historically is to give the Foreign Ministry to that left wing. Then it plays footsie with Cuba; Mexico has the largest Soviet mission in Latin America; they kick sand into the *gringos'* faces.

Q: While you were Assistant Secretary, were we doing anything actively to encourage this process of democratization?

MOTLEY: I would like to believe that during my tenure our support was less visible. Perhaps this was because I was born and raised in Latin America and I have seen the gringo from the other side of the street. None of my predecessors had that advantage. There is something called the "shadow of the gringo." The United States throws a long and sometime deep shadow. It is the deepest in Mexico because that is the closest country. But the "shadow of the gringo" is projected which means psychologically if you say publicly that "the gringo wants it or wants it done" then the Latin American loses his machismo if he agrees. That is very true in Mexican politics. No Mexican politician has ever been elected to office by agreeing with the Yankees. That is just a fact of life. We shouldn't get upset about it, but we need to recognize that it exists. Perhaps I am more sensitive than most having watched it from the Latin American point of view. So I didn't, and no one else did either, go around beating our chests publicly, telling everyone how good we were. I think we are better off a lot of times making quiet inroads. The problem with that is that people accuse you of not really believing in democracy and human rights if you don't shout it from the roof tops. I don't agree with that. The shouting is self-aggrandizement and does not help to get the job done--if you agree with my thesis.

The Camarena story broke while I was Ambassador [to Brazil]. Camarena was a DEA officer stationed in Mexico, in one of the smaller towns, who was captured, along with his driver or pilot, and then tortured terribly. I have listened to some of the tapes and they were horrible.

Subsequently he was killed. Suspicion at the time, later confirmed, was that members of the Mexican government were involved in the kidnaping, the torture and the killing. These were members of the police and the military. It was a nasty and ugly situation which rightly outraged the DEA and the Ambassador and all of us. You can be outraged, but that doesn't lift the restraint and discipline that you must have as a public official. Our responsibility was to fix the problem and try to insure that it didn't recur. You don't have the luxury to stand at the wailing wall all day. Unfortunately, some senior members of the DEA fell into that trap and our Ambassador, Jack Galvin, also played that role to excess.

Q: I would now like to turn your attention to U.S. relations with Mexico. How was it while you were Assistant Secretary?

MOTLEY: The relationship with Mexico was, as it has always been, distorted by different subjects. In my time, those were drugs, Central America and illegal immigration. Our relationships with Mexico were driven by those three issues.

While I was Assistant Secretary, the Mexicans were deficient on all three. The Camarena incident, which I mentioned earlier, was a manifestation of the drug issue. There was a significant feeling within the Administration that parts of the Mexican government had been seriously corrupted by the drug traffickers. The Camarena incident led that corruption trail pretty high in the Mexican government.

The Central American issue was part of a total Mexican foreign policy which created an enormous amount of heart-burn especially among the "heavy breathers." I found that policy, although I understood the rationale, very irritating. Those who didn't understand why the Mexicans acted the way they did were even more frustrated. Aside from the "shadow of the gringo, the Mexican policy was driven by their perception that Central America was their back yard, not ours. They resent our being involved. It was just that simple. If you look at history, you will find that since the time of independence from Spain, Central America was a Captaincy-General domain, under the rule of Mexico. So they saw it as their back yard; it was not for us to meddle in. So whatever we wanted, they didn't. That is fundamental to understanding Mexico's views.

Another factor was domestic policy. The PRI, which is the only party that really exists, acts like the French Socialists. It gives to their leftists--the Mexican "heavy breathers"--the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and lets them play with that area. The center and the right take business, commerce and labor and run the country. That is similar to the modus operandi of the French Socialists. So all the leftist freaks are running foreign affairs, in bed with Regis Debre, the French leftist Latin expert who was arrested for dealing with Che Guevara, and the Cubans and those ilk. So they are a constant source of irritation and place the Mexican foreign policy in conflict with us in the UN and on other issues. The Mexican Foreign Ministry, to the extent that it runs foreign policy, is a continuing pain for the U.S.

Q: Were you able to sell your colleagues in the U.S. government on your views; namely that the Mexican Foreign Ministry was what it was and we should accept it and ignore it?

MOTLEY: It was not that simple because not everybody is that reasonable. We tried to do that, but you can't always be successful because there were people who felt strongly about Central America and who didn't understand why the Mexicans couldn't come around to agree with us. Some were offended by some of the Mexican activities; they had to be calmed down periodically. So it was not that easy. Some in Washington maintained that Mexico's position on Central America was more important than U.S.-Mexican economic relationships. They thought those relationships should be forgotten. They saw the Central American communists at the U.S. borders. So there was a pull and shove constantly.

The Mexican economic position was also irritating. There was protectionism in both countries. Our investors in Mexico claimed that they were being discriminated against and some U.S. quarters were yelling for stricter border controls to keep out the Mexican workers.

Labor's position on this of course raised the third issue: illegal immigration. We didn't have time, while I was in State, to do what is being done today and that is a drive towards economic integration. De la Madrid, the former President of Mexico whom I liked, by the end of his tenure had done a lot to set the scene that Salinas is now playing. De la Madrid, in his pragmatic way, bit the economic adjustment bullet by taking orthodox economic steps such as forcing a recession to bring down inflation in order to give Salinas a better opportunity to start the process of an open North America market. I don't think he gets enough credit in the U.S. or in Mexico for his brave steps. I had a lot of respect for de la Madrid, I didn't have it for the Foreign Minister, Sepulveda, who was not a truthful man. He really irritated George Shultz when he just flat out lied to us. I was in the room in New York and he just bold faced lied. It wasn't a diplomatic lie; he could not have justified it for having done so for his country; he just lied for the sake of lying. From that point on, Shultz dismissed Sepulveda as a credible interlocutor.

Q: What were Reagan's views of the U.S.-Mexican relationships?

MOTLEY: Reagan had a more realistic, healthier outlook towards Latin America than either Johnson or Kennedy.

Q: What were your views of John Galvin, our Ambassador to Mexico? I have been told that he ran his Embassy with a small coterie of staff and that others had difficulty in seeing him.

MOTLEY: I think that was right. Galvin was an acquaintance of the President. He was there when I became Assistant Secretary. At that time, I wasn't sure that our Embassy in Mexico City and my Bureau had "diplomatic relations". It was that bad. The people in the Embassy were prohibited from talking to anyone in the ARA Bureau; it was an unheard of situation. So when Jack came to Washington shortly after I took office, I sat down with him and I told him that we would re-establish relationships and I didn't give a damn about what problems he may have had with Enders; I wasn't interested in history, but I was interested in getting along with him and supporting him whenever I could.

Jack Galvin was a very interesting person. The rap on him about his "palace guard" was absolutely correct. Jack, as an actor, had been in the public eye for many years and had depended for those many years on public support, acceptance, adulation for both fiscal and psychic income. Actors by nature are not brought up in a management system; the most he may ever have managed was a business or press agent or perhaps vice-versa. I don't say this in a derogatory manner; it is just a fact. So you put him in charge of one of the larger Embassies in Latin America with perhaps the toughest country-to-country relationship in the region. I hadn't realized how difficult it was to manage that relationship until I became Assistant Secretary. One of the problems was that every agency in town was represented in Mexico City--Treasury, Agriculture, etc. I had the same thing in Brazil, but the difference was that these representatives--attachés--worked for me in Brasilia and if they got out of line, I broke their fingers. In Mexico, each American Cabinet officer or sub-Cabinet official felt that this was his Embassy. So they tried to manage their attachés directly from Washington. The Ambassador sits there with a discipline problem with seven different U.S. Cabinet officials; that is something no other Embassy faced--not even our Embassy in Ottawa. So it is a very difficult managerial chore and if you have an Ambassador who is not used to management, you will have the problems that we did. I told Jack that changing DCMs all the time, like underwear, was not going to solve his problems. The system would not support it and he was the laughing stock of the Department. I told him that we would send him a DCM--Morris Busby, a Foreign service officer who became Assistant Secretary for Terrorism and later Ambassador to Colombia--who was good. I told Jack he should keep him and make the Embassy work. I told him that this was his last shot; he had already gone through four. He couldn't keep changing DCMs. I had a long chat with Busby before he went out; I told him he had to take charge and tell the Ambassador when his pants were down.

Q: And did you feel that worked?

MOTLEY: Yes, to a certain degree. Busby was able to get in there, but a lot of the palace guard stuff continued. Jack is not unlike many of us; he has a certain amount of vanity--perhaps somewhat more than most people, who are not actors. That's understandable. That vanity would get in the way on how he would conduct himself at times, both with the Mexicans or with the government. Jack was difficult and a different Ambassador for an Assistant Secretary to manage. I happened to like Jack personally, but he was a different challenge. You had to deal with a big ego; if you decide to deal with a big ego, that is an entirely different case.

Q: How do you deal with a big ego?

MOTLEY: The first 15 minutes of our meetings would be devoted to me telling him how terribly the Mexicans had been treating him and how he was standing up to it very well and that he shouldn't let them get under his skin, which they were doing. I just kind of puffed him up and made him feel good. Then I would get down to the substantive issues.

With a Dean Hinton, you didn't have to spend those fifteen minutes. You got right to the issues and went on. If you tried to puff up Hinton, he would probably hit you in the face. I am not trying here to draw a parallel between a career officer and a political appointee, but these were two men

who reacted entirely differently. If you decide you have to work with a person with an ego problem, you have to massage and stroke him or her. Then you have situation in which you can deal with the individual. One time, I sent Gavin a note to suggest how something might be done, He didn't respond, so I assumed it would be done. It turned out that he did things 180 degrees opposite. So I sent him a "back channel"--a message sent through a private communications system--in which I told him in essence that he had obviously not understood what I wanted done and that he was to proceed as I instructed him, in a 1, 2, 3 fashion. And I wanted it done that day. He took great offense at that as I found out from Busby. So I called him and said that he should not take great offense; I pointed out that if I had sent to him through normal State channels where many could read it, then he could take offense. He understood that; he knew that I was not trying to rub his nose in it, but that I was just trying to make sure that something would be done. He was just stubborn. But I don't want to make too much out of it. I think a lot of successful people in the world have egos. I would draw one parallel between Jack Gavin and Henry Kissinger, which I believe to be true: both of them have an ego that is a mile high and a self-confidence that was razor thin. After that they probably had nothing in common. One was short and fat and the other tall and handsome.

Q: I assume that one of the reasons that you were able to exert your influence is because Gavin was an "acquaintance of the President's," as you have said, and not a "friend."

MOTLEY: I picked that up from Deaver and Baker in the White House. They were mumbling about how Gavin was throwing the President's name around when Reagan didn't even really know who he was. Those two guys understood relationships. But I let Jack get away with a lot of stuff which was important to him and not to me. That was the price of the President-Gavin relationship; I was not interested enough to go the mat with Gavin; it wasn't that great a problem. There were a lot of things that were important to his ego that I just ignored, such as his insistence on riding in specific limousines, etc. That kind of stuff doesn't bother me, but when it came down to deciding on courses of action and if he wanted to stare me down, I would take him on and insist on my way. He understood that when it counted, I would be there.

Q: Were you able to repair the very important lines between the "desk" and the Embassy?

MOTLEY: Yes, because the "desk" officer (office Director) had been my DCM in Brazil--George High--and then had been assigned to Mexico City as Gavin's DCM. I had urged Jack to take George because he was an outstanding officer, who was dependable and could make an Embassy function. Unfortunately, the two didn't get along and George had a short tour in Mexico, but came to Washington to head up the Mexican "desk". There was no animosity between the two; the chemistry between just hadn't worked. I told Gavin if he didn't trust George in the job, he would get somebody else. Jack said ok and then the "desk" worked the way it should, just like the other thirty-two "desks" on the bureau. I told Gavin that it had to work and that he and I would have to make it work.

EDWARD M. ROWELL

**Deputy Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs
Washington, DC (1983-1985)**

Ambassador Edward M. Rowell was born in Oakland, California in 1931. He received a B.A. from Yale University. In addition to serving in Washington, DC, Brazil, Argentina, and Honduras, he was ambassador to Bolivia, Portugal, and Luxembourg. Ambassador Rowell retired in 1994 and was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: What about Mexico? Did Mexico play much of a role that you were watching [Honduras]?

ROWELL: No. Mexico pays a lot more attention to Guatemala and, to a lesser extent, to El Salvador. Most of the time it really paid very little attention to the other Central American countries.

Crime had become extraordinarily dangerous along the main north-south highway on the western side of Mexico. The route connected Arizona to Mexico City. There was also some substantial crime along the eastern route which ran from Texas, through Monterrey, to Mexico City. American tourists were being stopped by persons masquerading as police officers who then robbed, raped or sometimes killed the tourists. One of the things that the Bureau of Consular Affairs does is to distribute to the public notices regarding dangerous places in the world and precautions to take. We needed to do that about the crime. We were having a long series of problems with Mexico. We didn't need to rub additional salt in their wounds.

There were a couple of problems in Mexico City when we sent our draft notice to the Embassy there for comment. I think that our Ambassador was John Gavin, a person from Hollywood who did very well.

Q: He was well acquainted with Mexico.

ROWELL: He was bilingual in Spanish and English.

Q: His mother was Mexican, I think. So he was well attuned to Mexico.

ROWELL: However, in the end, and it didn't take very long to get to the end, the Mexicans said, "We recognize that you have to put out a notice." That experience really paralleled the experiences we had in other places. No Embassy, no Political Section really wanted to refuse to put out a notice of this kind. What they wanted to do was to massage the language to make it as inoffensive as possible without obscuring the core message. This was that, if you travel to this area, there are some dangers that you have to be aware of. You ought to think a whole lot about that before you undertake the travel. If you believe that you need to travel anyhow, then think about how you're going to manage your risks. That's usually the essence of the message. That's also consistent with our own Constitution which, after all, guarantees freedom of movement. The

notices required some massaging, but there were no brick walls.

Q: During the time you were in Consular Affairs George Shultz was the Secretary of State, wasn't he?

ROWELL: He was.

Q: He had a lot of things on his plate. Did you find that he had any interest in consular affairs or not?

ROWELL: George Shultz was probably the best top executive manager the Department of State has ever known. I think that career people, both Civil Service and Foreign Service, still long for George Shultz. My personal contacts with him were limited. They arose almost entirely in the Mexican context, but occasionally with the Caribbean area and with China.

At the time we had semi-annual meetings between the Presidents of Mexico and the United States, and even more frequent meetings between the Mexican Foreign Minister and our Secretary of State. I don't recall what the particular elements of conflict were, but there were lots of them. I recall that one day I went to a meeting in Shultz's office. I had to tell him that a whole series of consular issues was unresolved and was likely to remain unresolved because we and the Mexicans simply disagreed, and we had American citizens at risk. Shultz said, "Fine. So what we have for this meeting of the Presidents is damage limitation. I think that we'd better change the schedule and reduce the amount of time spent between the two Presidents, because we're not going to get this issue solved before they meet. They can raise it, but let's not expect President Reagan to resolve it. We're just too far apart. The elements are too 'tender.' I'll have to take it up in depth with the Mexican Foreign Minister."

What was important about the meeting was this. Other parts of the Department of State dealing primarily with our economic and business relationship with Mexico and, to a more limited extent, some of our political relationships, all had at least some good news. I had virtually none. I had lots of bad news and it was germane to the meeting. Shultz's whole reaction was, "Okay, I don't shoot the messenger. Make sure you keep me apprized of all developments, right up to the last minute. Design for me a 'damage limitation schedule' in Consular Affairs. Thank you very much."

DOUGLAS WATSON
Administrative Officer
Mexico City (1983-1986)

Mr. Watson was born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area and was educated at California State University at Los Angeles and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966, he served in a variety of posts throughout the world, including Cairo, Athens, Madrid, Saigon, Quito, Islamabad and Port au-Prince,

Haiti, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in the State Department in Washington, on Capitol Hill in the Pearson program and was a member of the US delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1991. Mr. Watson was interviewed by Thomas J. Dunnigan in 2000.

Q: Did you succeed Bouchard or did he stay there your entire time?

WATSON: No, he stayed there. I was the bureau's candidate to go as DCM to that lovely isle of Haiti. This was 1983. I was to be paneled. Clay McManaway was going to go as Ambassador and Ambassador Ernie Preeg was coming out. They had both agreed to me as DCM for whatever the overlap period was to be. Lo and behold, Mexico loomed on the horizon. Mexico had a fairly new ambassador, John (Jack) Gavin, from California, a Spanish speaker of the first order, very attractive personally, a strong personality, well plugged into the White House. President Ronald Reagan had formerly been president of the Screen Actors Guild, as had been Ambassador Gavin. Jack Gavin was an actor and as ambassador he remained so. He was truly a piece of work. To make a long story short, Don Woodward had been the Administrative Counselor in Mexico and was to have served there three years. But he had the good sense at about the two year point to seek and to achieve tour curtailment. That left us without an admin counselor in Mexico, administratively our most problematic post.

Q: And probably the biggest in Latin America.

WATSON: Oh, yes, absolutely. And far larger than most people recognized. We had nine or 10 consulates. Four of those were consulates general. We had 12 consular agencies. We had 30-some agencies in Mexico City. Don Woodward had the good sense to take a walk, essentially to bail out. Don Bouchard turned to me one day and said, "Soldier, you know what you really have to do for us." I said, "I am not interested in Mexico. I want to go where I can be DCM, or eventually ambassador. So, to make a long story short, I went home and said to my wife, "The right thing to do is to go to Mexico. That is where the needs are. It's a lousy post. It is managed badly. Relationships between the ambassador's office and the rest of the mission are horrible." So, we went.

At about that time there was a chap down the hall from ARA/EX, a Foreign Service Officer (I think he was an FSO-4 "old" system designation - a mid-level officer. His name was Don Lyman. At that point, Don Lyman was the third guy in the Office of Mexican Affairs. He had probably been in the Foreign Service seven or eight years. I think the appropriate descriptor for Lyman was "snotty." Gavin, throughout his appointment as ambassador and his confirmation, had in large part been handled by Lyman, and he wanted Lyman to work for him as his special assistant in Mexico and Lyman chose to resign as an FSO-04 and to be appointed the next day as an FSR-1. He joined Gavin in Mexico for a couple of years, and then resigned, entering the private sector. On balance the Foreign Service's gain, simply getting rid of him. And what a snot he was. He was Gavin's hatchet man. He had wreaked havoc on the post by the time I arrived there. We arrived on a Friday. Sunday night, we were all gathered at Lyman's house (Lyman had, by the way, moved into the DCM's house, since the previous DCM, George High, had been summarily asked to leave, and a new DCM had not yet been named). So, when I arrived, there

was Lyman settled into in the DCM's house, that being where he intended to stay. So, he had my wife and me over for dinner, and the Ambassador and the Ambassador's wife, Connie Towers (Mary Constance Towers Gavin), an actress and singer of stage and screen fame. We watched the Redskins, they won that particular and important game. Then I had the good sense to go for lunch the next day with Lyman at Sanborn's Cafeteria next to the embassy. Then two days later, I went with the other special assistant, a political appointee, Drew Arena, and had lunch with him, figuring I might do some good, lay some cooperative ground, trying to make it work. These guys, both of them, were both so obnoxious and supercilious. Both were hatchet men for Gavin. Gavin later brought in a third special assistant for legal affairs, a fellow by the name of Bill Manoogian. I believe he was from a well heeled family in Cleveland or thereabouts.

Gavin became very dissatisfied with me in short order (I don't know whether it took two or three weeks.). I recall one thing which offended him. I suggested at the big daily staff meeting with some 30-40 people in the room that one of his ideas deserved further examination before we implemented it. He didn't like that at all, he figured his idea was good enough, period.

What he then did, through Lyman, his special assistant, who at that point was acting DCM, had me issue an administrative notice announcing that the then counselor for the Foreign Commercial Service, Cal Berlin, a wonderful guy, would be the acting Administrative Counselor and I would be reporting to him because that's what Gavin wanted. It was indeed a difficult time for me. I think if I had had more guts, I would have somehow left post, been reassigned. But I didn't do that because I thought I was too good. Over the course of maybe 10 days, that particular arrangement fell apart thanks to Cal Berlin, who was very supportive to me, trying to help me get over this hump with Gavin and Lyman. To make a long story short, after some months, the DCM designate, Morris "Buz" Busby, a wonderful guy who had come to State after a substantial career in the Navy, he and his wife, Judy, came down to post prior to assignment to get the lay of the land before they came on assignment. I told him what the situation was, the unvarnished truth as to the problems I had with Gavin, and particularly with Don Lyman, the problems Gavin had with everybody, and with Lyman as the root of a lot of the mission's problems.

Q: Cal Berlin was then out of the picture as far as administration was concerned?

WATSON: He was out of the picture. I was doing the work for which I had been assigned and I was busting my hump. It was the most difficult assignment I've had in the Foreign Service. It was also the job at which I was most successful. But I must say that Gavin's handling of the Mexican-American relationship was very good. He was very strong and very firm and wouldn't take a lot of stuff from the Government of Mexico. His Spanish was superb and he was such a wonderful act to observe. He was a little like a good priest at high mass. He was a very good actor. It was just a beautiful show. The things that he would do...he would make sure his profile was right when people came in the office, the lighting was correct over his desk. His attention to detail cannot be imagined. The work we did in his residence. It was fine, excessive in many ways, but on balance it turned out well.

Eventually, Busby came to post as DCM, subsequently to find another house for the DCM because Lyman insisted on staying in the former DCM house while special assistant. Busby was

an excellent DCM. He gained Gavin's confidence through his competence and his strength. After all, Gavin had selected him through interviews and meetings in the Department. Buz marked his time initially. Lyman would handle certain portfolios. For example, as I recall, I think Busby handled narcotics, customs, and consular affairs. Lyman declared that he would handle political affairs, economic affairs, and intelligence matters. There it was. Buz realized that time would tell, he knew and recognized his own worth and value. And it did work out. Lyman left in July, not quite a year following my arrival date, prior to having performance evaluations submitted to the Department. I'll never forget the evaluation he did of me. It was the first time in my life I rebutted virtually everything he had written. My response was lengthy. The head of Consular affairs, Larry Lane, a fine chap, our Consul General, who was on the post review panel for the evaluations, came to me and said, "Are you sure you want to do this? The evaluation is not that bad." I said, "Lyman's report is terrible." I left my lengthy rebuttal to stand as it was.

Busby was so good that over time he was able to attenuate much of the hostility that Gavin had generated.

Q: Lyman was not replaced?

WATSON: He was not replaced by a special assistant. We just kept the other two special assistants Arena and Manoogian. We had Secretary of State visits, CODELs galore, parliamentary meetings, a presidential visit...I worked closely with Bob Pastorino, was our economic counselor. When the great earthquake of September 19, 1985 struck, Busby was on an official visit to the Tijuana area, as I recall. Gavin was back in Washington on consultation. Pastorino or I had acted as DCM or chargé when Busby or the ambassador were away. I had done it once, Pastorino had done it once, the Political Counselor had done it once. Bob Pastorino was chargé when the earthquake occurred. So, Bob and I on the heels of that earthquake coordinated beautifully. We obtained the necessary resources working with the AID fellow there, Sam Taylor, to assist the GOM. The earthquake was indeed a tragic event. Our first principal concern had to be American citizens. We did a very good job at that. Yes, we did a good job. I was pleased with how the mission performed in that crisis.

Q: And in terms of crisis management and organization...

WATSON: It worked well.

Q: Was the embassy itself badly damaged?

WATSON: We were not badly damaged. The embassy is built... the subsoil there is quite unstable. Once upon a time, Mexico City was located on a lake bed in large part, so the subsoil is "spongy". You might think of the embassy as having been built on something like an inverted bathtub or on pontoons. That is, the embassy would "float" a little, "give" a bit. There was very little in the way of structural damage. There were a lot fine heroic performances by embassy personnel, a few somewhat self-serving however, "showboating."

Q: Were any Americans killed or badly injured?

WATSON: I don't recall that any American citizens were killed, a few were injured. U.S. government American employees were not injured, though a few Foreign Service Nationals were hit by falling plaster in their homes. The Foreign Service National staff pulled their weight and did a hell of a job.

It was a very challenging post. I think the Lyman and Gavin relationships were those are important vignettes as concerns my own personal career. But I had a chance to travel around the country quite a bit, to provide better support for the consulates and consulates general, and the consular agencies. Tijuana had been left insufficiently funded and staffed over the years, the embassy I fear assuming that Tijuana, being next to San Diego, could take care of itself. That wasn't the case, and the post had been badly managed. We were able to provide more resources. When I arrived in Mexico City, we had computers sitting in boxes never opened. Attention had not been paid. We did quite a bit to bolster information systems. We also were successful in buying a substantial piece of property immediately adjacent to the embassy, costing some \$2 plus million. We had good working relationships with the police, to the extent that you could work with the Mexican police, a force which was and probably is rotten to the core.

Q: I wanted to ask you about corruption, whether that was any problem.

WATSON: Yes, sure, throughout the country. We reduced the amount of our Christmas gratuities. We made sure that they were fairly nominal. But I think they helped us in our work.

Q: Gratuities meaning bribes?

WATSON: No, just Christmas gratuities, the traditional bottle of whiskey. On another subject, I recall the death of Kiki Camarena, the Drug Enforcement Administration agent who was tortured and killed in Guadalajara. Buz Busby, our DCM for whom I continue to have the greatest admiration, and I developed a good relationship, and he entrusted me to do a variety of things. He chose me to go to Guadalajara as the representative of the embassy, of the USG. I saw to the transport of Camarena's body, along with the Marine guards. Narcotics are a problem that continue to plague us there.

Q: How many people did you supervise as administrative counselor?

WATSON: I don't recall precisely. A lot. When you include the consulates and all the Foreign Service Nationals, there are at least a couple of hundred direct hire employees. During my time there, we fired a number of people at the embassy and at consulates, Foreign Service Nationals, for various offenses. We had to fire successively two presidents of the Foreign Service National organization at the embassy in Mexico because of kickbacks taken, and for activities concerning importation of vehicles into Mexico from the United States, abusing his credentials as an embassy employee. But these employees were exceptions. The mission FSNs were good and dedicated employees. But corruption was rampant in Mexico generally, the temptation real.

Q: You mentioned automobiles. Wasn't there a problem of diplomats driving cars that hadn't

been made in Mexico?

WATSON: Oh, yes. It was a mess. We finally straightened that out. We were eventually able to get just about any vehicle imported. It was very difficult. If in Mexico Chrysler was making Dodges and Plymouths, you could bring in Dodges and Plymouths, but not other vehicles. If I recall correctly, and I like to think I do, we were able to work with Mexican protocol officers and others, and thanks to Buz Busby's efforts, we had a number of meetings with GOM officials about all kinds of imports, they import a wide variety of equipment that we would bring in through Laredo, Texas. That was an essential purpose of our consulate in Laredo, a procurement and shipment enterprise for materials which we imported for official use. We also expanded substantially our commissary operation, developing a tremendous asset for our large mission population.

Q: There was inflation in Mexico, too.

WATSON: Oh, yes. It was off the charts. Run across the street mid-day to find out how many points the peso had moved by so we could take advantage of our dollars. Mexico is a wonderful country. At this point, speaking Spanish pretty well, I eventually got to the 4/4 level, able to use some of the slang and joke with employees.

Q: What about drugs? Were they a big problem when you were there?

WATSON: They were a big problem for DEA. But amongst our employees, national employees and American employees, there was no problem. You would think with so many of our younger officers growing up in a more permissive culture...thank God marijuana wasn't around when I was a kid. You would have thought that undoubtedly some of them were smoking, but certainly not to any noticeable extent. But if they had smoked in the past, why wouldn't they have smoked?

Q: How about terrorism? Were there any incidents?

WATSON: Yes, we had a few incidents. We were cautious. I'm less paranoid than some, but I may also be a little less sensitive than I ought to be. We had one small bomb go off just adjacent to the embassy and the Maria Isabel Hotel next door. But it was a small bomb. It went off on a Saturday afternoon while I was there, as a matter of fact. It was adjacent to the surrounding wall on the side where my office was. Terrorism was not really a big problem, but there were occasional incidents.

Security was a normal concern regarding the conduct of Americans and our American staff. Let me say that as concerns the Marine security guards, we had had particular problems with several Marine security guards in Mexico for several years prior to my tour. But the Marines in Mexico City during my short stint there were much better trained, more committed, and much more dependable. We had only one or two significant incidences with the Marines during my time.

Another thing we did while I was there, thanks completely to my wife, Evelyn, was learning to

scuba dive. We began our training at 6:00 am at the American school swimming pool, over about six weeks, three mornings every week. Then we eventually scuba dove off the Vera Cruz coast in the Gulf, then later Baja, Cozumel and Cancun.

Q: It was great for relaxation.

WATSON: Oh, yes. We both became certified scuba divers.

Q: During that period, President Reagan came to Mexicali, as I recall.

WATSON: He certainly did.

Q: Did that involve the Administrative Section?

WATSON: Oh, absolutely, from top to bottom.

Q: Did you have to go up to Mexicali?

WATSON: Yes, several times prior to the visit, and of course during the visit. The visit took place on January 3, 1986. So, we went up there before Christmas. I took off around Christmas for a few days leave in the DC area, and returned prior to the visit. My wife departed post that previous summer to return to her work in the DC area. I don't think anybody will ever say that a presidential visit wasn't successful. Was it a successful visit? I think so. It went well on the administrative side.

Q: Ambassador Gavin was still there at the time?

WATSON: Oh, yes. I left Mexico in August of 1986, at tour end. Gavin left in June, I think it was. I don't think I've ever met anyone who had a more evident ego. And he loved the pomp and circumstance, attention, and adulation, and he got a lot of it. Even his farewell ceremony, sort of bidding adieu, waving from the small private plane that took him away. But Gavin knew how to move. He certainly knew how to move. The embassy limo was always out there on the tarmac at the foot of the ramp and all that folderol. I got to know the airport quite well. In point of fact, I am guilty of abusing a variety of regulations. I knew good and well that Gavin had a couple of daughters who visited him there from time to time. One of them lived with him for a while. I knew that the ambassador's limousine and the embassy driver would pick her up at school regularly. I never tried to stop it. I grimaced and growled and bellyached to myself. I never said anything to Gavin about it. I have to admit that early on, he cowed me quite a bit. Subsequent to my month there, he didn't much deal with me. I took Lyman on, head on, in Lyman's office one day early in my tour. I chewed him up one side and down the other. I called on Gavin and told him of the contretemps, and that Lyman was dysfunctional and ruining what could otherwise be an excellent mission. Gavin just rolled his eyes. What I said to Gavin effectively was, "I'm not leaving here. I am too good. You and this mission need me. I'll do good work for you. But that son of a bitch, Lyman, he is the problem for you here in getting a team built of people working towards the same ends that you want," or something along that line.

Q: Summing up your tour of Mexico, the major problem when you arrived was morale at the embassy.

WATSON: Oh, Lord! We had to curtail the tour of the narcotics coordinator when I arrived, and help him get reassigned. By way of counsel I told him, "Look, there are two ways you can go. You can stay here and get cut to ribbons, or you can leave." He left.

Q: Was that because the ambassador didn't like him?

WATSON: Lyman and the ambassador and Drew Arena. The economic counselor, who had risen to the highest rank of economic counselors, they wanted him out. Lyman as the acting DCM called me, telling me either he left agreeably or he would be "fired" the same as the narcotics officer. This was all within a period of four or five days following my arrival. The economic counselor had been in the Foreign Service maybe 30 years. He asked me what I thought he should do. I said, "Well, it depends on how strong your spine is. If you've got some problems with Lyman or the Ambassador, go and talk to either or both. I don't think this is going to work for you. They don't want you here, I think you're better off leaving." I believe he did meet with one or the other, and decided to curtail his tour. I vaguely recall that each of these officers received abbreviated performance evaluations upon departure, neither especially negative, just lukewarm.

Q: They didn't get sandbagged, in other words.

WATSON: They didn't get sandbagged. But had they stayed, they sure as hell would have.

Q: Let me ask you the final question. The Department of State must have been aware that the embassy in Mexico City was having these problems. Were there any echoes from here, any guidance, or didn't they want to take on the ambassador?

WATSON: Gavin was a friend of Reagan.

Q: Perhaps that answers my question.

WATSON: That answers your question.

Q: It's too bad when good people are caught in a situation like that though.

WATSON: It really is. And we had some fine officers and staff there.

VIRGINIA CARSON-YOUNG
Principal Officer
Merida (1983-1987)

Virginia Carson-Young was born in the state of Washington and received a B.A. from the University of Washington. She was the spouse of a Foreign Service officer and, following the death of her husband in 1972, became an officer herself. Mrs. Carson-Young's career included positions in India, Hong Kong, Mexico, Romania, and Peru. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: After this assignment you went to Mexico.

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes. I was not in Mexico City, however. I was the Principal Officer in Merida, which is one of our smallest consulates, if not the very smallest. There were only two Foreign Service officers there, myself and a junior officer. A most fun and interesting experience. Honestly, I believe that experience in a sense showed me what the Foreign Service ought to be. When you are the Principal Officer and you do everything, there is no compartmentalizing: no this is the political officer's job, this is the ECON officer's job...because it all flows together. And that is the way, in my opinion, it is supposed to be. But at a big Embassy it's not like that. It can't be, of course. In Merida, I did a lot of reporting. In fact, I was given the opportunity to report directly to Washington. I did not send my cables through Mexico City for clearance. I did a lot of commercial reporting, political, whatever. It was me. Some of my very best contacts, I obtained through a visa interview.

Q: How would that work?

CARSON-YOUNG: Example. There was a Belgian engineer who worked for a Houston oil firm. His job was to supervise repairing of the off-shore drilling facilities in the Bay of Campeche. Seventy percent of Mexico's offshore oil comes from that bay. That was in my consular district. The Mexican government was not always forthcoming in letting us know where their facilities were, how much they were pumping, etc. So this man came in and his Belgian visas were due to expire. I talked to him at length and told him to bring his family in at any time to see me. I would take care of it quickly, no problem. Then we began to talk. When I learned what he was doing, I asked where the facilities that he worked on were located. (Previously, Mexico hadn't repaired anything. During the oil boom days they just ordered new replacements.) I saw at some of the oil facilities that I did visit, just lots of equipment rusting under the sun because they had not bothered to use it. But by the 1980s, they had to repair facilities because it was less expensive to repair than it was to buy new items. The Belgian engineer said, "Would you like my map?" I said, "Oh, I certainly would." I sent it in to the Department and my understanding is that it became the bible for the Economic Bureau's oil-related economic reports.

What I am trying to say is that at an Embassy where everyone had his own job, I might have met this man at the visa counter, but I wouldn't have had (1) time to talk to him about anything more than the basic visa necessities, and (2) would not, perhaps, have known that the ECON section was interested in the information he could provide.

Q: What was the situation, political and economic in this area, which was basically the Yucatan Peninsula?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, my consular district included four provinces. They were Yucatan, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Tabasco. It is an area that is very pro-American, even at a time when Mexico as a whole was not. Yucatan tried to join the United States twice in the last century. Their request was defeated by just one vote, I think, just prior to the Civil War. They wanted to come in as a free state and were defeated by the Southern lobby. Ironically, they were much closer in their economy and social situation, having henequen plantations and Indian laborers, to the Southern side than the Northern side. In any case, the residue of goodwill is very strong, even though they were rejected for U.S. statehood.

Merida is an old Spanish-style city, one of the early ones. The courtyard, the cathedral, the governor's mansion are all very picturesque and charming. It is twenty miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

The other provinces that were part of my consular district included resorts in the Cancun and Cozumel area. I had Guatemalan refugees in two out of four of my provinces.

Commercial interests and trade were becoming very important. Yucatan had initially become rich on henequen, from which rope is made. I think the major part of the world's rope came from the Yucatan up through World War II. But at that point, Tanzania, Brazil and other countries began producing it more cheaply. In addition, synthetics became much more utilized. But natural fiber rope is still important, especially in the dairy industry, because those stupid cows will eat anything. If you wrap up the hay with synthetic rope, they will just eat it and then eventually die. It is indigestible. So there is still a market for henequen.

There were fortunes made in the heyday of henequen. It was interesting to see that by the early '80s something like three percent of the population of Merida, which is the major city in the whole Peninsula, was of Lebanese descent. But this ethnic group controlled 60 percent of the wealth. It was beginning to be acceptable for the old, Spanish Yucatan families to intermarry with the Lebanese.

Three out of four of the governors of my provinces had national aspirations. Interesting, different personalities. I traveled, got to know the officials and the people in all four provinces, quite personally. I felt really tuned in to the community.

When I left Romania, which was my last actual assignment, and people say, "Well, I imagine the Romanian revolution was the high point of your career." I usually say "Yes," because I was in Romania when they asked.

But actually, one Fourth of July in Merida, the Governor of Yucatan attended the consulate celebration. This was the first time a governor had attended the Fourth of July event in several years. (In spite of the overt friendliness to the U.S., I think there were official instructions that said you had to be somewhat cool towards the official day.) In any case, this was the first time he had come. I had been in Merida for two years.

I decorated with red, white and blue crepe paper Mexican flowers, had the "Star Spangled Banner" on a little portable recorder, had fireworks set up in the front yard. I pushed the button on the recorder just when the fireworks went off. My Spanish is not excellent, and I spoke extemporaneously. The speech was far from grammatically perfect. But I made a little joke, a play on words. The Governor had been trying to find a way to extend his term, because in Mexico you cannot be reelected to the same position. He had been appointed to the job so he was trying to *prolongar* or extend his term. So I started my remarks by saying, "I have served two years in Yucatan and I like it so much, I have been able to 'prolongar' my assignment. Then I paused, and said, "That is a word I learned here." There was total silence. Then a moment, when I think people were saying, "Did she say what I think she said?" Then a swell of laughter, the governor joining in. Well, the idea that you can say something amusing in a foreign language and have it appreciated, was wonderful. The governor, who spoke no English, told me later he wanted to learn an American word! Re-election.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the Peninsula, because it is really more than one province, really was at odds with at least part of the Mexican policy at the time which was not very forthcoming to the United States?

CARSON-YOUNG: Yes. People in Yucatan used to talk about going to Mexico when they meant going to Mexico City. They would much rather go to Miami. It was closer, for one thing. They felt very much at home there. I found it interesting; when I was doing visa interviews after Hong Kong...and, of course, the Chinese are always planning into the next generation, so we had friends in Hong Kong who were deliberately planting a child, a nephew, or someone in Canada, Australia, the United States, thinking of 1997 when who knows what will happen.

Q: That is when Hong Kong is supposed to revert to China.

CARSON-YOUNG: And even in 1980, for the Chinese, 1997 was not that far away. So I was in Yucatan and talked to a visa applicant who wanted to take his family to Disney World. I asked, "But you are spending half of your salary to go to Disney World?" I thought to myself, "I know you are going there to work." And I was wrong. No, he really was spending half a year's salary to go to Disney World. He said, "Well, if I don't go this year it will just cost more next year." *Mañana* to people like this was "never." They would borrow the money to have a pleasurable vacation. Whereas the Chinese will save their money and scrimp, for the future of the next generation. I don't like generalizations about nationalities--but it was interesting to see how often they were reflected in Mexican and Chinese attitudes.

Q: Our Ambassador in Mexico at that time was John Gavin who was sort of interesting. He was a former movie actor and a wheel in the Reagan Republican Party. What was your impression of him and his connection to the Yucatan?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, he never came to Yucatan while I was there. He made a point to visit all of the Mexican Consulates, but he had come to Merida before I got there and he didn't come back during my four years. So for me, it was to see John Gavin as an observer. I would come into Mexico City usually every six weeks or so. I found him certainly charming and I think he was an

effective ambassador, in a lot of ways. But he was merciless with the Foreign Service and during the first two years I was there, I would go into Mexico City and would learn whose head had most recently fallen.

My understanding was that Gavin came with two hand-picked assistants. One came from a law firm in California, and one had formerly been a Foreign Service officer. Gavin liked him and brought him back in. In any case, either one or both of these people, according to common wisdom, were whispering in his ear and telling him that the career Foreign Service was out to get him, was undependable, incompetent, etc.

Gavin is a very precise person. The story was that he had a photograph on his desk with everything in place and this was provided to the cleaning ladies so that they would put everything right back in place. He didn't like the carpets in his office and had them taken up and the floor sanded, then didn't like the color and had it sanded again. The story was that the fourth floor was going to come crashing down into the third, if he did it one more time. He expected that precise performance from his people. Towards the end, (he was there four years, of which only three coincided with the time I was in Merida), these assistants were gone, and he had become more used to our system. I think, like many political appointees, he came to appreciate what the Foreign Service could do. And in my experience, no one deliberately tries to make a political appointee look bad. On the contrary, we try to make them look good.

Q: This was the sort of court thing with the two, I think they are called the palace guard or palace dogs, who sort of keep people...became quite notorious. As a matter of fact in one of my interviews, I think it was Tony Motley, who was a political appointee, but the Assistant Secretary for ARA apparently said, I think...called Gavin in and said, "You can't do this any more as far as priority people. You become the laughing stock of the diplomatic service. You have to learn to live with people."

CARSON-YOUNG: At one point, when he couldn't get rid of one of his officers, I think it was the administrative counselor, he wouldn't allow him to attend staff meetings. That was really petty. But, as I say, to be in a consulate and one that had no real significance...on the grand scale, nobody was interested in Merida...so I could do really just about what I wanted to, as long as I didn't screw up. It was sort of my domain. I could go into Mexico City and talk to my colleagues there, and meet with Gavin and get at least a smidgen of personal attention, without that fear that it was going to be my head that rolled the next time.

Q: What about the problems of Americans? You covered one of the big resort centers. A lot of Americans must have been around. How did you deal with that?

CARSON-YOUNG: Well, a lot of my attention was diverted to tourism problems in Cancun, especially. I had a wonderful consular agent there. I think that is an unsung, unpaid aspect of our Service. There are nine, I think, consular agents, in Mexico. More than in any other country. I had two different agents during the time I was in Merida, both of them just especially capable women who were on the job sometimes in the middle of the night, 12 or 15 hours a day, etc. With hundreds of U.S. visitors there, we had lots of problems. We had a lot of credit card fraud,

for one thing. Arrests for all sorts of misdemeanors. It wasn't just drugs. People were attracted by a resort like that, and under the mistaken idea that their credit cards couldn't be checked in a foreign country.

I remember, I was in Merida at one point and heard the vice consul on the phone talking to a woman calling from the United States. He was saying, "Well, in what kind of place does your son usually stay?" It was obviously a welfare, whereabouts request and the vice consul was trying to pin down the sort of hotel or lodging where we could legitimately make an inquiry. He said, "Oh, he usually stays in 5-star hotels. He usually goes to first-class restaurants." I caught the name just as I walked by and said, "Wait a moment. He is in jail. Yes, he certainly does like first-class treatment, but he couldn't pay for it." I went to visit the man in jail in Cancun and he was most irate because his mother back in the United States wouldn't sell her house in order to provide him with the funds that it was going to take him to get out of jail. He said, "But you know, I like living this way and I just don't have the money for it." That seemed to be the end of his thinking.

I had one of my worst experiences in consular affairs, following a death in Cancun. It was a young couple on their honeymoon. They had rented one of those little jitney cars that are really very unsafe, and were rushing to return it on time. When the husband first called me to tell me about his wife's death, he indicated that he had been driving and had turned to get the sales slip out of his pocket, to make sure they would get in on time and had swerved when a water truck tried to pass him. The jitney car ran into a divider in the highway. The wife was thrown out of the car and killed instantly. Well, it was not only a terrible tragedy, to see this happen to a young and attractive and, it turned out, rather well-connected young couple from some place in the mid west. The girl's father and father-in-law came down. The husband was detained until he could pay damages to the water company. I can't remember just exactly what the circumstances were, but in any case it was a matter of getting money to him to allow him to depart. They couldn't get the body out, right away, since it was a holiday. There was lots of just terrible publicity coming from U.S. papers. The parents went back to the United States and reported that we had not been cooperative, when in fact we...you know there are only so many things you can do. The fathers were very critical of the morgue, the hospital, the jail and the facilities in Cancun, but especially of the consulate's assistance. And that is something that some people don't realize, but it is a resort city, built as a resort, so it doesn't have the infrastructure and facilities that other cities might have.

We had diving deaths too. People who were attracted to that gorgeous water and the inexpensive scuba diving and Mexico's rather loose requirements. In the United States in order to scuba dive, you had to have so many hours of instruction, etc. But in Cancun they would take people down 50, 60 feet after only one or two hours of instruction. One young American drowned in 15 feet of water. The instructor took out just too many people, and couldn't keep an eye on all of them. That just shouldn't have happened. Another, older man, had a heart attack when he went down too deep after just having eaten. So there were tragic things that happened. The cruise ships would come into Cozumel, and that would spill a couple of hundred people on shore on any given day, in a place that is also rather primitive outside of the tourist hotels. They use these little moped bikes to run around, and sometimes do a lot of drinking. Sometimes, results are fatal.

Q: Just to get a feel for the time, when you had this case of the young married couple, and the parents were raising hell, how did the Department support you on that?

CARSON-YOUNG: Wonderfully. That was the one thread that I clung to because I had never gotten such personal bad publicity. (Since then, if we want to get into adoptions in Romania, maybe I have.) The consular agent was, in fact, in Merida for a Fourth of July party, so wasn't actually there. However, I sent her back immediately when we heard about the death. She and I did everything possible to assist. I must say there was nothing that was not supportive that came out of the Department in that particular case.

ALAN HARDY
Deputy Political Counselor
Mexico (1984)

After joining the Foreign Service in 1956 he served in the Army from 1957-1959. His career included positions in Canada, Madagascar, Italy, Somalia, Hungary, Mexico, and an ambassadorship to Exuatorial Guinea. Ambassador Hardy was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker in 2001.

HARDY: I went from ambassador to Equatorial Guinea to the Deputy Political Counselor in the embassy in Mexico City. I was Deputy Political Counselor because my predecessor was Deputy Political Counselor, and he felt that the title had a nice ring to it even though there was no such thing as a Deputy Political Counselor as far as the Department of State was concerned.

Q: I've never heard of it.

HARDY: ...It would look better on one's calling card when passed out to Mexican officials. Anyway I was the second hand in the political section. For some purposes I took on that title, for others I didn't. People ask me how I could do that after being an ambassador. To which my answer was: once an ambassador, always an ambassador.

Anyway, it turned out to be a fun place. I'd never been to Latin America, so I wanted to do that. Very interesting to watch a lot of things going on, and make some contribution. Mexican-U.S. relations, had their own momentum, often very little affected by the Embassy, the Department of State or the Ambassador. Often times more affected by the U.S. Department of Treasury. There had been already one economic bailout, and since then another, second, bailout. A couple of bailouts of the Mexicans, you're talking billions of dollars here. So Treasury had a great role. They had their Treasury Attaché there. DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) by the same token, had a great quasi-independent role. I was liaison from the Embassy to DEA at post. An American drug agent was tortured and killed during this period. Quite a time. Some even wondered if the Minister of Interior was in the pay of the drug traffickers.

I wrote all the policy papers. I actually put together the whole policy for the Embassy whether it

was political, economic or whatever. I got all the contributions, dovetailed them all together and wrote the overall policy paper sending up the line to the Ambassador for approval and transmission to Washington for its approval. Sometimes desk officers do the same thing in Washington. Sometimes these things originate in Washington, sometimes in the field. But what I have to say about policy documents whether drafted on the desk or in the field, wherever, is... What are some of the names of these things?

Q: Well, been too long for me to remember.

HARDY: High-flown names, all the policy down on paper. I'll tell you what it is - it's codifying all that's self-evident, it's codifying history. It's of great value in keeping everybody on the same page on events that are not fast-breaking. As a document actually guiding foreign policy, things don't work that way. These policy papers are needed, they perform a useful function in keeping people informed and on the same page but they did not make or determine policy. Sometimes you could slip in a useful idea and get an audience for it.

I'll tell you one of the ideas that I tried to slip in. I saw it crop up a few times after I left, that was 12 years ago so I don't know whether it was ever accepted or not. Northern Mexico is very Americanized. Many of the elite from all over Mexico, political and economic leaders, send their children to the United States for university education. This is truest of all in places like Monterrey, Nuevo Leon and in the other northern states. You've got American television channels, in English, in Mexico City on cable TV. You've got even more of it in the northern areas. Northerners buy American cars and cross the border frequently to shop for other goods. I am over-simplifying but it is nonetheless true that to a significant degree the above and other factors lead to a kind of Americanization of the elite and many others in the north. It is in the north of Mexico where sentiment for democratization of the political system and for laissez-faire economics is the strongest. My idea, my feeling is the best way to handle American-Mexican relations is to encourage this kind of Americanization of Mexico or, put another way of blurring of differences between the two countries.

What can that mean? It can mean a sounder economic system, it can be a sounder political system where you actually have a change in parties in government, as recently happened with the election of Vincente Fox as President of Mexico. When I was there, PRI officials gave me a good tip: next year we're going to allow two of our Senators (out of I forget how many senators, 30 or 40) to be non-PRI people. This was a big step in 1987. The Mexicans have gone far beyond that now with the PRI out of power at the national level. I believe that these things change to some extent in sync with the "Americanization" of Mexico, as Mexicans become exposed to our media and some of the good stuff that's on it. As they become exposed to our education, as trade between our two countries increases... Mexico, of course, is not going to lose its Mexican character but the best road to change there may be a partial Americanization as increasing contacts with the U.S. lead to the free adaptation of those things in our culture which are constructive for Mexico.

Q: NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) is part of that package.

HARDY: Oh, absolutely, NAFTA is a big part of it. This was the early years, when, if memory serves, a NAFTA agreement was still just on the horizon. So when I was writing a policy paper, I was putting all of the foregoing argument in there and tying much of it to NAFTA. Then you have the *maquiladora* industries. These are places where essentially American-or foreign-owned, not Mexican, industries set up along the border, say within 50 or 100 miles of it, employ Mexican labor at lower prices and produced goods to be exported primarily to the United States.

Now in a sense that takes jobs away from Americans, but if they didn't go to Mexico, they'd probably go to Taiwan or China or someplace else. So that's a good deal, that's as another vehicle for Americanization. All of this stress on trade with the U.S. depends on conscious U.S. policy whether it's NAFTA, whether it's customs policy, whether it's regulations on inspection of fruit. We can help make constructive political and economic evolution in Mexico easier for the Mexicans.

Furthermore, Americanizing Mexico the way I'm talking about would probably lessen rather than increase immigration to the United States, which is the great Mexican argument in a different context. They don't want to, officially or even culturally, especially in the south, they don't want to be Americanized, or they wouldn't admit that they were being Americanized. Although they might accept those elements that are Americanizing, they won't characterize them that way. But they say, help us develop, give us money, and then you won't get immigration. Well, I say, "Americanize" them, and then people will want to stay home, they'll have a better economy, they'll have a better political system that people won't be fleeing. All these kind of things. But, of course, in practice we can't call it "Americanizing" as that would be offensive to Mexican sensibilities.

So, at the time, that really wasn't articulated, even indirectly But you could slip that in a policy document and perhaps encourage some good with it.

Let's talk about the succession. In the days of the PRI, you knew that either a governor or one of the cabinet ministers was going to be selected to be the next President. Everybody would sit around, and the political section would spin its, maybe not spin its wheels, that's maybe not the right metaphor, but run all over the place trying to find out who it's going to be. Is it going to be the Minister of Interior? Is it going to be the Governor of the State of Mexico? Who is going to be the next President?

You write endless reports on this. And it's a bit like trying to predict the stock market. It's futile. You might narrow it down to five or six people, three or four people even. It's hit or miss whether you really pick the guy that's selected. It doesn't really mean a thing if you happen to pick the right guy in advance. What does mean something is if there are three or four candidates that have a chance and we know what it would mean for the United States whichever candidate wins. This is entirely different from trying to predict things. I believe our whole system of political reporting is too centered on trying to figure who's going to win the next election or who's going to succeed to power. Don't worry about that. Find out what you can do, whoever wins. We need to orient our focus in that direction. That's one way you can conserve personnel resources and have a leaner, meaner Foreign Service, which I guess we're going to have to do. (I

alluded to another way earlier: automate your political reporting.)

Q: Know as many people as you can. Opposition and incumbent. Just know everybody.

HARDY: Yes, and it doesn't hurt to know the losers. The loser could be next year's winner, or next year's person installed by the army.

ALBERTO M. PIEDRA
Ambassador to Guatemala
(1984-1987)

Ambassador Alberto M. Piedra was born in Cuba and educated in Cuba, Europe, and the U.S. After receiving a Ph.D. from Georgetown University, he began working at the Organization of American States. In 1984, he was named Ambassador to Guatemala and later worked at the United Nations and the Human Rights Commission. Ambassador Piedra was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: What about Mexico?

PIEDRA: Relations were not very good. Guatemala vis-a-vis Mexico is similar to what it used to be between Mexico and the United States. Because, don't forget, according to the Guatemalans the whole Chiapas region was originally Guatemala and the Mexicans took it away from them. So therefore there is the feeling of big brother on top who has abused Guatemala.

Now, by the way, it is to the credit of the Guatemalan government that it established good relations with the Mexican government. There were many implications of all this because it had to do with the whole question of guerrillas coming into Guatemala from Mexico. The guerrillas are according to Guatemalan sources, very often going into Mexico, staying there a while and then come back.

Q: Did we stay out of the problems between Mexico and Guatemala?

PIEDRA: We didn't get involved because it wasn't that serious. I mean, it wasn't a question about war. It was just a sort of antagonism for historical reasons which was reflected now because of the suspicion that Mexico was protecting the guerrillas. The Mexican government, of course, has denied this saying that they can't patrol the border. Whatever the reason, the Guatemalans interpreted this as a sort of protection that the Mexican government was giving at the time to allow the guerrillas to linger there, etc. Therefore when there were some incidents...as you know there were some refugee camps which, after meetings, were pulled back a certain number of miles to avoid this problem.

Q: Did you and your Embassy get involved in the various peacekeeping efforts...El Salvador business dominated everything, the guerrilla war there. We were getting involved militarily, at least through assistance. Mexico and Venezuela and other Central American governments were in the Contradora...Was Guatemala involved?

PIEDRA: Well, yes they were involved. It was not a problem, but that is where diplomacy came in. Where did Guatemala stand in all this? Mexico wanted Guatemala always to be basically on their side. So from that point of view we were directly involved.

Q: I am sure you were getting cables all the time with instructions essentially to tell the Guatemalans this was how we wanted to see things and all. This is done to every post. On the Contradora position did you find the Guatemalans receptive, understanding of our concerns?

PIEDRA: I would say they were receptive. But the question here is that Guatemala wanted to follow a sort of independent, sort of neutral policy. We would have liked Guatemala to take more of a pro-US position in the whole Contradora process. Guatemala didn't want to antagonize either the US or Mexico so they took sort of a neutralist policy.

Q: At least they weren't against us.

G. PHILIP HUGHES

**Staff Director for Latin America, National Security Council, The White House
Washington, DC (1985-1986)**

Ambassador Hughes was born and raised in Ohio and educated at the University of Dayton, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Harvard University. His career with the US Government included service at the senior level with the Congressional Budget Office, the Departments of State and Commerce, and the White House, where he served two tours with the National Security Council. In 1990 he was named US Ambassador to Barbados, where he served until 1993. Ambassador Hughes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You had both the Caribbean and the Mexican portfolio. What was our view of Mexico? There has always been a troubled American relationship with Mexico. What were the concerns that we had at that time?

HUGHES: We were in those days dealing with the Mexican government of de la Madrid. De la Madrid's administration was I think regarded in Washington as more honest by the standards of Mexican governments than we were accustomed to. And as reform minded and as interested in trying to improve the climate of relations with the United States as had been true of the Lopez Portillo administration. To some extent de la Madrid was sort of a product improvement on Lopez Portillo in that respect. It was a serious, technocratic administration.

We had a couple of serious foreign policy differences with Mexico. Cuba was one. The Mexicans of course opposed our embargo policy. From time to time, anytime they wanted to tweak our noses, they would always be able to do something with Cuba. Central America was another area where one of our main concerns was that Mexico not be a troublemaker in this process through Contadora meetings of other Latin American governments with Central American governments to try to solve the Central American problem around or without the United States. Diplomatically we had the challenge of how to keep the Mexicans from being troublemakers or spoilers so to speak in Central America.

Then of course we had concerns about Mexico itself. Its internal politics, the one party domination of the system at the time which gradually had been weakening. In those days the Partido de Action de Nacional, the National Action Party, PAN, had just begun to win elections in the northern states and now begun to be taken as a somewhat serious political force. We wanted to see Mexican economic liberalization. In 1985 to '86 we were just in the stages of recovering from the 1982 Mexican economic crisis and didn't realize that another one was right around the corner in 1987. I don't think we realized that.

During the brief period that I was on the NSC staff in connection with Mexico, my main activities were planning a trip that Nancy Reagan made to Mexico and accompanying her to give a symbolic donation of a million dollars to the victims of the September 1985 Mexico City earthquake. Dealing with a presidential phone call between de la Madrid and Ronald Reagan. De la Madrid initiated it after Reagan's Geneva summit meeting. I also was involved in being at, and doing all the staff work for the January 1986 Mexicali summit between Reagan and de la Madrid. It was actually technically supposed to happen in 1985 but during the calendar year '85 we somehow didn't get in all of our annual visits so we made it in January '86, piggybacked on one of Reagan's trips to California.

Q: How did the Nancy Reagan and then the Ronald Reagan visits go?

HUGHES: Nancy Reagan's trip was I think her first foray into a foreign policy role. It was something she very much wanted to do. It was all got up in a few days as you might imagine right after the earthquake. The day after the earthquake I was called at the NSC and asked how do you think the Mexicans would react to the First Lady coming to Mexico? I said that the last thing in the world the Mexicans need is the First Lady coming to Mexico right now. She is not going to be able to do anything material. She is not going to be able to put back a building or dig out civilians or something like that. Any aid that we gave would be only a symbolic gesture, a drop in the bucket. Financially, we had already offered the Mexicans a variety of technical assistance from sniffer dogs to special jacks and engineering gear to try to rescue people from collapsed buildings. The Mexicans were proudly dilatory about taking us up on our offers of help, and she wasn't going to solve that problem. What could possibly be achieved by the First Lady's going to Mexico except inconveniencing the Mexicans at a time of national disorder and stress and grieving and all the rest of it and getting some photo-ops for Nancy Reagan. That was my view.

I was quickly told that this was probably going to happen so it's not a question of whether it is desirable or not, it is a question of making it happen. Within a few more hours I learned that this was probably going to happen so we turned to and set up the visit. I liaised with the office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and we got a check cut for a million dollars. This was an administrative decision and Nancy Reagan was going to take a million dollar check to Los Pinos. We coordinated with the embassy. There was no time for an advance visit or anything. We just sent advance teams directly to Mexico to get this set up on about 48 hour's notice and coordinated with the embassy to work out a schedule which mainly involved the first lady arriving, going to Los Pinos, meeting with de la Madrid, giving him the check, touring some sites of devastation around the city, meeting with the embassy staff and saying some words with them and then flying on to California.

We got on an Air Force I airplane. Elliot Abrams went from the State Department, I went from the NSC, Jim Rosebush was then Nancy Reagan's chief of staff and Elaine something or other was the First Lady's press secretary. We all flew to Mexico in this nearly empty plane spending a lot of hours in the air. Nancy Reagan's briefing was very brief and not deeply substantive and she mainly spent the flights both to Mexico and California closeted in her state room. She didn't mingle with people in the way the Bushes did typically on their airplane.

We landed in Mexico and went through this program which involved going to Los Pinos, giving the check, having a little talk with de la Madrid, and going around touring a number of sites. It was pandemonium. People were all over the first lady. There was one very frightening sight at, I know well the square in Mexico City but I'm not calling its name to mind, where a large high-rise apartment building, probably a 15 story building, had just collapsed into a pile of bricks. There was a great crowd of people milling around. The First Lady's motorcade pulled up and it looked actually very frightening. She was surrounded by this mob of people. They weren't evidently hostile but something could have happened to her in such a large crowd. The Secret Service had great difficulty with the Mexican authorities maintaining any kind of crowd control around her. Then we went to the embassy and she gave a speech. We got on the plane and flew to California, utterly uneventful.

The President's trip to Mexicali was a funnier thing. We were trying to set this thing up and towards the end of 1985, after the Geneva summit, we got a call. De la Madrid wanted to speak to the President. We didn't know what he wanted to speak about. We hadn't set up the Mexicali meeting yet. I was called by the West Wing and asked to get up some talking points right away and the President would return the call. We would book a time when the President would return the call. We had three or four hours to get some talking points over to the West Wing. Presidential calls in those days were much more orchestrated than they were later in the Bush Administration.

I consulted with the State Department Mexico experts on the desk to see what could de la Madrid possibly have on his mind that we could tell the President. So we put up some talking points saying that we finally agreed that the summit would be in Mexicali on a certain day, wasn't that nice, I'm so looking forward to seeing you. We put some talking points about Mexico having decided to join the GATT and that was very nice. And we put up some talking points about

Mexico's astronaut being about to be launched on the space shuttle and wasn't that nice. All this sort of bi-lateral Mexico fluff and it turned out that that wasn't what de la Madrid wanted to call about at all. He wanted to hear from Ronald Reagan about the Geneva summit.

Q: The Geneva summit was with Gorbachev. This was the first meeting wasn't it?

HUGHES: That's correct.

Q: That was quite a change.

HUGHES: It was really an important first meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev and de la Madrid wanted to congratulate him on the summit and hear about it. Our talking point didn't cover the Geneva summit so we finessed those things but somehow in the middle of this conversation he managed to work in all of these non-sequitur talking points that we had put up for him on these silly bilateral Mexico issues that were quite off the point of de la Madrid's real call.

Then we got up the summit in Mexicali. It was a one day affair. There was a private meeting with Reagan and de la Madrid in which we had an ambitious agenda for Reagan. He was to talk about Central America, Mexican political reform, Mexican economic reform, and some bi-lateral trade problems we were having. By his account after their one-on-one meeting, he mainly talked about his observations about how much economic development potential there was in Baja California for resorts along some of the lovely deserted beaches. Mexico could really increase its prosperity if resort development in Baja were significantly advanced. And a bunch of other personal stuff. While that was going on Secretary Shultz chaired a meeting of the Mexican delegation and the U.S. delegation. Shultz was the U.S. chair, Baker was there for Treasury, and the National Security Advisor, Poindexter at the time, was there. Nobody went to Reagan and de la Madrid's meeting but Reagan and de la Madrid and their interpreters. What we know about that meeting came from the interpreter's notes and what Ronald Reagan told us about it afterwards.

In the delegation meeting the Mexican opposite number was Bernardo Sepulveda, who was formerly ambassador in Washington and was then Mexican foreign secretary, Jesús Silva-Herzog, who was then Finance Minister and is now ambassador in Washington; and assorted other ministers. That was an extremely contentious meeting in which the Mexicans beat us up about our Central America policy and our Cuba policy. They were unhelpful on virtually everything that we raised. Sepulveda was nationalistic, argumentative, uncooperative, accusatory. I did a big memcon on this after the fact and I don't remember all of the features of the discussion, I just remember it as a thoroughly dissatisfying meeting in which Shultz and Baker went out of the meeting basically furious, just wagging their heads and angry at the Mexicans.

Then we had a luncheon. The Mexicans served some wine that had been specially bottled on the occasion and Jack Gavin, our ambassador, said that it tasted like some animal's piss, well anyway. Then I think there was some kind of press availability and some kind of ceremony or despedida [farewell]. Then we got on the helicopters and flew back to California and then on to Washington. That was pretty much it for that meeting.

Q: I have been told, I've never served in Mexican affairs, that in a way the relations between Mexico and the United States are so terribly close in almost everything that foreign affairs is sort of almost handed over to the nationalists or to the left to beat up on us. We are cooperating very closely at the state, the county, whatever level, departmental level, finance, security, everything else.

HUGHES: Jesús Silva-Herzog reportedly was as mad as anybody in that room about the way that Sepulveda conducted the meeting because he had serious business to do with Jim Baker and we didn't do any serious business because we were too busy tied up in these ideological fights over democracy, Central America, communism and who's on the left. Frankly that meeting was a living, vivid demonstration of the degree to which in those days, not so much today and not at all I think during the presidency of Carlos Salinas, the Mexicans placated the left and sort of farmed out their foreign policy to the left.

RICHARD H. MOREFIELD
Consul General
Guadalajara (1985-1987)

Economic Counselor
Mexico City (1987-19??)

Richard H. Morefield was born into a Mexican-American family in San Diego, California. He received degrees from the University of San Francisco and the University of California. Mr. Morefield joined the State Department in 1956. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Colombia, Norway, Uruguay, Iran, and Mexico. Mr. Morefield was interviewed by William D. Morgan in 1990.

Q: Because this turned out to be, x-number of years after you were there, a tremendous tragedy, namely, the execution by certain people, some of whom just had a doctor arrested in the United States, or dragged to the United States from Mexico. How many years after that was Kiki -- what was his last name again?

MOREFIELD: Kiki Camarena was there when I was there.

Q: He was there when you were there? Tell us what you can, or want, about that.

MOREFIELD: My wife has said, and I think I agree with her, that probably my being there was a culmination of my career, otherwise. Because of my own son's murder and because of my incarceration in Iran, I was in a position to provide the kind of emotional support, not only to the family and to the other colleagues, but to the rest of the consulate.

Q: *So his kidnapping and death took place while you were there?*

MOREFIELD: His body was found on the tenth anniversary of my son's murder.

Q: *Oh, dear. I think for the reader, the listener, we should make it clear that Dick's son was brutally executed as a young man--19, I think, in a 7-11 or a--*

MOREFIELD: At a Roy Rogers [fast food restaurant]

Q: *Roy Rogers, right here in the Northern Virginia area. This was in 19--*

MOREFIELD: '76.

Q: *Seventy-six, yes. And then, of course, his hostage days, that he's referring to, he'll get back to shortly. But those two things, the Department felt, really--and your wife, particularly, felt--contributed to your ability to help in this tremendous tragedy. Tell us briefly, for those that might not know what happened. It was a DEA agent.*

MOREFIELD: The DEA agent was picked up and kidnapped as he walked out of the consulate to go have lunch with his wife. When I was notified the next morning, I said right up front, "The first priority of this consulate is to get him back."

For those who don't know how police investigations go, they live on communications. We had around-the-clock communications, where my secretary, who was the part-time communicator, and one vice consul, who was a backup, did twelve hours on, twelve hours off for six weeks.

Q: *How long was it before they discovered his body, or knew he was dead?*

MOREFIELD: They found his body in March. So it was about six weeks.

Q: *And through all that time, it was possible he was still alive?*

MOREFIELD: We were pretty sure that with the kind of treatment he was going through, as the days went on, it was unlikely that he was still living. One thing that was important was the attitude we took with the Mexican Government. The governor was out of state when Kiki was taken.

Q: *Governor of the state of?*

MOREFIELD: Of Jalisco.

Q: *For Guadalajara area?*

MOREFIELD: Yes.

Q: And he had supervision over this. Or, at least, he was a principal?

MOREFIELD: Yes. I told him from the very beginning that he had to realize this was an issue that would not go away. That the worst of all possible scenarios for the Mexican Government was that the case not be resolved, because they would be continually condemned in the worst possible terms.

Q: They would be guilty until proved otherwise.

MOREFIELD: I said, "Even in the unfortunate circumstance of some Mexican official being involved in this, it was to the advantage of the Mexican Government that you cut your losses, and, basically, resolve the case. Because until you do, it was going to be a festering wound."

And his reaction was, "But we have had police officials killed in the line of duty." I then said something, which I am proud to say was picked up and followed.

I said, "Governor, this man was an American official, accredited to the Mexican Government as a diplomat, assigned to my consulate to cooperate in a joint program with the Mexican Government. He was not killed in the process of helping a police raid. He was kidnapped walking out of the consulate." I said, "If you don't understand the distinction..."

Q: Maybe he thought of him as a Mexican?

MOREFIELD: Well, no--but as a police officer. So it was important that from then on, I never referred to him as a DEA agent.

Q: He was a diplomat.

MOREFIELD: He was a member of my staff at the consulate. And I think that kind of support was important to DEA. That's the kind of support that I think you have to give; an ingrown, inherent belief in the importance of their activities.

I would say to the Mexicans, "Look, I was in Colombia at the beginning of the drug problems there, and you have a real problem. The one thing that can jeopardize the Mexican political-economic system is the drug traffic."

Up until then, the official party, the PRI, had the ability to obtain a consensus within the party by co-opting, by assigning things. Consequently, there was no power structure outside the PRI that could, in effect, develop a competing political consensus. I argued there were only three organizations in Mexico, which had national representation. The PAN was not one. It was a regional political party.

I said the three nationwide organizations were the PRI, the Catholic Church, and the drug traffickers. And that if the drug traffickers ever parlayed their money power into economic power, and into political power, the ability of the Mexican political system to come to a national

consensus was going to be destroyed.

Q: Do you think this tragedy, and all that followed, in terms of the attention and some of the things that you spoke of, helped the Mexican Government make sure that that wouldn't happen, that that wouldn't be a route? Or is it still out there?

MOREFIELD: This occurred at a time when for a number of reasons Mexico was going through a very, very difficult economic restructuring.

Q: Again, this was 1984?

MOREFIELD: This was up through '88.

Q: Through '88? You were CG in Guadalajara from?

MOREFIELD: For two years, from '85 to '87.

Q: And then went on to Mexico City. So you carried on your awareness of all this into Mexico City, where you were what?

MOREFIELD: I was economic counselor.

Q: Economic counselor. Okay. So you got to see the economy of the drug trafficking. But back to the point that you were saying.

MOREFIELD: Previously they had sufficient resources to co-opt and to bring everybody into the system. When that economic model for a number of reasons ran out of steam--and it had already run out of steam before the drop in oil prices--and then when you had the subsequent drop in oil prices, they were in real problems.

Q: Because that was an enormous chunk out of the economy, and the potential economy.

MOREFIELD: And to dedicate the resources to fight the drug traffickers at that time was a real statesman-like decision, and to the credit of the Mexican authorities.

Q: You're saying they did it?

MOREFIELD: They tried.

Q: Where do you think they are today?

MOREFIELD: They're still trying. And I think they are concerned over the social implications of that kind of illegal money floating around.

Q: Of which, the tragedy in Guadalajara really brought it out? Out of all evil comes good,

maybe? Or was there a lesson there for them, that they learned?

MOREFIELD: I don't know what the Mexicans learned out of Guadalajara.

Q: Even from the capital? When you moved to the capital, you didn't get different insights?

MOREFIELD: It was an issue that continued all the time I was in Mexico City. It did not go away. It has still not gone away.

Q: No. We picked up a doctor.

MOREFIELD: To me it is very interesting that there is a task force in DEA to get the perpetrators.

Q: Understandable, but how do the Mexicans look at such an extraterritorial intrusion?

MOREFIELD: This has always been a problem in the attempt to enforce U.S. legislation overseas. DEA has a dilemma. They're a law-enforcement agency, which has responsibilities overseas, but does not have the authority. But you get, in a minor way, the same kind of things where you get a deputy sheriff from Dade County who goes over to the Bahamas and brings back somebody.

Q: Or into Canada. [Laughter]

MOREFIELD: Or into Canada; the famous example, into Canada. Or you get somebody from the LAPD that goes down into Mexico. There are ways in which to get prisoners across the border.

Q: Mr. Thornburgh's going there today or tomorrow, I think. He'll have an opportunity to explain the American way of doing this.

MOREFIELD: But unfortunately there's also the judicial ruling that just because the person was, if you will, shoved across the border, the courts do not have to consider this as a violation of his rights overseas. His rights begin once he's shoved through that border.

Q: That was 15 to 10 years ago, Dick. Now you look back at it. Have we made it or not?

MOREFIELD: I think we are in a far better situation than we were then. One of the real problems is motivation. I saw this very clearly in Mexico, where we had 15% of all junior officers start out with a consular assignment in Mexico. One out of seven junior officers, at the threshold, thinks that the Foreign Service is doing consular work in Mexico. Unfortunately, many of them are saying, "Well, I'm an economic officer. I'm a political officer. I'll do my time in El Paso, South, or whatever it is. And then two years from now I get on."

I made a conscious effort to try and get to every constituent post and talk to them. I said, "It's not my bailiwick. I have no ax to grind. You ought to know you can't afford to waste two years. We're a competitive service. You can demonstrate skills. You can demonstrate your ability in these assignments."

One of the problems with a consular package was that you were forced to program every single minute. And one of the things we tried to do--not only myself, in Guadalajara, but later on, in all of Mexico--was to say, "10% of a consular officer's time should be invested in the future. He should be not only urged, he should be required, to contribute to the economic section, or the political section, or the admin section, in order to broaden the base of experience." Basically, to get at a large post like Mexico City what I got in Barranquilla.

Q: What you're saying is that there should be, and we haven't used this word yet, more rotation. Or a more refined rotation program, especially in the first or second year.

MOREFIELD: Given the staffing pattern in Mexico City, it was hard to do a rotation pattern, in which you would get one out-of-consular assignment. The best you could do would be rotated among the consular positions.

Q: Well, you can do it.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Minister Counselor for Public Affairs
Mexico City (1985-1989)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: We're never done. Today is the 24th of July, 2003. Sally, let's just do it very briefly again. How did you get the job in ARA? You went to Mexico as what?

COWAL: I went to Mexico as the public affairs officer, as the minister counselor for public affairs, which was at that time a USIA post, rather than a State Department post. Having come from being political counselor in New York at the State Department, I then couldn't resist the offer to go to Mexico, which is a country I had long been interested in. So I was in the embassy in Mexico as the public affairs officer for nearly four years.

Q: Between when and when?

COWAL: Between 1985 and 1989. As I got ready to leave Mexico, I was supposed to go as the public affairs officer to Spain, not something that I particularly wanted to do, since I didn't think what was happening in Spain was nearly as interesting as what was happening in Mexico. But for somebody who had Spanish as a language, it was supposed to be the ultimate reward, that you could get to Madrid. I just wasn't particularly interested in the ultimate reward, although I must say I wasn't politicking for anything else. There are lots of times in the State Department when you're actively working behind the scenes to see what else you can do, but I had gracefully accepted the fact, actually, that living in Europe might be a wonderful experience. And if Spain was what would get me there, then that would be interesting. Spain was going to have the presidency of the EU (European Union) once during the contemplated four years that I would be there. I think the Barcelona Olympics were going to be on, and there was going to be a big trade fair in Seville. So I was being persuaded that this was going to be a very interesting job.

I got as far as Washington, DC, coming through on the normal consultations. Then I was persuaded by Bernie Aronson, assistant secretary for Latin America, that instead of going as PAO to Spain, I should stay in Washington and be a deputy assistant secretary for Mexico and the Caribbean. I think the reason I was asked was because of the experience I had in Mexico. This was at a time when really for the first time in 30 or 40 years, there was perceived to be on the part of both governments, this being the beginning of the Bush administration and the beginning of the Carlos Salinas administration in Mexico – there was a desire to end this relationship of sort of distant neighbors: countries which shared a 2,000-mile-long border, but which, symbolically, were standing along the border with our backs to each other.

It had begun when I was there, and I was seen to be a part of helping it to occur. The two new presidents, George Bush Sr. and Salinas, who were elected about the same time – elections in Mexico are in July and the President takes office in December. Of course, here they're in November and he takes office in January. But because Mexico has a six-year election cycle and the U.S. has a four-year election cycle, it's only every 12 years or so that we actually have presidential elections the same year. So these two new guys were getting elected, and I'm not sure really whether the push came from – I think it really came from the Mexican side, but it was responded to very favorably by the new Bush administration, the pre-administration. But of course he was vice president to Reagan, so he was already very involved in things.

The idea was that we could use this time when they were both presidents-elect to really form a new relationship, look at this relationship in a new way. I had helped to set up the first visit between Bush and Salinas, which came to be known as the Spirit of Houston, because they met in Houston. Originally, there were going to be two visits. Bush was also going to be going to Mexico, but it's a very short time between our election and inauguration, and they really only had time to do one. Nonetheless, it was seen as "Let's begin anew." I had excellent relations with a lot of people in the Salinas government, mostly because many of them had been exchange students in the United States. Especially in Boston, they had gone to Harvard and they had gone to MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and they had gone to other places like that. Since

the person from USIA/USIS really runs our exchange programs and keeps track of those alumni, I had met them before they were selected.

So, since they wanted to have a new kind of relationship, they decided they wanted to have somebody who was the point person on it who knew a lot about it and had a rather sympathetic view toward it, whereas many State Department people had avoided serving in Mexico. It was considered to be a difficult country. Especially through the prior maybe 10 years of great turmoil that we talked about last time in Central America, we in Mexico were on opposite sides of that in many ways.

Q: Let's go back to the time you went to Mexico, because we really didn't touch this too closely. Who was the ambassador when you arrived there in '85?

COWAL: John Gavin.

Q: Now, John Gavin, former movie star and all, was considered a very difficult person by many people who have served there, and could you talk about that?

COWAL: First of all, I only served with him for about six months, I think. He had been about five years, so he had been there for almost all of it. I think he was Reagan's first ambassador and stayed on, probably before they were so affixed on rotating, even political people, every three years. So the political appointees tended to stay on longer, and it was actually the Reagan administration that put that plan into effect, because Reagan was such a nice guy that he could never say no to his friends. When he would appoint these people to London or Paris or Mexico or wherever they were appointed, and then they wanted to stay on, and sometimes that was a good idea and sometimes that was not such a good idea, but it was very hard for him to tell somebody that, no, they couldn't stay any longer. They decided that the way to mitigate that problem was simply to say, "Okay, all ambassadors serve for three years, whether you're career or whether you're political. It's three-year appointments." It's really difficult to extend that, so at any rate, John Gavin had been there five years at least, I think, when I got there, was considered both by the Mexicans and by many of his staff to be an extremely difficult person to work around.

I think the Mexicans considered him difficult for good reasons and for not such good reasons. He was extremely critical of Mexico, and he was critical about some things that he should have been critical of, such as corruption, which was fairly endemic, such as the rule by one political party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), which was at that point still very much cast in concrete. Those were things that he was right to be critical of, but he probably expressed his criticism in ways which the Mexicans, who are extremely sensitive with respect to their sovereignty and their dignity, particularly vis-à-vis the United States, found enormously offensive. And I think because he was a movie star – he was also nobody's dummy. He was much better educated, for instance, than Reagan. He was a movie star who had gone to Stanford University, and his mother was Mexican, who had lived in the United States for many years, from Sonora, a northern Mexican state. I sense that she was very critical of Mexico, also, so I think he probably grew up in a way in a love/hate relationship, wanting it to be better than it was, but disliking many things about it.

Because he was a movie star, of course, he had enormous presence. He was well known in Mexico by the time he got there as ambassador. He had made a couple of movies there. He was bilingual in Spanish. It was something that he had gotten from his mother. They had always spoken Spanish, as well as English, at home. So you couldn't pull the wool over his eyes terribly easily. If there is a typical political appointee, and I don't think there is, but if it's a typical political appointee who goes to a country where he or she has no real knowledge of the country and no real language schools, and the press and the public don't much care who it is, it's just some other political hack who's come down from someplace to sit in this job for a few years, Gavin was not that. He was bilingual, he was knowledgeable about Mexico, and he had a following and a presence.

I wasn't there when he arrived, but I think from the time he arrived the press were after him and interested in quoting him and doing things with him. The more he did, the more trouble he got himself into, in many ways. So it was a difficult time. I think for his staff, he was extremely courteous in many ways, but he had enormously high standards, I must say, and he had some strange likes and dislikes, not only about people, but about how things should be done. If you got on his wrong side, he was not inclined to treat that so kindly. He, for some reason, decided that he had heard about me and he really wanted me to come, although I had not met him personally. So he actually had to engage in a sort of tug-of-war with Vernon Walters who was my boss in New York about when I would be able to leave New York and come to Mexico. I just stepped aside and said, "Let the elephants fight it out and I'll come when they get this thing settled." But I came in with him very much wanting me to be there, and I think therefore I had a relatively easy time of it, although I remember him – let's say he expressed his anger easily, and sometimes over things over which you had no control.

I can recall his last speech in the country was to the American Chamber of Commerce, of which he was, as all ambassadors are, the honorary chair. But the American chamber in Mexico is a big organization, 2,000 or 3,000 members, Mexican companies, as well as American companies, and 1,000 at least had turned out for his farewell address. People also turned out for his speeches because they figured he would say something controversial and they wanted to be there. The waiters started, I think, serving coffee while he was speaking, so you could hear the sort of click of the china cups being put on the china plates, and he was absolutely livid at both me and the head of the chamber of commerce, whom he thought should have and could have prevented this from happening. I must say, that's the only time where personally I felt that I was – again, not without reason. It was certainly distracting to him and it was distracting to the audience. I guess I didn't think I was in charge of the waiters, but if we were in charge of the event, from his point of view, we should have been in charge of the waiters.

So that was the kind of person he was. I think the most controversial thing that he did, at least in my time there, happened just before I arrived. There was a very large earthquake in September of 1985. One of the first things that he did, he was very concerned and he was very interested and he wanted to make sure that appropriate assistance came from the United States. He got the military to get him a helicopter, and he wanted to personally survey the damage in Mexico City, not without reason, again. He got a helicopter and he flew over and counted the number of buildings

down, and many of them were apartment buildings. Fortunately, the quake was early enough in the morning that people weren't yet in their offices. Otherwise I think it would have been much greater, because a lot of people were still out of the city or in small buildings and so on, not in these huge office towers.

At any rate, he counted the number of buildings down and he made two observations to the press as he got off the helicopter. One is that 20,000 people had died, because he counted the number of buildings times what he assumed was the occupancy of each building, and it was clear that most people in those buildings would not survive. They pulled a few survivors out of the rubble, but mostly these buildings just came right down. And, secondly, he observed that the pattern of destruction was very uneven, so while it was worse in some sections of the city than others, it was not uniform. So you'd look on a block and three buildings would be standing, and two buildings, like collapsed teeth, would be down between the three standing buildings. He immediately jumped to the conclusion that those were buildings that were probably built not to the standards which were in print, but not always observed, of how buildings ought to be built in a seismic zone. And that a lot of that probably had to do with corruption, that maybe it was paid for that there should be 50 bags of sand and cement or whatever it was, but 15 bags went in, because it was more expensive to build things to code.

Of course, both of those facts, and they probably were facts, that he announced, were things that the Mexican government didn't want to hear. Actually, that earthquake, and I think perhaps Gavin's taking a very out-front role and really expressing the damage and so on, the follow up to that by the Mexican citizenry I think really led in some interesting and strange way to the ultimate defeat of the PRI several years later.

Assistance was just not flowing and not flowing fast enough, and people were without electricity and they were without water and they were without homes, and they began for the first time to organize themselves, in neighborhood groups and community groups, to do something about this. That was maybe for the first time really since the Aztecs, a questioning of the central authority and of the power structure, by individuals and by groups of nongovernmental organizations, civil society, that really began to emerge. That quickly spread from earthquake-related things to environmentally related things, the fact that Mexico City was such a polluted city. Again, groups began to form to do something about the pollution or to speak about what was happening to the city, and I think all of that great foment in civil society is what led to a reform in the political system in Mexico. It was very interesting, and Gavin was not without his role in all of that.

Q: What was the Mexican media like?

COWAL: Pretty difficult, pretty impossible. We had two sets of media. First of all, we had 45 foreign correspondents in Mexico City, some of whom had been there for a long, long time and others of whom had come with the earthquake, and then I think because of these sort of quasi-political developments emerging out of the earthquake, stayed on. So 45 American correspondents is a huge foreign press corps, or 45 foreign correspondents, most of whom were Americans – obviously AFP (Agence France Presse), The Times of London, and a few of the Europeans had bureaus. The Brazilians had a couple of newspapers and so on, but I would say of

the 45, 35 at least were from Dallas and from Houston and from New York and from Washington, from Boston, from Chicago and from Los Angeles, all the major media in the United States, television and radio, as well as print media, all the wire services, satellite correspondents. That was part of the press corps that we dealt with, and then we had the Mexican press, which tended to be, at that point, totally captive to the government.

Mexico was a democracy in sort of name only. There was no organized criticism of the government by the press. There was one weekly magazine called Proceso, which sort of attempted to report the news. There were a couple of newspapers – Massuno was one and La Jornada was another, who were more to the left in the political spectrum. But I think the typical pattern was the government pretty much controlled it, because they controlled newsprint. They had a monopoly on the newsprint, so in order to buy paper to print a newspaper, you had to buy that from the government, and if they didn't like what you were printing, you didn't get enough newsprint.

The other way they controlled it was because they had so much money, and the primary advertising in all the newspapers was for things of the government, and those were not only government announcements and so on. At the time I got there, I think there were 1,100 or 1,200 parastatal companies, so the government dominated the economy. They owned everything from chains of supermarkets – there were also some private supermarkets, but there was a whole government supermarket chain, and of course the oil industry, which they continue to own. Since 1936, there's been no outside investment, no private investment, allowed in the Mexican petroleum industry. It was something that Cárdenas took over and determined to be the case.

The government ran enormous numbers of things and had terrific economic power. So both through the punitive restricting of the paper to print on and the hours of broadcast, radio broadcast or television broadcast, which they also controlled for the electronic media, and the incentives that they could give, and finally there was a well-known system of bribes called *embute*. An *embute*, in Mexican slang, is a little envelope that can be flipped under something and given to a journalist to either not write the story or to write the story. So I think our belief was that the Mexican media was a pretty corrupt institution.

Q: Well, then, if Gavin would make these statements, like obviously there was a problem of corruption which led to deaths, could the media mention that?

COWAL: Well, they would sometimes mention it, and that would cause problems, or they wouldn't mention it, and that would cause problems, of course, with the embassy. The foreign media would always cover these things, and then report it, and then sometimes the Mexican media would be able to report on what the foreign media had presented. Yes, it was not the Soviet Union. It was not totally closed. The leading newspaper of the day was called Excélsior, and it was truly an awful newspaper. It was just awfully difficult to try to read it. For instance, the front page would probably have – if you look at the front page of an American newspaper, there are maybe six or seven stories on the front page, which then get carried over to the inside. Excélsior would probably have 30 stories on the front page. So they would have everything on the front page with about three lines of type, and then every story would continue in a different

part of the paper, section C, section F, section D, page 35, page 39, and about half the time it didn't continue on page 39, it continued on some other page, because it was all loused up. It made it extremely difficult to read these stories anyway.

Or they would turn the story around. There was also not much of a line between editorial opinion of the newspaper and the reporting on the news. So a lot of what we did in USIS, we would also sponsor seminars for journalists and so on. We were trying to make them more professional, but they would editorialize right through that Gavin might have said there were 20,000 dead, but that couldn't be the case because of whatever or whatever. So they wouldn't just report the facts and then put their editorial opinion on the editorial page, saying he shouldn't have spoken this way or he didn't have the facts corrected, it would all be interwoven in the same story. They would sometimes report his criticisms, but you would sort of lose the train of it before you got done. Nonetheless, I mean, it came across to the Mexican people that he was someone who was not their friend.

Q: Well, to the Mexican people or to the Mexican government?

COWAL: Well, to the Mexican government. I think some people – obviously, some people thought he was great and some people thought he was awful. I recall when he left his successor was a Goodyear Tire executive, who had never been in Mexico, who had had some experience in Brazil but not much in Mexico. He came and immediately there was an outpouring in the press about this wonderful person and how great was, and this was still under Reagan. It was still when Reagan was president, so he was Reagan's named successor.

I can remember, his name was Charles Pilliod. I can remember saying to him once – he was getting pretty puffed up about this great press that he was receiving. I mean, it really was nice, after taking all of these brick-bats, and I said, "Well, with all due respect, they just like you because you aren't John Gavin, and that's all you have to do at this point, is just not be John Gavin." And that was indeed true. They were by then trying to show they were discerning. They were certainly not anti-American. They just had found this person to be offensive, although, I must say, they never declared him persona non grata. In that sense, they never took any steps, because I think they had no basis on which to do that.

Q: Well, were you getting things from the government press office or from other sources saying, "Can't you do something?" We're talking about Gavin. I mean, were you getting heat, sort of, from the government sources of one kind or another?

COWAL: I think, actually, our press officer and some people were. Personally, it didn't come to me because I probably wasn't there long enough during his time to have made good enough acquaintances or friends or contacts in the media that that was coming to me, at least I don't recall that happening. The embassy was also divided on whether he was good for the United States or not good for the United States. That was both from people who had been personally, perhaps in some way or another, wounded by this guy, or a lot of people who just thought, "Hey, we're all supposed to be here to win friends and influence people, and this guy certainly is not doing that," and who therefore were quite critical of him.

Q: Well, I've heard sort of the word was around the corridors at the Department of State that Gavin and Mexico have, what do you call this, temple dogs? These were people he brought in from outside who kind of served as sort of DCMs or something, but sort of kept him away, and they were not exactly ...

COWAL: Well, he had a DCM named Morris Busby, who went on to become our drug chief for a while and our ambassador in Colombia, I believe, who was from the State Department. He wasn't quite considered to be a full career person, although I think by the rules he was. But he had been sort of a lateral entry into the State Department, I think from one of the law enforcement agencies.

Q: I think so.

COWAL: From the Coast Guard or the military in some way or another. I don't think that was actually done by Gavin, but he was not ...

Q: Assistants, I heard they were sort of – maybe that was earlier on.

COWAL: Then he had also some assistants who again I think were Foreign Service officers but who, shall we say, I think were picked by Gavin because they were very loyal to him, and not because they were necessarily the people that the system would have spewed out as being the best people for these particular jobs. He was somewhat suspicious. He was as conservative, politically, as Reagan was, and therefore I think he regarded most of the career people in the State Department as being hopelessly liberal. I would say, very definitely, again, because of his relationship with the president, not so much with the secretary, as I recall. Shultz was the secretary, and I don't think he and Shultz had a particularly close relationship. But he clearly had one with both the president and with Nancy Reagan. I think the State Department actually exercised very little control over him, either in terms of what he said or did, or in terms of the people who filled the jobs.

By the book, as you know, an ambassador is able to more or less pick his own or her own DCMs, and more or less able to pick his or her own secretary, and beyond that, all jobs are supposed to be competitive, and Foreign Service officers apply for the job of DCM to Mexico or political counselor to Mexico. And the ambassador doesn't decide that. That's decided by the Bureau of Personnel and the office that's responsible for it, in this case, the ARA, the American Republics office, make a decision on who goes as the political officer to Mexico or to Guyana or to Chile or anywhere else. I think because people were afraid of Gavin's relationship with the president, he was able to influence the selection of career officials to the embassy Mexico to an extent that was not generally the case. I think once he got a couple of people, Busby probably being one of them, who he thought reflected more his political or personal point of view than the typical State Department officer did, then he relied – he didn't bring in all these people from the outside, but he brought in people from places in the State Department where they would not necessarily have gotten to those jobs. He relied on this network of people within the State Department whom he did have more trust in to pick other people in whom he also thought he could have trust. So he

was in no way a passive ambassador. He was not waiting for these people to simply be assigned.

Now, those of us who've been in the Foreign Service for a long time know that career people are also not uniformly good, and that if you are totally passive, you sometimes end up with those whom nobody else wants to take. Those who are more active than you are manage to fight them off. So whether he was just trying to get the best damn staff he could get, or he wanted a staff that would march to his tune, I think is debatable. But he was playing an active role.

Q: Going to the media again, I've been told, and you can correct me on this, that the Foreign Ministry of Mexico has always been sort of a playground of the left-wing intellectuals, who don't like the United States as such, whereas other agencies, departments, have longstanding relationships. How about the media? And we'll talk about the Foreign Ministry, but how about the media at this time? Did they come from any particular ...

COWAL: Well, I think mostly what they tended to be was sold out to the government. And, therefore, if the government wanted to be with the United States on something, they were with, and if the government wanted to be against the United States on something, they were against. The PRI and the government were not separable at that point. The party and the government, it was a one-party state, and they pretty much controlled everything, so that I think we sometimes made the mistake in the United States of assuming that things that have the same name mean the same thing. A labor union means something to us, and it's often anti-government in our context. They want rights for the working men, or more salaries, or higher minimum wage, or whatever it is. In Mexico, the labor unions were completely a part of the PRI, and sold out to the PRI. So you sometimes got something that appeared to be a labor union protest, but it was all staged. At the end of the day, the PRI decided what the minimum wage was going to be.

The same was true about the business sector. You survived in Mexico in the business sense – I mean, as a Mexican company, maybe not so much as an American company or a French company, although I think there was great influence there also because of the dominant position of the Mexican government in the economy. But as Mexican business, there were all these confederations of employers and various business groups, the group for the transformation of da-da-da, which would be a business group. And we would say, "Oh, this is the Mexican equivalent of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce or the National Association of Manufacturers," and it might have that name, but it was all a part of the PRI and of the government. We would tend to want to see these things as mirrors of the United States when they weren't all. All of the shots were controlled by the PRI, whether it was the agriculture sector, so the farmers and the land given to peasants in the revolution, or the labor unions, or the press, or the industry, they all had orchestrated roles, and the bandleader was the party and the president. It was an imperial presidency and there is no question about that.

I think people who went into the press maybe tended to be rather more intellectual or rather more liberal than some others, but I think you kept your job in the press because you pretty much toed a line, whatever your private opinions might have been.

Q: How did our operation, your operation, work? We had a number of consulates there,

consular posts. Did they operate differently? Did where they were make any difference, from your particular point of view?

COWAL: Well, we had USIS operations in Guadalajara, which is the second-largest city, and Monterey, which is the industrial center of the country, which is actually where the opposition, the organized political opposition, began to come from. The PAN (National Action Party) party, which is currently – President Fox is a member of the PAN, came to power originally regionally by having the governor of Nuevo León, which is where Monterey is, and the governor of Chihuahua, which is a border state, somehow those got away from the PRI. I think because there, it was just away from the central government enough that it began to fray around the edges. So you had a press there, a newspaper called El Norte, which was somewhat independent from the government, and they were constantly having problems with getting their newsprint supply and so on.

You had some industrialists who were wealthy enough that they could actually be a counterpoint to the government, and you didn't have that in Mexico City. Then we opened an additional post in Tijuana, because I became convinced that the whole border – it was a Tijuana post, but it was meant to cover the border. It was before NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), but anticipating that border things and cross-border relations would become increasingly important as we went forward. Particularly the Monterey position and the people that we could reach in Monterey through our programs I think was important to the whole changes that were taking place in Mexico. I don't think there were any consulates in the south.

Q: Well, there were in the Yucatan.

COWAL: Well, yes, I guess, the Yucatan.

Q: But that's not ...

COWAL: It's not Chiapas, where I don't think we had a consulate, and I don't think we had one in Oaxaca. I guess there were actually eight or nine consulates, so they were probably a more extensive network, and they did some political reporting, as well as mostly they were there to handle consular affairs. But they did do some political reporting, and sometimes what they reported and the things that were going on outside of Mexico City were very interesting.

Q: Well, while you were there, what were the issues that dominated your time? I mean, were you trying to get a point of view across?

COWAL: Well, I think we were very much in the issues of sort of free trade, or open trade, and trying to encourage openings in the Mexican government. We were certainly trying to encourage better observance of human rights, less corruption, more open government, selling off of this enormous parastatal structure which had been created, starting in the '30s, which totally dominated it. Then I would say that, certainly, dominating all of those issues was really drug trafficking and the increasing concern by the United States that Mexico was a center of production, but more importantly, of transiting. There was a DEA, Drug Enforcement Agency,

agent killed in 1985, Enrique Camarena, who was kidnapped, tortured and eventually killed by one of the drug cartels.

I think that even heightened our awareness more. It has always been said that the soft underbelly to the United States is Mexico. Mexico is a dagger pointed at the heart of the United States. We think of ourselves, and we are, a continent or an island, but we're an island with an umbilical cord, and that umbilical cord is Mexico. It attaches us to another continent out there, which is one that produced increasing numbers of illegal immigrants. Migration was a big issue. I would say migration and drugs were probably the two most contentious issues, and the others were trade and corruption and political and economic opening.

Q: Well, during this '85-'89 period, where stood the Nicaragua, El Salvador business?

COWAL: There were active conflicts going on in the Central American region. People like, I think, Reagan himself, who certainly tried to see all of this – or saw all of this. I shouldn't say tried to see, because I think it was genuine on his part. He regarded with great fear the possibility of a domino effect such as we had seen in Southeast Asia of a growing number of states on our border who were hostile to us. That started with the Nicaragua election, leading to the Sandinista government. Clearly, the influence of the Cubans and the Nicaraguans, then, in the internal wars in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala was a source of great concern. Of course, the ultimate domino was Mexico, and the ultimate fear was Mexico.

I must also say that I think that was without foundation. There was no way that Mexico was going to become a Communist country, in my opinion. But Mexico always wanted to hedge its bets with the United States, which it clearly did. From 1847 when we took over half of the Mexican territory, we weren't out there as a friend, necessarily, so they wanted to always have some power to equal the United States. Of course, in the days when the bipolar system was based on the United States on one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, the Mexicans wanted to have good relations with the Soviet Union, and basically did. That included allowing the Soviet Union to use Mexico as a place to put many spies, in fact whose operations were aimed at the United States, and to give them listening posts closer to the United States, and ways to infiltrate the United States. So that was not without foundation.

I mean, it was not an easy relationship. I think it was Reagan who said, actually, the United States had two really important relationships in the world. One was with the Soviet Union because we possessed the ability to blow each other up, and the other was with Mexico, because we seemed to possess the ability to annoy each other to death. He sensed that. It was never an enemy, but there were irritants, enormous irritants, in this relationship.

Q: Did you find, in your job, that one of your things was to apply ointment to the irritants?

COWAL: Yes, I think it was not only to apply ointment to the irritants. I think we had a role to play in both how to make Mexico understand the United States better, but also in trying to help the United States understand Mexico better, trying to get beyond the headlines, trying to get to having a real understanding of our history and our relationship. And, more pragmatically, the fact

that this was a marriage without the possibility of divorce, that history was one thing, and maybe you could change the future, but you couldn't change geography, and therefore wasn't it in both of our best interests to try to figure out a way where we could take advantage of each other's strengths, for the good of all of us. I think that's what the significance, really, of NAFTA is. It's much more than a trading agreement. It's really trying to understand that we have a common destiny, and whereas the Mexicans used to say things like, "Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States," the United States had its equivalent of that message, which was basically, "We're willing to do anything for Mexico except think about it."

We wanted to pretend like it really wasn't there. We did turn our back. If you asked in those days, I mean, probably until today, but certainly in the mid-'80s, I used to do some speaking in the United States. If I would be speaking to a group, an academic audience or any kind of an audience, and I would say, "Well, who are the United States' three largest trading partners," people would say, "Oh, France, England, Japan." Well, it's actually Canada was number one and Mexico was number two, even before NAFTA. It was an enormous trading partner because an automobile that's assembled in Mexico is probably sold here. A television set that's assembled in Mexico is sold here, but the picture tube comes from here, or the engine comes from here, exported to Mexico, it's assembled in Mexico and back, so that two-way trade was already very big. But we didn't even have to think about that. Mexico wasn't our largest trading partner, or even in particular our ally. Who are our allies? England, France, Germany and things far away, not things close at hand. We tried to change the context of that.

Q: Well, did you find the equivalent to the intellectual think tanks, that sort of thing, people with whom you could sit down and sort of say, "We've got this difficult relationship that's going to continue forever, but let's figure out what today we can get done?"

COWAL: I think that's what we were all about, and I think that's really what so-called public diplomacy is all about, is to try to foster the functioning sort of intellectual connection between one society and another. That's obviously something that nine-tenths of the people in any country are not going to understand or respond to. I don't think we were really out there, although occasionally we would do something like bring a popular music group or dance group or something, because you want to try to reach a large number of people. But basically you're trying to direct your attention and your outreach and your programs, whether it's sending people to the United States or bringing Americans to Mexico who can speak at the Colegio de Mexico or in a certain faculty, a certain university, where you believe there are people who are in turn influential in their own societies, intellectually or politically. And to reach those people with something that they wouldn't get simply by watching U.S. television, which they might have seen.

I mean, 50 percent of Mexicans have a close relative in the United States, so there are these enormous connections that bind us, because Uncle Jose lives in Chicago and goes back every few years, but maybe in a marginalized, immigrant community. So that's providing a very narrow slice of the American picture. So we were certainly trying to broaden that, and could we find people to talk to? Of course we could, and partly because we had invested over all the years in these programs, like the Fulbright Program, and in sending people to the United States for undergraduate school, for graduate school, on the International Visitor Program, to expose media

leaders, political leaders and young people whom we believed would be one or the other of those in the future to something about the United States. I think it's one of the greatest – and we're jumping way ahead – but I think one of the greatest, maybe it's too strong a word to say tragedy, but mistakes, of the Clinton Administration and the Albright secretary of state-ship was to allow USIA to be swept away in her attempt to have a deal with Jesse Helms.

There was this feeling that, “Oh, the Cold War doesn't exist anymore. We don't need to have a specific program which tries to explain our values and our people and our society to others,” and I think we're paying that price horrendously now, in terms of the Middle East and other places in the world. But that's the one, of course, that comes to mind.

Q: With this group, were we differentiating, or were we looking at the PAN as well as the PRI and others, and exchange programs, and trying to sort of foster the opposition?

COWAL: Yes, we were, and we had to do it very delicately. Again, maybe you always try to interfere in the internal affairs of others, but you try to do it in a correct and subtle enough way that you don't get vilified for doing so. So, yes, I would say we were very conscious of trying to help these opposition parties survive, because we thought it was for the good of the whole country that there be a multi-party system with some political opposition. We did that in a variety of ways. We identified leaders in those parties, and I suppose more in the PAN than the PRD (Democratic Revolution Party). The PRD tended to be so anti-American, it was difficult to find people that you would work with. And to give international visitor grants to those people, which the Mexican government would allow us to do, would allow to happen. It was not Cuba in that sense, it was not the Soviet Union in that sense. We were allowed to invite people of our choosing to visit the United States, and I think that that had a tremendous impact.

We would also do things like, with the ambassador, we would go and visit states. We had a little military plane, and we would take the country team, essentially, and we'd go out. Because Mexico is so centralized, it's hard to get away from the central power, but we'd take the plane and we'd go to Querétaro or Guanajuato or Sonora or to another state for a day. The economic counselor would have meetings with the business sector, and I would have meetings with the press, and the political officer would meet with all the political parties that were in the state, and the ambassador would spend the day with the governor and then we'd have a big lunch with all these people. I think it was a wonderfully successful way of sort of reaching out beyond the power controlled by Mexico City.

Then we had a whole thing set up by border governors. There are six Mexican states that are border states, and four U.S. states that are border states. Again, as a way of trying to get away from the central power of Mexico City, there would be an annual meeting of the border governors, and they would bring along their directors of environment and their directors of education, their police chiefs. They were very practical. They would try to get away from the ideology, which has so dominated the relationship between Washington and Mexico City, to talk about, “Well, what do we really need in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez to be a better-functioning society, and to try to get exchanges going across the border. I think all of those things were somewhat successful and somewhat paved the way for getting where we are today, which I think

was more on the way to being an ideal relationship before we got dominated by the other issues beginning on September 11th, 2001.

After all, the first state visit for Bush, for this President Bush, was President Fox, so a real acknowledgement for the first time that who's really our number-one trading partner and one of our closest allies? It's our neighbor Mexico. That's an amazing change in these 15 years.

Stu, I've got to back off now and go to work.

Q: Well, we'll pick this up the next time, and essentially we've sort of finished Mexico, don't you think?

COWAL: I guess so. These poor people have got to be bored by now.

RICHARD T. McCORMACK
U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States
Washington, DC (1985-1989)

After attending Georgetown University, Mr. Richard T. McCormack assumed a multitude of administrative roles for the Nixon Administration in addition to serving under Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania and Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Mr. McCormack's career also included positions as the US Ambassador to the Organization of American States as well as Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. Ambassador McCormack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

McCORMACK: The most important thing that happens at the OAS every year centers around the OAS General Assembly where foreign ministers gather to consider the broad issues facing the region and make decisions. Before I attended my first General Assembly, I asked all the former U.S. OAS Ambassadors to get together with me regularly for lunch to draw on their experiences. This exercise was extremely valuable. I had particularly useful discussions with former OAS Ambassador John Jova. I also asked him to travel with me to Mexico and Central America, where he had also served as ambassador, to introduce me to his friends and to build relationships that would support my work in the OAS. He agreed to do this. So we flew to Mexico, and Ambassador Gavin, who was then Ambassador to Mexico, gave us a very large dinner. Ambassador Jova was loved in Latin America. He was a man of immense intelligence, absolute integrity, and incredible charm. His wife Polly was just like him. As a consequence of that visit and other things, the Mexican government decided that Mexico and the U.S. would try to work together in the OAS and not fight all the time.

Q: Well traditionally, it has been Mexico versus the U.S. almost.

McCORMACK: Yes, but I learned after the fact that the Mexican Ambassador had been

instructed after these visits, never to vote against the United States without prior approval by the government of Mexico. His colleagues later told me that the frustration that this ambassador felt over these instructions was indescribable, although he was a very nice man. I did not know, of course, until much later that this restrictive instruction had been imposed upon him.

I learned in this OAS period that it is absolutely possible to make multilateral diplomacy work. Jova's advice to me was worth its weight in gold. He basically said, "Every country in the OAS has only one vote. The main currency that you have for influencing other countries is personal friendship. So try to take due consideration of the interests of others and be their friend." That is exactly what I did. Every time I had an opportunity to be helpful to one of my ambassadors or to his country, I took that occasion. Because I previously had the economic portfolio in the Department, I was aware of many issues and had wide contacts. So for example, when Haiti was having difficulty with a pesticide registration problem threatening its mango exports to the United States, I arranged for a year's grace to be given to them so that those exports would not be disrupted while they developed substitute products to spray on their mangoes. Little things like that, which had significant importance for those governments. Also I tried to treat each of these people with the same kind of respect that I myself would have liked if I were representing a small country. I built many personal friendships, which have lasted for years in some cases.

THERESA A. LOAR
Visa Officer/Aide to the Supervisory Consul General
Mexico City (1986-1988)

Ms. Loar was born and raised in New Jersey. She was educated at Louisville University, Dartmouth, Rutgers, and she also studied in France. She and her husband entered the Foreign Service in 1986. After serving in Mexico City and Seoul she was assigned to the Office of the Undersecretary for Global Affairs in Washington, where she was involved in Human Rights and Women's issues. She subsequently became Senior Coordinator for International Women's Affairs. Following her retirement from the Department of State, Ms. Loar was the co-Founder and President of the organization Vital Forces Global Partnership. Ms. Loar was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: So where'd you go?

LOAR: To Mexico City. We were delighted with that. You know, Spanish is a learnable language. At that time I thought, "Yea, I can learn a language, you know." [Laughter] I didn't realize what a struggle it was. Mexico City was great. We just had no real...we would have gone anywhere. We would have gone to Africa; we would have gone to Asia; it didn't matter.

Q: I'd just like to get the beginning of an assignment. You went to Mexico City from '86 to, or was it '87?

LOAR: Yes...I'm trying to think when we left to go there. We started in September of '86 -

Q: Probably '87 then.

LOAR: It's when we started FSI. So nine months, is it? I think it's a pretty...is it nine months in those days they did?

Q: It's three or four months, I thought. But maybe - I don't know. But then language too.

LOAR: Yes, language too.

Q: So probably around...so you were probably mid to late -

LOAR: Eighty-seven.

Q: Eighty-seven to when? When did you leave Mexico?

LOAR: It was a year and a half, just a short tour, ridiculously short tours, stayed a year and a half.

Q: Yes. Okay. Well then, probably '89ish.

LOAR: Yes, right.

Q: All right. Well, let's...what was your job?

LOAR: Non-immigrant Visa officer. Richard, the real estate lawyer, [laughter] was doing immigrant visa interviews, and we were in two separate sections, but it was a blast. We just loved it, you know! We just, you know, it was fun! It reminded me of my first high school job, working as a checkout girl in a supermarket, because it was fast, and they didn't care what you did as long as you did it fast.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: Everyday the line supervisor would list how many decisions were made - visas issued, visas refused. They actually compared officers on the line. It reminded me of my summer job in the paint factory, too (it was get 'em in there; the machine will break down if you do not put these things into the machine holes at the right time). And it was so much fun. There was such a great esprit de corps among the officers.

Q: Well, how did you find the decision-making, because for some people this turns out to be -

LOAR: Ridiculous. It was atrocious.

Q: ...a very difficult thing just to make -

LOAR: I did not think I was doing work of value. I didn't think it was serious work. It could have been, but it wasn't when you were being asked to make these decisions in...under 60 seconds, I'm sure. We would go out to the barn in Mexico City. If you've done consular work, you know what that's like; and it was the waiting area that they built like a giant Quonset hut to shield people from the sun. This one fellow officer, Michael Scown, who was a big lawyer, really fun guy from San Francisco, [and I] would go out to the barn because we were the fastest; and we would go up and down the aisles and make ridiculous decisions based on whether somebody looked clean or not; and we would just like pluck out the ones we knew were never coming back to Mexico, were clearly going for work or whatever in the United States.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: But I also felt very torn because I started thinking, "Well, wait a minute! My grandparents were immigrants. I have to treat these people fairly." But my job was to carry out the immigration law, which was riddled with inconsistencies. We'd get these ridiculous CODELS (Congressional Delegations) all the time asking us to ignore the immigration law. So I didn't feel it was particularly valuable and important work, and I didn't think anybody cared how it was done as long as it was done fast.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: But it wasn't like eating me up. I wasn't struggling with it. We had such a fabulous, fun group of officers, who had come from all different parts, all different backgrounds, all different ages. We had like 20 JOs (Junior Officers), that it was really great fun to work. Richard had more serious work. In the Immigrant Visa case, you get to interview the person, and he would be done with his work at 11:30 in the morning, and then he was like, "Okay, now what?" We were done when there were no more people standing; and there were always people standing, always. I would joke that I really got into Mexican Coca-Cola in the green bottles because I needed to go, go, go, go, go, go, go, and I didn't drink coffee, and I would just chug those cokes back. But we would go through the lines and just pick out, okay, who's has nits, bugs in their hair, who has dirty feet? Send them outside. The others you go in for an interview. You just do the triage out in the barn of cutting out who was not going to ever - and sometimes it got to the point where, don't even send them in. Make the decision out there! So it really became ten seconds, fifteen seconds. You're just sizing somebody up!

Q: Well did you find that visa brokers were hiring suits and getting haircuts?

LOAR: Oh, yes. On the Immigrant Visa side Richard had some serious cases. He had to do a thoughtful, deliberative case, case-by-case things. Immigrant visas are a lot different than the 90 percent of the people who apply in Mexico City who are going to Disneyland or to visit a distant cousin, because those are the two destinations in the U.S.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: If we only had a nickel for every visa we issued for people going to Disneyland. But

there wasn't that thoughtful process at all. It was much more of a quickie, quickie deciding, using your language, which I know my language on the visa line was terrible.

But we had wonderful housing because at that time they had an interesting housing policy in Mexico City, none that I could figure out. We had two kids, and I didn't want it with a lot of stairs because I didn't want my little guy falling down stairs. They found us one place that had quarters for two separate sets of household help, and I thought, "That sounds cool." And we had an American, this Mormon, young woman down with us, who was the transitional nanny, you know, at costs we found were so much because she had to live with us, you know, in Washington during the training and then come on down to Mexico with us, great person who was willing to help us get settled. We needed an apartment for her. So the landlord took this servant's quarter and turned it into a really nice apartment; and then, of course, when that American nanny left and the Mexican nanny moved in, the landlord was furious. "We would never have fixed that up for a Mexican nanny, and you tricked us!" I said, "No, I didn't." But the house was really an incredible house, and I couldn't tell how we qualified for this house, but I didn't care! It was fabulous, very close in and great life style, and my son was very close to the little Montessori school.

But the work was not wearing you out mentally. But it didn't matter, because we were all like, "Well, let's get this done," and nobody put themselves higher than anybody else. One woman there had seven languages, Daria Fane; another, Bryan Dalton, had seven languages. They were incredible linguists.

Q: Well, did you find one of the complaints sometimes is that, here I am so terribly qualified, and what they made me do? They made me go to Mexico City. We had, you know, letters to the editor and things like I'm -

LOAR: Of course, and they make it a big deal in Mexico City when people resigned. Yes.

Q: How did you feel about that? Did you feel your skills were always being misused?

LOAR: Oh, it was ridiculous! The thing was we all were in the same boat; and they were highly qualified people, all of us in the same boat, all of us, you know, in our mid-30s because that was the average age (when I came in, I was 32), mid to late 30s; and we were all having fun, having parties, and doing great things.

We were all looking for the serious work, and Richard had a chance to do some really good serious work. Roger Gamble was our DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission); and he was terrific, a former marine. I was very lucky. We were very lucky to have Roger as our first boss. Roger really, really managed the junior officers, really reached out to us, really spent time talking with us; because, here we were in the bowels of the embassy with the visa line chief focusing on getting the most out of us that they could.. Roger was just great.

He pulled Richard up to do some study of how you can predict who a Mexican future political elite is going to be. So Richard did this interesting study looking at people who were identified by the international business program. It was really a great thought piece, you know. But because

he was in the Immigrant Visa line and done at 11:30, of course his line chief deeply resented that
-

Q: Oh, yes.

LOAR: ...did not let him forget that that was inappropriate that he was working outside the section. You're supposed to read catalogs and magazines the rest of the afternoon, the way that she did. [Laughter]

Q: Yes. Well, I was just going to say, you came up against sort of the second level of the consular establishment, which is usually a problem.

LOAR: Yes.

Q: I mean in that these are people who probably aren't going to go too far, and have learned their technical skills, and sort of resent the young people, or not young, but I mean the bright people coming through and on their way somewhere else; and sometimes that resentment -

LOAR: Well, the immediate line supervisor was Gail, I forget her last name, but she was bright, and her job was to get those visas done.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: And then the one above her had some real problems. I didn't have a problem with him, but some other people did. And then we had the consul general, and this is good for another session, okay.

Q: Who was the consul general?

LOAR: Charlie Brown.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: He was the supervisor and consul general for all of Mexico and the consulates, and Richard Peterson was the consul general just for Mexico City. If we could stop, I'd sort of like to pick that up, because that's another interesting discussion for next time.

Q: All right. Well then, we'll stop at this point, and we'll pick it up next time. We've got you in Mexico City. We've talked about your job per se, and your housing, and all. But we'll, now, next time, pick it up talking about your impression of the consular establishment there.

LOAR: Yes.

Q: Great.

Q: Today is 7 November 2001, Theresa, again, you were in Mexico City from when to when?

LOAR: I think from '87 to '88, for a year and a half, or '89, something like that.

Q: All right. Well, that puts us pretty close. Well, we were just beginning to talk about the consular establishment and your impressions, because I think this is important. For one thing, it's very important for an awful lot of people who are coming up to get visas or get protection from Americans to understand what makes it, and what harms, and what helps, you know, in this. We were talking about some of the people who came in sort of mid-career. But could you talk a bit now about the supervision that you had, and as you saw how it operated?

LOAR: Well, it was a great challenge, I think, to the consular supervisory team because you had so many people every day who were applying for visas; and you had to train these officers, most of whom were on their first tour in the Foreign Service and many of whom had done significant jobs with responsibility in other fields, but who had come all eager and excited to start their work in the Foreign Service.

You're supposed to implement the immigration law, and you usually had about 30 seconds to adjudicate a case, which is a very highfalutin word for looking at somebody and seeing whether they look like they're going to return to their home country or not. Well, I think that the supervisory consular team had a lot of challenges - which is, getting people to work fast and hard, keeping the refusal number high enough that Washington would think we weren't giving away the visas; and trying to keep the process honest, which was challenging when you had so many pressures from neighbors, and friends, and people who might know you, to help them with the visa. There were also a lot of security concerns at that time in Mexico: there was a lot of activity from former Soviet Union Bulgarian diplomats passing through; and from Russians, Cubans, and people of all sorts and stripes looking to come into the United States - so I think it was challenging work.

I think we had 20 junior officers in Mexico City. Everybody had to rotate through two things. the first of these was the line, the NIV (Non-immigrant Visa) line, which reminded me of my first job working as a cashier in a supermarket which was a lot of fun. There was no heavy lifting, a lot of fun, an emphasis on "do it good, do it fast" with a lot of camaraderie in the group you're working with. We had terrific camaraderie among the officers, who were just a very mixed bag of people: some were out of graduate school, some were experienced linguists, some with a lot of experience within the UN, three or four were lawyers, and my husband Richard and I. It was just a great group to work together with. But I think people uniformly felt their work was not difficult; you were making quick decisions, but you weren't making good decisions a lot of the time. It wasn't really your job to think it through. You'd just look at somebody, size them up as to whether they were coming back, or not.

Q: Well, did it bother you? Something that later actually came into a court case, I think, was that with this quick look, it's the whole non-immigrant visa process is discriminatory as all hell,

because if you're a rich person, you've got something to come back to, and if you're a poor person, you don't have something to come back to. So ipso facto, you're looking at somebody and saying, "Is this person rich? Are you all satisfied? Good."

LOAR: The immigration law, though, is based on proving, or getting in this 30-second interview - maybe 30 seconds - the information and making the impression that you're going to return to your home country. Are you an intending immigrant or not? As we're finding after the tragic events of September 11th, there are other things that need to be considered. But right now, the consular system isn't equipped to do that if the intelligence is not in the system. And I fully support Mary Ryan's testimony before Congress. I follow this closely, especially when there is criticism. How did these people get visas? Well, if you don't know anything derogatory about this person, and you do your computer checks, and it doesn't come up with a hit, there's no reason not to give all those people from Egypt and Saudi Arabia who were involved in the terrorist activities here in the United States a visa. There was nothing in the system to indicate they were bad guys. You see, the whole system is based on, "Are you going to return to your home country?"

Q: Yes.

LOAR: And these people were people of means. So the intelligence information needs to be fed to the consular people, and there needs to be a lot more intelligence information, so that the consular officers have the information that they need to do their job. I really do feel strongly about that. You cannot blame the United States consular people for letting these people in when there's nothing to indicate they should not be let in. The law is not based on whether you think they might be bad guys or not. If you have no information, and there's no clue, there's nothing to go on. You have to go ahead and give them the visa.

Q: Yes. We're trying. But there have been proposals, supposedly from the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) not to give any Middle Eastern male between the ages of 18 and 45 a visa, or something like that.

LOAR: Yes.

Q: I mean highly discriminatory!

LOAR: Yes. We had so many visa applicants and so many people waiting in line that two of us would be outside to do what I would call the triage - Michael Scown, who was a lawyer out of San Francisco and me. Neither one of us had fabulous language skills, I will say right up front; but we were able to make decisions quickly. So, they put us out in the barn, which was a big room, very hot, with benches where people would filter in. The mariachi bands would be playing right outside; the taco stands were all around it, and we would just walk up and down the rows, and [laughter] I'm reluctant to say this, if somebody's feet were really, really dirty, or if there were bugs clearly on their person, in their hair, or if they just looked like they'd literally just walked out from the fields, we would save them the trouble of going inside. We weeded out an awful lot of people who were encouraged or who had paid somebody money to come stand in

line to see if they could get a visa. It was a ridiculous process, utterly ridiculous process.

Then, after weeding those out, the pressure was, “Well, we don’t want that many people coming in for interviews.” So we would do our 15-second interviews out in the barn, and we would stand there and say, “Yes,” “No,” I mean just look at somebody, and [sigh] you know, you’d look at their papers, all the papers, and 90 percent of the papers were prepared by the visa handlers outside. They paid money to ‘em. I’m glad to hear the United States is finally charging now for visas in some countries, since everyone was making money on the process except the poor U.S. government -

Q: Yes.

LOAR: ...which was giving them the right and the privilege to come into the United States. But the papers meant almost nothing, because, unless you could really figure out which were the fake papers and which were the real ones, it was impossible to tell. But it was a very haphazard process, and I don’t think it’s changed particularly.

Q: How do you feel you were sort of supported, encouraged by the supervisory consular people. I would think this would be quite a job: to have people like yourself coming in, and a new crew coming in every few months almost, and doing things that we were trained you shouldn’t do. You shouldn’t make snap judgments.

LOAR: Well, I think we all saw it as the job you do to get through the gate. I was a consular officer, and I took consular work seriously; but I don’t think anyone thought this was developing some skill. You did learn how to move people quickly through lines, how to set up secure entry systems; and I think it’d be hard for anyone to say this was something that was skill building, or a training thing that built you for the future of the Foreign Service. It was a need, and they threw bodies at the need, and we were one of the bodies.

Q: Did you find any of your colleagues were in a way unable to meet this particular test?

LOAR: Oh, I think some people found it annoying, but we were all ranges of abilities and all kinds of backgrounds, and it was a great leveler. It was what I imagine when you join the military. It’s a great leveler no matter where you’re from, the old military.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: When it wasn’t so class divided.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: So there was somebody next to you in the line who spoke seven languages and was really, really good; and here I was - I could barely handle Spanish.

Q: [Laughter]

LOAR: And then the person next to me had a different set of experiences, had her master's in international relations, and was really dying to get out there and work in the Soviet Union; and here I come out of advertising. But it didn't matter. I mean we all sort of worked together, and we did different projects and went off and did our prison visits, which was a real fun project. Going off and doing prison visits, you got out into the countryside, and you got to visit American drug dealers in jail for the most part.

Q: Well, let's move away from the Visa Section. How'd you find the prison visits?

LOAR: Oh, it was a very interesting experience. It was scary, because you had to walk into these prisons alone. My husband, Richard, had worked in the Immigrant Visa Section. He had a very different work experience, in that it wasn't a sweatshop sort of quick, quick, quick, quick, quick! It was more: "Here's your cases for the day. Look at them, blah, blah, blah." Those were the scheduled appointments; and he had people like the Shah of Iran's brother, who wanted to set up a pistachio business, which is a little different from the clientele I was seeing. [Laughter]

Q: Yes. [Laughter]

LOAR: But when he was done, then he had free time to do other projects. So he went off and did well. He was recruited by the DCM, Roger Gamble, who was terrific. Roger Gamble was a great DCM; a former marine who loved the Foreign Service and really ran the embassy. Of course, our ambassador at the time, Pilliod [Charles J. Pilliod, Jr.] only kind of lived in Mexico - he didn't quite live there and wasn't really connected to the team at the embassy.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: But Roger really ran it, and he was just terrific. He and his wife were lovely. They would invite junior officers out to their place and you'd get to know them. He would invite the junior officers to receptions. He really treated all the junior officer team as serious officers, not as the people in the lower echelons of the embassy working [laughter] to decide who was in or who has fewer bugs in their hair than the other one.

So Richard would be recruited by Roger to do some different projects and reports. I felt that was interesting and glad he had a chance to do it, but I remember thinking, "Gee, that would be fun."

But as consular officers, we were called upon to go out and do these prison visits. You couldn't do it when you were on visa line duty, because you [laughter] literally couldn't leave your work area. That was really different from the supermarket, in that at the supermarket I had a union, and at 16 years of age I had more flexibility. [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter]

LOAR: And I had an older sibling working at the supermarket with me.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: But everybody was good-natured about it. We really did have all kinds of personalities.

But the prison visits were an interesting thing, and I do think Americans who are arrested overseas do need to be visited in prison. I think the program in Mexico was particularly stringent, and the U.S. Congress was very concerned about the prisons. I remember visiting a young woman who was probably in her early or late 20s, or so, who was a mule, and just carried some drugs for her boyfriend, and who was in this one prison for a very long time. She was getting out soon. She was obviously extremely concerned about what it would be like to be out of prison. But walking into the prison alone was not part of my life experience.

I remember one time I went someplace in the middle of a coffee plantation just south of Mexico - I think this was it. An embassy driver was with me, a wonderful guy; and he said, "Would you like me to walk in with you?" and I said, "Yes, I would very, very much like that! Thank you for asking me that question!"

Q: [Laughter]

LOAR: And it really did make me feel a lot more comfortable that he would do that and wait at a particular place; and they knew he was waiting. I don't know what I expected.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: You know, I don't have a lot of experience with that.

Q: Well, how did you find the prison authorities?

LOAR: Well, there are two prison visits that come to mind. One was visiting this one guy who was a former Assembly of God missionary, and who grew up as a missionary in a big family of missionaries. Then somewhere along the line he had crossed to the other side of the street and had become a major drug dealer, and had used his intimate knowledge of the transportation systems, and distribution routes, and where to find the product to become a big-time drug dealer. He was arrested, and he was now living in this prison in a very remote area. He seemed to be pretty much running the prison. There were drugs everywhere. So that made me even more nervous, because you didn't know who the authorities were [laughter].

Q: Yes.

LOAR: Part of our services to him was to make sure he got his Social Security check delivered, so that his Mexican wife -- who was living, I don't think in the prison, but in the prison town -- could get the full benefits, which was another eye-opener to me [laughter]. I didn't know you could be convicted, and, while serving time in a Mexican jail, get your Social Security check, and be able to support your new family. But he was one of the more colorful people. I did say I was scared as hell when I was in there. But what he pretty much said was that he apparently had some

ongoing relationship with people who sold drugs, so he had a lot of power in the prison. You would think he was a missionary with his long beard. He talked about how the heavy drug use calmed everybody down and kept them sedated, and how the men were able to bring women in -- their girlfriends, or wives at the moment, or whatever we would like to call those who provided those services -- and so there was not a great deal of sexual tension or sexual violence that there is in American prisons; that was very interesting. So, drugs and conjugal visits were kind of an accepted norm.

And my interest was really: is this American getting the full range of services he's supposed to get as an American overseas prisoner; is he being treated okay? He clearly was the dominant personality in the prison. And, yes, he seemed to be doing just fine [laughter].

Q: [Laughter]

LOAR: And when his social security check was delivered, he would request specific chocolates from a particular city - I think See's Chocolates from San Francisco, California - and we would do what we could to help him. That was an interesting experience. I remember the hotel I was staying in had little geckos all over the walls.

Q: Little.

LOAR: Little -

Q: Well, they -

LOAR: Ugly things.

Q: They eat the other insects that are around.

LOAR: Yes, I am glad to see them there.

Q: Yes [laughter]!

LOAR: Because there weren't other ones! And, I can't remember what city it was in the South. It was just unbelievable.

And then this other prison visit I remember. It must have been outside of Mexico City, which is why the driver was with me; and that was scary. It was just so sad to hear this story of this young woman from the Bronx who carried drugs for her boyfriend, and ended up paying such a heavy, heavy price.

Q: This, of course, is one of the great tragedies, because there are people, and elderly people also, who were used as mules.

LOAR: Right.

Q: Was her boyfriend still around?

LOAR: No. I don't think he ever even got caught.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: I do remember Colin Cleary, who was a really terrific Foreign Service officer, and his wife, now Susan Cleary. They're both in the Foreign Service together, and they both have red hair. They have three redheaded kids. They look like a GAP ad.

Q: [Laughter]

LOAR: They're just a great couple and wonderful talented people. Well, Colin did a report. We were all looking for substance, something we could get our teeth into, because we were doing these 30-second visa interviews - cheerfully [laughter] -

Q: Yes. [Laughter]

LOAR: ...seeing who had the most numbers, and socializing a lot, and enjoying each other's company, but looking for substance.

He wrote a very long, detailed report about a Mexican drug lord who was in prison. It was about where he was in prison in Mexico City, and what his arrangements were. Colin would ask questions, and they would tell him. "Well, how does this guy get food? Well, how does he run his operation? How does he get visits from women? How does this all happen?" I do not remember the name of the Mexican drug lord, but it was let's say, '88 - '89. He was the preeminent Mexican drug lord, and he was in a prison in Mexico City and living the good life. Colin wrote this really long cable detailing it. But, it was not cleared to leave the embassy, because that would be bad information for Congress to know that Mexican drug lords were living the good life and running their operations out of a Mexican prison. I'm not sure who made that decision, but I remember Colin being very frustrated, because it was well researched.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: It was like a reporter had written it, backed up by more than one source; it was very clear information. But it was deemed by someone in the embassy as bad information to come out of Mexico because then Congress would beat up on Mexico, and we didn't want that to happen, and "That stuff happens overseas sometimes."

Q: I know. Well, of course, there is this problem (I run across this in a lot of other of these interviews, and I know I've experienced it myself), that it's great to report on corruption, but when the corruption gets filtered out to Congress, it ends up in absolutely negative reactions when there are other things going on; and so do you report as a reporter does, and then can walk away from the repercussions of this? Or, you get your jollies, and you report it, and then,

what does it mean?

LOAR: Yes.

Q: And unfortunately, we're seeing this now with our relations with our Islamic allies.

Well, where else did you serve in Mexico? What else did you do?

LOAR: Well, after my time on the NIV line, there was a position as an aide to the supervisory consul general. I was selected for that, which was a lot of fun because I got to work up in the office with the consul general, [Richard] Dick Peterson and Charlie Brown, who was the supervisory consul general. I don't remember all the things I did. I do remember that I set up a rotation schedule for junior officers when they came in so that they had some idea of what to expect from their tour. They didn't know if they were going to work on the visa line until they dropped, or if they were ever going to get a chance to do prison visits, or if they would ever get a chance to do citizen services, which was a cushy job and interesting. It gave you some chance to do things.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: But we also were thinking (and I don't remember how this started) of rotating junior officers from the different consulates, because the supervisory consul general was also in charge of the final rating officer and reviewing officer for all the junior officers at all the posts all over Mexico. So I got to know all those officers, and that was really a lot of fun because there was so much talent out there! Patricia Hanigan, who's now Patricia Hanigan Scroggs, was a star. She was a fabulous junior officer out in a place whose name I forget [Mazatlán, Mexico].

So we set up a rotation of junior officers. I don't remember if this started with me, or if this had gone on before. It was a wonderful program of rotating junior officers in from the consulates into Mexico City, and then sending out the junior officers from Mexico City out to the consulates for two weeks at a time. I know the junior officers in Mexico City; thought it was great because you got to get off of the visa line to see what it was like in a consulate, which was completely different. And the JOs, who were in the middle of a consulate and bored to death because they had maybe 20 visa applicants a day, rather than 20 applicants in 15 minutes, were thrilled to come to a big city and to see what it was like inside of an embassy. So, it was a very good program. I'm sure it had gone on before. I enjoyed organizing that and getting that going and getting people to come in and out. I also enjoyed meeting all the officers from the other posts.

The other thing has to do with junior officers' EERs (Employee Evaluation Reports) - the personnel reports from the junior officers at post. Charlie Brown, as the supervisory consul general, had to write the reviewing statement. We had to look over those. That was something we took pretty seriously, because in some posts there were less than fabulous supervisors who were less than fair to some of the junior officers, and it's so important that your first reports were done right.

Q: Yes. Oh, absolutely!

LOAR: So I played a little bit of an advocates role in looking out to make sure people's reports were fairly done. I got involved in that part of it: I think Charlie wanted to be fair as well. He knew who the problem people out in the field were and who the problem supervisors were. We would go back with drafts that were more appropriate, given what people had done, and what they had contributed.

Q: Well, one of the things I was wondering was whether you were able to take a look at the Foreign Service, or consular work particularly. It's not everybody's cup of tea, and some people really can't rise to the occasion, as the fit isn't right. There's nothing wrong with them, they may be brilliant, but they were like a fish out of water. Did you run across that when you were looking at this rather large mass of junior officers? Were you, yourself, seeing, just as a reviewer, problems like that? I mean people who were a little out of place?

LOAR: There were some who were out of place. But one thing I learned in the time in the Foreign Service - and I learned this from one of my favorite bosses, Kathy Cahir, who was a consular officer, and had risen very high, and was one of the best managers I've ever come across - is that there's a whole different set of skills that are needed. You have people who can write cables well, people who can argue a point well, people who can figure out an economic table and read that well, and people who can represent U.S. interests. There's such a broad range. There were a couple of people who were odd fits. Some felt they were above it; and frankly, that was annoying to me because this is what you do. You come in, you do this job, and you move on to something else and you build relationships that help you in your future job, and you make your contribution, and you pay your dues. There were a number of people who had really significant high-level skills and had done very important highly compensated jobs, and they were not really the problem.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: It was the people who had the perception that they were in that category. The perception and the reality didn't always match.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: There was such camaraderie among us, even though we were such a disparate group, an odd group. You would never put these people together and say, "Well, here's a group that can form together as a team and support each other," but it really was the case. I'm trying to think if there were people who stood out because they didn't work as a team and didn't support each other, because these were not good jobs, you know. [Laughter]

Q: No. No.

LOAR: They weren't good jobs! I'm trying to think if there were some who really stood out. There was someone who did have some mental health issues, and suffered a breakdown, and left

post. Everybody saw that coming and felt bad about it.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: I'm trying to remember if there were others who weren't quite up to the job of doing things quickly, and for whom that was a challenge.

Q: In a way, as you mentioned before, it's like the military basic training.

LOAR: Yes. They just strip down to: "Can you talk to people quickly?" This was the NIV Section. The Immigrant Visa Section was different; they had very different challenges. They had supervisory challenges there that were on a whole other level.

We had, I think, a good supervisory team on the NIV side and people who, for the most part, wanted to get the job done; and I wouldn't have done it exactly the same way; perhaps somebody else would do it differently. But we socialized with the boss team [laughter]. One of the things I think about it is those are friendships you built there. Richard and I are so close to the people we served with in the Consular Section in Mexico City because we were all in the same boat.

Q: Yes. Well then, did you both leave Mexico at the same time?

LOAR: We did, yes; which reminds me of one interesting experience.

Q: Sure.

LOAR: One time I was on duty in the NIV Section because in our lowly status you didn't have lunch free five days a week. You had to rotate lunch duty. One person had to cover the phones and be there in case something happened during those 35 minutes that you were allowed, or 40 minutes, to consume your lunch [laughter].

And I just must say something about the taquito stand behind the embassy. I still think those were the best fresh taquitos I've ever had. I'm still looking to replace those in my journeys around the world.

One day, on lunch duty, I got a call from a man who identified himself as a Nicaraguan diplomat and said he wanted to defect to the United States. Now, my immediate reaction was somebody who wanted to jump the line. You know, "I can understand that pal. I would want to jump the line too!"

Q: Yes, me too.

LOAR: "What baloney!"

He said, "Oh, no, no, no!"

I said, "Well, come to the front door." I mean, you know, it was lunch duty. It's what I was supposed to be doing.

Q: It occurred about the time when the Sandinistas were -

LOAR: Right. Right. Did I mention this in this history before?

Q: No, no, no, no.

LOAR: Okay.

Q: I'm just putting it in context.

LOAR: No, no. That's it exactly. So he said, "I won't come to the front gate because I know there's cameras there."

I thought, "Okay. This is somebody who's on the ball. This is a clever line jumper." I said, "Okay, I'll come to the side gate." So I had a Foreign Service National come with me, because I didn't want to go to the side door and let somebody in without some other person there with me.

This person comes in, is shaking like a leaf, has a military uniform on, has an official passport, has who appears to be his wife with him; and they're both shaking like crazy. I realized that this was probably something serious and talked to them a little bit. I felt bad for them because they were so nervous and so anxious. I said to them, "You wanted to talk about defecting." Then I said, "Tell me what your thoughts are."

He said, "Well, I've been trying to approach the embassy for days, and days, and days, and days; and I've not been able to get in; and this is what I want. I'm only here for a few days. If I don't have these conversations with the right people soon, my opportunity will be lost. I am the top aide to Humberto Ortega at the defense ministry in Nicaragua, and I don't like what they're doing, and I know where their secret bank accounts are, and I know how they betrayed the revolution and the people."

And I said, "Well, what are you doing here in Mexico City to start with?" I was trying to figure out who sent him, and how he was set up and what this whole thing was.

And he said, "Well, I'm here for medical treatment, and I always come to Mexico City for medical treatment. It's a wound from before my Sandinista days, in another revolutionary battle." And you know, he seemed very sincere.

So I took the passport and called members of the Embassy staff, and they came down and interviewed him behind closed doors. I kept calling back upstairs, and they were very excited because this was a real live person who had real live information, and it was a sincere defection.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: I should just back up a little bit to say that as part of our training on the NIV line and the Immigrant Visa line, we all got to know people upstairs who were working for the station; and part of it was to look for people from Bulgaria who were going to the United States and were going to be stopping at the border and how we could coordinate with different intelligence communities so the intelligence community knew what these “not friends of the U.S.” were doing as they were coming in and out of the United States. So we knew whom to call. We knew the station chief, who was very sociable and invited people up and really got to know the consular officers, so that they could be assets and helpful in intelligence gathering, which I thought was consistent with our job because we’re supposed to represent U.S. interests. I think most people felt that way. It was more interesting than some of the other things we were doing.

So, when this fellow presented the passport, it took awhile to get somebody to come down because they were all on lunch. But I knew this guy was really shaking. I was really afraid he was going to leave so I had an FSN (Foreign Service National) keep me company/guard him and not let him leave. But it was right next to the door. He was so shaky! I was just so afraid he was going to leave after I started to think, “Maybe he really is legitimate.” It took a while just calling up anybody I knew up there. They came down and determined that he was legitimate and bona fide, and decided then to continue their conversations with him. I felt good, and thought, “Go ahead and do that. This is my job, that’s yours! [Laughter] You go and do that.”

It turned out that they did bring him to the United States. At that time the Mexican government was quite friendly with the Sandinistas. We did not want the Mexican government to know that this guy had defected to us, and we had him in Mexico. So they got him out and got him to the United States.

I was told that this is highly classified, and we weren’t going to talk to anybody about it. My father was a staunch anti-communist and really didn’t like the Sandinistas, and I was dying to tell my father [laughter]! It was so difficult not to call my dad and tell him, “Dad, you’re not going to believe what I did! You’re not going to believe what happened! This guy came in, blah, blah, blah.”

We knew that he got out of the country. A couple weeks later - maybe a month later - Judge Webster [William H. Webster], who directed the CIA came to town. We didn’t even know that this is happening. I was invited to come up and talk to the station chief again. I thought, “Well, you know, maybe there’s some other thing related to this.” But Judge Webster was there, and he presented me with an award for my work in bringing in this defector, and it was a great.

Q: That was really wonderful!

LOAR: It was really a neat, neat moment. He talked about how they got the Walkers - the father and son who had spied against the United States. They were Navy people. How that came about was ... I think Walker’s disgruntled ex-wife called drunk one night, trying to get the FBI to pay attention, and after several attempts somebody did. That’s how they were able to do it. He compared it to that; it was just a really wonderful thing.

My view was: what a great opportunity to be able to help someone who has information that could be helpful to U.S. interests. Now, I wasn't the biggest fan of what the U.S. was doing with relation to the Sandinistas and with relation to our covert activities. But I was never a big fan of the Sandinistas either. So I thought it was important that we'd be able to bring some new information to light.

The fellow who defected was Roger Miranda, and he stayed undercover for a long time. Then, they pulled him out and made him public when there was some key vote in Congress on whether to continue to provide funding against the Sandinistas to undermine their government. He was a key witness and gave key testimony; he was listed in an article in Newsweek; I think he got the largest resettlement package of any defector. It was very interesting to have experienced this overall.

But I always told that story to other junior officers to say, "The lowest, lowest job has its rewards if you do it right.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: And if I hadn't listened to this guy, hadn't been polite enough, frankly, to listen to him, and let him in, and make him feel comfortable, he would not have come in to the embassy then. He may never have, or he may have come in at some other time - maybe or maybe not. But the lowest, lowest job, if you do it right, has value and importance. I do believe that.

Q: Well now, this is very important. I've seen this. I've served in a number of countries where defection is something, and one of the things I find is that this is one reason why it is very handy to have well-educated vice consuls, even if you only use him/her for a while for their brains. It takes things out of the routine, every now and then. I think some people tend to dismiss the obvious signs. This is true with a lot of intelligence activities, because, as you know, it's always the problem of getting past the clerk on the phone, or the doorman; if you have somebody who's intelligent there, they can do something about it.

LOAR: Yes. Well, it was just an interesting experience; and, after it was in the newspaper and in the public, I could tell my dad! [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter]

LOAR: Which he got a kick out of.

Q: Well then, in '89 did you and your husband take off somewhere?

LOAR: Yes. I'm just thinking if there are any other highlights of Mexico...we left Mexico...

Q: If you remember anything else, we can talk about it.

LOAR: Yes, actually my rotation as a junior officer to one of the consulates was to Mérida in the Yucatan, and that was a really fabulous experience -

Q: Oh, yes.

LOAR: I learned a lot about life in a small post and realized that anybody would talk to me. I was interviewing all these political candidates, including some women who were running for office, and I thought: "Wow! You mean you're going to talk to me, little lowly vice consul, who in the embassy can, you know, barely make it up to the floor where the ambassador sits?" It was such a great program, and I hope they continued it. It was a little disruptive to supervisors, but great for the junior officers. The smart people who ran those consulates recognized this was a chance to build friends in the embassy, and to find out who the talent is for future assignments, and all of that.

It was a very interesting time, and the consul general there was Bryant Salter, who was a former Redskins football player. I don't remember the position [defensive back], maybe is there a cornerback...?

Q: I'm not sure.

LOAR: No? If that's a position, then I think that's what he did.

I was reporting. I had never written political reports before, and these weren't classified or anything, but I was interviewing people, getting their views, so I was very nervous about doing it. I was told by Roger Gamble, our DCM, that "I want a steady stream of political reporting," and I thought: "Well then, you probably have the wrong person, because don't know how to do that!" [Laughter]

Q: Yes.

LOAR: But he pulled me in by saying something like: "I want to see a steady stream of political reporting now, and I want *you* to do it, and I *expect* that to happen correctly!" [Laughter] Well, I need say this just for some background. I was very, very nervous about it. I did some writing, and I would review it with Richard over the phone, because Richard had done this in a post; I didn't know what I was doing and he would help me with this. And that kind of gave me the confidence to think, "Well, you know, of course he was helping me, but I've actually had reports coming in, my own cables, out of this post.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: And I wouldn't have been able to do it, I think. I didn't know how to even start the cable. We had no experience on writing a cable, other than advisories back to Washington on a bad visa guy. It was so, so valuable, and of course, I had someone helping me, Richard, write the cables, which was very kind.

But it was fascinating what was going on in Mérida. There was so much. Their political activity was so different; there were Cuban posts there, and there was heavy drug activity. I was able to do a series of cables, and get them to Washington, and get them to posts. They were concerned because they were not getting a lot of information out of posts at the time. They were concerned about that. So it was a really wonderful opportunity.

Q: In the short time you were there, did you see a different part of Mexico? Was there a different feeling, or much more of a local ambiance, or local political ...

LOAR: Well, it was Mayan. I think it was the PAN political party (National Action Party), so it was not the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). It was a different group to start with and very disconnected. This is where the Zapatistas - is that what they are? They are the ones who are armed, and masked, and fighting the government, and representing indigenous groups. But at that time, they were not active in the region.

It is an area that was so close to Cuba; and not far from Guatemala. These are Mayans; and they're a very different ethnic group; not the indigenous group in Mexico City. It was a completely different experience and very different politically.

It was a small town, but also great intrigue, you know. What is the U.S. doing? Who are they talking to? Who are they paying attention to? And I did have a chance to interview some high-level women politicians. It was fascinating to me that these women were, first of all, willing to talk to me, a lowly consul, but also that they saw themselves as capable of being out there in the game and running in the political life of Mexico.

Q: Well, in view of your later career, including where you are today, did you find yourself looking at women as a political means?

LOAR: It wasn't me that was doing this. She had put herself out there, and we were just reporting it; and I think if someone else were there, they probably would have interviewed her as well. But I felt comfortable doing it because I thought she'd be more likely to say yes to talking to me than maybe the male candidate. Then, after I made some progress with her, I talked to the male candidate as well. It was just an interesting eye-opener for me, in that Embassy Mexico and the State Department in Washington didn't really know much about these people, and didn't know much about her. I don't remember her name or where she went in the future. It was just an eye-opener that someone with whatever her background was could run for political office, and could get in there, and roll up her sleeves, and compete with the big boys. For the rest of my time there I followed her to see what happened with her; it was very interesting to stay in touch.

The other project we had out of Mexico City was the special agricultural work project, which was something, in my view, written into the immigration law to help the American growers have a steady supply of people who could work in the agricultural area; it was largely bogus. We did not have people who could handle the workloads. We had to get a lot of help from Washington. So that's why I made some friends in the Consular Affairs Office in Washington. Suddenly this law was passed, and we had representatives of the growers in the embassy ready to interview

people and to decide who should get the visas. They stayed on as consultants.

And how do you know if someone worked? The program required that people had to prove that they had worked in a particular agricultural area before, and to be allowed to come to the United States possibly for longer-term immigration benefits (I don't remember that part of it). But we had to find out who had worked in mushrooms. So what do you do if you work in mushrooms? We had to get in basic checklists. If you had picked strawberries, what were the likely series of questions you would ask somebody who had worked picking strawberries? And the ones who helped us design these questionnaires were the growers' representatives. So it was a very, very interesting process.

But they also at that time got to work with the church groups, the Catholic Church social justice groups. I think it was Caritas (Catholic Relief Services) whom I've stayed in touch with over the years. They were very interested in making sure these workers weren't getting screwed, and the ones who were qualified would get their benefits. So, then, the church social justice groups and the growers both wanted these workers up in the United States. So there was a lot of pushing and coaching: "Okay. You look like you could pick strawberries because you have the cuts on your hands to show it. It was really a strange program. There was tremendous pressure from Washington, from the California growers, and from the church groups to get these people credentialed up and get them up there. And I know we need agricultural workers in the United States. There is discussion about how to do that now.

One of my duties was to help manage that and get the help we needed for the program. That's because I was up in the consul general's office as an aide and one of the responsibilities I had was to make sure we had the administrative support to ensure the program was successful. It wasn't the usual Foreign Service officers who did it, because they still had full-time responsibilities. It was a special program and we hired spouses, some of who were excellent, and terrific, and could really break through and figure things out. But, sitting right next to them was a representative of the growers. Then the Catholic groups would come in and try to get my ear. I was very sympathetic and wanted to know what Caritas was, what they were doing and how they were representing the interests of these workers? I was also interested in what the lives for these people when they were up there but not in the fields were like? It was a very interesting, eye-opening experience for me.

LACY A. WRIGHT
Deputy Political Counselor
Mexico City (1987-1988)

Mr. Wright joined the Foreign Service in 1968 after earning degrees at Mendelien College and Loyola University. His foreign service took him to Vietnam both during and after the War. Other assignments took him to Milan, London and Bangkok as well as to the State Department in Washington, where he worked with International Organizations in matters concerning refugees, and UNESCO

affairs. Mr. Wright was born and raised in Springfield, Illinois. Mr. Wright was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

WRIGHT: In '87, I went to Mexico, of all places.

Q: *That was a different view. You were in Mexico from '87 to when?*

WRIGHT: Not very long. From '87 to about April of '88.

Q: *What were you doing there?*

WRIGHT: I was the deputy political counselor.

Q: *What brought you to Mexico? You had served in a Spanish country before?*

WRIGHT: No, never.

Q: *Was there any rationale for this?*

WRIGHT: Yes, it was the only job I could get.

Q: *Okay.*

WRIGHT: No, it was not a place that I would have ever thought of going, but I had a heck of a time finding a job that I wanted—in fact, I didn't find a job that I wanted—and this came up and kind of looked like the thing that best appealed to what I was used to doing, and so I took it. I remember that there were a couple of other things at the time. One was going back to the anti-terrorism coordinator's office, which I thought about and decided not to do. One was I was offered a chance to stay in Bangkok at the embassy and be the narcotics coordinator—he was leaving—and I decided not to do that. So I went to Mexico.

Q: *Well, obviously it didn't last. What happened?*

WRIGHT: The reason it didn't last is because I got a better offer, and after I'd been there for nine months or so, a cable came out from ARA, the Latin America bureau, advertising a suddenly vacant DCM-ship in Trinidad. And the DCM was Roger Gamble, who called me in and said, "Would you like to apply for this?" And so I did. Several other people, I think, at our mission did, and I suppose that maybe a total of 10 people or so from our hemisphere responded, and I got that job.

Q: *Let's talk a little bit about the time. What was your view of our embassy in Mexico. I mean this was a whole new world for you. How did you find the diplomatic effort there, from your perspective?*

WRIGHT: Well, it was a huge embassy, first of all, and that was one feature. Our relations with

Mexico, of course, have always been tricky and sensitive. Our ambassador at that point was a man named Charles Pilliod, who had been the head of either Goodyear or B. F. Goodrich—Goodyear, I think—tough guy, a guy who made no pretense of trying to regard the embassy as a family or even get to know very many people. His method of management was to get to know four or five people in the embassy and talk to them and they'd talk to other people. At the same time, he was a guy who, I expect, took his job very seriously, didn't spend half his time away at the beaches or anything like that. He worked hard. Although he became known as probably a bit too much of an advocate for the Mexican Government, he in fact was awfully tough on them, and I seem to remember that he routinely picked up the phone and talked to the foreign minister and gave him hell about one thing or another—in a fairly nice way, but still. So he was a tough guy. I'm trying to think of some of the issues that were between us at the time. You still had the aftermath of the Camarena case, Kiki Camarena, the DEA agent who was murdered in Guadalajara. That's still poisoning our relations. We still had a big drug effort. And then all the other stresses and strains that we normally have.

So it was a pretty hardworking place. In the political section, the political counselor was a guy named Andy Tongs, who was a good guy, hard worker. We had a section of about six or seven people, so I supervised about four people under Andy. We had a very large consular section, as you can imagine, a lot of junior officers, and one of the things that I did there and which I became successful at, was to involve our consular officers in political reporting. Most of them were anxious to do this, so we would figure out projects which they were to do, and they would do them with a little bit of help from me, and then we would send out their effort. And a number of them, four or five of them probably, did this and did it very well. It's kind of interesting comparing this with my time in Brazil, when the attitude of junior officers, at least in our experience there, seemed to have changed. The ambassador at one point went down—this was only two years ago—to visit Rio, which has a horrible visa load—it's probably the third or fourth visa-issuing post in the world; São Paulo is one notch above it—suggesting that the junior officers, as part of their professional development, might want in their spare time to do some reporting. And he said they looked at him like he was crazy. And their attitude was, "Forget it. I'm going home and going to bed" Or going home and doing something else. Which could be a kind of shift in the demeanor of junior officers, who may now tend to see their job more as a job, less as a calling or vocation. On the other hand, the people in Brazil, junior officers who did this kind of work, really had a terribly difficult job to do, so we mustn't be too hard on them. But I would imagine that working in the consular section in Mexico was no cakewalk either.

Q: What was your particular slice of the political section pie?

WRIGHT: I guess I probably had just about everything, not that I did everything but that the people that I supervised did everything. One of the things that happened while I was there was the election of President Salinas, so we were in charge of reporting on the elections. We didn't report on them very well, I must say, because we really underestimated the public dissatisfaction.

The PRI, as I'm sure you know—I think it's called the Institutional Revolutionary Party or something like that—but at any rate, it's by far the largest party in Mexico and the one that's run things for many, many decades and thought by most people to be tired and corrupt and so on, but

very much in power. And every president came from the PRI, including Salinas. Salinas was very much our guy in the sense that we certainly didn't intervene in any elections in any way, but we felt that he was a good modern person, an economist, a younger man, who would be good for Mexico. And then, of course, we stepped out of the way. What happened was that he almost didn't win the election, despite the massive support behind him, and may well have lost the election. He barely squeaked by in the end with something a little bit over 50 per cent, which was an unheard-of total for a PRI candidate to get. They usually got 80 or 90 per cent, I would think.

And this was interesting. Well, a couple of things were interesting. As we reported during the course of the election, I would say we were under a certain amount of pressure from Ambassador Pilliod to report that the PRI was doing okay, doing pretty well, and I remember that every day as I came to work—I used to take a taxi to work—I would ask the taxi driver, who was always different, who he was going to vote for. I don't believe anyone ever said he was going to vote for Salinas. Maybe one did. Now I should have taken this as indicative of something, but I think I thought, and most of us thought, well, when push comes to shove, yes, the other guys will get some points, get some votes, but the PRI still has such a massive apparatus that this won't make a whole lot of difference. Well, what happened was this. The Mexican Government had new election computers for this election, so they were saying for the election that, by gosh, by the night of the election people will have the results. Well, the night of the election came—no results. The next day dawned—no results. Evening fell—no results. Next day happened—no results. And it became clear from our sources that the PRI was in pandemonium over there trying to figure out what to do about these horrible results that were coming in. And eventually, as I said, when they were announced, Salinas had won by a little bit over 50 per cent, but I think it doesn't take a Rhodes Scholar to speculate that maybe he didn't win at all. And then, the rest is history, as we say.

Q: Were you getting indications from the consulates elsewhere and all, polls and all this, because we'd been reporting, of course, for years on the Mexican elections, and it had always been assumed that the PRI would win one way or another, and it was such a predictable thing? Have we gotten lazy at sort of getting down and looking at the system?

WRIGHT: I don't remember. There certainly were polls, and I can't remember now what they were. I think I'm right in saying that I don't think any poll predicted what in fact happened, although I might be wrong. I really don't remember. And I don't know that any of our consulates predicted anything differently. I do remember that our USIS officer in charge, whose name was Sally Grooms, who in fact there became Sally Grooms Cowal—she got married there—and was a very bright officer, questioned this at the time, said, "Are you sure we're really right here?" So her instincts were good, as they usually were. By the way, at the same time, when we did report what we felt about the situation, we got a certain amount of unhappiness down from the Ambassador, who thought that even though we were not depicting the situation as badly as it turned out for Salinas, he thought we were being, as it was, too pessimistic, and not being a wilting violet, he let that be known.

Q: Why do you think the Ambassador had taken this stand?

WRIGHT: I think he probably genuinely shared the perception that I just described as that of many of us, that is, that, yes, there was a lot of criticism of government, but when push came to shove, when people actually voted, the PRI apparatus was so strong that the results would be predictable. He probably felt that, and then he probably also felt that if we report differently we're going to get everybody excited in Washington. One, we'll get them excited, and two, we'll probably turn out to be wrong. I imagine both of those things were in his mind.

Q: Now was there ever any debate at all anywhere about, say, saying the election may have been won by fraud. You know, in other countries we might have raised this subject. Was this sort of a no-no?

WRIGHT: No. It's an interesting questions, isn't it? I don't believe it ever occurred to anybody to have a US official stand up and wonder aloud whether these elections were fair or not. At the same time, I think it was perfectly evident to anybody with half a brain that the elections might have been fraudulent.

Q: It is interesting, because in lots of other countries we would have been in the forefront of questioning.

WRIGHT: Well, and I think that had the question been raised, the answer from our government would have been crystal clear: No, we are not going to stand up and say this—first of all, because the guy who one was a guy who we thought would be good for Mexico—that's number one—and secondly, to have done that would have introduced into our relations with Mexico and into our relations with the government which was surely going to run Mexico for the next six years an intolerable discord.

Q: Well, then, off to Trinidad. You were in Trinidad from '88 to when?

WRIGHT: Let me just say one thing about Mexico. I regret that we didn't spend more time in Mexico because it's such an important country for us. There too, I wish I had had more time to get to learn Spanish well. I did travel a bit around the country, which was very interesting, but I wish I had been able to spend more time there. At the same time, for my wife, Jackie, the pollution there was a big problem.

Q: Oh, yes.

WRIGHT: A very big problem, not so much for me, but for many people it was.

Q: And the height.

WRIGHT: And the height. And by the way, during the time that we were there—and this was 10 years ago—many embassies had special provisions for their employees because of the pollution. Some embassies did not send people with children there. Some embassies gave people off one day a week—various things like that.

Q: I was wondering also, here you were, the odd man out, not an ARA specialist, all of a sudden put into the political section of our most important country in Latin America. I was wondering whether you felt a little bit out of it, and also at the same time had a certain amount of questions because here was an important election and essentially the embassy got it wrong, which makes you wonder, you know, what sort of club am I getting into? Did you have any of those feelings, either exclusion or wondering what this was all about?

WRIGHT: Exclusion, I don't think so. I got along very amicably with all the people that I worked with there. Of course, I was relatively unfamiliar with the scene there, needless to say, but I worked hard, and I think I caught up to a large degree, and I think by the time I left I was pretty conversant with the situation, the parties, the politics and so on. The fact that we did not do as well as we could have, predicting the winner of the election, is certainly something I noticed, although I think almost everybody was taken by surprise. I don't recall that there was any finger-pointing at the end, although it was a good lesson, and one lesson is that you need to not just go by the past but be prepared for things to change.

Q: Talk to the taxicab drivers.

WRIGHT: Yes.

LARRY COLBERT
Consul General
Tijuana (1987-1991)

Mr. Colbert was born in Ohio in 1940. He attended the Universities of Ohio and Missouri. After a tour in Turkey with the Peace Corps and a year as an assistant on Capital Hill, he entered the Foreign Service and was sent to Viet Nam as Regional Advisor. His subsequent postings, where he served as Consular Officer include: Ankara, Turkey, Oran, Algeria, Dublin, Ireland and Manila, Philippines. At Tijuana, Mexico, Madrid, Spain, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and Paris, France Mr. Colbert served as Consul General. Mr. Colbert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November, 2006.

Q: You were in Tijuana from when to when?

COLBERT: Three and a half years from '87 to '91. I stayed a little longer than three years and less than four, slightly less because I knew I was going overseas and I wanted to get my second daughter settled in college in her freshman year before we left.

If I could go back, just a minute, to the War College though. Even before I went to the War College, the last year I was in the visa office, my wife and our two children, one of whom was in, at that point, in junior high school and one was a junior in high school, we went to that amusement park in Virginia that was recently purchased by Daniel Snyder with money he should

have used to buy better football players. But anyway we were standing in line for some ride, and there was this petite, lovely, young girl with this much taller, handsome young man, both of them young people. We were talking with them. We thought he was in college and she was in high school. It turned out she was a freshman at West Point and he was, this was the younger brother. So my younger daughter became very interested in the fact that this demur young woman was going to West Point. So she developed an interest in going to West Point, which didn't break my heart because it's free of course. So lo and behold I find myself in the National War College and my desk mate, had a daughter who was also a freshman at West Point.

Q: Called a Plebe.

COLBERT: A Plebe I beg your pardon, I knew better too.

Q: I grew up in Annapolis.

COLBERT: So Plebe, Yearling, Cow, and Firstie. I know all those terms from my daughter, of course. But anyway his daughter was a Plebe and he said there was a program whereby if they prescreened you to see that you had the academics and the athletic ability you could actually spend the day there as a perspective student, the parent takes you up. So I took a day off from the National War College and took my daughter up for a Friday. I went to a lecture for parents of perspective cadets and she spent a day going to class going around with this young lady that was a plebe. The plebe was happy because she was not subject to any hassling and she couldn't be harassed when she had a guest with her. I thought to myself my daughter is never going to buy into this but in fact all the way back she said that's what she wanted to do.

So we go off to Tijuana. I have a daughter who is going to be a freshman, no, one is going to be a sophomore, and one is going to be a senior. The senior pursues this ambition for West Point, and while we are in Tijuana gets an appointment there. But to go back to Tijuana I sort am digressing a bit I guess.

Q: Oh that's ok.

COLBERT: I arrived to find perhaps the sickest place I had ever been. Two weeks before I arrived the then ambassador or the then DCM, I forget which it was sent a shrink to the post because he thought that there were serious problems, and indeed there were. Not the problems that a shrink could solve. My predecessor was inept, detached and ineffective, and I'm being polite.

The vice consuls totally ran the place. At that time there were no civil service visa examiners - all vice consuls it was a big post. Vice consuls ran everything, the supervisors were totally detached, the physical plant was a wreck, the relationships with the Mexican, and particularly with the American officials on the border, were essentially non-existent. One of my so-called section chiefs told the immigration inspectors at the border that they had no right to inspect us crossing the borders because we were diplomats; we were immune and we were better than they were. Of course that was false, we were entering the United States. So he basically soured the relationship

with customs and immigration, which we had to work with everyday. It would be hard from a perspective of twenty years to explain just what a mess the place was.

It was such a mess that about the third or fourth week I was there I was so taken with trying to solve these problems that I got sort of all scrunched up from nervous tension. I was all bent over; I literally couldn't move. I remember sending a message to Mexico City to the admin counselor, a cable, saying, "The following is a list of things which are wrong with this post which have to be corrected some of which are criminally wrong," and they were a lot of admin issues as well. So he called me on the phone, Jerry Tolson was his name. He said, "Why did you send me this cable?" I said, "Jerry, before I sent the cable I had thirteen problems or fifteen problems." I said, "Now we have fifteen problems."

It took a long time, It took getting rid of some people who were coming out of their tours; it took a change of some attitudes. It took a lot of sweat and tears, and a lot of paint. It is amazing what a can of paint will do. Joan Clark said once to me, "A can of paint is an important thing." I took the rule that if it wasn't moving paint it and that included people. We worked very, very hard and I think of the many compliments that I like to remember that were paid...everybody likes to remember the compliments they are paid rather than the not so complementary things that are said about them. Joan Clark came to visit about one year into my stint there and she spent two days and she said to me, "Larry, call me Joan and you've done a very good job here." That's probably the nicest thing anybody has ever said to me.

I think when I left we had a good relationship with the Mexican officials, we were possibly seen in the community as doing what we could appropriately. We had a very good relationship with the federal agencies on both side of the border and we had a nice, pleasant work environment for the people. I really, really felt good about Tijuana. I thought it was a very, very hard job. It would be very hard to explain all the things that were wrong from terrible housing for the officers, horrible working conditions, and things that I wouldn't even want to say that were going on which were borderline insane. I mean there are something's that even I would be uncomfortable talking about because they were really defame people in a way that they probably should be defamed, but just awful people.

Q: Well, let's talk about what would you talk about.

COLBERT: OK.

Q: In the first place, start with the people. You are certainly with a group of people that are vice consuls...well first let's start with the supervisors. What did you do with the supervisors?

COLBERT: Let's talk about an ACS chief who...

Q: ACS?

COLBERT: American Citizens Services chief, who went on subsequently down the road to be an unsuccessful DCM and an unsuccessful ambassador twice. She had the only working telephone

line into Mexico when the earthquake occurred in Mexico City but she had a dinner party that evening. This occurred while I was in Spanish training but I learned about from the Mexican Des, Tijuana was the only post at that point that had a tie line, a State Department dedicated line, and it was impossible to reach Mexico City because of the earthquake. She hung up the phone- definitely cutting the connection - because she had a dinner party. This was when there had been an earthquake.

Q: Yeah.

COLBERT: I mentioned the NIV chief who wrecked our relations with the local officials; I don't know, it's hard from a perspective of nearly twenty years and perhaps more than twenty years to remember. But I do know you had to change the whole attitude of everybody. You had to change the attitude of how the outside saw us by doing things differently. You had to change the attitude of people inside so we did do the things differently. You had to give people things to do that were unique and different. We set up a reporting plan; we gave people things to report on. We gave people time off to go and do things. We allowed people to go on TDYs (temporary duty) to other posts. We tried to find ways to cause it to be a better post and then I got better people. I had as one of my deputies Katherine Peterson who is a super star and now is on her second ambassadorship.

Q: Who was the head of FSI (Foreign Service Institute)?

COLBERT: That is the lady, yes. So when you get people like that I had a public affairs officer who was just absolutely fabulous. I think to criticize myself, I went there with poor Spanish and so I would have been much more effective had my Spanish been better.

We did a lot of entertaining. . I think one of my great, great successes was I remember we gave this big cocktail party for the then ambassador who is now head of national intelligence, John Negroponte. He came up on a state visit to northern Mexico and we had a real program for him. But one thing we did was we had a big cocktail party for him, and I invited the elite of Tijuana and neighboring towns and a few people from the other side of the border as well. The Bishop of Tijuana, who was a good friend and a very good contact, a person we maintained very good relations with, -I will come back to tell you a story about him in a minute- came and he brought with him the Cardinal from Mexico City and the Cardinal from LA (Los Angeles) He didn't bother to call me nor should he have and he brought the two Cardinals. Now to have two Cardinals in your house in a provincial town that ain't too shabby.

When I presented the local bishop to the American Ambassador and his wife, the bishop said "And this is Cardinal Mahony from LA, and Mr. Ambassador, you know Cardinal so and so from Mexico City". Then the Ambassador's wife says "Oh, John and I haven't had the pleasure of meeting him yet." So I thought, wow, that isn't too shabby, the Ambassador meets the Cardinal from Mexico City in his constituent post office at our home. So we did a lot of entertaining which was good.

I think we left a much better post than we inherited. I got a lot of help from my wife on that; I got

a lot of help from Katherine Peterson from that. I think the FSNs were happy and it was a good place and I am happy about that.

Q: OK, let's talk about Tijuana. I was just recently listening to the song by whatever it is there about the Tijuana jail.

COLBERT: The Eighth Street jail.

Q: Tijuana has been a sort of relief valve for the west coast or something of...particularly young people going down there to...

COLBERT: A horrible, horrible challenge because the legal drinking age in Tijuana is if your elbows can reach the bar. There is none, if you have the money you can drink. People come down, drink too much, get in their cars, get killed on the freeway going back or have accidents there or fall off balconies in hotels, get into fights, get beaten up. When we were there we figured out that something like 20 percent of all the arrests of Americans abroad in any given year take place in Baja California. Once the mayor of Ensenada phoned me on the phone to say that during an American holiday that they had some several hundred Americans that were drunk that they had taken to the soccer field. I said, "Are they safe?" He said, "Well, they are going to stay there until they are sober and they have water." I said, "Right on, just keep them there." They didn't want to put them in jail, they were just drunk but if they had gotten in their cars and down that super highway along the mountains they'd have been killed.

We had horrible, horrible, horrible ACS cases, which required a lot of challenge. A case of several marines from Camp Pendleton who went down to Ensenada, got drunk, ran into an official car which was being driven by a Mexican naval officer and his family, two people were killed. The mother was critically injured and they were all taken to hospital. The military said we want to fly a helicopter down and evacuate the Marines. There is a strict rule in Mexico; U.S. government helicopters cannot fly into Mexico. If you think about your history you will understand why they are so leery about our military. But the military wanted to evacuate these two or three critically ill Marines.

In the meantime, under Mexican law, if you are involved in an accident and you are responsible you have to pay the damages and the damage is worth \$10 thousand or so. The governor said, "No." Or the courts said no. So we went back to the courts and they said, "Well if you can come up with the \$10 thousand damages and if they will take in their helicopter the critically ill Mexican lady as well because this woman needs really specialized care, then they can have the Marines." The Marines said, "We can't take a civilian." I said, "You can't take the civilian, you can't take the military." "What are you telling us?" I said, "We are in a foreign country, that's the law." So the military said, "We will pay the \$10 thousand, we can't get it right away, and we will take the woman." I spoke to the Mexican governor who put up the \$10,000 as loan from his pocket on my word that the Marines would pay him back. So they sent the helicopter down and took the woman and the two or three soldiers, Marines, back to Pendleton.

Well then a week later this colonel calls me up and said, "The person who told you that we were

going to pay the \$10 thousand didn't have any authority to say that. We are not going to pay." I said, "You realize the governor of the state put the \$10,000 dollars up out of his pocket." Now the guy was a crook of the worst kind but it was still his \$10 thousand. I said, "You know the governor of the state put up \$10 thousand on my say so because the U.S. Marine Corps gave me their word." He said, "That's not our problem." I said, "It is your problem."

So then I thought about it and I called up and asked to talk to the commanding general of the Marine Corps. My secretary said, "The only person I can get is a sergeant." I said, "You mean the only person you can get in Camp Pendleton is a sergeant?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Well, let me try, I'm the CG here." I got a corporal, that is to say, they really dissed me badly. So I sent a message back to the Department of Defense, DOD, without clearing it saying, "We had arranged this for these people who were guilty of drunk driving and manslaughter and we got them out on this assurance. Now we've been told that the Marine Corps is not going to pay the \$10 thousand and all I can say is that you realize that several thousand Marines and Navy people come over here every single month and we're not in a position to help them because our assurances on military personnel will be worthless. In fact, we were not even supposed to do military personnel, that's what the MPs were for." I said, "We won't be able to intervene to help the MPs at all because our credibility is shattered." I said, "We are also very puzzled because when I tried to call to discuss this with the flag officer at Camp Pendleton I was told there were none there and I can only reach a corporal. Who is in charge?" Whoa. I actually sent it saying that we couldn't...I got a major general from the Marine base calling me back, "How dare you send a message like that." I said, "Well, I tried to call you first." "We were aware you called" he replied. I said, "Maybe next time you will take my call." In the meantime they sent me the \$10 thousand. So we sometimes played hardball with them.

Q: Who were sort of the authorities in Tijuana?

COLBERT: The authorities? Well the drug lords really hadn't, there were drug lords, but the Felix brothers hadn't really hadn't taken over things yet. The real drug lords were further down in the south but the Felix brothers became notorious...

Q: These were the...

COLBERT: The family that ran the drug cartel in Tijuana hadn't really come to the fore when I was there. They were drug lords; we knew who they were. There was a mayor; there was a state government in Mexicali, which is another town. We had good relations with them. In constituent posts there isn't a lot going on politically. If anything happens it happens in Mexico City; it is a centralized state. While I was there the mayor of Ensenada who was a Panista, that is to say a member of the then opposition right-wing party, the PAN (National Action Party). He had been the first mayor who was elected and allowed to be elected. That is to say he was the first mayor who had ever won and been allowed to win. He was very, very popular. He ran for governor and he was the first Panista, the first opposition non PRI person to be elected governor. I think in the past PAN people had won in the north, but the votes always came out differently than how they had been cast. Sort of there were lots of hanging chads and if they weren't those in charge always found some!

So we were there when that happened and we had a very good relationship with him and a person who I came to admire a lot. I think it was very, very hard to be totally honest in that environment. In Mexico they have this thing they offer you lead or silver. That's to say if you are offered a bribe it's silver, if you refuse a bribe they give you lead, hot lead. So I think it was not a totally honest society but most people we dealt with were trying hard to do the right thing..

Q: What about on the civilian side? You must have had a lot of particularly young Americans in jail didn't you? How did that work out?

COLBERT: We had a vice consul or an FSN visit the jail every day seven days a week and there was always somebody there. Most of the charges were drunk and disorderly; and people paid a fine and got out. At any one time we had maybe thirty people in prison for serious crimes which would be bringing a firearm into Mexico or more importantly drug dealing- being a mule or being involved in the drug traffic. While I was there we had an on-going program of prisoner transfers. This is our agreement between the two countries that your nationals can serve their time in your country and their nationals can go back to their country and serve their time. So we had then and we still have an agreement with Mexico to permit Americans in prison in Mexico to petition to come back here to serve their time closer to their families. While I was there, this was an on-going process and we would send the paper work for those people who wanted down to Mexico City and they would be vetted by the Mexican authorities and then they would be vetted by our authorities and in due course there would be an agreement and they would be bussed to the border and picked up by our authorities.

While I was there the Department of Justice without telling anybody in advance announced that there would be no prisoner exchange that year because they were overrun with Mariolettos, that is to say they were overrun with Cuban criminals who fled from Castro under the Carter administration and they didn't have any room in the federal prisons for these Americans, so they could just damn well stay in Mexico. Well, the American prisoners were all set to go home, and they were very upset so they decided they would go on a hunger strike. Now in my own mind to this day I don't know whether they really were on a hunger strike or not but they said they were on a hunger strike and the Mexican authorities said they were on a hunger strike, so we got permission to buy a protein drink, sort of a food supplement because they would drink and they would drink this. So our thought was we would give them this food supplement and that way they don't die on our watch while they are protesting. Now as far as I know they could have been eating T-bone steak and we wouldn't have known, but it was a hunger strike. Over time this became a media thing. The American media were coming down to interview these starving prisoners who were starving for their right to go back to Butte, Montana or Biloxi, Mississippi, or wherever they wanted to go. It became untenable for the Department of Justice because clearly they couldn't point to us say it was a State problem. The Department of Justice made this decision and we would just refer all media, public and congressional complaints back to the Department of Justice. So the Department of justice quickly caved in a matter of several weeks allowing the exchanges to go forward.

So, lo and behold off the prisoners go. Well among the group was a person who had claimed to

be a U.S. citizen. We had forwarded his claim of U.S. citizenship to Washington for determination and had heard nothing. So they came back as he was released for transfer and said, "We (the Department of State that is) have determined he is not an American citizen and note that you were feeding him for six weeks at ten dollars a day, whatever it was, and you, meaning me or the post, owe the U.S. government somehow \$1,275 or whatever it was because you fed this prisoner who was not a U.S. citizen." We found that just a little bit too much so we went back and said - they had sent their message, of course, by some informal means, but it wasn't a telegram. So we went back by cable you know with all the appropriate distribution saying that, "With the case of Juan Delacruz (name made up) you will recall that on this date we noted that he was in prison and he said that he was a U.S. citizen and on this date we asked that he be checked out to see if he was a U.S. citizen. On later date he went on a hunger strike and we then decided to give him food. Based on the Department's recent communication we can understand, that is the post understands, that if a person in a similar situation say destitute or in prison claims to be a U.S. citizen and doesn't prove it we shouldn't feed it. Were he to die and be proved he is a U.S. citizen that would really be on your head and not ours." It was more politely worded than that. We basically said, "You are saying that we shouldn't have fed him because you hadn't told us he wasn't a citizen and he claimed he was. So in the next instance when a person claims to be a citizen we don't help him until you're determined they are? But then can we have the name of the office that made this determination and preferably even the person so we can..." Whoa, such screams. We had misunderstood what they were saying. Well we went back and said, "Well maybe you could restate it so we could understand it more clearly." We didn't make any points, but we were told that the Department would pay the money and not us.

That was one of the most stupid things I had ever heard of but there were lots of those. Once the Naval attaché called and said, "We have a destroyer escort scheduled to come in to Ensenada for a ship visit but we forgot to ask for diplomatic approval from the Mexican government. Now we'll get it, but the ships already underway. Would you ask the admiral if he could make all the arrangements pending the approval?" Well Ensenada is a very small port; it only has maybe three piers. So I went down to see the admiral and explained that they had forgotten to do it, it was coming, they would get the permission but could they have the pier lined up and could they have the water supply laid, all the things for the first ship visit." He said, "You know we aren't supposed to do this until we hear from Mexico City." I said, "Well admiral, do you think you could..." Well I then drove to Ensenada with a vice consul for the visit, but the ship never appeared. We phoned my secretary who learned from the DAO that the ship visit had been cancelled a week or so before, but no one had bothered to tell us.

So I apologized profusely to the admiral who was not happy either and I went back to Tijuana drafted a cable to the Department of Defense. "Visit of the U.S.S. Stealth, aka whatever the real name was, saying that we wanted to compliment the Department of Defense on their new stealth technology. We were at the port, there was no ship so we just think it is really remarkable that this..." this was done sardonically and we info'd Mexico City. We didn't clear it; we just sent it because I was really, really ticked. The Defense attaché was not a happy camper, because obviously the Pentagon called him and said, "What the hell is going on?" But from then on we were on distribution for all ship visit messages and they never, never messed with us again.

Q: Well then what about American tourists driving through. What was the district?

COLBERT: All of Baja California, all the way down to La Paz.

Q: What about Americans driving around there, not just drunken driving but were police casting for...

COLBERT: Police in Tijuana would occasionally stop people for real or not real offences and hit them up for money; and, in fact, policeman had to actually pay for a particular spot. If you worked a good block, you could augment your salary very well by ripping off the tourists and even ripping off your fellow Mexicans. People driving all the way down the country a lot of it is desert so you have to keep your car gassed but it's perfectly safe, it's a four-lane highway with a medium strip. A lot of it is just cactus, it's beautiful country. Down at the tip we have a consular agent in Cabo San Lucas, which is a resort area now. It's a very pretty place.

Q: Well didn't you have basically a snowbird area where all the people brought their campers down to be along the Gulf or something?

COLBERT: That would be on the Gulf area more in New Mexico and Arizona than Tijuana or Mexicali. We had people who came down on spring break, and they'd go to the resorts close up which was obviously a challenge for us as well because they would get into trouble, some of them.

Many, many, many, many Americans buy or lease a retirement either all the way down in La Paz or Cabo San Lucas or up near Ensenada farther down from Tijuana. Housing is relatively less expensive; gasoline is certainly less expensive, life pleasant since you can have help. The challenge you run into is if you buy something; sometimes the land that you think you own but was sold to you by X really belongs to Y. There is an on-going issue that's been lasting, I mean since I was there, this big resort was built on a piece of land overlooking the ocean near Ensenada, basically a modern housing development, a little conclave or development and people bought their houses or they got them for 99 year leases and then only to find out that the people who said they owned the land may or may not have owned the land. The Indians said they owned the land so it was and still a big mess. You really don't know whether the person selling your land might be the brother of the judges who decide whether you own it or not. There are lots of wheels on the wheels and it is a big problem. When they came in to see me, I could give them a lawyer's list. As a consul you can't solve that kind of problem. I urged people to be extremely cautious and to rent, not to buy.

Q: What about visas and the whole illegal immigration, legal immigration, that whole thing?

COLBERT: In a sense of being a border consulate the really, really bad cases don't really come to see you; they just try to get across. So it's probably more problematical in the interior. Most people who live on the border already have a border-crossing card, a mica, which it is commonly called. So I think visa work is not as challenging as... I mean certainly there are people who have to be refused and a lot of them from in the interior who had to be refused. But most really bad

cases are people from the interior and they are going to try and be smuggled across. The consulate doesn't really have an immediate role in policing the border, that's the border patrol, INS, or whatever it's called now.

Q: How did you find relations, you mentioned initially you had a problem with Customs and INS, how did that work for you?

COLBERT: I think we had a very, very good relationship. We met with them regularly; in fact I think we even worked very hard to improve relations between Customs and INS. At that time, they were both separate agencies and they didn't really like each other very much, sometimes you were mediating between them as well. We went out of our way to work with them and I think the relations were good. I hope that's the case.

Q: Well then, did you deal with lots of parents coming looking for their kids and that sort of thing?

COLBERT: Kids rarely disappeared. Missing American children were not very often a problem occasionally, very occasionally. We did immigrant visas then and occasionally you would have the case of someone who came down to acquire a child by purchase and attempt to get an immigrant visa for a child that did not qualify for an adoption visa, The bigger problem would be the kid who gets arrested for some infraction and then you'd get two approaches.

I remember one case a kid who was fourteen or fifteen stole or borrowed his fathers Porsche and drove it down and got drunk and totaled it. We called the father and the father said, "Well, I guess I've got to buy another Porsche." I was thinking to myself, if I had totaled my fathers Ford he'd have to get another son. Because when I told him I'd be dead but this man's reaction was "I guess I have to get another Porsche." I'm thinking, huh.

But then on another case I called a mother up and said, "Your son is in jail." She said, "What did he do?" I said, "Well he had a little bit to drink and got into a fight and broke a plate glass window." She said, "What's the damage?" I said, I don't remember say, "\$50 court case and \$100 for the window." She said, "Is he in any danger?" I said, "No. He's in the 8th Street jail," the famous 8th Street jail. She said, "If I don't pay?" I said, "Well, since they don't want to feed him they will just kick him out after another 24-hours." She said, "You mean if I don't pay he just spends another 24-hours in jail?" I said, "Yeah." She said, "Tell him I said to cool his heels and maybe he'll learn something from it." So I think the second is much better than the first.

The range in difficulty of ACS cases there is incredible. Every single week there is something.

Q: I hate to put it in the wrong way but for the ACS people was it fun or just a terrible grind? Sometimes, it is much more challenging than sitting on a visa line. How did you find it?

COLBERT: First of all, all the vice consuls wanted to do a stint in ACS because it was away from the visa line. Second of all, they would be working for Kathy Peterson, which in and of itself was a pleasure. Thirdly, it was a challenge to find solutions to problems. If you had good

relations with the Mexican authorities, many, many times you could simply fix the problem externally, make it go away.

Q: This, of course, was consular work. Real diplomacy is on the street corner with the local authorities.

COLBERT: Absolutely.

Q: Keep it out of the hands of the legal and all that.

COLBERT: Keep Washington and Mexico City as uninformed as possible. Nobody can screw it up like Washington. We'll over tape that recording but I don't think anybody will disagree with you.

Q: I learned a long time ago that you referred things to Washington really if you didn't want to do anything.

COLBERT: If you do what you wanted to do and you knew that they would agree with you. If you wanted back up for what you already decided. Lou Goetz, bless his soul, said, "Don't ask. Never ask Washington if it's in the U.S. national interest, it's in the interest of the U.S. citizen and it ain't illegal, you can do it. If it doesn't say you can't, you can't, but don't ask."

It was a really, really, really good three and a half years. When I left some Mexican members of the Mexican leadership of the society of movers and shakers as it were, gave me a party. One lady gave me an Oscar and it said, "For Best Performance as a Consul General." I still have that Oscar. She went up to LA and had it made for me.

I would add here that our second daughter went on to the University of Santa Cruz where she did very well indeed. Graduating she went to Taipei to improve her Chinese in formal study and to teach English. She came and did an MA in Business and Asian Studies at the University of California in San Diego. She has had a success business career in California. Her older sister spent about six years in the ARMY, joined a drug company, completed a MBA at Harvard and works in marketing for a large drug company. I most proud of their continuing success – and my modest role in helping them – though most credit should go to their mother. Just she was my greatest diplomatic asset, she was their most important parent.

Q: How wonderful.

COLBERT: I really treasure it.

Q: Well then where did you go then?

COLBERT: From there I went to Madrid. I was going to suggest we stop because tomorrow I may be on a jury and I'd better go home and find out if I am lucky or unlucky.

Q: OK. Well we will stop at this point and what year are we talking about?

COLBERT: This would have been '91 and I would be going to Madrid as CG.

Q: And you went there and were there from '91 to...?

COLBERT: '94.

Q: OK, well we will pick it up at that point.

COLBERT: Okay doke.

Q: OK, today is the 24th of January 2007. Larry how did you end up in Madrid?

COLBERT: Well I really thought I was going off to be principal officer in Montreal. I truly believed it. I had done all my work to make that happen. I had been in contact with people and, in fact, EUR thought I was going, I thought the Bureau of Consular Affairs thought I was going, I certainly thought I was going, and the embassy thought I was coming. I just was waiting for the orders to go from being principal officer in Tijuana to principal officer in Montreal. I had French; I certainly seemed to have the green light for the job. Then I got a call from the DCM in Ottawa who was quite upset with me saying, "I thought that we had agreed that you were coming? I think it is very unprofessional of you to have withdrawn your name." I said, "I beg your pardon." He said, "We've been told by the Department that you've decided you didn't want to come." I said, "Well, that's the first word I've had on that. I certainly didn't withdraw my name and I certainly didn't say I didn't want to come." "Oh," he said, "we've been misinformed." So then I called back and found out that although I thought I was going, the highest level of CA had a different candidate in mind and they hadn't told me. So that they were feeling bad about it because it think they felt that they had sort of...

Q: Who were they putting in there?

COLBERT: I think Leslie Gerson; no I'm not sure who it was but it was a female, that's immaterial, but I do remember it was a woman. But in any event it wasn't me. So I called the DCM back up and said, "I checked and certainly I hadn't withdrawn my name, but in the way that the system works the Bureau of Consular Affairs gets to pick certain positions and they hadn't picked me, they had picked someone else." So he said, "Well, you know how would you like to be consul general in Ottawa?" I said, "Well, I appreciate the officer, I'd love to go to Ottawa but the Bureau of Consular Affairs is feeling bad and sorry for me so they offered me Madrid and between Ottawa and Madrid, between cold and sun, I thought if I wanted to stay married I would have to take Madrid."

I tell the story simply to say that the way assignments are made in the Department are sometimes quite Byzantine, as we all know.

RICHARD H. MELTON
Assistant Secretary for Mexico, Caribbean, and Regional Economic Affairs,
Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC (1988-1989)

Richard H. Melton was born in Maryland in 1935 and studied at Cornell University and at the University of Wisconsin. He served in the U.S. Army and, in 1961, entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Portugal, England, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Washington, DC. Mr. Melton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

MELTON: I was asked by Abrams if I were interested in being a deputy assistant secretary in ARA, responsible for Mexico, the Caribbean and regional economical affairs. I told him that indeed I would be--it was a challenging portfolio. So I took that job. I did that from 1988 to 1989--six to nine months.

As far as my new job was concerned, one interesting aspect of it was that the administration had rediscovered Mexico. The focus was generated by Jim Baker who became Secretary of State in 1989. The center of our policy implementation became the Binational Commission which met annually. First, we had to review the record to see what the "US/Mexico Binational Commission" was and how it had been used in the past. It had not been active for some years and both we and Mexicans had to do some homework in order to resuscitate it. It has now become the norm; it meets at Cabinet level annually--sometimes attended by the two Presidents--to review the status of our bilateral relations. 1989 was pre-NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement); the concept was not yet politically acceptable in Mexico--it would have been viewed as another attempt by the U.S. to swallow Mexico. It is interesting to note that this is the direct opposite view of that held by the AFL/CIO which views NAFTA as a serious threat to American labor.

So in this period there was a new awareness of the importance of the relationship with Mexico across the board. Drug issues were becoming increasingly important; DEA agent Enrique Camarena would soon be murdered; Elaine Shannon had just published her book arguing that we subordinated our drug policy to large foreign policy considerations. All of that headline material gave the drug problem more relevance. We worried about corruption and the responsibility Mexican authorities had for the problem--the same range of issues that are discussed now in deciding whether to certify Mexico as a cooperative partner in the war on drugs. We had considerable hope because it was clear that Mexico was embarked on a major economic development program--liberalization and modernization. But this was only part of the picture. Overall, Mexico loomed larger on the regional and global agenda. The negative aspects of the Salinas administration was not as clear in 1989 as they later became.

We had some concern about the Mexican political system. One of the issues was whether the historically dominant party, the PRI, was becoming more open. Would the opposition parties be permitted to compete on an equal basis with the PRI? Would the election results be honored? The border industries--the *maquiladoras*--and the growing cross border economy and

cooperation already showed signs of influencing the Mexican political structure by loosening the hold of PRI on the levers of power. Election results were concrete evidence of this change, with the PRI being under increasing pressure; the change was palpable; the only question was whether the PRI would honor the election results. The process in the border regions was viewed as a precursor of possible change in all of Mexico, both politically and economically.

The economic liberalization program was impressive. There were concerns about its staying power, although the evidence seemed clear that it would persist. As I suggested, we had hoped that that economic development would bring political change in Mexico. We were encouraged by early progress, but the outcome was not clear. The tensions between President Salinas and some of the traditional PRI leaders suggested that the political system might well open up. The PRI oligarchy didn't want to honor election results; they didn't want transparency in government operations. As people began to see the possibility of opening the Mexican political system, they also became more interested in raising the US/Mexican relationships higher on the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

It was of course very useful that two Texans--President Bush and Secretary Baker--were in charge of the U.S. foreign policy process; they were interested and had considerable background in Mexican issues. One of President Bush's daughters-in-law is Mexican. When I went to Mexico as a member of the U.S. delegation to the inauguration of President Salinas, that son was a member of the delegation. The first meeting that newly-elected President Bush had with a foreign dignitary was with Mexican President Salinas.

The Binational Commission handled many of the very sticky problems that affect cross-border relationships--many of them in the environmental area. These included water rights and distribution, sanitation, and pollution. These issues are of great interest to the Congressional delegations from the border states as well as to the governors of the adjacent Mexican states. Bush and Baker, both being from Texas, were quite familiar with these issues and understood their importance. So when the issues arose, in anticipation of the annual meeting of the Commission, they were taken very seriously in Washington.

The establishment of NAFTA opened a breach between Mexico and Brazil, which has not yet fully healed. Brazil had a rude awakening when Mexico joined NAFTA, because the foreign offices of both countries had previously collaborated on so many world and regional issues. Both had viewed management of the relationships with the U.S. as one of their primary foreign policy goals. The increasingly friendly relations between Argentina and the US, the Chilean economic renaissance, and the new Mexican economic relationship with the U.S. and Canada forced Brazil to rethink its approach to the region.

JON G. EDENSWORD
Consul General

Mexico City (1988-1992)

Jon G. Edensword received a degree in economics from Harvard University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967, where his career included positions in Washington, DC, Mexico, Martinique, Liberia, Haiti, Jordan, and France. Mr. Edensword was interviewed in 1995 by Raymond Ewing.

Q: From there, Jon, you went to Mexico City which I think was your last assignment or last overseas assignment in the service and then you did the Board of Examiners before you retired. In Mexico City, your job was what?

EDENSWORD: I was Chief of the Consular Section and they have kind of a strange set-up in Mexico City. There's a Consul General (that was my job) then there is a Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs. We had offices next door to each other. The Minister Counselor was responsible for the supervising the six or seven consulates at that time, plus me.

Q: Six or seven consulates outside Mexico City?

EDENSWORD: Outside Mexico City, yes...principle officers. Some of them are the biggest consulates that we've gotten in the country: Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, Monterrey, and (in the old days - when I first got there) Guadalajara which is, of course, now just a small consulate. I guess is still a Consulate General (but I'm not even sure of that,) but it's only a fraction of its former size. I see that they're going to close two of the consulates in Mexico this year: Matamoros and Hermosillo.

Q: With this separation between the Minister Counselor and you as Consul General, that meant that you didn't have responsibilities outside of Mexico City or did you?

EDENSWORD: Outside of Mexico City's District.

Q: Outside of the consular district?

EDENSWORD: Except in the sense that I was the deputy to the Minister Counselor, so if he or she were not there or there wasn't one, I took over those responsibilities and I did that on a few occasions. It was Norm Singer when I first got there and then he left and was replaced by Pat Langford. There was a gap and there were times when Pat was on home leave or whatever.

Q: You'd fill in?

EDENSWORD: I would fill in. So it worked out very well in the sense that we always knew what the other was doing because we were next to each other and we often worked together putting out cables and...

Q: But the other position would not be very involved with the day-to-day activity of the Consular Section in Mexico City. That was your responsibility.

EDENSWORD: No, no - not at all. The Minister Counselor essentially had two employees: she had a junior officer who came out of my ranks and she had an American secretary who we shared for the classified stuff. But I had my own FSN secretary.

Q: The junior officer who worked for the Minister Counselor would do what? Help her with the...?

EDENSWORD: Sort of like a staff aid and there were a lot of responsibilities that she had just for maintaining communications and making sure that everybody was doing the same thing about the visas and...

Q: Had guidance from her?

EDENSWORD: Guidance...She was ultimately responsible for a lot of the boarder issues and the immigration thing which was a major bi-national concern. There are annual meetings (very high level meetings) - one year there in Mexico, the next year here in Washington and they always include the Secretaries of State, Commerce, (sometimes, maybe always) Treasury, Head of INS, the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, and the Attorney General. Those are the Binational Commission Meetings. The Minister Counselor and I had responsibility for (particularly if it were being held in Mexico) a lot of the management of that program and briefing papers for Washington.

Q: I know from those who have served in the Embassy in Ottawa that one of the challenges for the Embassy there is always to keep abreast of what's going on: there is such intimate contact with our northern neighbor Canada and a lot of direct communication between government agencies and their counterparts in Ottawa. Does the same sort of thing happen with Mexico or because of the language difference make it easier to be in the center of what's going on between Mexico and the United States?

EDENSWORD: Yes. I think it is easier. Juárez and El Paso had a very close relationship and the two Laredos and Matamoros and Brownsville, but that was a very localized thing. They dealt with a lot of local issues that they would...Nuevo Laredo and Ciudad Juárez - our consulates there often had to deal with problems of the movement of goods back and forth and that sort of thing. But...yes, much less of that. I think Tijuana and San Diego are really not sister cities: there's not that closeness that you get in Texas the cross boarder...although that may be changing. No, I think that isn't the kind of problem that exists in Canada.

LANE KIRKLAND
Mexico and the North American Free Trade Agreement
(1990's)

Lane Kirkland was born in South Carolina. After serving in the Merchant Navy,

Kirkland attended Georgetown University. After graduation Kirkland began to work for the American Federation of Labor and stayed there for his entire career. Throughout his career with AFL, Kirkland worked with a variety of countries as well as the International Labor Organization, lobbying for labor rights worldwide. Kirkland was interviewed by James F. Shea and Don R. Kienzle in 1996.

Kienzle: I wonder if we could turn to another part of the world and an area where the AFL-CIO had a lot of visibility, and that is Mexico and the NAFTA agreement? Would you care to comment on how you view that? Obviously the AFL-CIO was a major player.

KIRKLAND: Of course I think NAFTA is an atrocity. It only serves one interest, and that is the moneyed interest in this country. It doesn't serve the workers in Mexico, and it is very damaging to workers in this country. We had basically two stipulations. We wanted tough worker rights language in the agreement, so that if trade served any purpose it could help lever up conditions that ordinary people in that country suffer from, and of course the environmental mess along the border, and we were sold down the river on both of those.

Shea: Well, you were instrumental in getting an administrative office in the Labor Department headed up until recently by Jack Otero.

KIRKLAND: Yes. What about it?

Shea: It was supposedly set up to monitor [the agreement].

KIRKLAND: It's ineffectual, because there are no teeth in the labor rights side agreement whatsoever. It's a pure facade. I made a proposal that was published as an op-ed piece at the time that instead of going south and merging our economy with the morals of the PRI [Partido Revolucionario Institucional, the long time ruling party in Mexico] and the peso, we should create a North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement. We should elbow our way into the European Common Market and create the largest free trade area in the history of the world that would represent something like half of the world's gross national product. Now that would be a significant expansion of free trade.

Kienzle: Did you get any response from the Clinton Administration on your op-ed piece?

KIRKLAND: No. No. No. No. Well, I did in a way. Sometime later I was at a dinner at the British Embassy for John Major, who came over to meet with President Clinton. And at that dinner I reiterated my proposal and said that I thought it was still a good idea. He said he agreed and he would take it up with Clinton and he did. And he got a little flurry in the papers for it.

Kienzle: Would you care to comment on your relations with President Clinton and on his lack of receptivity on issues like NAFTA?

KIRKLAND: Well, on that particular issue, we are in disagreement. I had a discussion with him

in which I said he should follow through on a speech he had made, I believe, in Winston-Salem during his campaign, where he had addressed the trade issue and had made certain commitments that he proposed to address and do away with the incentives that existed in American law, tax laws and otherwise, that encouraged American corporations to move their operations overseas. I said, "If you would actively do that, you would take a little of the sting out of the NAFTA." Of course he didn't. On other issues, I got along with Clinton very well.

Shea: Getting back to NAFTA, Lane, did you talk to Don Fidel Valesquez?

KIRKLAND: Oh, I have talked to Don Fidel many times. He is a very warm and friendly fellow, but we were on opposite sides on this issue. He was carrying water for the PRI.

GUS TYLER
Labor Affairs
City Unspecified (1990s)

*Gus Tyler served as the Assistant President of The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union as well as being involved in the AFL and NAFTA proceedings.
He was interviewed by Morris Weisz in 1995.*

TAYLOR: The loans were rammed down the throats of these people. Why? Because *governments never go bankrupt*. Time went by. We got into the 1980s. Mexico had to service one of the loans. Mexico owed the United States six billion dollars, but they didn't have six billion dollars. They didn't have three billion dollars. They didn't each have one billion dollars with which to service the loan. What do you do? Well, the United States could have said, "Forgive them." Well, if we were going to forgive Mexico, we would have to forgive Argentina. We would have to forgive Brazil. We would have to forgive Chile. We would have to forgive all of them. We couldn't just say, "I'm going to forgive you [alone]." So, the banks said, "We have a great idea. You owe us six billion dollars. Okay. We will lend you six billion dollars," which they did. "You then give us back the six billion dollars and your loan will be known as a performing loan, so we can still carry it on our books as an asset."

A performing loan is an asset. A non-performing loan is a loss. So, you give them six billion dollars. They give it back to you. The six billion dollars is then added to the principal. You do it one year. You do it the next year. They owe you more now because the principal has gotten bigger. You do it the third year. You do it the fourth year. You do it the fifth year. Now it becomes ridiculous. You can't go on forever.

So Secretary of the Treasury Brady stepped in. He had a solution. What was his solution? It was called the Brady Plan. The banks of Mexico were owned by the government. The Government of Mexico owed us all this money. Okay. They could not give it to us. So we would have a swap: Equity for debt. Mexico owed us money and couldn't give it to us, so why not give us equity in the Mexican banks? That's what they did. And it was hailed. This is known as "privatization."

Privatization.

So the American bankers found themselves big shareholders in the Mexican banks. But there is another problem now. The problem is that the banks are going bankrupt because there is no economic base in Mexico, as a foundation for their banking world. So now what do we do? Okay. What we did was this. We worked out a treaty with them called NAFTA, and the object fundamentally was to take a big chunk of the American economy, remove it from the United States, put it into Mexico and that would give the Mexican economy a base from which to operate. Then the banks would become viable banks. But it didn't work. It wasn't happening fast enough, and the Mexican economy was in a state of disrepair for a variety of reasons, and they had no foreign exchange.

So if you have no foreign exchange, you speak to the International Monetary Fund and they'll tell you what the solution is. You devalue your currency. If you devalue your currency, then whatever you produce is very cheap in terms of other currencies, so you will increase your exports. You won't be able to buy from other countries, so there will be no imports and there will be no drain on your currency. So, you keep the wages down, because if wages go up, then the cost of what you produce will go up and people won't buy it. And cut back on your social programs, because that's another cost of production. That's the formula of the International Monetary Fund.

So [President Carlos Salinas], who was leaving office, said, "Well, I guess that is the only thing that is left for us. So we will devalue the peso and say, 'Oh, now we are really in trouble.' " Why? Because how will the banks ever be paid back?. In pesos or in what? Wages were cut in half and what not, and armed revolt was on the way in Mexico. So we came to the rescue, and the Administration gave them twenty billion dollars and tried to get other countries to give them fifty billion dollars to bail them out. How did we know that they then would be able to service the loans?

Well, we made an agreement with them. Mexico had already privatized its banks, but Mexico was not about to privatize the one thing they had to hold onto, and that was their big oil company. The government owned the oil fields, and that was it. It was their only asset. So, we said, "Okay. We're giving you these loans to bail you out, and you have other loans. However, to service these loans, we need collateral. So whatever income comes out of your oil operation, the money goes directly to the Federal Reserve Bank in Washington, DC."

Q: All of it?

TYLER: Once we service the debt, we'll give them back the rest, whatever is left over. So, what this is is that the banks with billions have put an impossible burden on Mexico's back. Argentina's next and Brazil after that. Chile's not far off. Venezuela? Absolutely. There are African countries in the same position. Nigeria.

Q: Which also has oil.

TYLER: Yes. Sure. Well, we'll work the same [deal]. Look at it politically. I'm a Mexican and

these are our oil fields and the money goes to Washington, DC? WOW! So, you know, there is this trade aspect, but that's not where it's at.

DONALD MCCONVILLE
Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs
Mexico City (1990-1993)

Mr. McConville was born and raised in Minnesota and was educated at St. Mary's College in that state. After service in the US Army overseas, he joined the Foreign Service in 1962. Specializing in Economic and Trade issues, Mr. McConville served in a number of posts abroad, including Panama and Vietnam as Economic Officer and as Economic Counselor in Korea, Malaysia, Mexico and the Philippines. In Washington, Mr. McConville also dealt primarily with International Trade and Economic matters. Mr. McConville was interviewed by Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: You left there about that time?

McCONVILLE: I left in mid-year. In fact, this was going to have a lot of consequences, because that ended up being my next assignment, Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs at our embassy in Mexico. The biggest reason that people were interested in me for that job and I was interested in the job was because by this time it was pretty clear we were going to have free trade negotiations that would include Mexico and Canada, the so-called North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations. So I went off to Mexico then as what was called Economic Minister Counselor, and that was to occupy a good part of my three years in Mexico.

Q: You were there '90 to '93.

McCONVILLE: '90 to '93, right. There had already been a commitment to explore the whole idea of negotiation, and then within the following year there was the actual launch of the negotiations. We in the embassy were very intensely involved with that. As the Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs, we also has a Minister Counselor for Commerce and for Agriculture, and we had a Treasury attaché and so forth, but I was essentially the person who was the key coordinator. In fact, when the negotiations went on, the Treasury attaché was the embassy participant for the financial services negotiation and for agriculture. Commerce got involved, but they were much more interested in promoting American goods as opposed to the trade policy *per se*. While Commerce itself was an important player in the trade negotiations, Commerce in the embassy didn't play that much of a role. Again, we had something like 15 or 18 negotiating groups, and for all but about three of those, the economic section of the embassy was the embassy representative. It was either myself or someone on my staff that was representing it. Of course, then during that period NAFTA became a big front-page issue in the United States. Again, we just got endless streams of Congressional delegations, Senatorial and Representatives. There were Cabinet officer visits and so forth, just a never-ending stream of them, and almost all

of them had at least as part of their agenda to talk about NAFTA while they were there. I think eventually it extended to about 18 groups. Most groups would have one meeting in the U.S., one in Canada and one in Mexico, and each one of them would be meeting about once a month or once every six weeks or so. In any one week we would probably have at least two or three of these negotiating groups in town. Then for some of the overall meetings where they got all the groups together, they were held some in Iowa, in Dallas and Houston, and then some in Mexico. I attended a number of those, as did some of my other people, but there were always negotiating sessions that were going on in Mexico itself. In a typical week, there'd be two or three of these groups in town at any time. Then you'd have all of these visiting business groups and Senators and Congressmen. I remember twice during my stay there Gephardt was the Senator Majority...

Q: Richard Gephardt.

McCONVILLE: He was Speaker of the House. Twice he came down, and each time when he came down he came down with just a few of his staffers; he didn't come down with any other delegation. First Congress had to approve the fast track, which was going to be key, an extension of the fast track, and then the following year there was a crucial vote on NAFTA itself. Each time Gephardt came down, he came down on very, very short notice. He wanted to see President Salinas, he wanted to see the ministers. Ambassador Negroponte, John Negroponte was ambassador at that time, was deeply involved in this whole negotiating process and committed his own personal time extensively to it. He was a superb ambassador. Negroponte arranged the last-minute meeting with the President, but Salinas knew how important Gephardt was.

Q: Gephardt was basically concerned about the union.

McCONVILLE: Gephardt was always very much on the fence. He was undeclared as to where he was. What President Clinton had to deal with here was the fact that he had majority support on the Republican side, although there were Republicans opposed too for their own reasons to free trade, but the majority of Republicans were supportive of free trade. Within the Democratic Party, primarily because of pressure from the unions and environmentalists, they had only a minority in favor of free trade, but it was crucial to Clinton, and it wasn't just a handful of Democrats. They had to have a fairly significant number, and there were some significant Democrats who were openly and strongly in favor of NAFTA. But Gephardt was on the fence, and it would clearly be very important if Gephardt as Speaker of the House would have come out openly in support of free trade and the NAFTA. He in the end both times ended up voting against it. I was his personal - what did you call it when a big-name dignitary comes? - control officer for Gephardt on both his visits. But that was just an example of the sorts of exposure that I had down there.

Q: We've already gone through an agonizing time with the Canadians. Well, the Canadians and the Americans went through an agonizing time coming up with this Canadian-American agreement, if the Mexicans want to come into it, I would think that it would be very hard to sort of disassemble some of the provisions of the American-Canadian agreement in order to meet Mexico.

McCONVILLE: It was really more the other way around. First of all, with the case in Mexico, we were prepared and were insistent that we were going to have this agreement and it was going to go further than the Canadian agreement, most especially in the area of agriculture. Essentially that had been finessed in the Canada agreement. So NAFTA was a broader and more far-reaching agreement than the U.S.-Canadian agreement, and the Canadians were going to have to be prepared. We were going to have a separate bilateral free trade agreement with the Mexicans. Neither we nor the Mexicans had anticipated having the Canadians involved, and then suddenly the Canadian Prime Minister spoke up and said that Canada wanted to be a part of this. Both the U.S. and Mexico were caught off guard by this and weren't really all the keen about the idea, but it was hard to back away. Canada had come in though but with some sense from both the Mexicans and the U.S. that, "Fine, you can be a part of this, but you're going to have to do it on the kind of terms that we are prepared to negotiate. If you can't agree to that, we've already got our agreement with you; we'll have a separate agreement with Mexico." For the Canadians, there again in agriculture, they largely exempted themselves from agriculture in the NAFTA and we ultimately, we and the Mexicans, acquiesced on that. They certainly didn't come as far as we and the Mexicans did. Another issue was the cultural thing again with Canada. It was Jaime Serra Puche, I think, the trade minister of Mexico, who, when asked about this issue, said that, "Mexico isn't afraid of cultural imports; we export culture." It simply was fundamentally different. With their sense of themselves and their security about their culture, they really didn't feel threatened by American culture in the way that the Canadians did and had much less difficulty in dealing with those issues. In any event, you know, Canada did become an important part of it, but they had to come in on sort of the basis that, "We in Mexico are going to negotiate an agreement and we're happy to have you as a part of it, but if you aren't prepared to make some of these commitments, then we will do that bilaterally."

Q: How did you find your colleagues on the Canadian side in Mexico? Was it difficult, or were people on both sides pretty open, do you think, on this thing?

McCONVILLE: Negotiations are negotiations. First of all, the people that were involved from all three countries were pretty capable people, and where the US and Canada, our trade negotiators on both sides, had had more experience than the Mexicans, the Mexicans had a significant number of U.S., internationally but basically U.S. trained people not only in specific trade areas but in a whole broad range of economic areas, and these people, some of them, had been brought into this administration. There were some of them that were coming back with fresh PhD's out of the U.S.. But they were very bright competent, capable people who had had a good deal of sophistication because of their international education. They were a totally different breed than, say, the typical Mexican diplomat, who tended to be somewhat leftish in his outlook and always had a strong undercurrent of anti-Americanism. In the economic ministries down there, this was not totally but largely absent. This was, of course, actually gaining great acceptance in Latin American in that era, this whole idea of looking much more positively towards market economics and the U.S. model in particular as something that could be very, very useful in Latin America; and it wasn't just in Mexico, it was throughout a good deal of Latin America at that time. So it had become much more acceptable to be openly supportive of liberal economic policies, and the leftists were on sort of the defensive. Now, the leftists still controlled the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and you still heard some of that over there, but these people were nationalistic and they

were good negotiators for Mexico, but they also understood and did believe that liberal economic trade policies were in Mexico's interest. So clearly it was somebody that you could negotiate seriously with. There were areas in the U.S. where we were clearly protectionist, things like textiles and transportation sectors and so forth. Agriculture was difficult on both sides. But they were pressing for much more openness than we could politically probably deliver on the U.S. side in some of those areas. These negotiations are never easy, but the caliber of people negotiating for all three parties was of very high quality. It was hard-headed negotiations. During the period of time I was there, in addition to all this trade agenda that was moving forward. There was a tremendous economic opening of Mexico itself. It had begun earlier but was accelerated dramatically during the Salinas years. So this also was an area of a great deal of interest, and it also involved a great deal of reporting. It was, again, something that was of significant consequence to the whole relationship with Mexico. It was absolutely critical as well to the whole idea that you could now seriously negotiate a free trade agreement with Mexico. You couldn't do that with a country that was the Mexico of the '70s or '80s or even earlier than that; it was only if Mexico was truly a fairly open economy that this was going to make sense for us. All of these things were interrelated, but it was a period again of great excitement. I was deeply sorry that Salinas came crashing down like he did a couple years hence. I think that he was truly committed to modernizing Mexico, liberalizing the economy of Mexico, feeling that was absolutely critical to being able to modernize Mexico, and yet he came from a family that had been involved in politics in Mexico for a long time, and he had gotten into the position to be President because he and his family also had ties in that world and his family at least had allowed some of those people to benefit significantly from what was happening in Mexico at the time, he and his family as well. I think that he himself was probably more driven by the idea of modernizing Mexico but this was a compromise that he had made, and that compromise ultimately brought him down.

Q: You're talking about insider corruption, as families?

McCONVILLE: Yes. There was a mixture in the Salinas administration between the people who were clearly these technocrats who were highly motivated people, very well educated, and were driven largely by a sense of mission, of wanting to modernize Mexico. Then you had also some of the old dinosaurs, as they were referred to, the people who had the political connections and that's what they owed their position to, and these people tended to be corrupt because that's the sort of people that had advanced in that system. They were more and more, though, being pushed aside by the technocrats. The technocrats, by and large, were people who were themselves not corrupt. The more and more that they were able to liberalize. Mexico had historically been a place that had been controlled out of Mexico City. In the old Spanish economic society you had a large number of fiefdoms with the license and control of it being parceled out by Mexico City, and those benefiting from it then would pay off the authorities to have this position, this favored position, and they would benefit at the expense of the masses. This became true when you got sort of a much more state-dominated economy in the '30s and '40s and beyond with the huge petroleum industry that was state controlled and the telephone industry and so forth. In all of these, too, you had certain favored groups. If you worked for the petroleum sector, fine, you got paid pretty well and you had a sinecure, but this came at the expense of a great many other people not having much of anything. There were very inefficient industries and industries that were

arrogant and dismissive of the populace as a whole. A big part of what Salinas was doing to was privatizing all of this. In privatizing it, you broke up these power structures, and in a much more liberal economic climate, those who benefited from simply have the license or the privileged position in a particular sector would no longer do so, and that minimized the amount of corruption. But it had been an enormously corrupt society and was still corrupt, less so perhaps than it had been before, but you were moving in the right direction. I recall something like, for instance, customs. Customs in Mexico had been historically so corrupt that there was not an awful lot of customs revenue generated, but there were an awful lot of bribes being paid to customs officials and so forth. The Secretary of the Treasury, for example, the customs king, along the border, in particular, with the U.S. - and this was again partly preparing for what was likely to be a huge expansion in trade over the border as a consequence of NAFTA - tried to modernize the customs facilities up there, not just in people but in the way that they were administered. They secretly trained a whole new crew of customs workers, and then suddenly over one weekend they either fired or dismissed with provocation or transferred virtually all the personnel they had up there and put these new people in, and they were people who were supposed to be bachelors or single women so as not to have close ties. They were moved every three months. We talked to a great many of the American businessmen and the Mexican businessmen who had to go through customs up there, and the effect was dramatic, and the increase in customs revenues was soaring because suddenly there was money going to government. Probably right now you still have a lot of corruption on Mexican borders out of customs. You can't do it once and then it's over with. But these were the kind of things, across a whole broad swath of policy areas, we were doing and attempting to do, and it was very fascinating to see it and to be involved with the Mexicans, to have intimate contact with so many of these people who seemed so committed to this mission.

Q: It was an exciting time.

McCONVILLE: It was a very exciting time. Of course, their economy really began to improve significantly, and you could see the possibility that, given decades into the future, I could see a Mexico resembling a Korea, a country that was truly modernized and would be a totally sort of neighbor to the United States, and NAFTA was going to be a part of all of this. Of course, on the U.S. side, it was the unions and the environmentalists, but with the Clinton Administration, they did deal with this by coming up with separate agreements on labor and environment that were supposed to address some of these issues, and to some extent did, and those were also part of the negotiations. In any event, it was, again, an extraordinarily exciting period to be in Mexico. I think I mentioned before I got married in Korea and acquired a stepson who was five at that time. It was actually before I left Korea our daughter was born as well in 1987 just before coming back to the United States at that time. So I had my wife and two children at this point, and we enjoyed Mexico too. We did a good deal of traveling when we could get away for a long weekend and so forth when we were down there and had an enormously enriching experience in Mexico and with a Mexico that was changing very dramatically right before our eyes. In any event, NAFTA was concluded before I left but it still had to be ratified by the Senate, which was to be a big battle yet, and this was after I left. After my three years in Mexico, then I went off to be economic counselor in the Philippines. Lo and behold, this happened after I had actually been assigned to the Philippines. It was shortly before I left Mexico. I remember there was a picnic at the

ambassador's residence, and Mrs. Negroponte, Diana Negroponte, had kept me aside at one point and was asking about our going to the Philippines and what I had found out about the schools there and so forth. I was sort of puzzled by why would she be interested in the schools. About a week later it was announced that John Negroponte was going to be our new U.S. ambassador to the Philippines. As it happened, I had already been assigned there, but I ended up being the economic counselor for John Negroponte for another three years.

WILLIAM JEFFRAS DIETERICH
Public Affairs Officer
Mexico (1992-1995)

William Jeffras Dietrich was born in Boston in 1936. He received his bachelor's degree from Connecticut Wesleyan University in 1958 and then served in the US Navy. His career included positions in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Israel, Italy, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Mexico. Mr. Dieterich was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

DIETERICH: I was in Mexico from '92 to '95.

Q: What was the state of our relations, as you saw them at that time, with Mexico?

DIETERICH: It was a pretty good period. The Salinas government was interested in an economic change in Mexico and interested in change in the way Mexico viewed itself. There was a turn toward free enterprise and also a turn toward good relations with the United States. The most important single fact, and one that encouraged me to go there, was that we were in the NAFTA period, specifically the period that led up to NAFTA being submitted to the U.S. Senate for approval.

Q: Could you explain?

DIETERICH: The North American Free Trade Agreement.

Q: Which was what?

DIETERICH: It was an agreement between Canada, the United States, and Mexico that would do away with the major economic barriers of trade among the three countries. It was an important concept; an important event; one that recognized a fact of absolutely basic geography that a lot of Americans sort of slide by, that Mexico is indeed a part of North America, as well as being a part of Latin America. The decision to go to Mexico was in some aspects a very good one, from my point of view. I discovered, somewhat to my surprise, that I liked Mexico a lot and I hadn't expected to.

Q: Prior to that, you were in El Salvador weren't you? Had you picked up southerner's concepts

of their big neighbor to the north? Mexico stands off to one side in the Latin American circle.

DIETERICH: Yes, to some extent. Mexico in a sense, sees itself too close to the United States. You know the old joke about poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States, which is a reference to the anti-clericalism of the Mexican revolution. I don't think the rest of Latin America sees it that way. They see Mexico as a serious regional power; they see Mexico as a major provider of those services that relate to the fact that it is a part of Latin America and it also speaks Spanish. I guess Mexico, in terms of population, is the second, or the largest Spanish speaking country in the world. It has a great influence in the rest of Latin America, especially in media terms. Mexican television is a major producer of entertainment programming for all of the Spanish speaking world. That gives it a great deal of influence. The same is true of publication; Mexican newspapers are influential in the rest of Latin America.

Q: In 1973 or '74, I watched a dubbed version of a Mexican soap opera that was showing on Russian television. This was in Kyrgyzstan of all places. It was about a peasant girl that went to the big city and her problems there.

DIETERICH: It's a curious thing because Mexican, as well as Argentine and Brazilian soap operas do pretty well in Europe. Also some places in Asia too, it's a curious phenomenon. If you go back, *Dallas* was one of the big, big American successes in terms of international distribution of dubbed versions; I think it had to do with family structure. The extended family structure of Mexico looks familiar in much of southern Europe and eastern Europe, and looks familiar in much of Asia.

The Mexicans, as well as the Brazilians, are very good marketers. Early in my stay there, John Negroponte and I went to call on the Director of *Televisa* and as we were waiting in the lobby to go in and see the great man, a Russian came up to the ambassador and greeted him like a long-lost brother'. It turned out he was the ex-Russian ambassador in Mexico, who had returned to Mexico and gone to work for *Televisa* in charge of marketing their programming to Russia.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

DIETERICH: John Negroponte. He was then replaced about mid-tour for me by Jim Jones, ex-congressman from Oklahoma.

Q: What was the USIA apparatus?

DIETERICH: The USIA apparatus was big, it was one of our biggest posts in the world, which included three branch posts, Guadalajara, Monterey, and Tijuana, although we didn't call the one in Tijuana a branch post for bureaucratic reasons, but at any rate we had an office in Tijuana. We also were in charge of the Benjamin Franklin Library, which is the United States' oldest overseas library. It is an important institution in Mexico City.

We had a very large cultural program, based on the fact that the Mexican government is, by tradition and by inclination, very heavily into cultural affairs of all kinds. The foreign ministry

has a large cultural division and even runs its own cultural centers in other cities of Mexico. Mexico heavily subsidizes orchestras, theater groups, and literary activities. It also has a large cultural center in San Antonio, which is really a branch of the UNAM, Mexico city's autonomous University. It is a very serious operation.

What this means is that Mexico was very interested in cultural relations on an official level with the United States. That is difficult because we often don't see much of a governmental role in our cultural heritage. Nevertheless, in many ways, over the years, we have adapted to the Mexican model through mechanisms like the Fulbright program.

Mexico is one of what USIA in those days called a "commission country," which means that the Fulbright program is run through a governmental bilateral agreement and governed by a board of directors appointed by both governments. It was a big program and Mexico contributed half of the funding. That involved a major amount of my time. It also meant that, in addition to a board of directors to run, there was a separate Fulbright Commission office with its staff of 6 or 7 people and an executive director named by the board. The Fulbright Commission staff administered the Fulbright program, which meant nominating and preparing Mexican students to go to the United States and nominating and preparing Americans to come to Mexico, assigning them to various universities. It also served as the student advising organization in collaboration with USIS. If a Mexican student was interested in studying in the United States, the Fulbright Commission was a place where he could go to find a collection of catalogs and to get advice on what he or she would have to do, what it would cost, and how to apply.

Q: When one thinks about it, the American higher educational system is incredible for an American to understand but for a foreigner, I mean all of us have gone through this. There isn't a university or state university - you have hundreds, probably thousands - all different, all with strengths and weaknesses.

DIETERICH: That's why student advising services are terribly important, and I hope after the merger of USIA with the department we can find ways to continue those services. In the first place, you are absolutely right. Most countries find it difficult to fathom the U.S. university system because it is more highly privatized than any other system in the world. There is no system, no set of rules you can count on; no central place to apply. There is not even a clear-cut definition of what is prestigious and what isn't. A lot of what people advising students would do would be to say, "Look, you don't have to go to Harvard or Yale to study in the United States."

Q: What was your impression of the flow of Mexican students to the United States? Were there characteristics?

DIETERICH: The first characteristic was in the last decade or so, there was an increase in the flow. Mexico, like much of Latin America, by tradition tended to look more toward Europe for cultural and educational models. Academics lived in a universe that said if you wanted to study engineering or another hard science you might go to the United States, but if you were interested in the arts, literature, history, or political science you ought to go to Europe. That was changing in all of Latin America, but it had notably changed in Mexico. In addition, NAFTA was changing

the equation.

Q: Why would NAFTA make a difference?

DIETERICH: Because it made clear to people that Mexico's most important relationship was a positive one. Mexicans always knew their relationship with the United States was overpowering, but they tended to see it in negative terms. The Americans would do things to you like start a war, and occupy your capital, and take part of your country away. The Americans were sort of arrogant. They would do what they pleased on the border and didn't much care what Mexicans thought about it. I think the NAFTA context gave Mexico a way to begin to see positive sides and benefits to their relationship with the United States. It became possible to say, "Now wait a minute, this being so close to the United States and so far from God might not be such a bad deal after all. We really ought to benefit from this special relationship we have with the United States."

Also, Mexico is very much a part of the intellectual life of Latin America, a leader in that intellectual life, and has also been affected by the decline in the credibility of the dependency theories. In intellectual and political terms, that is probably the most important development in Latin America in the latter half of the 20th Century.

Q: Could you refresh my memory - the dependency theory was what?

DIETERICH: Dependency theory - I can't give a really competent definition - means whatever bad has happened in my country was caused by the foreigners and probably the United States.

Q: Which tends to take away responsibility too.

DIETERICH: It certainly does, and it was a movement that was tailor-made for the Marxists, and tailor-made for a lot of the devotees of liberation theology. I don't mean to identify those two with each other, but they shared this stake in dependency theories. It is nice for governments to be able to blame somebody else, but it is also comforting for a society to say "it isn't our fault and if we are disadvantaged economically it is because of our virtue," and at the heart of liberation theology in human psychology is the notion that you buy economic progress at the expense of spiritual and moral values. You can have one or you can have the other.

Q: That is a little bit Jeffersonian too.

DIETERICH: That's right, and it relates to a whole set of societal values that separate northern Europeans and those of the Mediterranean basin, as well as their New World descendants. Take the sense of family, for instance. Latin cultures tend to believe that northern Europeans prospered because they are cold and calculating, don't care very much about their families, and are not very good at human relationships. They buy economic and technical progress by sacrificing human and spiritual values. The leads to the comforting thought that "We may not be rich, but that is because we adhere to higher moral, intellectual and artistic standards. The gringos got rich because we let them exploit us since we are concentrated on higher things." It is a comforting

thought because it lets you off the hook for the lamentable condition of your own country.

The trouble with the argument is that it isn't true. You don't buy one thing with the other. The same countries that win Nobel prizes in sciences also win them in the arts and literature. A country with bad philosophy more often than not, ends up with bad plumbing.

Q: By being in Mexico and seeing their cultural strengths, did you find it was a little hard to keep one's eye on what we were doing, such as explaining the United States as opposed to letting people in the United States know about Mexico?

DIETERICH: Actually, we had to do both and both were in the USIA mandate. We were very active dealing with groups on both sides of the border that were interested with NAFTA; dealing with groups on both sides that were interested in cultural relations; dealing with people that were interested in everything in the relationship.

We dealt with great numbers of Americans who had come to Mexico, and with great numbers of Mexicans who were traveling to the United States.

There certainly was no problem in getting people's interest. Mexicans know a lot about the United States because they watch U.S. television. Sometimes not as much as they think they know, but a lot. They know much more about the United States than Americans know about Mexico.

Although, if truth be told, there are a lot of Americans in the southwestern United States who do know a lot about Mexico, speak some Spanish, like to be in Mexico, and are interested in the relationship.

NAFTA was a major part of our job, but in broader terms the main message was democracy in the United States and how it functions and relates to democracy in Mexico.

Q: Let's talk about NAFTA. I'm familiar with the problem in the United States, particularly unions, but what about Mexico? What were we trying to sell, and was there a problem?

DIETERICH: Mexico had a lot of the same problems, but the general opinion in Mexico was more favorable to NAFTA than in the United States. There were Mexican unions, too, that felt this would be disadvantageous to them. There were Mexican business people who could see a combination of benefit and risk in the whole thing. There were a lot of Mexican industries that had gotten used to a high level of protection from the Mexican government and were worried about what would happen to them when they didn't have it any more.

The great majority of Mexicans, however, did believe that it meant they could buy U.S. goods at lower prices. That was very important in Mexico, because a lot of things that make life easier for Mexicans are imported from the United States. If you go to Mexico you see a good many American cars on the road - many of them are manufactured in Mexico, but nevertheless American cars.

I think the balance of opinion was more favorable to NAFTA in Mexico than it was in the United States. Favoring NAFTA was part of the official policy of the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), the eternally ruling political party of Mexico. I think we had a slight balance on the Mexican side and a very “iffy” proposition on the U.S. side. Many of the things that would absolutely haunt us on a day-to-day basis were the terrible things politicians in the United States would say about Mexico as part of the debate. It was fair game to say that Mexico was a country ruled by a pack of environmentally insensitive, human rights-violating, labor union-bashing morons and the Mexican press rarely missed the story. That’s not a nice message to deal with when you had my job.

What you do when the message is absolutely terrible, when there is no way you can make it look good, is you talk process. That worked in a sense because the process itself is seen as sort of admirable by a lot of Mexicans. We were really saying, “This is the way debate happens in the United States. People are going to say these things and you know they don’t mean them. This is something we have to live through. If NAFTA is to prosper, it will prosper because there is consensus in the three countries in favor of it. Even if NAFTA could somehow be shoved down the throats of the people of the three countries, it wouldn’t work.”

I think that message worked.

Emptier part of the message, which related back to our cultural affairs programs, was to say that NAFTA was a big concept and it had its corollaries in other areas - politics, culture education and society in general. All the movement associated with NAFTA will bring lots of changes in the three societies themselves. If you had been dealing with a lesser country than Mexico, the last part of that message - changes in society - would have been scary. Argentina or Guatemala would have found the prospect of change influenced from the north to be frightening. But Mexico did not to the same extent, and I think that was because Mexico has a very strong sense of itself, its own society, and its own strength.

That sense of self goes back at least to the Mexican revolution. Out of the absolute horror of the Mexican revolution - a horror based on the extreme divisions in the society between those of Hispanic blood and those of Indian blood and culture - came a realization that the contradiction had to be reconciled in some way.

The country developed something that went beyond mere ideology, a consciousness, that Mexico was not a transplanted European country in the new world but was a new society, a new race. What we call Columbus Day, Latin Americans call “the day of the race,” which is basically a Mexican concept.

The idea that out of the conquest came an amalgamation of peoples and cultures that produced something entirely new under the sun. Jose Vasconcelos, an early 20th century Mexican educator, called it “the cosmic race.” Mexicans have a very strong sense of that, and Indian elements play a strong role in the way Mexico behaves and organizes itself. It’s a great source of strength to Mexico.

Q: Did you find Mexicans bragging about their ancestors, like a great grandmother? Or were there so many people with straight Indian blood that this didn't work?

DIETERICH: No, but it works in strange ways in Mexico. You reminded me of a conversation I once had with the conductor of one of the Mexican symphony orchestras, Enrique Diemecke. We were talking about Mexican composers and Mexican music, and during the conversation - you have to remember this person is blue-eyed, blonde, comes from Eastern European immigrants to Mexico (probably early 20th century) - and he said to me, "We are all Indians here in Mexico." I don't think he meant that all Mexicans can claim Aztec, Toltec or Mayan bloodlines. What he did mean was something more important - that everybody shares in an Indian culture, in a new world culture that is unlike others.

Now that is really strong stuff when you start to compare it with the rest of Latin America, and especially with the rest of highland Indian region along the spine of Andes. Culturally and geographically, Mexico, in many ways, belongs to that spine of mountains and those societies, but Mexico has learned a lot in comparison say with Peru and Bolivia, where the system is still almost apartheid.

If you live in a country like Argentina or Uruguay, or even southern Brazil, which are totally dominated by their European consciousness, who consider themselves transplanted Europeans, then you realize the Mexican solution is really strong stuff and it has really worked because Mexicans think differently about themselves. Although they complain about U.S. power and influence, they aren't really scared about us transforming Mexican society in ways they don't want it to be transformed.

Q: While you were dealing with this in this '92 to '95 period, what about the influence of immigration and flow back? How did this play from your perspective of USIA?

DIETERICH: Sure, there was a lot of flow back. A lot of the illegal or undocumented immigrants do come back all the time and they do bring back influences from the United States. Somehow that doesn't bother Mexicans very much. Whereas Mexico is very protective of its own culture; they believe more than other people believe that they have a culture that is worthy of export, that is worthy of examination that has a lot of good things about it, and they tend to think more in terms of presenting and projecting that culture abroad than they do in terms of protecting it in Mexico.

Q: Well, let's talk tactics. I assume that to a person our embassy was sold on NAFTA. This was not something that was crafted in Washington and begrudged at the embassy in Mexico. Am I correct in that?

DIETERICH: I'm sure there were people who had their individual doubts, but I didn't think we had much of a problem of people in the embassy in Mexico City being lukewarm on NAFTA.

There were probably some people on the law enforcement side of the embassy who might have

thought NAFTA was a bit too generous, in the sense that maybe we should hold out for more cooperation from the Mexicans on the drug enforcement side than we were getting. That was probably balanced by other people in the same community thinking enforcement might improve under NAFTA.

Tactics? The tactic that I followed and believed in was to emphasize the benefits that would accrue to Mexico. The economic benefits were pretty clear. Mexicans were already convinced NAFTA was going to lower prices. They were already convinced it would increase job opportunities for Mexico.

Just like Americans were afraid of the great sucking sound Ross Perot so colorfully described. But some Mexicans also saw that it was better to be the sucker than the suckee. They have already seen jobs flowing south.

A lot of our tactic was to convince people that there would be collaterals all over the place, especially in the area of education. The whole time I was in Mexico we worked on various schemes to create a sort of educational NAFTA. There ought to be a free-flow of educational and intellectual resources among the three countries. It ought to be very easy for a Canadian to study in Mexico or an American to study in Canada, or whatever. The three ought to go together. There wasn't a great deal of funding for this activity, but a lot of what I did had to do with big, often overblown meetings of educational authorities from the three countries who would get together and try to come up with schemes, try to talk each other into offering scholarships. The meetings were extremely interesting, produced a whole lot of talk and a lot of meaningful low-level activity, individually and university to university. but they were not able to create any big chunks of funding for particular trilateral initiatives. I suppose the contact work and jawboning really did have some effect, and I think it was worth doing. There is more cooperation among universities in the three countries now than there was before we started all that.

My days had to do with that sort of education stuff, and a lot of them had to do with being the person that supervised the people that wrote the speeches for the ambassador. Both ambassadors had heavy speaking schedules.

Also, I had to deal with individual press flaps and a lot of time dealing with delegations from the United States that wanted to talk to embassy people.

The performing arts side of cultural affairs was also very important. It was almost an irony: whereas the United State, then and now, was willing to spend almost nothing on American performing arts being presented in other countries, the Mexicans were extremely interested in it and felt that high culture should have the patronage of the government. A lot of American performers did come to Mexico. I found that using my representational funds (which were pretty good) and my residence, which was nice, that I could sort of piggyback and get listed as a cosponsor of a whole lot of important American cultural events by simply giving a reception. I'm not a big fan of big receptions, but the one place I sort of changed my view on that was in Mexico City. Every time any American of any importance in the cultural world would come to Mexico, I would be asked to give a reception at some point and be listed as a cosponsor. I was

glad to do it and the price was right, considering the money I had.

We also funded some programming that had to do with how the arts are supported in the United States, because Mexico was in a privatizing mood and the Salinas government had gone around to the official arts organizations in Mexico and said, "Hey, the old days aren't coming back, we are going to keep reducing your funding and what you need to do is find out how to raise funds to support your organizations out of the private sector. So symphony orchestra number two, get out and do some fundraising. Art museum number three, get out and get to the private sector and find out how to do this because the government funds are going to dry up eventually."

Q: This is very difficult because unless you have a population that is brought up in a philanthropic mode, as the United States is, how would this work?

DIETERICH: Part of it was easier because Mexicans live close to the United States and have experience with this. They don't do our kind of fund raising but they have seen it. Part of it had to do with the decline of dependency theories, the concomitant rise of the notion that we have to take responsibility for ourselves. Part of it was a consciousness that it might not be right that all the taxpayers in Mexico should have to support an opera production when very few people in the country really like opera. We found a lot of people coming to us and saying they were interested in how we finance arts in the United States and they wanted advice on how it was done. They thought that was what they wanted to do, because government funds were going to dry up and also because it would increase their independence.

When people came to us we used different kinds of resources. Sometimes it would be educational exchange resources to get people up there to look at how it was done in the United States. We brought the chief fundraiser for the Cleveland symphony down to Mexico City to hold seminars and talk with the administrators of various symphony orchestras. We worked out arrangements with the Ohio Arts Council where they came and visited Mexico and talked about how they worked with the state arts council in the United States. They invited representatives to come to Ohio and spend a couple of weeks with them to see how they did it.

There was another positive aspect. We finally began to get another message through to Mexico, which was hard. Mexico had always wanted to deal on a sort of official government-to-government level in cultural affairs. They wanted to have cultural talks every year; they want to have an omnibus cultural agreement. People in various ministries who were in charge of cultural affairs wanted to deal with their counterparts in Washington. We kept saying there no real counterparts up there. We don't have a culture ministry. We have a department of education but it doesn't really run the schools. It has some influence on public schools, but almost none on universities that we have been able to detect. We began to try to get the message through to them that often their counterparts are at the state level in the United States. If you want to talk about how a public education system runs you have to talk to the states in the United States. If you want to talk about cultural programs, a state art council is going to know much more about how you distribute grants to various people so they can put on a show. If you want to talk to a museum, there is no department of museums that you can talk to, you have to go to Denver or to San Francisco.

Although there was a certain attitude among Mexican officials that said “I don’t want to deal with state or local officials because I am a national level official and I should have a counterpart,” I think we did make progress in getting the message through. By making things happen and making sure people were treated well, we licked part of that protocol problem.

Q: Did you find that by breaking their rice bowl, by breaking this down they felt challenged? A bureaucrat at the central level felt challenged by going down to the state level?

DIETERICH: I think a little bit, but their rice bowl had already been broken. If anybody was breaking their rice bowl, it was their own government, it wasn’t us.

Q: Did you see a growing regional way, as in the United States, we have our states and they have their states, did they play much of a role at this point?

DIETERICH: Less so, but it depends on the state. I mean the states that have big cities in them could begin to relate to big cities in the United States. In cultural affairs it is almost more city to city relationships.

Q: Sister cities - was that big ?

DIETERICH: Yes, yes, there was a lot of that sister cities stuff going on in Mexico, but I can’t remember who was with whom. It worked at all sorts of levels. There is a lot of private, non-governmental cultural exchange between Mexico and the United States. In many ways we at the embassy were merely responding to a Mexican notion that there ought to be governmental involvement in culture rather than paying for a whole lot of exchange ourselves.

For example, there were a lot of Americans playing in Mexican symphony orchestras. They got hired because Mexicans know how to get into the trade publications in the United States and hire musicians. They were rapidly disappearing by the time I left Mexico, because the Russians had come on the market and they were able to work for much lower salaries than the Americans were. You can go to relatively small cities in Mexico and find a symphony orchestra with a lot of Americans in it, playing the season for a couple of thousand bucks. I wish Mexico luck in transitioning to more private support.

Q: It’s a different society. I watch in the United States and this is in our bones, that you are supposed to do things on a local level and tithe yourself. Even in Europe this is kind of alien.

DIETERICH: It is, although that was a lot of the message we were working and the Mexicans to some extent were absorbing. Individual responsibility and giving are the hardest part, but that is only part of the game. A lot of it is corporate charities, it’s foundation charities, it’s grant writing, it’s proposals.

The idea that corporations might support culture is not alien to Mexico or in the rest of Latin America. Banks have art museums; big individual industrialists often think they should own a

newspaper and that newspaper ought to have a cultural page. There are a lot of things that push the very wealthy into hobbies that frankly eventually can redound to the cultural benefit of the country.

What was most important about that period was that the Mexican cultural officials were getting accustomed to the idea of private support and beginning to like it. I think they began to see that they could vary the portfolio. They could have donations coming in from enough different places so that nobody would have a preponderant influence over them.

Q: Did you have a constant battle with Canada? I guess it's not quite the same because Canada is one language, but a spillover of our culture, special magazines, I mean the Canadians really fight the Americanization of their media outlets. Was this an issue with you all?

DIETERICH: I think it was an unspoken issue in our tripartite education deliberations. I think the Canadians had the notion there was a common cause to be made with Mexico that national governments ought to protect the national culture. This was especially pronounced on the French side of the equation in Canada, but not unknown on the Anglo side of Canada either. The Mexicans weren't really very interested. As I have said, at least on an official level, Mexico is much more interested in projecting its culture than protecting it.

Q: So you weren't having to deal with protests?

DIETERICH: No, we would have protests, but the biggest one I remember was generalized international issues; the remnants of the Mexican left. Then the California initiative to severely limit immigration and to keep kids out of public schools - that produced some big demonstrations because it was insulting to Mexicans.

The Mexican attitude toward immigration is very complicated. They don't particularly like the fact that their economy doesn't produce enough jobs to gainfully occupy the people it needs to. On the other hand, they really do believe that Mexicans have a perfect right to go and work where there is a job. They do believe that the Americans are hypocritical, in a sense, because we try to keep them out on one hand but then we provide the jobs on the other. It's not hard to imagine what might give them that idea.

Deep in the Mexican psyche is the idea that if a Mexican goes to work in Texas, New Mexico, or California why the hell shouldn't he? "We were there long before the Gringos were and it was only our mistake that we invited the Gringos in and we shouldn't have done it." The Mexican official attitude is an interesting one, too, because they are very much into consular protection of their people. And they are often pretty good at it, although the task is daunting. And their potential constituents often do not come to them. They may not trust the Mexican government much more than they trust the U.S. government.

Q: Once, when I was with a senior seminar, I interviewed various consuls in the United States and the Mexicans said they often had a problem because their citizens would be arrested but they would not want their government to know about it.

DIETERICH: Exactly. There is a lot of that. Our local police are no more aware of the rules on consular access than are the police in most other countries; they may even be somewhat less informed. And often when they are aware of the obligation to inform a foreign consulate, they think it's a bad idea and don't do it. This means Mexican consulates, and others, have to proceed on an almost political basis - monitor the media and try to identify the problems and go after access.

There are some real irritants in our consular relations with Mexico, capital punishment being one. Mexico does not have it and we do. There are a number of Mexicans sitting on death row in the United States, and it creates a problem every time it happens.

Q: How did you handle it?

DIETERICH: There isn't much you can do about it except remind them it is the law in the United States and that ample appeals were available. It is difficult to make the death penalty look good to a country that doesn't have it.

Those are the irritants of countries that share a long border. The other issues that are very irritating to Mexicans were the measures we would take across the border to prevent illegal immigration and the drug traffic also. The Mexican government was very clear. They understood our right, obligation, and duty to protect our border. They understood people came across that weren't documented; they thought our standards of documentation were way too high and that we should have more open access to Mexican workers.

However, they react very negatively to symbolism, to measures that seem to have symbolic value, that appear to them to reflect a generalized notion that the United States has to protect itself from Mexico. They especially object to walls and fences being put up.

They also object to bad treatment of Mexicans by American immigration officials - and there is a lot of that going on. There is also a lot of bad treatment by Mexican officials of Americans trying to come over, too. Those are difficult problems to deal with because you have to have sympathy for the border patrol people. They have been given an absolutely impossible task.

I think if there were ever an example of a woefully disgraceful, irresponsible, unfunded mandate, it has to do with U.S. immigration policy. The principle shortchanged institutions are the U.S. border patrol and the U.S. Department of State. The border patrol is no more capable of controlling the traffic over the Mexican border than the U.S. consular service is of giving visas in a rational, thoughtful, humane way. It simply cannot be done. Our consular sections are overwhelmed and the border patrol is overwhelmed. There is a terrible negative effect on the morale of people being asked to do a job they can't do well, and to do it day in and day out. Our consular officers know they can't interview 60 people a day and do a good job of it. The difference is however that our consular people don't have to work that visa line forever. They go to other assignments. But a lot of the border patrol people are there for the duration. Sometimes they get cynical; sometimes they get lazy; sometimes they get mean.

The irritants are never going to go away in that situation, and the Mexican consciousness that the border shouldn't be there anyway is never going to go away. I hadn't thought too much about the Mexican war before I went to Mexico, but it looms large in Mexican history. In American history, it is a dumb little rehearsal for the Civil War, but for Mexicans it is a major, major event.

In some ways, the impact of it came home to me once fairly early in my tour, when I was leafing through a big coffee table book on Mexico and there was a painting of the central square in Mexico City and the cathedral with an American flag flying above it. That is a shocking image to somebody living in Mexico. After all, I lived in the shadow of Chapultepec Castle and Chapultepec Castle was where young cadets fought to the death against American troops. What really hurt Mexico was the loss of territory. Any human being in the world understands what the loss of national territory is.

You can rationalize it all you want but the fact is, neither Mexico nor Spain had any success at all in convincing Spanish speaking people of their own nation to go and live in those places. Almost by the same token, no Latin American country has ever been really successful in getting people to go live in the interior of the country. It's tough in there, and you don't have the same culturally based pioneerism in Latin culture that you have in Anglo-Saxon, and especially in Scotch-Irish, culture in the United States. The fact is, the United States went to war and bit off a huge chunk of Mexican territory; Mexico was humiliated by its inability to defend itself. The Mexican war is probably characterized in world terms by a not very good army beating the tar out of a really terrible army.

Q: How did Santa Anna come out of this? He was a pretty despicable general.

DIETERICH: Well he was a better politician than he was a general. Not many Mexicans see Santa Anna as a particularly positive character. The only good thing they see about him is he stood up to the Americans for awhile.

Q: How did you find the media there?

DIETERICH: Well, the media was really interesting in Mexico. You have a number of big powerful, traditional, family-owned newspapers which are quite good. They are conservative and pursue their own economic interests. There are also papers affiliated with political parties that pursue partisan interests. Nevertheless, many of the papers are better than what I have said sounds. No matter what interests you pursue, you still have to sell papers. If the perception of your paper is that it is too much in the hands of the party or the owners, folks probably won't buy it and it will cost you even more to run it than it does already. A lot of papers don't make much money anyway, but they are owned by people who have other interests.

Televisa is an entertainment conglomerate owned by the Azcarraga family. It is a major, major media organization. It may, as a network, compare almost in size with U.S. networks, in the sense of the number of outlets it has, and especially in the sense of how its programming is sold in other countries.

Televisa is very interested in the United States. As Azcarraga once told me, the United States is the third largest Spanish speaking country in the world. This is a big deal for them because they know they can sell a lot of programs in the United States. The Spanish speaking market is here, and the United States can afford it. They also have a major interest themselves in *Univision*, the U.S. Spanish language network, so they are really a big deal. They are fascinating to watch.

Their news broadcasting is okay and it's technically very competent. They have correspondents, satellite access, and they can put on a perfectly respectable news broadcast by anybody's standards. Their journalists, in my opinion, are not as good, nor as free of corporate influence as they ought to be, and not as free as television journalists are in the United States.

Their entertainment production is fascinating because they run on the Hollywood studio system of the 1930s. This is a system that Azcarraga knows very well, which he remembers and admired. Their superstars are people they identified as kids, kept in the studio, and who they made into household names around Latin America, and around the world. *Televisa* sees these major personalities as members of their stable, and if they don't do as they are told, by God, they will be fired in a country minute.

Televisa produces a huge number of soap operas. They also produce mini-series type historical spectacles and variety-show style entertainment. To see what *Televisa* produces, just turn on Channel 30 in Washington, DC. It is all there. The worldwide reach of *Televisa* productions was brought home to me during a visit Ambassador Negroponte and I made to the studios. As we entered the waiting area a European gentleman rose from his chair and greeted the Ambassador as a long-lost friend. It turned out he was the ex-Soviet ambassador in Mexico City who had gone to work for *Televisa* marketing their productions in Russia.

Televisa is a big money earner, a very profitable operation.

Q: Did you find any particular outlet of the media to be a place where the left settled and hit home with the United States whenever possible?

DIETERICH: Oh, some of the tabloids do, but they tend to be more "right nationalist" than they are "left" papers. Again, it's not quite as fashionable to keep hitting the United States as it used to be. That is an important development because many of the people who were in the classic left probably don't even consider themselves left anymore. What they tend to do now is criticize their own society. They think bad things happen to them because they are doing the wrong things. Sometimes I was really surprised by some of the things that were said.

The line sort of goes like this: "Our own heritage made us dependent. It is the legacy of Spanish misrule. Or it is the fact in our society we only like priests, soldiers, and bureaucrats. It is our inability to develop our own private sectors. The only people who know how to be entrepreneurs in our society are the Indians who we have kept down and never allowed to get much money, and the foreigners who come in and run our businesses for us."

Like the dependency theories that preceded it, this "the problem is our society" theory is based on kernels of truth. I remember Richard Henry Dana's, *Two Years before the Mast*. He describes a port of call in Mexican California where the ship trades New England industrial goods - shoes for example - for the hides of California cattle. They load the ship by throwing the hides off a cliff to the beach below. Very picturesque. Dana and his shipmates visit the town of Santa Barbara for a party - a fandango Dana calls it. His description of the town, how it was organized and how it worked, sounds a lot like what I saw in 1970 in Santa Cruz in the interior of Bolivia. Here was this society of nice people, very stratified with a few folks on top. Almost nothing resembling modern, or even not so modern, industrial goods were being made locally. Hides from California were being shipped to New England to be turned into shoes which were shipped back to California. And the only store in town was being run by an American.

At any rate, some of pressures to automatically blame the United States for the economic woes of the country has sort of petered out. That doesn't mean some folks won't continue to blame the United States for immigration problems, or mistreatment Mexicans in the United States, or a lack of respect for Mexico. Many cultural factors still play, but are not as important as they used to be.

Q: Did you feel you were dealing with left wing intellectuals at the university?

DIETERICH: No, well, look, because of the kind of stuff we were working on - the NAFTA, tripartite, education stuff - I was dealing at a pretty senior level at the universities and had very cordial relations with some of the rectors and others. The feeling I had with most of the rectors was, that I was dealing with fairly conservative people who would have liked to be more conservative if their university would have let them. Smart people do respond to their constituencies.

Not too long ago they broke up a strike at the Autonomous University in Mexico City. That goes back to a dispute I talked to the Rector about when I first visited him at the beginning of my tour in Mexico. He just wanted to charge a little bit - I don't know what the price was, maybe 76 cents a semester - to go to the University. He could see funding beginning to dry up. And I guess maybe he thought it wasn't fair that all taxpayers pay to educate a kid whose old man has lots of money. Some kid who drives a BMW to class everyday shouldn't be funded by tax payers. I found that a lot of the university administrators hoped to move toward something more like some private funding for university education, but were being absolutely stymied. The student organizations just weren't going to permit it.

Student activists did shut the Autonomous University down, and there was very little authorities could do about it because of the memories of the clashes in 1968 before the Olympics. The military intervened in student demonstrations and a lot of people got killed. It was a seminal event in Mexican history. It really horrified Mexico. When Mexico gets horrified, they do something about it. They say, "This will not happen again. We are going to work our way around this." Sometimes that attitude can have some paralyzing effects on things. It is still difficult to deal with university resistance. On the other hand, the Mexican government still funds the Autonomous University very generously. That is a big deal. They do a lot of serious research, and they try to do a serious job of educating the undergraduate. All-in-all, an admirable institution. I

think I have to stop here.

Q: Let me put the usual thing at the end here. You were noticing the change in the political process in Cuba, the collapse of the Soviet Union, any Clinton presidential visits while you were there, and were we pushing studies of American history and American culture? Then a bit about the embassy itself and the coordination with all these multitudinal things.

DIETERICH: Yes, we have plenty for another session.

Q: Today is the 17th of March 2000, the first St. Patrick's Day in the new millennium. Jeff, let's take some events. Did you see changes in the political structure, or was this becoming apparent and were we watching or doing anything?

DIETERICH: Absolutely, but being it's St. Patrick's Day, that means it's time to remember the *San Patricios*. The *San Patricios* were Irish soldiers (mostly deserters from the U.S. Army), who fought on the Mexican side during the Mexican war. After the successful storming of the Chapultepec Castle, a whole lot of them were captured and hanged by the U.S. Army within sight of the castle. A very sad event.

Institutional change in Mexico, and an opening of the political system was very much the order of the day during the time I was in Mexico. The best of those aligned with President Salinas were very aware that the PRI hadn't changed. We started to develop some new terms in the way people talked about the PRI (Spanish acronym for the Institutional Revolutionary Party.) The term "the dinosaurs," came into vogue. The dinosaurs were those members of the PRI who saw no need to change and thought things could run on the same well greased skids of patronage that had always moved the party.

But Salinas and his people were certainly committed to at least some level of change, to an opening in the political process, and to democratization of the political process. This was accompanied by a sense that you also had to open the economic system. The old system of well-supervised state capitalism wasn't going to work well in Mexico any more. The economy had to open up, and the state had to divest itself of the overwhelming influence it had had on the economy in Mexico all during the sixty years of PRI rule. Nevertheless, while it is relatively easy for the leadership to decide that things have to change, but it is very difficult to get that change down to the working political level, and especially outside the capital city.

Q: Of course, this is where the political leaders can maneuver, but when you get farther down in the party they don't have wiggle room.

DIETERICH: That's right, and I think the equation that constantly occurs is somebody on the provincial level says, "Well now, what is it you want? Do you want to open up the system or do you want to win the election? Which is it, because they don't really go together? If we open the system and begin to abandon the chain of patronage that kept this party in power all these years,

then we may not win the election. It is no good you telling me you want it open, fair, and democratic, and you still want to win, because that's not the way it is going to work."

A lot of times those people may well be right. Those politicians who had a provincial rather than a national base, were the most resistant to change. You had two poles of opposition to the PRI, one in PAN (the National Action Party) and the in the PRD the Party of the Democratic Revolution.) The PAN was centered mainly in the north around the city of Monterey, rather conservative but dominated by modern pro-business types, who were very heartened by NAFTA, and felt they could see a future for Mexico as a major player in the world economy. In opposition to that you had a large number of people to the left of the PRI around Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, who had already lost one presidential election, but who believed in a more classic third-world stance for Mexico, and that the government had to intervene in the economy to assure fairness to the great majority of Mexicans who, after all, are poor.

It would be easy to be cynical about efforts to reform the PRI. My judgment is, those efforts were genuine and sincere, even though we now know about Salinas and the troubles he came into - the inordinate involvement of his family in the economy, the bad behavior of some members of his family (particularly his brother), the fact that he was into all kinds of dirty money, and that there were heavy irregularities in campaign financing. Nevertheless, Salinas' perception that change was necessary if the party was to survive was absolutely genuine. He really believed in it and he really worked at it.

Q: Was there any call on you to say, "Here, I can get State leaders of the Democrat and Republican parties to talk with you, and that type of thing to get a better feel for how it works?"

DIETERICH: The answer is yes, although not a lot of calls on us in USIS or the embassy because the contacts were already there.

Every year the border state governors get together and have a meeting. One year in Mexico and the next year in the United States. The border governors conferences are big deals. Governors show up and their staffs show up. These are people that know each other, and work issues across the border all the time.

You also have the annual bilateral consultations between the two national governments, held alternately in Mexico and the United States - either in Washington or Mexico City - which come down to a fairly well attended joint cabinet meeting. Secretaries and ministers from both sides tend to show up, and you have a very complicated agenda with plenary, and breakout sessions dealing with the whole range of governmental issues. It is easy to say this is a lot of hot air and talk, and a lot of times we don't communicate very well because the two governments do things in very different ways. However, it tends to open up the political section of both countries to scrutiny by the other.

Our Americans sort of do understand how the PRI operates, because it operates like American political parties really did operate before the era of massive primaries. It is not an exotic system that we can't fathom, nor are we that exotic to the Mexicans. That is what is so unique about the

U.S.-Mexico relationship. We understand each other rather well. That, of course, begins to fall down the farther you get from the border, and I guess it would be true that people from Ohio find people from Chiapas or Oaxaca pretty exotic and difficult to fathom. By the same token, folks in Mexico City also find people in Chiapas pretty hard to fathom.

Nevertheless, we don't deal with Mexico in terms of a great deal of misunderstanding. I suppose that is an important thought because in our rhetoric, certainly Mexicans and Anglo-Americans, tend to deal with disagreement by pretending that it is misunderstanding. We often say, "No, you didn't really understand what I was trying to tell you." Of course the other person understood, he just doesn't agree with you. Mexicans tend to understand better than we do that we simply disagree and, at times, have different interests.

Q: There is a movement toward a multi or dual party system in Mexico, did you find you were doing any adjustment to your operations to facilitate or respond, or was this just not in our purview?

DIETERICH: We understood very well that we had to deal with people from the PRI and the PAN, as well as with people from the Cardenas' PRD. That was not strange to us and American embassies figured out quite awhile ago that you have to be able to show that you deal with the opposition or you are going to get beaten up. Probably not by the Department of State but by everybody else. Again, we are not dealing with Paraguay. We are dealing with a Mexican government that understands the reasons for our contact with the opposition. Their own foreign ministry understands perfectly well that it has to deal with the opposition in the United States.

It's a very intimate relationship between the two countries, and not very restrained by diplomatic niceties. I think the U.S. Department of State and the Mexican Foreign Ministry are both inhabited by very old-fashioned folks, who really believe that relationships between the two countries ought to be run out of the respected ministries, but they know deep in their hearts that is not true and will not happen. Think back to the phenomenon of the bilateral consultations. This is not the Mexican foreign ministry and the State Department talking to each other. It is almost all ministries of the Mexican government talking to their departmental counterparts in the U.S. government, and working out their own bilateral relationships. The foreign ministries in both cases handle the formalities - they do the hosting. They dot the Is and cross the Ts, but they both know they better not get in the way of the working relationships or they are going to have problems.

Q: We had a new president in January '93, William Clinton, traditionally, the first or second State visit is either to Canada or Mexico. You were there in '1995 so you must have had a Clinton visit sometime.

DIETERICH: Yes, we did. Wow, you know visits wind up being a big blur in memory because the preparations are so intense. What can I tell you? I hadn't worked even a cabinet level visit in a sizable country since Brazil in the mid-'70s. There had been big changes - a lot of them technology driven - and some of them ruled by the fact that visiting parties kept getting bigger and bigger.

The big technological changes were the speed with which print, thought, and text could be transmitted. It was instantaneous, so there could be a lot more consultation on what various people were going to say, and what the essence of the visit's central message was to be. The fact that there was a great deal more consultation didn't necessarily mean that what the embassy wanted to say necessarily made all the cuts.

In terms of coordinating events, the impact of the cell phone was really important. Working visits in Brazil in the '70s, we were beginning to use "walkie-talkies," and we had those with everybody on one network, where everybody heard what everybody else was saying. People tended to lose them and leave them someplace. That had all changed when we were working in Mexico 20 years later. We had some cell phones and the first thing we did was go out and lease, beg, borrow, steal, or rent a whole lot more. Anybody that was out of the building had a cell phone and could talk discreetly. That was a big difference, a big help, and saved us a whole lot on things like transportation.

The Clinton people arrived early. The main impact on USIS of a big visit that the press section is thoroughly engaged and probably needs more people, so you rob out of the cultural side to get people to the press section. You also use your cultural section people to take up escort duties at various times. But you have to keep your press people focused on issues of the press itself.

There was a huge events in the big national auditorium. A major speech with a lot of complicated calculations on who would be in an audience of thousands, with the right mix of old people, young people, opposition, labor unions and business representatives.

Q: Moving from that to Cuba, did Cuba play much of a role?

DIETERICH: No, Cuba as a nation played almost no role in any practical issue. But Cuba as symbol is a touch stone of Mexican policy. It is almost the way that Mexico distinguishes its foreign policy from that of the United States.

Q: Canada has been using it too.

DIETERICH: Absolutely. I remember once saying, in a fit of cynicism, that diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union was what Latin American countries did instead of land reform. It makes you look moderately progressive, but has few tangible domestic consequences.

Cuba, to the Mexicans, is a way of saying, "Our foreign policy is different from the United States, it's a way of showing solidarity with the rest of Latin America and the third world." That having been said, they don't trust Cuba and they certainly don't trust Castro. They don't want him to have any influence in Mexican politics.

Mexico also has a tradition of offering asylum to political dissidents of which it is justifiably proud and which was greatly strengthened during the Spanish Civil War. That is a tradition with which we should have some sympathy, because we share it. Exiles from Spain during the

Spanish Civil War still have a lot of influence in Mexico, and are accorded a lot of honor and respect. That sort of extends to Cuba and what it comes down to is that Mexico will maintain its relationship with Cuba and present it to the world as a sympathetic relationship. It will champion some of Castro's causes as does much of Latin America and Canada.

That policy is quite acceptable to the Mexican public which finds U.S. policy toward Mexico to be unduly harsh, and unduly influenced by Cuban exiles in the United States. Gee, go figure, what would give them an idea like that? On the other hand, the Mexican government does not want Cuba messing around in Mexico, and Castro understands that very well.

Q: Were we doing anything to promote American history and that sort of thing?

DIETERICH: I think the bloom had sort of gone off that rose. That was a major part of USIA activity ten years earlier. The idea was that you went around and established chairs of American Studies or tried to get some university to build a building and call it, "The Center for American Studies." That seems superfluous in Mexico, although it really is not.

There is a European academic orientation in Mexico that has to do with the fact that its universities, led by the Autonomous University of Mexico City, tend to follow European models. Mexican Universities are a collection of faculties around a major urban center, rather loosely controlled by a central administration that doesn't have very much clout. They tend to have campuses in the sense that there is a center where the buildings are - often some very nice buildings - but in many of them there is not much in the way of dormitories and places for students to live.

There are also some American modeled experiments that have been pretty successful and are heavily endowed by counterparts and patrons in the United States. The *Universidad de las Americas* in Puebla is a prime example. It has a lot of American students and a lot of U.S. citizens serve on the board, who have a great interest in how the school is run. It is a very attractive college with dormitories and a campus that looks and acts like an American campus.

The Technological University in Monterey tends to see itself as the Mexican MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and keeps its contacts with MIT, Caltech (California Institute of Technology), and other major institutions. It is stunning in its modern architecture, its technical facility, its use of computers, and has satellite links all over the country. They do very impressive stuff.

Q: Did you see a change in business, political, and other cultural climates as the computer was coming on the scene while you were there?

DIETERICH: Oh, absolutely. In the first place, you can do technological leaps. We've seen that in other countries, and we see it in the media. If you have never managed to develop a very good telephone system, which is the case in much of the world, you may jump over that by having cell phone systems that really do work. The cell phone system in Mexico is very impressive. If it takes you eight months to get a telephone, and then it doesn't work and costs too much, you are

going to be very tempted toward cell phones. If you have never developed broadcast television very well, or you have a crappy government-run network, video cassette recorders and tape rentals - as well as pirating - are going to do really well in your country. Big dish satellite systems for those who are in the footprints of the U.S. domestic satellites, or even international satellites, are going to proliferate. How did I get on that subject?

Q: I was asking about technological change.

DIETERICH: Technological change, often is more impressive as an engine of change in the less developed countries than it is in big countries. It is very hard to overestimate the power of technological change in Mexico. When the rebellion broke out in Chiapas, all of a sudden the guerrillas had no problem with communication. They grabbed their cell phones and would be talking to their friends and funders in the United States, or wherever in no time. If they didn't have a cell phone at hand, they could use the solar powered installations that the Mexican government had put in all through the rural areas of Mexico in order to get telephone service to people. Internet? Absolutely! The transmission of information is no longer a problem, but that doesn't mean reaching agreement has stopped being a problem.

Q: What was your impression about USIA and its response to technological changes?

DIETERICH: Not great, but pretty good, and stunningly effective when compared to the State Department. USIA and State started about even on computerization and dealt with it in different ways. I think the only reason USIA eventually did it better, had to do with not having a strong, centralized administrative structure in place. To explain that, you start with the premise that the Washington administration of both organizations fell into the trap of saying, "No, we're going to wait to buy this new computer equipment because something new is coming up." They had a bureaucratic instinct that said they had better get one system - that meant Wang. They didn't anticipate that eventually the IBM computer would become adaptable to all systems, and that they wouldn't have to buy all their computers from the same company.

State stuck with Wang way too long. They stuck with Wang after Wang went belly up. USIA didn't. Mainly, because there was a successful revolt on the part of senior PAOs overseas, who said they couldn't get along anymore without computers, and would buy them from funds in their post budgets. That is essentially what happened. USIA central administration didn't know how to stop it, and didn't have the budget structure to make it stop. Maybe that's the big object lesson, that PAOs in the field tend to control their own funds which enable them to decide to not hire another person and buy computers instead. Unfortunately, State did not have that flexibility, nor did it have enough senior people involved in communications overseas to see the need. Too much of State's use of computers was seen in terms of typing and not communication.

Q: Also, I think they got caught up in the correlation side, rather than transmitting.

DIETERICH: But you can start with a more profound problem. The State Department was the only organization I had ever seen where the senior officials still dictated to secretaries taking shorthand. Nobody in USIA did that. I guess because, initially in the fifties we recruited people

out of academia and out of the press, and they all had learned to use the keyboard. Every now and then we would get old PAOs who would complain because they couldn't get a manual typewriter anymore instead of an electric, but at least they could type.

If State didn't see the need for computerization in political sections they certainly should have, because if there was anything that could make the clearance process faster and smarter, it was the word processor. Suddenly you could make a change because it was a good idea to make the change and you didn't have to say, "But I don't have time to make the change. Who the hell is going to retype the whole page?"

Q: You could type your own letters and you didn't have to wait for someone to be ready. Things moved faster.

DIETERICH: Yes, but I think what may have gone wrong - an overreaction - was the assumption that everybody ought to start typing their own letters. It still may not be a good use of time. In embassies now, too many high-paid officers are spending time doing routine things on word processors that could be done by somebody less expensive, and we lost all the other things that our secretaries did, like organizing and coordinating the functions of the office, not to mention screening phone calls, and all those other things that make for efficiency.

You know, if the senior officer is trying to decide what copies he really needs while he makes the copies, that is a different equation and may even make sense. But if he is just standing there watching a copy machine, it doesn't make sense.

Q: You're right.

DIETERICH: A whole lot of time is still wasted. Another thing that happened in State that actually slowed down technological change, I think, was that we always had the comm center and they were people who we counted on to manage the change for us. What we didn't foresee was that they were going to begin managing the change against us. They became the arbiters of what technology we ought to be using, and they became the only people who understood it. That allowed them to shift work to other people and make life easier for themselves. I'm being a little unfair because communications is a tough job.

But let me give you an example. In Tel Aviv in the press section, we had to turn out a summary of the Hebrew press in English by about ten in the morning both for Washington and our own use. That was a press summary that was read all over the place, including the Pentagon and White House. At that time the comm center was on the TERP system, which was an optical scanner system. It used sort of funny shaped letters and a special IBM Selectric ball. Since everything had to be perfect on the page it was virtually impossible to make a correction. You couldn't erase a character and put a new one in because it wouldn't line up perfectly and that would screw up the optical scanner. That meant we had to let typos go or retype an entire page to correct one character. Before TERP, when comm center people still keyed texts themselves, almost any correction would work.

TERP would have been wonderful if we had had word processors. Nobody did. We were still using electric typewriters. That is a good example of badly managed technological change, because somebody should have said to our comm centers, "No, you can't use TERP until we have word processors, because it doesn't make any sense." What they were doing when they said they would not process a message unless it was on the TERP system was shifting part of their workload down to the sections that generated the telegrams. Time and money were being saved in the comm center, but the saving to the government was phony - probably even a net loss - because all the sections and agencies generating cable traffic were spending much more time. That sort of thing should not happen. That's a bad management failure.

At any rate, USIA did it better. Driven by the need to keep ourselves current in media terms, we got into satellite technology really early. We installed our TVROs, big satellite dishes that enabled us to do interactive television broadcasts. We could Secretary X up on the screen, with a two way audio circuit that was just phone lines. We really could stage long distance press conferences. If the Mexican press needed to have a session with Doris Meisner of INS, we could do it.

Once we got that technology into place, we began to figure out that we could, at reasonable cost, keep the satellite circuits up all the time and could embed other signals within the video signal. Imagine a big circle - a big information rich stream - and around the periphery of that circle you can put in audio circuits or data circuits that don't require a whole lot of space within the spectrum. We were quickly receiving the wireless file through the satellite system. That made it a lot more efficient, much faster and a whole lot cheaper.

When I was press attach_ in Tel Aviv, we were haunted by the specter of the noon briefing. The noon briefer, usually the State Department spokesman, at least two days out of five, would say something about Israel, and we would have a hell of a time finding out what it was he said. About the only way I could do it as press attach_ was to get on the phone with somebody I knew in the press office who would tell me what the spokesman had said. That depended on whether they had been paying attention or not. Did they have time to take the phone call? How senior could we get? It required a new negotiation every time to get the information. By the time I was in Mexico, we, and every other USIS post, could tune into the State Department briefing and watch it. We could even get a transcript in a couple of hours.

Q: What about the embassy as a structure? What was your impression during the time you were there?

DIETERICH: It was an annoying embassy. Of course, it is very big and it has all sorts of folks in it. But it is not an encouraging place to work. I don't know quite how to describe it. I noticed that every time something would go wrong, somebody would say, "Well, this is the biggest embassy in the world, you know." That may reveal something of our mentality in that we offered that as an excuse for not being able to do something. I could just as well have served as a reason why we should have been able to almost anything.

Also, the embassy is home to a lot of agency heads who had a lot of clout, and that is a great

frustration for the Department of State. When as the head of a constituent agency you hear this complaint *ad nauseum* from State colleagues you begin to feel that you would like to get the person by the lapel and say, "Well for heaven's sake negotiate with us. That's what you are supposed to be good at. You are the Department of State. You are diplomats. If you can't deal with the relative power of agency heads within your own government, what on earth would make you think you are at all capable of dealing with a bunch of foreigners who don't even share that level of interest with you?"

When I arrived in Mexico there were a lot of people in my organization that were absolutely convinced that we were getting screwed, that embassy admin was sort of hostile to USIS, that we would get the substandard housing and that the Admin counselor was working overtime to take over the USIS motor pool because we had more cars than he did. None of this was true, with the possible exception of housing.

Housing was very tight in Mexico and the new housing standards were in, which made it difficult. Being the housing officer was an unwelcome duty that got foisted on one of the more junior Americans in the section, and it was a problem. I am convinced that the best housing was held back for State Department people, unless somebody really screamed. That's a dumb philosophy because you are going to hear a lot of screaming. One convincing instance will become anecdotal evidence that will create resistance all through the system.

There was sort of split in the embassy between the people who did diplomacy and people who did law enforcement. As I said before, I have sympathy for the enforcement people, because it was damn difficult to enforce laws across the Mexican-U.S. border.

Q: I went up to the border one time and spent a night there. My God, it is an eye opener.

DIETERICH: Oh, it's a fascinating world up there. We kept a USIS officer in Tijuana. For administrative and budgetary reasons, we didn't want to call it a branch USIS post, but we stationed an officer there with basic resources of a USIS post and called it a Border Affairs Office. I had people point out how crummy the town was and wonder why we kept people there. That was where the real problems were, and it was also where a lot of the energy was. The creativity that results in making the U.S.-Mexican relationship better, often comes from the border areas. It's in San Diego and Monterrey you are going to get some of the good ideas that might make things work.

But anyway, it's a tough embassy and I don't think anybody really likes working in those great big embassies. You had a lot of people who had uninteresting jobs. The visa section is about as tough as it gets. I had a window on it because my daughter happened to be stationed there as a junior State Department officer on her first tour abroad. She had some awful stories to tell about the visa section - even the physical arrangements were bad. We finally had got away from making people wait outdoors by building this shelter, a roof over one of the parking lots with benches in it, that gave people a place to wait for their turn to get up to the window. In a display of stunning insensitivity we habitually referred to that as the "visa barn." What kind of mentality does that reveal? We could have called it the pavilion, or something else, anything, but we

persisted in calling it the visa barn. That's terrible. I couldn't get people to stop doing it.

There are some terms we are fond of that make us feel better but surely must have negative effect on the other person. What did we do when we had a Congressman coming to visit the country? We assign somebody to take charge of that visit, and we call them the control officer. Do you think that Congressman likes the idea that he has somebody controlling him? Do you think we really are in control? The term also gives ridiculous expectations to this junior officer who has the job for the first time. "Oh, boy, I get to control a Congressman." In your dreams you do! Why can't we use terms like "liaison officer" or whatever? I guess because we use the terms that make us feel better, regardless of the effect on the job at hand.

Citizen services in Mexico is a really weird business. This is the country where an indigent, crazy, homeless, American can get on a bus and arrive in Mexico City. You deal with problems in Mexico involving American citizens that are almost unimaginable. It is unlike other countries with the possible exception of Canada.

Part of the embassy's problem is, of course, under-funding, but part of the problem is also that the Department doesn't make the best use of what it has. I reluctantly have come to the conclusion that our political sections are too big, and our consular sections way too small. I'm reluctant because political stuff is really hard.

Q: You don't need as much reporting as before, just a couple of good reporters to make contacts and report.

DIETERICH: We start from a philosophy that says the reporting should be comprehensive. The fact is, I think, we should reorganize our reporting around two poles, maybe three. One is, you report on those issues concerning which there are ongoing negotiations between the two governments. Second, you try to be alert to places where the press has gotten it really wrong, where you may have to do some reporting to correct wrong impressions within the department or in the host country. Third, you organize your reporting around the mandated stuff, the human rights report, whatever.

Q: And a certain amount of contact work.

DIETERICH: The contact work is hard, but that should be shared. There are a lot of people doing contact that don't think very much in reporting terms. Maybe part of the job of political sections ought to be spending more time with other people in the embassy than they do. That sounds contrary to popular wisdom, but in some ways political section people spending more time with DEA people, USIA people, AID people, and other folks like that might be a good idea. I am afraid the impression at a lot of embassies, on the part of people in the other agencies, is that the political section holds itself aloof, as if too much contact would be contaminating. You don't want to fall into the trap where your political people are spending all their time hobnobbing with other Americans in the embassy and not getting out there where they ought to be, but a certain amount of time incorporating what people in other sections and agencies know into political reporting would be well-spent.

Q: Had the unrest started in Chiapas when you were there?

DIETERICH: It started while I was there. That was that funny January of 1992, right after the elections. Mexico got a double whammy, with the beginning of a rebellion in Chiapas, and a terrific slide of the peso in relation to the dollar. When you think back, you remember the prime PRI candidate was assassinated. Then they fixed upon Ernesto Zedillo, the education minister. This was a man who had not been groomed to run for the presidency; a very good education minister; educated at Yale, and a very sound economist. A good man who has made a good president in Mexico. He has carried on the Salinas legacy without the Salinas burden. Nobody laid a glove on him when it came to the kind of accusations of corruption that ruined Salinas' reputation and life. Salinas lives in exile in Ireland, which is an absurd fate for a Mexican president. Mexican presidents usually live in honor and dignity in Mexico, without huge amounts of influence, but that is the way it is supposed to be.

The election itself was observed to the hilt. I talked about how in El Salvador during the last days of the Jesuit trial, and my perception that the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) were rapidly shifting their focus to Guatemala. I think during my time in Mexico it had begun to shift out of Guatemala to Mexico, because of NAFTA. All of a sudden the nature of Mexico, and Mexico as a proper ally of the United States became a debatable thing, and the NGOs could see a lot of the things that were wrong in Mexico, a lot of things they didn't like. That meant the Mexican elections were filled with observers. The Mexican government started out, especially under the naive influence of the foreign ministry, trying to control who was going to be an election observer. I think a major accomplishment of the embassy, in which USIS had a role, was convincing the Mexican government they didn't have to control everybody.

If you cannot control it to the point where you only get the observers you want, what is your next best course? The next best would be to throw it open to everybody, then you could say you didn't control the observers. That serves you well there, and also here, because you don't have to take responsibility. All you have to do is offer the facilities you offer to the press, and you already know how to do that. I attended a number of briefings for NGO and election observers where the Mexican government very patiently laid out a very complicated electoral system, and it was unassailable. The elections came out looking pretty good all over the country. There were a few instances where people could say the lines were too long, and some people didn't get to vote down in Oaxaca, but nearly everybody said it wasn't on purpose. Mexico came out of that looking pretty good.

Chiapas? I guess it's another one of those classic intelligence things. I would like to tell you that there were those of us in the embassy who saw this coming, but that would not be true. We didn't.

Q: Well, it is not a place you would particularly go to either, is it?

DIETERICH: No, I had been there occasionally but it is pretty far away. We don't understand it very well down there. Chiapas is more like Guatemala than it is like most of Mexico. That

official Mexico City based ideology that says, “We are all Indians and we are part of this cosmic race that occurred in the New World, this wonderful mixture of Indian-Hispanic tradition” doesn't penetrating down into the Mayan country of southern Mexico.

There were a lot of local irritants, and a lot of the Chiapas revolt focused on Mexico City not paying attention, but the real issues were a dispute between absentee or foreign landlords and local folks that hadn't been resolved. Landlords claiming more land than they really owned, and people of indigenous culture claiming land that maybe they didn't really own. A lot of irritants were land-based and culturally based. These local irritants in the hands of some fairly ambitious political operatives resulted in a minor armed revolt, and if you toted up the battles and the gun fire, there had never was a whole lot to it. Much of it has been a war of press releases, a war of television coverage, and a war on the Internet.

Some of it was made possible by the fact that there was excess guerilla talent coming out of El Salvador and Guatemala, that could be applied to the game. There were people who knew how to fight guerilla wars and there were people with a lot of guns. Anybody that thinks we have picked up all the weapons in El Salvador, has not been paying attention. A huge amount of armament was also available in Guatemala in a war that was entering into more of a negotiation stage than it had been before.

The Mexican government is in the same dilemma most governments are. No matter what your military people tell you, the human rights and political cost of totally stamping out a rebellion like that simply isn't worth the game. It's way too high. Despite the fact that a few telephone poles get blown up, the Mexican government is smart enough not to turn Chiapas into El Salvador.

The slide of the peso was much more disastrous in Mexico, because it took the bloom off NAFTA right away in terms of what expectations on both sides of the border had been. It made it harder for Mexico to benefit, and it also made it harder for the United States to benefit. Remember, the big issue while I was in Mexico had been ratification in the United States.

HARRIET C. BABBITT
U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States
Washington, DC (1993-1997)

A lawyer by profession, Ambassador Babbitt was born in West Virginia and raised there and in New York and Texas. After attending the Universities of Texas; Madrid, Spain; Arizona State; as well as Sweet Briar College and Mexico City College of the University of the Americas, she entered law practice in Arizona, the home state of her husband, Bruce Babbitt. She continued her law practice throughout her husband's political career until being named US Ambassador to the Organization of American States in 1993. Ambassador Babbitt was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: What was the role of Mexico? I always think of Mexico as keeping a very close eye on the United States, and its concern that we might overstep the bounds. How did you find Mexico?

BABBITT: Mexico was the key, always one of the main protagonists for the protection of sovereignty. The role Mexico played was really quite interesting, because in the bilateral relations, they knew they had to deal with us in a more or less rationale way on a thousand issues. So, at the time, they reserved their really hostile, ideological anti-anything behavior for the OAS, and to a little lesser extent, the UN. They had wonderfully prepared, hardworking diplomats who got up in the morning, every morning, and went to bed every night, figuring out how to insert that language in every resolution, declaration or other utterances of the OAS and how to avoid moving away from anything with the most traditional language.

Q: Things have changed, but it used to be said that within the Mexican government, all these intellectuals and those who really didn't like the United States' influence, went into the foreign ministry, because in a way, for Mexico, that wasn't a very big game. Our CIA, and FBI and immigration, are back and forth with each other all the time, really very close relations, but they allowed the foreign affairs to be the designated nasty person.

BABBITT: That was certainly the case. The ambassador who was there when I first came was an anomaly. His name was Alejandro Carrillo Castro. His father had been Alejandro Carrillo Marcor. His father had been governor of Sonora, when Bruce was governor of Arizona. So, I knew his mother and father quite well, and his sisters. I hadn't met him, but I spent a lot of time with his parents, and other members of his family. Low and behold, Alejandro was Mexican ambassador. He tried very hard to find ways to satisfy his ministry and allow things to move forward. He was succeeded by people who saluted the flag of sovereignty and non-intervention.

Q: I would have thought you would have arrived at a very interesting time, because President Clinton, with some exceptions, accepted the North American Free Trade Agreement. At this point, it met with Mexico, and extending it from the Canadian and American one to the Canadian/American Mexican one. Since the administration was pushing that, I would have thought that this was very popular with the Mexican authorities.

BABBITT: But NAFTA was, of course, a bilateral treaty. That was Alec Watson's and USTR's turf. I would almost say that the more that was going on, on a bilateral level, the more Mexico used the OAS arena as a place to vent the opposite, because there wasn't as much penalty for it. Most administrations see the bilateral stuff as more urgent.

Q: Did it ever come up about the one-party rule in Mexico that was going on at that time, and continued to, the PRI in power, 40, 50 years, or something. We're talking about spreading democracy. Could you raise this issue about Mexico, or did we keep our mouths shut on that?

BABBITT: I wouldn't have raised it in a permanent council meeting. I raised it quite often outside a permanent council meeting. In fact, with the election in 1994. Do I have my years right? Mexico, for the first time in history, allowed foreign monitors, not very many, but some. I was

very eager for the OAS to have a slice of the external monitoring opportunity. The Mexican foreign ministry and authority, everywhere, basically said, “We’ll let in the UN, we’ll let in the Swedes.” I can’t remember who went, but this and that, from various sources. But, under no circumstances, can OAS monitors come in, because they really saw it as a tool of the United States.

Q: Did you feel the OAS responded to the United States, or did you find it to be a pretty independent body?

BABBITT: It would depend on how the other member states responded, and on a variety of issues, how they were set up within the OAS, and how much attention the State Department paid to it. My first job was to say, “Nothing is going to happen here.” “We need a new secretary general.” Baena Soares was scheduled to leave in 1994, but wanted to stay on. Much of my early time there was spent identifying a successor, secretary general, and working to get that successor elected, our choice elected.

Q: In a way, you were paralleling Madeleine Albright in the UN, and Boutros Gali.

BABBITT: It preceded that. I remember Madeleine saying to me one time, when she was in the throes of some horrible thing with Boutros Gali, how smart I had been. “Hattie, good job.” Then, she proceeded to do the same thing, in a much more complicated venue. Lord knows, Kofi Annan was a thousand times more helpful than Boutros Gali.

Q: This is tape two, side one, with Hattie Babbitt. You came in at a time when the dictators, in Latin America, were pretty well gone - the military government. This was the first time ever, I guess. You had a pretty democratic Latin America, didn't you?

BABBITT: We did. Paraguay was not exactly all in one piece. There were pockets around. We all called Mexico a democracy, but how democratic is it with 70 years with the same party? Fujimori had come in democratically, but then behaved undemocratically. There were lots of things going on that needed improvement.

JAMES R. JONES
Ambassador
Mexico (1993-1997)

James R. Jones was born in Oklahoma in 1939. He received his bachelor's degree from University of Oklahoma in 1961 and law degree from Georgetown University in 1964. His career included being Deputy Appointment Secretary to the White House from 1965-1969, being a congressman from Oklahoma, acting as the president of the American Stock Exchange, and an ambassadorship to Mexico. Ambassador Jones was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 2002.

Q: '93. What did...?

JONES: I had been called during the transition in late '92. They asked me if I would consider being OMB director in the Clinton administration. I said that I really couldn't because that was when I was trying to put these mergers together. I said that maybe four years from now I'd love to, but I couldn't walk away from this now. Then early in '93 I was asked if I would be ambassador to Japan. I said no for the same reason. I just couldn't do it. Then, about May, late April or early May of '93, Peter Tarnoff and I were calling and Peter said, "We're completing our major ambassadors. They're going over to the White House now. I'm really puzzled on Mexico. Would you have any interest in that?" I said, "Well, you know I don't know. It's nothing I've ever really thought about." I didn't reject it out of hand because it looked like what I was trying to do at the Amex was not going to work, the merger, and I do love public service. So I didn't reject it out of hand. I didn't think anything more about it and it was about a week or so later that the President called. I was just going out the door. Did I tell you this part?

Q: No.

JONES: I was just going out the door for a 10-day business trip that wound up in Switzerland. About twice a year I went all over the country and met by regions with our listed companies CEOs. So I was just starting that trip and the President called. He said, "Jim, what do you think about the economy?" and what I thought about this and of course you're always pleased to have your opinions asked by the President of the United States, so I was giving them and I said, "Mr. President, I hate to cut this off, but I've literally got to get out the door. I'm catching a plane and going on a business trip." "Well, that's not why I called you anyway. I want you to be ambassador to Mexico." And I said, "Mr. President, I thought about it. I just don't see how I can do that. I've never had a desire to be ambassador. Besides, I don't know whether I could work through all of the bureaucracy. I'm too much of an old buzzard now." He said, "You know, you won't have to go through bureaucracy. I need you because NAFTA is in trouble."

Q: NAFTA being...

JONES: The North American Free Trade Agreement. It was in trouble in Congress and I had had the reputation of building bipartisan coalitions in Congress and was trusted on both sides of the aisle. He said, "I need you to help push that through and be my ambassador." I said, "Well, you know I don't think I'll be able to work through the bureaucracy very well." He said, "If you ever have a problem, you call me directly. You don't have to work through the bureaucracy." I said, "Let me think about it and I'll call you when I get back. I'll be back in 10 days." In the meantime, about three days into the trip or two days into the trip, it was leaked that I was going to be nominated ambassador of Mexico. I hadn't told any of my board. So I was calling from practically every airport and city to my board to tell them what was the situation. I remember what Lyndon Johnson said to all of us who worked for him. "If the President of the United States ever calls you, no matter who he is, if he needs your help you do it." So I said, "Well, I'll do it."

Q: Let's go back to that. Can you talk about your relationship to Clinton and the '92 campaign?

JONES: When I left the White House, we moved to Tulsa. My wife had never been to Oklahoma before and I thought Tulsa would be less of a culture shock than the rural town where I grew up. My plan was to run for office. Tulsa is in the northeastern part of Oklahoma. Bill Clinton, after he finished his Fulbright went to the University of Arkansas as a teacher. That's in northwest Arkansas, so Fayetteville was in the television market of Tulsa. So he watched my campaign in '72 that I won. He ran for Congress in '74 and lost. But we had known of each other in that period of time. Then in the mid-'80s, I was one of the founding members of the Democratic Leadership Council after the '84 election. Among the ones we persuaded to come in, ultimately as chairman, was Bill Clinton. So we had known each other. In '88 he was going to run, but didn't. I remember I called him after he decided not to run. He was very dejected, very depressed. He said he may have missed his opportunity for a lifetime. I pepped him up and told him that was not the case. In '92, when he ran, I didn't support him. I supported Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts. Obviously I supported him after he got the nomination. So that was sort of the relationship. We knew each other, but we were not close. I think there was a mutual respect for our political skills.

Q: Did Mexico fit into your itinerary?

JONES: Peter Tarnoff was the President of the Council on Foreign Relations. About a year before, I guess in, maybe all of 1992, I had been appointed chairman of the CFR's task force to study North American trade, in which Mexico was the key part. I had done some stuff in Mexico, going back to my days with Lyndon Johnson in the '60s, but I was not a Mexico specialist at all.

Q: How was NAFTA seen from the New York business world at the time?

JONES: Oh, very much for it. In fact, I was involved with a business leadership group in New York to promote NAFTA.

Q: So it wasn't a matter of convincing yourself, converting you or anything like this?

JONES: No, I was a major business promoter on NAFTA and of expanding trade. And I was that in Congress, too. I was very much for free trade, expanding trade agreements, and things like that when I was in Congress.

Q: How did you go about...what happened? You apparently had to tell the President yes.

JONES: When I got back I called and said that I would do it. I said, "Look, I'll do it for a year to help pass NAFTA, help implement NAFTA, and then I'll come back and do something in the private sector." So that was like the middle of May, somewhere in there. They sent me all the papers. I filled them out and sent them back, I guess, in June. Nothing happened and nothing happened. It got down to the end of July and I called the White House because Congress would go to recess in early August, and I said, "I don't mean to be ungrateful, but if my nomination isn't taken up and approved before Congress recesses in August, I'm withdrawing because the whole purpose of this was to help pass NAFTA and NAFTA's going to be front and center right after

the August recess. If I'm not approved, I'm not any good. So I'm going to withdraw." They got it up to Congress and got it approved the night they adjourned.

Q: Did you have any problems with Jesse Helms?

JONES: No. Interesting thing, Jesse Helms...there was a young lady named Debbie, she came from a very conservative family in Michigan that owns one of those direct sales companies, Debbie Devoss or something like that. She was Jesse Helms' expert on the subcommittee on Latin America, Foreign Relations. You never know how these things work. She turned out to be a very good friend and telling me how they were going to put through and was very, very helpful. It turns out the reason why, she lived on Capitol Hill and she walked by our house everyday on her way to work and she absolutely adored my wife's garden, and anyone who could be married to someone with such a beautiful garden had to be a good person themselves. Debbie Daboss. So she was very helpful, and got it through. Then I had to wind up my Amex stuff in early August and went to Mexico. I went down there the 15th or so of August. Because I hadn't had any time to take any language training, I didn't speak Spanish. And so I went down there, and I say, I Ronald Reaganed my way through Mexico for the first six months. I wrote out all of my statements. U.S. ambassador was covered like a blanket by the Mexican media. Wherever you are, they are out in force. So I would write out all of my statements in English. I had the USIA translate it into perfect Spanish and then I would memorize it. I had cards that underlined words from here to here. So everybody thought I spoke perfect Spanish and then when they asked their questions – that's when I say I Ronald Reaganed it – that's when I would smile and nod my head. I didn't know what they were talking about. About six months later, I had my first press conference in Spanish. Mexicans were very tolerant because still my impromptu Spanish is not that good, but they were very tolerant.

Q: Let's talk about NAFTA. When you took over in late summer of '93...first you better explain vis a vis Mexico, what NAFTA was and how things developed.

JONES: George Bush the first had started the negotiations for the North American Free Trade Agreement. He, Carlos Salinas the Mexican President, and Brian Mulroney the Canadian Prime Minister, made the agreement in San Antonio or somewhere. They started negotiating this thing. Then Clinton was elected. Clinton, during the election, the transition, thought that he had to change some of things they were negotiating. As I recall, Carla Hills, who was the prime negotiator, basically they finished the negotiations in August of '92 and Clinton had said he can't accept everything. He was for open trade, but in the area of labor and environment, at least, they were going to have to make some changes. So then he gets elected, he takes office, and a new trade negotiator comes in, Mickey Kantor. So they started renegotiating. That goes through that phase for several months. Finally, I don't know the exact time frame, but somewhere around the time that I was being confirmed, somewhere in that summer they were in sort of the final stages of the negotiators agreeing to the agreement. At which time they then had to send it to the Congress for an up or down vote, which took place in the fall. So it went through the process of hearings and all of that. We were short of votes. Three weeks before the vote, we planned congressional delegations to identify who was undecided and we picked 30 undecided Democrats and Republicans and invited them on three different trips to come to Mexico. We arranged the

trip. We arranged these visits. One of them, coming in from the airport, someone said, "Hey that's a Wal-Mart." It was not a planned stop. I said, "Well, let's stop there." Everybody got out and went in, all of these congressmen, and they saw chickens from Arkansas and all of these products being sold in Mexico, U.S. products. That impressed them; I was watching. Henry Davis, who was the head of Wal-Mart and their joint venture partner, he's a Mexican, but he's got a name Henry Davis, and he was very good and he explained how they do it. I could tell these Congress people were impressed. So for each of the other two congressional delegations that we had the next two weeks, I always made Wal-Mart a stop. We put together the top business people. We had a couple of dinners at the residence. We set up a leading Mexican businessperson, who happened to own a plant in the district where that congressman was from. We scheduled meetings with the publisher of a new independent newspaper called Reforma and he was a very candid guy, Alejandro Junco. We always had him on the stops so he could come and give his assessment. We gave them an assessment of Mexico. It was positive, but it was not sugarcoated. We talked about the legal system and the corruption that still existed. We talked about the problems that they had to overcome but why NAFTA was so important to it. Anyway, at the end of that three weeks, out of the thirty who were there, we had 28 votes supporting NAFTA. It passed 230-200.

Q: I remember Ross Perot was a candidate and got what was it?

JONES: He got about 19% of the vote.

Q: I mean his thing was that NAFTA was supposed to be a giant sucking sound or something of jobs going down. Was Ross Perot, even though he lost the election, was he a factor anymore?

JONES: He was a factor, from my point of view, in Mexico. He and the governor of California were factors because they continued to play on this anti-immigrant feeling that was in the country, the fear of losing jobs and being overrun by immigrants and all of that. Whenever he said something, which was often, it was highly played up in Mexico and I had to always explain to put it into context.

Q: When you went there, there seemed to be two things. One was, of course, cheap labor destroy American jobs. And the other was the environment. Mexican controls were much less strict than American ones. It would give them an unfair advantage and plus it would increase the environmental impact. How did you view those...before you went I mean, looking at it, how did you see it when you were down on the ground?

JONES: It wasn't as bad as it was portrayed. People who were exporting goods were adhering to very good environmental practices. When we went there, I established six objectives, if I can remember them. The first was commerce. The whole embassy team did a great job pushing it through, first being commerce. My theory was, the more we exchange commerce, the more we add wealth to both countries, the more we're going to understand each other, know each other, and like each other. So that was number one, expand commerce between us. Number two, which led from that, was democracy. If you open the markets, you're going to open the political system and make it fair and honest. Three was the whole business of corruption, narco-trafficking, etc. In

that case, I concluded that we would never be able to stop narco-trafficking as long as the U.S. market was as rich and as big a buyer as it was. All we could do in Mexico would be to disrupt it and send it somewhere else. So I called it the “Cucaracha Strategy.” They said, “What’s the ‘Cucaracha Strategy?’” Cucaracha being cockroaches in Spanish. I said, “Well, in Washington or in New York if you buy a row house, for example, you always have cockroaches. So you get an exterminator to come in and about 30 days later, the cockroaches are back because you’ve got more food around and you’ve got to keep doing that. Then finally, you get a service where you have it done every month and so you don’t have any cockroaches. Then you meet your neighbor five houses down who has a terrible cockroach problem because they all go where they can get their food. That’s what you’re going to do with narco-trafficking. If we can disrupt it enough, we’re going to divert it to Puerto Rico or Cuba or somewhere else to get into the United States, except from Mexico.” So that was third, narco-trafficking. The fourth was border issues. The border was like a third country: the United States, Mexico, and the border. So that was a special objective. Fifth was the environmental issues. The sixth was that I wanted this embassy to be known as the most customer-friendly- (end of tape)

The other objective was to have the U.S. embassy in Mexico to be known as the most customer-friendly embassy in the world. So that was what we set out to try to do.

Q: Let me take the last one first. As an old counselor officer, I never served in Mexico and avoided it like the plague, but I mean you’ve got two major problems: you’ve got visas and you’ve got protection and welfare. Visas were for Mexicans and many wanted to come in and essentially as visitors, but they were really going to work. It’s hard to be customer-friendly when you don’t particularly know.

JONES: First of all, Mexico, the embassy in Mexico made a profit for the United States government. Our entire expenses were seeded by the money we made on visas. A customer were the Mexicans themselves. It wasn’t that you had to approve, but you had to have the process that took the demeaning nature of the application out: schedule times that they could count on not having to wait in long lines; when they get there, you treat them friendly. I used to walk the visa lines a lot just to see if our people were acting that way. We also found burnout. It was a very hard job as you know.

Q: Oh, yes.

JONES: Mexicans can make up better stories than almost anybody I know, in terms of having a cock and bull story be believed. So you become hardened by that. That’s just one aspect. Since commerce was our number one thing, we really wanted to build a commercial section that knew the country, that knew how to do market studies; if a company called, they got all of our resources to understand what they were getting into and how to do it. All that sort of business.

Q: How did you find the commercial system, because so much of the commercial system...I imagine in a place like Mexico when a foreigner goes through the bureaucracy, to some extent, and the bureaucracy was certainly notorious as being, you know, I mean, there were payoffs.

JONES: I also personally told any company who was about to make an investment there - I met with them - that if you ever get into a situation where you're asked to do something that would be illegal in our country, you come to me and we will go to bat for you. We did. I took a few of those cases up with the President, himself, of the country. Then we would do some testing later to see if there was retribution because we fought very hard for that. By the time I left, there was hardly an instance in which a company complained that the only way they could do business was to pay off somebody or to share or to give 10% of something to somebody; they just didn't mess with us. We put that word out. I did it publicly. I did it with all of the government officials.

Q: How about the problems of tourists and all, you know, and the police – getting involved with the police and all of that? This is sort of a local problem, but it was one of the issues.

JONES: President Zedillo asked me at one of our late night meetings...he was so dejected at one point that he said, "What would you do about our law enforcement system?" I said, "What I would do is not practical." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Take an atomic bomb and blow it all up and start from scratch. Any Mexican that had ever had any law enforcement background or experience, never hire them, period." I told him, I said, "I don't mean this to be disrespectful, but I found about Mexicans that they are very smart, they are very trainable, they can be very loyal if you show loyalty to them, but never try to retrain a Mexican in what he thinks he knows how to do." He agreed with me.

Q: How about Americans caught in jail and all of that? Deservedly so, for drugs and things like this, but...

JONES: No, we had a very good...it was all consular officers do.

Q: Was this...we had the prisoner exchange system by this time. Was our prison population a problem for you or was it under control?

JONES: It was under control. We had a few instances that they brought to my attention, but there were very few. That was the nice thing about NAFTA. Pre-NAFTA and post-NAFTA the way things were done in Mexico, vis a vis the U.S., have really changed dramatically. Today, it's 180 degrees different doing business with Mexico than it was 10 years ago before NAFTA started.

Q: How did you find...did you run across the problem of trying to keep control over this big embassy because, I mean, you had all of these lines of communication? The FBI was talking to their counterparts. You know, the water commissions were talking to water commissions. There were a lot of these...

JONES: That was part of the arrangement I had with the President and I told them at the first country team meeting. Mexico is our largest embassy - I think 33 agencies are represented there - and at the time we had the screw worm eradication program going, so we had a little over 2,000 people. At the first country team meeting I said, "I don't know how you've been accustomed to doing business, but I believe in teamwork." I told the President, I gave him the story about the Presidents that call him directly, and I said, "I also was told that I have the authority not to

approve anybody coming here and sending people out of here, which I intend to do.” So I know that because Mexico is so close to the United States, you have your direct lines: the FBI to FBI and the CIA to CIA, etc., etc. I said, “We’re not gonna do that anymore. We’re gonna work as a team and be the embassy team in Mexico. If I find out any of you going directly without coming through me first, you’re out, period.” And I did send one person out.

Q: Well but I think that there would be a problem that, in a way, these direct connections worked for efficiency. To have to go through your office would be a problem, you know?

JONES: I was there representing the President and it was not a problem. They do these in depth, what do they call them, investigations every seven years or so...

Q: Yes, inspections.

JONES: Inspections. The IG people wrote in the report that they had rarely ever seen one like that, in terms of their attitude toward me, in terms of their attitude about being a part of the embassy team. I kept that as a souvenir. It was very nice, very complimentary.

Q: What was your impression of the...you were there from when to when?

JONES: ‘93-’97.

Q: What was your impression of the government? At that time it was still the PRI, wasn’t it?

JONES: Yes.

Q: Was there a feeling that this was a party that had been ruling for 40-50 years that was on its last legs?

JONES: No. In fact, the Mexicans themselves...one of the first things that I had to do on the political side was to, there was the general feeling that the U.S. ambassador had a cozy relationship with the PRI and one of the U.S. ambassador’s objectives was to make sure the PRI, for stability purposes, never lost. So one of the first things I did was to go out in a public way and meet with the leadership of the opposition parties and to assure them that we believed very strongly in democracy and an open political system. We were not going to take sides and our only interest is that there be fair and honest elections. It was hard for them to believe at first. We really proved ourselves in 1994 when Carlos Salinas did not want elections observers. So we went around and around, I forget what we finally called them, but to get a name for them to do the same thing. We put some money into some of the NGOs, a couple of NGOs there that were fledgling NGOs, and we brought lots of observers down for the 1994 Presidential election. We did our own polling. We convinced them to do exit polling on election day, and it was perceived as an honest election. Even Cuatemoc Cardenes, who was from the far left and became a good friend of mine...he was marching to the Zocalo after the election, we didn’t know what they were going to do. I called him on his cell phone while he was marching, and I said, “Cuatemoc, don’t burn your bridges. If you’re going to say that this was a dishonest election, or whatever, we know

it wasn't. We know it wasn't and we're gonna say it was. So don't burn your bridges." He didn't. He was very responsible. So that turned out well.

Carlos Salinas is an interesting character. I was there for the last year and a quarter of his presidency. He's very smart, very good economist, very good politician, he had a smart cabinet and he was the smartest of them all. He kept several balls in the air at the same and I described him as having one foot in the old system - because they were getting money out of the business establishment and they were circumventing their own election laws - and one foot in the new system because he really wanted to be perceived as conducting an honest election. It was a good transition time. Zedillo I really liked, we spent a lot of time together. He was not as good a politician, but he was the genuine article. I never felt I knew Carlos Salinas, that he was always hiding something from me, but Zedillo was much more transparent.

Q: How about, certainly the politics of the embassy...there had been various times when the ambassador has been a real problem for the embassy. You know, there are the so-called "temple dogs" moving after...

JONES: Yes.

Q: Sometimes ambassadors arrive with sort of an entourage, gate guards...

JONES: I didn't bring anybody.

Q: ...who isolated. This is not a good way to do this.

JONES: I didn't bring anybody with me. First country meeting, I said I've got an open door policy and I always kept my door open unless there was a private meeting of some sort where I had to...people would come in there who had to make appointments. I mean they did just to see if I was available or busy or whatever. I hired the wife of one of our DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) agents. He was kind of a goofball, but she was Mexican-American and just a delightful person; very, very efficient. She was a schoolteacher. She made everybody feel absolutely at home and welcome, whether they were in the embassy or from outside. No, we never had that problem.

Q: It must have been beginning with elections and this, people talking about what had happened previously.

JONES: Oh, yes. They compared me to Negroponte, who many of them didn't like because he was very aloof. I would walk through the embassy, not everyday, but quite a bit, just go down and see what's going on.

Q: Who was your DCM, by the way?

JONES: It started out with a guy named David Beall, who is now running whatever the drug program is over at the OAS. I inherited him, too. We had terrific chemistry. It really clicked.

David's wife had some health problems and...my goal was to make sure David got to be an ambassador. He was a career and I wanted him to be ambassador of a major country because I thought he was very good. He finally got discouraged with Jesse Helms. He thought that he would never get by Jesse Helms and his wife was kind of wanting to go back to the states. So he left the foreign service. Then I interviewed and chose a fellow named Chuck Brayshaw, Charles Brayshaw. It was a different kind of chemistry with him. He was a little more, not laid back, but a little more methodical. David Beall was hard charging the way I was. But Chuck did a superb job.

Q: How about the desk?

JONES: I never used it. In fact, I either talked to Warren Christopher or Peter Tarnoff or Sandy Berger, the cabinet officer, or whomever.

Q: I'm looking at the time and we better stop now. I would like to have one more session and let's talk more about what, you know, were there any particular issues that came up. We talked about your six point policy and all of that, but maybe we can talk about maybe some specific issues and all that came up and about the press and how it operated.

JONES: You had a number of specific issues around the drug trafficking thing. You had big issues on the devaluation and the bailout, which was very big. You had a big issue on the elections. So those were all the big ones.

Q: Alright, and we'll talk about, maybe, border state relations, too.

JONES: Alright, good.

Q: Great.

Okay, today is the 11th of March, 2003. Let's talk first about drugs. What was sort of the report on the drug war at the time you got there?

JONES: Well, let me backtrack. When I was in Congress, one of my colleagues from Oklahoma was chairman of the committee to try to stop the drug trafficking into the United States from Colombia and the Andean countries. This was about 1980. All of the drugs were coming in through the Caribbean to Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, and then moving into the U.S. market. It took them until about 1989 before all of the efforts at interdiction succeeded at essentially stopping the traffic through the Caribbean. What the drug traffickers did is just to divert and go through Mexico, which was an even more convenient place. So when I got there in 1993, a pretty sophisticated drug trafficking operation had developed. It developed a great deal of organized crime, particularly at some of the principle border cities, like Juarez, in the Tamlipas area, and then in Tijuana. They were some really big drug cartels. What had happened in that period of time just before I got there was that in the past, when they diverted drugs from the

Caribbean through Mexico to the United States, basically they were paying a commission to these criminal organizations to get them across the border. Then the criminal organizations started realizing that they could do much better, they were really good entrepreneurs, to take product. So they would get a percentage of the actual drugs going across and they started developing their own drug distribution systems in the United States. By the time I got there, you had three major drug cartels that were a very corrupting influence and were sending three quarters or more of the cocaine going to the United States -through Mexico, originating in the Andean countries - through Mexico and into the United States distribution. A good bit of the marijuana. But it was really the cocaine and those kinds of drugs. One of the big issues was drug trafficking. How do you stop it? When I got there, I tried to analyze the situation and talked to a lot of different people. I decided that there is no way to stop it. As long as the United States market is so vast and so financially rewarding, the most we can do would be to divert it. We devised what I called the “cucaracha” strategy, and I used to explain it, “cucaracha” being cockroaches. I used to explain it by saying if you move into a row house in Washington, you generally have a whole bunch of cockroaches. You exterminate the cockroaches and they’re gone. About a month later, they come back.

Q: The neighbors are very unhappy.

JONES: So then when you start exterminating every month, you don’t find them anymore and then you meet your neighbor five row houses down and he has this terrible cockroach problem. My theory was that as long as the market in the United States was so big and there was so much money to be made, the drug traffickers, the cockroaches, would find a way to get the drugs into the United States somehow. The best that we could do until we really reduced demand in the United States was to harass the cockroaches and move them around. So that was our strategy. It ultimately became relatively successful and now drugs are going back through the Caribbean and through other places.

It’s been my experience that wherever you have the Napoleonic code as the rule of law, you have a high degree of corruption because it’s very structured and non-transparent. In order to make anything happen through the legal system, you have to grease the palms of so many people just to get the wheels grinding. It becomes an endemic part of society. That’s true in Mexico, it’s true in virtually in every country that I know of that has the Napoleonic code, because it’s not transparent and it doesn’t have jury trials the way we have jury trials. You add on top of that what they pay their police, it’s such a pittance that the policemen have to buy their own uniforms, the gasoline for their cars, bullets for their guns, etc. They make very little money. It is not unreasonable that there’s going to be a lot of corruption in there. You further add that their training programs are such that they have no professional sense of what they’re supposed to be doing. I told the attorney general one time, I said, “Even if you assumed that the legal system was honest, it’s incompetent. It doesn’t know how to collect evidence, preserve evidence, present evidence, and therefore you don’t have competence in the system, so you have a ready-made system ready to be corrupted further.” The amounts of money that the drugs can spread around is really quite phenomenal. It’s such a big business. It was very hard. For example, one of the things we did in about 1990 – somewhere midway through my four years – we made a concerted effort to really train, equip, vet, continue to vet units strictly for fighting drug trafficking. We had the

CIA involved, we had the FBI involved, the DEA involved, and this was kind of a radical departure for Mexico because if it was to get out that the CIA was training Mexican law enforcement would be politically very damaging, so it was closely held. We put it together. We had the units. We equipped them and what have you. Even with that, we had it penetrated. It was penetrated, first of all, by having assassinations of some of the elite units. Then it was penetrated further by having them corrupted, bought off. We targeted the heads of some of the cartels. One that had been the sort of the big daddy of them all was the Juan Garcia Abrego cartel, which was in the northeastern part of the country, the Tamaulipas area, you know, east of Juarez. It had been the big one, ultimately eclipsed by the Tijuana and the Juarez cartels because they were even more vicious than the Garcia Abrego cartel. As you may know, or may not, we had more intelligence gathering apparatus in Mexico than any place except the Soviet Union – because, in the old Cold War days, Vienna and Mexico City were sort of the crossroads for spies and things like that, so we had a deeply entrenched intelligence gathering apparatus. We targeted Garcia Abrego and we had one intelligence interception that indicated he was going to have a face-lift. I think it was a San Diego doctor who was going to perform it. We knew the location of where it was going to be. His girlfriend on the Texas side of the border was going to meet him there. We knew the time and place, etc. I went to the attorney general of Mexico and said, “Here is the information. We can get this guy.” In fact, that attorney general told me one time, I said, “How are you finding it?” He said, “I think there may be five people in the entire PGR,” which is their Justice Department, “that I can trust.” So anyway, we decided to keep it very close, and just the two of us, then we expanded a little bit more and a little bit more. As we were going to close the noose on the guy and catch him right in the middle of having a face-lift operation, just before that, someone within the organization tipped him off and we missed it.

Subsequent to that we had another intercept that said that Garcia Abrego was going to teach the U.S. ambassador a lesson. He put a contract out for me, to bomb me. So there was about an intense 10 days there where we had significantly more security. That sort of sharpens the focus when you know you are a target for that. Ultimately, we caught him, partly by accident. A Mexican in, I think the city of Pueblo, just happened to come across him and catch him. Apparently Garcia Abrego’s mother was quite ambidextrous because he was born simultaneously in Texas and Mexico and had a birth certificate in both places. So I already prearranged with the foreign minister that they would...because they had to go through all kinds of legal loopholes and legal hoops to jump, in order to extradite anybody who was a Mexican, and it had been very difficult to extradite anybody, no matter what they did, if they were Mexican. So we had prearranged with foreign minister that he would recognize the Texas birth certificate and instead of having to extradite him, he could expel him as a non-Mexican. When we caught him we already had a plane arranged. He was caught and put on a plane sent to Houston before anybody could say a hoot. He is now in jail in Houston for a nice long sentence.

Having done that, that shifted some of the drug...well, first of all, there was a bit of a leadership war in the Garcia Abrego cartel, and then there was a real battle between the two remaining big cartels. About that time, the Mexicans appointed a general, whose name I just forgot, to be the head of what would be equivalent to their drug czar. Our drug czar was Barry McCaffrey, also an ex-general. We had one of our bi-national commission meetings in Mexico and Barry McCaffrey met this General Gutierrez for the first time and was really enamored by him. He made all kinds

of public statements and I said, “Barry, we don’t have anything bad on the guy, but down here it’s always good to do a little more due diligence.” Well, very shortly after that, General Gutierrez was arrested and convicted on being very aggressive against one of the drug cartels, but he was on the payroll of the other cartel. So, fighting the drug business was an interesting business in Mexico.

Q: How were your relations with both our attorney general and with particularly the Drug Enforcement Agency? All of us in the foreign service have had dealings with this. They sort of have their own rules. They’re cops, essentially. Diplomatic niceties are not there. Particularly in a place like this, I mean, it’s a war. How did you find the way they operated in your relationship with them?

JONES: Because I had had this arrangement with President Clinton...since I had first declined the ambassadorship and then when I said that I don’t work well with bureaucracy and that sort of thing, he said that if I ever had a problem with anything, to call him directly, which I never did, but I let the whole U.S. government know that I could. I went down there believing that the ambassador was the representative of the President and the entire U.S. government and that we were going to develop team concepts. If I caught anybody reporting directly and around me, or doing things without my prior approval, I would have them sent out of the country, removed, which was the ambassador’s authority. I let them know firmly what I would do, but I wasn’t doing it for the purpose of creating a hostile relationship but to say that we were gonna work as a team. We did indeed work as a team. I didn’t have the problem, and I particularly met with the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) folks because they had the reputation for being cowboys and doing something and then thinking about it later. That just wouldn’t work in Mexico, particularly with some of the things that had gone on there. So I did not have that problem. We had, for the most part, good DEA people there. I had to ask that one be removed because he was just clumsy as hell. It was not a big problem. My problem with the DEA and my problem with everybody in the law enforcement and the intelligence gathering business was the accuracy of what they were reporting to me. That went back, I think we may have covered it, to my days in the White House and Vietnam, where theoretically, the best and brightest that this country can produce, produced to the President of the United States information that was not accurate at point which decisions should not have been made regarding Vietnam. How that happened I’m still baffled as to how the system could create such erroneous misinformation. But I was a skeptic, and I was particularly a skeptic in Mexico, because Mexico, because of its closed non-transparent system of government and journalism, etc., in the past, it is probably the fastest rumor-spreading country that I’ve ever been involved with. Trying to figure out what’s true from rumor is very difficult. We spent a lot of time in the bubble...

Q: This is the secure room where supposedly you can’t eavesdrop in.

JONES: Right, right. Because when I would get information about this Mexican family was related to this drug family, or that someone in the President’s office was laundering money for drug dealers and things like that, these were obviously very sensitive things. Before I would let them go back to Washington, I would bring everybody into the bubble. I was like a district attorney. I would really grill them and then if I was satisfied that they had done their homework

well, it was not just some rumor that they were passing on, we would let it go. If not, I would insist either that it not be sent or that we add a skeptical...

Q: Did you find as you started this process that this sharpens the work of your people?

JONES: Absolutely. It was very interesting because - and I talked to Janet Reno about this...

Q: She was the attorney general.

JONES: She was two years ahead of my wife in law school. My wife knew her vaguely, but I didn't know her at all and came to really like her. She was very supportive of everything that we were doing. But I told her, I said that the biggest enemies law enforcement has in the United States is each other. They cannot work with each other and it wasn't going to happen in Mexico and it didn't happen in Mexico. So we worked as a team in Mexico. For example, I had a real knockdown drag out on one piece of information that came to me and I happened to know, and my wife knew, the families involved. I happened to know some of the circumstances surrounding the incidents and so they had put a twist on it. So we went in the bubble and I grilled them until we got down to and everybody agreed that they would send a different piece of information back and correct it. Subsequent to that, the head of the DEA in Mexico came in to see me and said that he was going to have to retract his agreement on that report. I said, "We had a very thorough conversation about this. What has changed your mind?" He says, "I've been ordered to, by Washington." That person subsequently left the DEA he was so discouraged with it.

Q: This is always a problem in reporting. You talked about Vietnam. Sometimes there's this, you know, back in Washington they often say they essentially want this information to be so and so and pretty soon a few of them begin to pick up these revelations and their bureaucrats and they feed what the monster in Washington wants.

JONES: Yes, and that's the case. I think, going back to Vietnam, because I've talked to some people who were in the field in Vietnam at the time, who are now some senior folks. There was an interpretation by some of the agencies that what President Johnson wanted and what is ironic, that was a misinterpretation of what he actually wanted.

Q: By the way, there was a movie that came out. I guess it sort of covered your period, called Traffic, wasn't there?

JONES: I have not seen the movie, but the answer is yes, and it's based on...the general I just told you about, their fictional general is really based on that.

Q: But essentially it came up with that there's no solution to this thing.

JONES: Really? The solution, I used to say, is that you're always going to have some, just like you have some alcoholics and things like that. The solution, to me, is to reduce the demand and to have as active a program making drug usage as anti-social as cigarettes, as smoking has become. Until you make it anti-social, I don't think you're going to reduce the demand. The

second part of that is you have to put some money into the drug cultivating areas so that the families that are growing the drugs, these are peasant farmers, will find another reasonable means of making a living.

Q: Because actually they don't make much off it anyway. It's the manufacturers.

JONES: Then the third part is to do what we did, the "cucaracha" strategy. That is to have a multinational police operation just to harass the drug traffickers.

Q: Well then, we come to finance. What was it, devaluation? I mean, the whole thing. What was the problem during your time?

JONES: What happened is that President Zedillo was elected in August and he took office December 1. President Salinas was going out of office. During that period of time, there was a discussion, because at the time they pegged, the peso to the dollar was roughly three to one, and they kept it that way. They did all kinds of things to keep it that way, a stable peso. To do that, they had also taken on a lot of commitments that ultimately weakened the peso. Somewhere in that period of time, roughly November, there was a big internal argument between the incoming administration and the outgoing administration about having some phased devaluation of the peso. The outgoing administration didn't want to deal with that. So on December 1, the Zedillo government comes in. The new finance minister, a fellow named Jaime Serra Duche, who had been the commerce minister and chief trade negotiator for NAFTA. Very smart guy, but as most trade negotiators, they hold things close to their chest. They don't reveal a lot of information. The outgoing finance minister was a fellow named Pedro Aspe, who had really gained the confidence of the international financial community. He had a Rolodex and if the slightest blip happened, he was on the phone calling all the financial people and explaining what it was and so he really paid attention, he communicated. December 1, the new administration comes in, two weeks later, roughly. At the time, Mexico, because we watched this, we were concerned that Mexico was perhaps depleting its reserves to be able to defend the peso at a three to one ratio. At the time, the new administration took over, there was something like \$30 billion in reserves, which was a sufficient amount. In that period of time, the roughly two and a half weeks, there was sort of a run on the peso and before anybody knew it, it got down to about \$3 billion or \$4 billion reserves. The new finance minister had to prepare a budget. In the old system in Mexico, it's still that way, but it's changing, it was improper to have a transition. You could talk and what have you, but you didn't do anything until you took office. The President didn't do anything, the cabinet didn't do anything. So they all took office on December 1 and that was their first knowledge, really, of what was going on. In that first two and a half weeks, the finance minister had to prepare a budget and present it to the Congress during the month of December. His wife was expecting a baby. He had one other big issue, I can't remember what it was now, and then, all of the sudden, this run on the peso. So he had lots of distractions. I started getting calls, roughly mid-December, from financial managers in New York, some of whom I had known and worked with, saying, "What's going on in Mexico?" They said that they called the finance minister but he was not returning the calls. That, to them, meant something really negative was going on. So I called him and we had a couple of conversations. I said, "You've got to return these calls. You've got to reach out and tell them what's going on." What he did, instead, was to,

in a 7:30 a.m. broadcast on radio where he was being interviewed, he said they were not going to devalue the peso. To a fund manager, who didn't get his phone calls return, and then to have a public announcement that they're not going to devalue the peso, meant a) they're going to devalue the peso and b) it's coming soon, I better get out of there. So there was a real run on the peso, almost overnight the reserves depleted down to about \$3 billion or \$4 billion. At that point, it was too late. The devaluation occurred and literally, in a matter of days, interest rates went from single digits to 100%. The peso devalued 50%. It shot up to roughly eight from three to the dollar. So overnight, people's incomes were cut in half and their interest payments went up 10 times. People were turning in keys and everything. It was really a very big mess.

Q: This was when?

JONES: This was December of 1994. First of all, I went there in August of '93. We finally passed NAFTA in November of 1993. It took effect January 1994. January 1, 1994, you had the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas. So that had been ongoing. During the campaign in the spring of 1994, the PRI candidate, Colosio, had been assassinated up near Tijuana and Zedillo had been substituted. Then Zedillo wins in a relatively close, but clean, election. He takes office and at the end of 1994 you had the huge devaluation. At that point, I was coming back to Washington on a Monday and returning to Mexico on a Friday, working with Larry Summers, working at the White House...

Q: Secretary of the Treasury.

JONES: Yes. Well, he was not the secretary of the treasury, he was the undersecretary of the treasury. My view right away was that if Mexico continued to go the way that it went, it was going to spread a contagion of recession, deep recession, among all of the developing countries that would ultimately go global and come back and bite the United States. So all of our planning of having free trade agreements, opening markets and what have you, he closed the markets, and finally comes back the next day and created a huge problem for the United States, let alone the bilateral problems that would exist. So I was coming back to Washington trying to convince the administration that we had to do something initially. Ironically, people like George Stephanopoulos in the White House who were there to protect the President's political viability, wanted nothing to do with it. They saw no political gains of any kind a bailout or anything like that. Ultimately, they realized that they had to do something and so for about a month there, I was coming back every week, going back to Mexico, working with Zedillo, working with the team down there, and ultimately came up with the bailout package that the President approved. It saved Mexico and I think it saved the United States.

Q: Looking at this, your experience in commerce in the White House and with Wall Street, in a way, these all came together on this particular issue. In other words, you understood the problem and the consequences and how things could work out.

JONES: It was fortuitous in many respects. For example, the head of their stock exchange, the Mexican Bolsa, called me and asked for my counsel on what to do because it also had a major effect on the stock market. It was both a mechanical problem – how do you handle this much

trading in a short period of time – and a confidence problem. I had counseled them that they close the market for a while and get their act together and then open it up and let the market go where it was going to.

Q: How did you find President Clinton? I mean, what did President Clinton have to do and what were the problems for him?

JONES: First of all, the initial effort was going to be to get the Congress to pass a law that authorized a certain amount of money to be a buffer, to bailout Mexico and get them back on their feet. That took about two or three weeks and there was a lot of negotiations between Gephardt and Gingrich because the new Republican Congress was elected in '94 and Gingrich was the new speaker. So it was a different ballgame. Ultimately, Gingrich and Gephardt couldn't reach an agreement. In fact, I came back on a Monday night and as soon as I got in, I had a call from Larry Summers because he thought Gingrich and Gephardt would agree at a meeting they were having at 5 o'clock that day - I think I got in about 7 o'clock, or so – and then the effort would be to get it through the Congress and how could we pass it? As soon as I got in, Larry Summers was calling me and he said they couldn't reach agreement and were meeting with the President at the 8 o'clock in the morning and the bipartisan leadership of Congress at 9 o'clock. We had to come up with a plan. So that was an all-nighter kind of thing. Ultimately what we did was a \$30-40 billion bailout, which would have the IMF (International Monetary Fund) part of it, various organizations, but it was basically a U.S. bailout. Part of that was to have some sort of assurances. We had to take this out of the, what do they call that fund? It's a fund that exists and it's a Presidential discretionary fund mainly to be used to equalize or temper monetary problems in the United States, domestically. It had not been used for foreign purposes, as far as I know. So we were going to go through that fund. I'm sorry, I can't think of the name of it now. And then add to that some of the international financial institutions to give some guarantees and what have you. It also meant that we had to get an agreement from the Mexicans that they would pledge their oil, their exports, which was paid for through the Federal Reserve of New York. So we had to be able to hold those receipts to make sure that this money was going to be paid back, etc. We also charged a premium for the monies. We had interest rates plus a risk premium. We actually made over \$1 billion profit. It was paid back early. In any event, we came up with the package. At 8 o'clock, we met with the President. Vice President Gore was basically the interrogator; he was to shoot holes in the plan. We presented it to the President. The President listened. Gore asked the questions, to shoot holes through it. Others spoke up. Each of us had a little piece to present. The President said that it was the right thing to do, we're gonna do it, which I thought was very courageous of him. The domestic politics of it was not clear. But he knew it was the right thing to do. He caught the substance of it and I think he saw the ultimate politics of it. At 9 o'clock, we met with the joint leadership, the bipartisan leadership. Bob Dole, at that time, was the majority leader of the Senate. He was somewhat scared of Phil Gramm of Texas, so he asked me and a team to get Gramm briefed quickly. He also, he and Gingrich, said that we had to brief the entire Congress. So it was decided that Alan Greenspan, Bob Rubin, and I would go up and brief the entire Congress. We broke up, scheduled these meetings, and the rest of that week was spent briefing Congress.

Q: This was a period of a very partisan game. The so-called Republican revolution, particularly

in the House, was such that I would think that almost a sense of reason was the farthest from the peoples hearts. Was the idea to show power?

JONES: Well that was part of the thing. Both Gingrich and Gephardt basically said that they didn't have the votes. They couldn't agree on something to present. On the Democratic side, Gephardt was ultimately against NAFTA. Because of organized labor and parts of organized labor, especially, were opposed to NAFTA, Democrats were very reticent of any kind of "bailout" of Mexico. Many of them said, "I told you so that this would never work" etc., etc. Republicans, because many of the 1994 freshmen Republicans were isolationists in essence – they were the ones who bragged that they didn't have passports, never did, etc. – so I think they decided they didn't have the votes. That's why the President had to do it out of his fund. That's why we had to put it on the President's shoulders, so to speak. There wasn't a whole lot Congress could do about it at that time except complain and moan and hold hearings and things like that. But that's why they wanted us to go up there, all three of us, and really answer the questions and try to defuse it. Even though there was some public complaints, you know, nothing ever happened. It turned out to be one of the most successful foreign economic policy decisions that was made. The United States made money on it. Mexico rebounded. In '82, when Mexico went through a similar thing, it took them about seven and a half years to get back to where they were. In '95, it took them like seven months to get back to where they were. So it was a good thing to do.

Q: Did that give you extra clout in Mexico?

JONES: Oh, yes. Most of what you do, in my judgment, if you're an effective ambassador, or if you're an effective public servant, most of what you do is behind the scenes. Most of it is quiet persuasion and not trying to publicly embarrass or things like that. That's particularly true in Mexico, because there's a sense that bilateral relations. Having said that, I made a lot of public statements in that period of time, and they were honest things, things that Mexico needs to improve on, but it mostly was that the United States recognizes what you're going through. We're gonna be there for you. We're gonna help. We're gonna plug this in Washington, and etc., etc. From the standpoint of Mexico, to this day, people come up to me and thank me for backing them and helping them at their time of need. It was enormously helpful.

Q: Turning now...there was an election in, what was it?

JONES: '94 and then a congressional in '97. One of the other six objectives after really deepening the commercial relationship was to take the freedom of market and translate that into freedom of democratic institutions. So we were working with the government and, fortunately, Salinas wanted to have a legacy of being a reformer, a progressive, and what have you. I used to describe Salinas as having one foot in the old system and one foot in the new system. While he clearly wanted to preserve the PRI as the dominant party, he wanted also to have what were perceived as fair and open elections.

Q: Sounds a little bit like Gorbachev.

JONES: Yes. So we worked with them a lot on a lot of different things. We got some money for them to have different kinds of educational programs. How to conduct elections and what have you. We provided some money, what were then some very nascent NGOs, because the concept of a Ralph Nader or Common Cause program was just totally alien to them, so we tried to put some resources in to getting NGOs involved. We put money into election observers. We had a lot of education programs on how to conduct elections, etc. But ultimately, it had to be the Mexicans themselves that wanted them. A few other things that we did was, when Jesus Silva Herzog was the Mexican ambassador to the U.S. and I was U.S. ambassador to Mexico, we did a program on reform of democracy and whatever in Mexico. Once I was speaking first and I had made the comment about the enormous strides that Mexico had made. This was after the '94 elections. I had pointed out how we had worked with Mexico to have election observers, which we had to change the name, because election observers were not that politically, they were not viable in Mexico, so we called the visitors or something like that. We worked out a different name for them, but it was the same thing. How we had encouraged them and how they had implemented a system of exit polling on election day. I said that we had these different exit polls in Mexico and within 30 minutes after the election they could call the results of the election. Jesus Silva Herzog got up, he was the next speaker. He said, "That's not so impressive. As a member of the PRI all of these years, we used to be able to call the election six months before!" But Mexico did a lot of things like that and we kept the pressure on them. In '94, Zedillo won, but it was less than 50%, which was an unusual situation. The election was indeed called in the first few hours after the polls closed, which was also unusual.

Q: Which is pretty important, wasn't it, because this meant that it didn't allow time for cooking the books later on?

JONES: Well, Salinas was elected in '88. He had defeated Cuatemoc Cardenas, who was with the upstart PRD party, which was a break-off from the PRI, and many people say Cardenas actually won, but mysteriously the electricity went out on the counting machines and what have you and then it came back on and the PRI had won. There was a lot of skepticism about it. So this was the first time that the PRI had won with less than a majority. Zedillo won. One of the other things the ambassador does there, because there had been so much mistrust and distrust about the ruling PRI party stealing elections and what have you, there was Cuatemoc Cardenas running a second time, son of the former President who had expropriated all of the oil industry, etc. There was an immediate push among the PRD to challenge the elections and to disrupt and what have you, and it was either the next day or a few days afterwards, they were going to have a big rally in the Zocalo, which is the big old part of the city, the square. Cardenas was leading this. It could have gone either way. It could have either disrupted and caused the new government to not be legitimate and to be severely weakened or not. It was interesting, because he was leading the march to the Zocalo and I called him on his cell phone and I said to him, "Cuatemoc," because I had become a friend to him, became a friend to all three of the Presidential candidates and really tried to understand where they were coming from, let them understand where we were coming from and why, and they all asked me advice on politics because I had been a politician myself at one point. Anyway, I said, "Cuatemoc, I've won elections and I've lost elections. The main advice I can give you is don't burn your bridges. You're a young man. You still have a future. I can tell you that if you challenge these elections,

we did everything possible to make sure those elections were honest and we believe they were honest. There were some discrepancies here or there, but not enough to change the outcome, and we certainly will not back you up on that. So I hope that you will not cut off your political future by doing something that does not make sense, that maybe you're emotionally responding to." He thanked me. He went down. He made a good speech. He didn't incite a riot or anything and it broke up and that was it. So I think that an ambassador, if you work your way quietly, you can still have an effect.

Q: By the way, when you're looking at election reforms and all, when you've been going through the last 50 years or so, the tremendous revolution and the role of women and civil rights, how did you see it in Mexico?

JONES: Well Mexico is a macho country like most of the Latin countries. Having said that, there are some women leaders in the PRI. The PRI, I used to say, was less a political party than a combination of interests. One of the ways that it stayed strong so long was that as different interests evolved, they would accommodate it in some way. Some of those interests were the women's interests. So the PRI developed a number of women political leaders into their Congress and into their government. It's an evolving thing. The interesting thing right now is this current President, Fox, everything I've picked up is that he and his close advisors are gearing up to run his wife for President. She's very ambitious and that's going to be an interesting, because that's a major departure from what happened in Mexico's history. She's not exactly an Evita, and Mexico is not Argentina. It will be interesting to see what happens.

Q: How did you find, being ambassador for Washington, you have our bordering states, this is true of course in Canada too, where these relations are so close between the states of Mexico and the states of the United States, did this get in your way or was it helpful?

JONES: It was helpful because I knew most of the governors anyway. Fife Symington was enormously helpful to me.

Q: He was governor...?

JONES: Governor of Arizona, a Republican. I came to know him and I can tell you one period of time, because I was in Pueblo making a speech at the Universidad de las Americas, and we were trying to prevent the U.S. Congress from declaring Mexico, under the annual certification process, of being uncooperative with the United States in the drug trafficking war and etc. There was a big movement to slap Mexico in the face on that in Congress. I did two things. Number one, I called Fife Symington, ex-governor of Arizona, and I said, "Can you help me with some Republicans?" And he said that John McCain was the one that helped Bob Dole because he's helping him in his Presidential race and you call McCain and I'll call, he had several governors in the Republican Party in the northeast that were friends of his, so he made those calls. I called Johnny McCain, who got Dole in the saddle. In that case, a border governor was helpful. A case when Bush was governor, I took...

Q: The present President?

JONES: The present President. I took, for example, Fox, who was governor of Guanajuato...in this whole goal of democracy I wanted to identify up and coming political leaders of the opposition parties that might challenge the system and Fox was clearly one of those. I took him to Texas. Bush was very helpful to me. I called Bush a couple of times on issues where we needed some help from the Texas delegation. He was very helpful. Pete Wilson had his own game he had to play, but I knew Pete, and his wife and my wife were in school together at Stanford, so those kinds of relationships actually helped.

Q: Pete Wilson was from New Mexico?

JONES: California.

Q: California, oh, yes.

JONES: So, no, the border relationships were actually helpful. I used to describe in Washington that I was ambassador from or to three countries. The United States in Washington, Mexico in Mexico City, and the border, which was the third country, and it viewed things differently than either Washington or Mexico City.

Q: You mentioned the Zapatista revolt and there have been sort of Indian type revolts which have gone on. Chiapas, I think, is that sort of the same thing?

JONES: That's the one that I'm talking about.

Q: Oh yes, is it? How did we view this? It gets very popular in the...

JONES: There's no single explanation to it. I spent several days down there and we helicoptered all around and I tried to get a feel for it later. Chiapas is the state that borders Guatemala. If the lines were to be redrawn, what makes a natural national borderline, Chiapas would be Guatemala, it wouldn't be Mexico. So that's the first thing. In Chiapas, you have a whole large indigenous population that doesn't even speak Spanish. It's different in many ways. You also have a system of not warlords, but similar to warlords, very powerful individual landowners who have kept the indigenous down for a long period of time. You have a different educational system. I happen to be Catholic. I went to a Catholic church there, I didn't recognize it. They were twisting chickens heads off in church. Between the blood and fear, they were drinking Coca Cola real fast and then belching. This was expelling the evil spirit. It was a really a form of paganism and yet it was a Roman Catholic church. So Chiapas is a different territory with different problems and very poor and it's been ignored. On January 1, 1994, we had visitors from Washington, friends of ours whose kids were friends with one of our children, and they had come down to spend New Year's with us. We were having breakfast or dinner or whatever and I get a call that there's an uprising in Chiapas. So I sent a team of three, four, or five from the embassy to Chiapas to look after the U.S. citizens who were there and to help evacuate them depending on the circumstances and to report back. So you had a consular officer, you had an intelligence officer, and a couple of military officers and a political officer. The first night, he reports back to

me that they talked to one of the commanders in the military and he said that they were going to secure the situation and then go “Indian hunting.” Immediately, I thought this could be a major disaster, because this is the day NAFTA goes into effect. The next day, I called the chief of staff of President Salina, who was a very smart fellow. I said, “This is the report our people give to me. You can’t do this.” What amazed me is how that’s the way it has always been handled in the past. You crush them, you wipe them out, and you go on the next issue. This liberal, or progressive, government went right back to the old ways of doing things and this bright guy, so I then go to another cabinet officer, the same thing, another cabinet officer the same thing, and so I go back to the chief of staff and I said that I had to see the President. The President was busy but I was taking some investment types from the United States in to see the President that day so at the end of the meeting as we were ushering them out, I said, “Mr. President, I need to visit with you for a few minutes.” So we went back in, the two of us, and I told him what had been reported to me. I could tell he was very much, that was his attitude also. It was very much a macho attitude. I said, “Mr. President, let me tell you, I have had a lot of experience, unfortunately in this, with the White House and Vietnam.” I said, “Our military, in Vietnam, is far superior to your military today and we couldn’t fight that war. It’s a similar kind of war that you’ll have in Chiapas. Second, we didn’t have CNN in the 1960s...”

Q: CNN being...?

JONES: The television.

Q: Cable News Network, all over the world.

JONES: And I said, “I could tell you, and this would happen, that if you take this military action in Chiapas and crush the indigenous Indians, the United States Congress will pass a resolution condemning you, the government of Mexico. Our government will probably have to condemn you. If I were you, I wouldn’t worry about. But let me tell you about my experience on Wall Street. Here’s what the investors will do to you. They will drop you like a hot potato. If you have any desire to be a first rate country, you won’t have a chance, because about 24 hours of a CNN war and investors will drop you so fast, you won’t even know where your head is.” I could tell that worked. I left. I had one other meeting with the foreign minister, who had been the former mayor of Mexico City and one who had not been chosen to be the President - Colosio had beaten him out – a guy named Manuel Camacho. I went over to his place. He was very paranoid, so we always met at a friend of his place. He was always telling me that everybody’s listening to it anyway and probably were. So I went to him. This was about three hours or so, after, because I knew they had a cabinet meeting that night, and I said, “Manuel, here’s the situation. This is what I’ve done.” He said, “I totally agree with you. You must have had some impact because the President called me and said you were in and asked me what I thought about that.” In any event, they didn’t take the military action. They did put it into a context of a peace resolution. It has been contained and it’s sort of off the front pages now.

LARRY COLBERT

**Consul General
Ciudad Juarez (1994-1997)**

Mr. Colbert was born in Ohio in 1940. He attended the Universities of Ohio and Missouri. After a tour in Turkey with the Peace Corps and a year as an assistant on Capital Hill, he entered the Foreign Service and was sent to Viet Nam as Regional Advisor. His subsequent postings, where he served as Consular Officer include: Ankara, Turkey, Oran, Algeria, Dublin, Ireland and Manila, Philippines. At Tijuana, Mexico, Madrid, Spain, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and Paris, France Mr. Colbert served as Consul General. Mr. Colbert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November, 2006.

Q: '94 whither?

COLBERT: Whither? Actually, I went to Ciudad Juarez as consul general, a border town facing El Paso. Again I think it might be constructive to talk about how I got there. I was saying a little while ago that Mary Ryan paid an official visit to Madrid. A year or two before I had the unfortunate, unpleasant encounter entertaining and taking around her predecessor the famous Betty Tamposi, who most people would say was one of the worse political appointees in recent memory Mary Ryan, of course, was quite different so we went, and looked, and saw and did and so on. We were coming back from visiting Seville where we had a consular agency that used to be a consulate general and on the train we talked about some of my staff and where they wanted to go and what they wanted to do and at some point she said, "And what about you, what do you want to do next?" I said, "I want to be a principal officer in Ciudad Juarez, I had enjoyed the challenges at the border, the problems on the border when I was in Tijuana and I would like to do it again." She said, "She thought that was possible." And lo and behold I got assigned there.

Q: So you were in Ciudad Juarez from when to when?

COLBERT: From '94 to '97.

Q: Talk a bit about Ciudad Juarez.

COLBERT: Well, it's a place of contradictions. It's one of the richest cities in Mexico. It has the highest level of education – of literacy in Mexico; it has a major industrial basis of Maquiadora, that is a major industrial base maybe several hundred maybe even more factories that manufacture for the U.S. It was the second state to elect a Panista or so called opposition party mayor and governor (now of course the PAN are running the federal government but at that time they were the second state to be allowed to win the election, that is was allowed to have the people who were elected win. It is a very northern city in which they had the same disdainful view of Mexico City and the government elite as they did in Tijuana, the other border town.

In comparison with El Paso literacy rate is lower and the unemployment rate is higher. In comparison with El Paso which is just across the border it is poorer, El Paso is the poorest major city in the United States but it's richer per capita by far than it's neighbor to the south which is

richer than most of Mexico. It's a city of contrast. It has several universities including a couple of very good ones. It was a major transit place for illegal immigration, had been until the fencing went up and the Border Patrol become more active; the migrants then moved farther into the desert and away from the city. It is a major transit point for illegal narcotics. It is the home of one of the major cartels. It's full of very, very, very nice people. Most people in Ciudad Juarez have immediate relatives in El Paso and vice versa. Perhaps 60 percent of the homes in El Paso speak Spanish as a first language. Most people in the two cities go back and forth as regularly as people from Virginia go to Maryland; the only difference is you have to have travel documents.

It is the largest immigrant visa operation in the entire world that we have. While I was there roughly twenty percent of all the immigrant visas issued worldwide were issued there. Normally, when I was there, we issued a thousand immigrant visas a day. I may be overstating...no I don't think that. That figure is probably right on. I know the day after Richard Nixon's funeral we issued two thousand. Why did we issue two thousand? Because we do all the immigrant visas for all of Mexico and they had their appointment letters and they turned up and the government announced at the last minute that we would be closed for Richard Nixon's funeral. So we had all these people who had come from the United States to get their papers to go back to the United States both from Mexico to get their papers to go into the United States. It meant extra time from their modest jobs with lost income and the added expense for hotels and meals – usually for an entire family, so we had to move out –as the cowboys used to say in movies...

Most of our immigrant visas issues are to people who are already in the States and having gotten to the States illegally have somehow acquired inequity to somehow come back and get visa based on employment and a visa based upon personal relationships, blood relationships.

I remember very well the inspectors coming to inspect my post. At the end of the inspection the admin inspector said to me he was, "...very disturbed to find after auditing our records on one day that three people had gotten their immigrant visas without paying for them and that we were out \$600." I said to him, "Well you know Sam we actually put that in your briefing materials." The point I was making was we certainly hadn't hid it from them. I said, "You will also note that we also of the three people, the three families, which included 300 visas, in all three instances people had come in and lacked a document and we put them on sort of administratively of hold while they went off to get another piece of paper or papers. In the rush of the day, which was the day after Richard Nixon's funeral there were 2,000 immigrant visas. So these people had managed to acquire, to pick up their documentation, pick up their visa without paying and certainly that was a terrible mistake, even in light of the fact that we were doing two thousand cases probably what a normal post would do in two or three years?

Q: Yeah.

COLBERT: I said, "You will also note that we wrote the people and assured them that a check for the requisite amount so at that point we were really only out \$200 or something, whatever the amount was. And in point of fact, we have 26 immigrant officers here, 26 immigrant officers and each officer put in a few bucks out of their pockets voluntarily so that the cashier would not be forced to make up \$200 that she only made \$4 or \$5 thousand a year. So the government didn't

lose a penny. But we did make a mistake.” I said, “Let’s put it another way,” I said, “Last year this post collected \$26 million in immigrant visa fees, \$26 million.” I said, “And you are saying that we lost temporarily \$600. If I were working for General Motors or General Electric or IBM if I had lost \$600 on \$26 million I would be getting a cash bonus.” He was not amused. But I think that was sort of an eyeglass, green eyeshade view. In fact we actually were making a profit for the government, after you deducted out our modest operating costs.

Q: Did the illegal operation, illegal immigrant thing, did that touch you at all?

COLBERT: Only when something happened which caused a public relations problem.- when an immigrant drowned in a canal there were these big water canals, irrigation canals, when an immigrant was or was not allegedly mistreated by the border patrol, when an alien smuggler or illegal was shot or allegedly harmed by the border patrol or others. That became a public relations problem, but the most part the people who were going to sneak in didn’t come to see us, they went around us. For the most part long time residence of the state of Chihuahua, which is the about the size of Indiana and Illinois together or maybe Indiana and Illinois and Ohio, it is the biggest single state in Mexico., most of the people who lived there could get visas anyway and they had been coming and going for generations.

I remember once the honorary consul of France who was from Chihuahua City the capital, came to see me and he had this other guy in tow with him, and I thought “Hmmm.” Here was this lawyer coming to see me with this cowboy and what was this alarm going off, oh he is coming in to get this guy a visa. I’m, you know, not terribly happy because I have to do something that I don’t want to do, I’m consul general and I shouldn’t actually be doing visa cases. Yet, he is an important person and I’ve got to be nice to him. So there is so-called cowboy friend, there is a Texas expression ‘All hat and no cattle” or “All belt, because they had these big belts, and no cattle.” This guy had a big cowboy hat and I’m thinking “Hmm, cowboy, Some Cowboy indeed.” He had a 50 thousand hectare spread in Chihuahua, he had a 25 thousand hectare spread in New Mexico and he had a small little place, 100 thousand hectares in Brazil, this cowboy. He was one rich man! It turned out that the cowboy, in front of me, had come in to get a student visa for his daughter to go to Calvert Military Academy and that she would be the fourth generation to go to Calvert Military Academy. You find those connections, you find people who have connections in the United States going back many, many, many years.

But I mean you did have problems. There were pollution issues, there were water problems, and there were certainly border violence problems. I think my best, well there were actually two stories which I can tell which will probably indicate how complicated the job can be. Because as the principal officer at a border post it is not like being principal officer in Barcelona where there is representation, catering to the scholarly patron, whither the provincial government.. You’re operational, you are problem solving, you are an immediate reactive person. You are almost like being on point in the military patrol.

Case in point, one Thanksgiving my wife and I decided since neither of our adult children were coming that we’d go across the border and have Thanksgiving in the El Paso club. The El Paso Club was a nice restaurant, on top of a bank where we were allowed to eat as long as we paid,

courtesy of one of our Mexican friends who was a long time member there – sort of a courtesy membership. We'd go in, eat and pay the bill, that's all. It was a nice place with a view and we were going to have a nice leisurely Thanksgiving dinner at the El Paso Club. At about eight o'clock in the morning we got a call that the Mexican police had pursued a notorious carjacker, murderer and criminal with his gun moll, his girlfriend into the United States. He had attempted to hijack a car that contained a woman who turned out to be the wife of the senior military officer. He got in the car and threw her on the ground and he and his moll took off. Shortly thereafter, they were pursued by a convoy of Mexican police who were up kind of up on getting this guy with the police determined to catch them, because he was really a bad guy. There is a road that runs along side the border on the U.S. side and it runs alongside the border on the Mexican side. Well the Mexican road goes quite a long way but well past Juarez going east in the direction of New York City, so to speak. There is a small border-crossing place, it has a bridge, the water may be ankle deep, maybe more, and on one side is the U.S. and the other Mexico, there is no real fence, it is desert.

Well this villain drove his car into the water, up and by-passing the U. S authorities and went directly into the States. Well, the cavalcade of Mexico police followed him, as well shooting at him. At some point his car become stuck and so Mexican police grabbed the carjacker and his moll, the companion who turned out to be a career criminal too, and dragged the two of them back across the border. Before they could manage all that, the U.S. customs service managed to grab and arrest two Mexican policemen. So now that is when I got the phone call about eight o'clock in the morning. The Mexicans had the two bad guys and the Americans had the two Mexican policemen. Everybody was thoroughly ticked off. They had invaded our country, they had fired guns in our country and the U.S authorities were very unhappy. The Mexicans were equally unhappy that we had their people. We had kidnapped their policemen, and our point of view was they had kidnapped two innocent civilians from our side of the border.

It was becoming a sort of press circus as well. So I confer with everybody I can, tell the embassy what's going on and the embassy tells me it is going to send a diplomatic note of protest. So taking my cell with me I go to have my Thanksgiving early. Everybody is on their cell phones talking back and forth but it's a true "Mexican standoff". But saner minds are beginning to realize we need to calm down...the federal authorities on the U.S. side realize that they don't really want to press charges; they don't really want to prosecute these two Mexican policemen on federal charges. So they very cleverly gave them over to the El Paso police or actually to the state police, but the U S still has them on their hands. And the Mexicans authorities are embarrassed by the actions of their police, yet there is Mexico City and the Mexican press to consider I'm at this point sort of neither them nor them – not on either side but wanting a face-saving solution - sort of in the middle. I'm conferring with the consul general of Mexico in El Paso and I'm conferring with the Mexican officials and U.S. Officials, so back and forth and back and forth we go. Many, many phone calls in all directions – countless.

So then the U.S. authorities decide they want to come visit the kidnapped civilians taken from their shores. But they were afraid that if they come to Mexico the Mexicans might just grab them as counter hostages. But they wanted to visit these people who have been kidnapped from U.S. soil. So they proposed that I be the intermediary and meet them at the middle of the bridge with

the Mexican authorities coming up to the middle from their side. I would then lead them along with the Mexican officials to visit the men's prison and the woman's prison and see these two poor victims. So I said, "Sure." It was all arranged. My driver is on vacation so I have to drive myself. So I drive my office sedan it was two o'clock in the afternoon, maybe closer to three, anyway late afternoon, to the middle of the bridge; it is a free bridge that's no toll on either side. I park in the middle of the bridge, nobody is there, just me, it is Thanksgiving. I find the Washington Redskins game on the football - they are playing Dallas, Dallas is a big time football-wise in Tijuana and Juarez. So I'm sitting on the bridge listening to the football game. Up comes a cavalcade of Mexican cars, these gentlemen were the federal prosecutor for the state of Chihuahua, the police chief and three cars of other Mexican officials all in their Sunday best. So I said, "Well, while we are waiting..." and I switched the Redskins game to the Spanish station, so we are listening to the Redskins-Dallas game. I'm rooting at this point very discretely for Washington, because but they are all rooting for Dallas because Texas and Chihuahua are really strong Dallas fans.... Well a little bit later another cavalcade of cars come the other direction and we all shake hands and we all go. I'm the sort of the guarantee for the Americans to make that the Mexicans are not going to grab any of them because we had grabbed two of theirs. I don't think it would have happened anyway, but the Americans were really nervous.

So we go first to the men's prison. This guy is the biggest scumbag of scumbags. I mean a cold-stone killer. This guy had a rap sheet, which made Charlie Manson go pale. I mean this guy was really a bad guy and you see the light beginning to dawn on the American officials, because they are coming to see about the "kidnapped victims". So then we go to the woman's prison; she is an equally hard person. And we see her rap sheet, not a nice person. It was occurring to these Americans that if the Mexicans do surrender these people and we take them back they are not really guilty of anything in the States. They would be essentially paroled in the United States and we will be taking back killers. So it was not articulated but you can just see the wheels beginning to turn, everybody... thinking hmm. So then we have to come up with some way to sort this thing out. So we decide that we will use the mechanism of the border liaison mechanism, which was the system whereby the local officials, state officials and federal officials on both sides meet regularly to discuss issues or they can meet specially for an issue. So we set up this border affairs liaison, and we schedule it in a place on the U.S. side because the U.S. officials still are afraid to go to Mexico still and somewhere the press can't find us. We decide that we will have pre meetings; we will have an American pre meeting and a Mexican pre meeting. This is all worked out between the Mexican consul general and me and a couple other people who are prepared to play.

So in the American meeting the Americans all vent and complain. We are going to do this to them and we are going to do this and we've got them by the short and curlies and so on and so forth. The same thing is happening in the Mexico meeting. So the Mexican consul general and I sort of meet between and during these meetings and so then we go to people on both sides who are a little more reasonable and we say, "Let's just find a way to make this go away." So the senior FBI agent, the agent in charge of El Paso at that time, we've already talked. He said to the group, "You know we can really make them pay but if we do what do we get out of it? Do we lose cooperation here, we lose cooperation there and all we get is a couple of Mexican policemen in jail for a week, a month, two years and so what, they were just chasing two bad guys. Besides

the Mexicans might respond by saying yeah and we'll give you the two people that you want back and we don't really want them back do we?" So they agreed that the Mexicans policemen would be released from jail, and they won't be allowed to come across the border and shop at Wal-Mart or Costco, a joke, but they won't be allowed to come across the border for X number of weeks and they'll be on probation for X period of time. The two bad guys can stay in Mexico and it all went away.

So we worked this thing all out and it was all worked out. So then I go back to the consulate and I pick up the phone and I call the ambassador and I say, "Well, it's all gone." He said, "Well what is the arrangement? I told him the details in a general way. Did you clear this with Washington? Or with us?", he asked. I said, "Of course not." There is this long pause. He said, "By the way we are still trying to get language cleared for our diplomatic note of protest." Actually it was a real coup. The consul general of Mexico and I because we got along well and the fact that each of us knew the officials on both sides were able to solve a problem locally which had a real potential for being a public relations nightmare and it just went away. We didn't, at any time during the process; check with Mexico City or with Washington. I think wisely so.

Q: Groovy. What did you gather, what was your impression of the authorities in Chihuahua?

COLBERT: I could always work them and as long as what we were doing wasn't putting them in danger or going counter to their interests – governmental or personal. But I dealt basically on local issues, I had really nothing to do with preventing drug smuggling, I'm sure some of the people that I worked with probably were one way or the other corrupt, I'm sure some of them were. I had some really wonderful experiences.

One thing I had nothing to do with at all was the first PAN mayor; he was already in office when I was there and there are...

Q: A pawn is P-A...

COLBERT: PAN ...The mayor set up tollbooths in front of the federal tollbooths. So citizens paid the sort of in advance and went they got to the federal booths and they said we already paid. The city had tried for years to get a better share of the bridge, the bulk of which went to Mexico City, unlike El Paso which got 100%. The federal government did not like this at all; there was still at this time a PRE government in Mexico City and they said, "If you don't stop we'll arrest you." The mayor said, "Come get me." In fact, everybody knew that he was independently wealthy, that he had terminal cancer and he had come back from a very nice life in Europe in France after his wife died to be mayor of the city. He was a beloved figure so they take him to jail.

Well it wasn't the mayor that was in jail it was the federal government that was in jail. The longer he stayed in jail the more ridiculous the federal government looked. They put the mayor of the city, who is dying of cancer, in jail because he wants a better shake for the city and everybody in the city says, even the people of the other party, everybody is for the mayor. I couldn't go visit him because that would be a political statement – interference in the affairs of the host country, it

would really have been an inappropriate thing for a foreign diplomat to do, but I certainly knew him and I wished him well. But every other person including people, even including the mayor of El Paso came to see him, everybody brought him food, and he was visited regularly by a nurse and doctor and on it went. The federal government wanted him simply to leave jail but he said, "No, you arrested me." So in the end they had to drop it, charges dropped, and Juarez got a better break for the tolls. It was really fun to watch. It was a case of the mouse in the trap being the trap. I liked that.

Q: How did you find the American authorities? They don't live together for a long time hadn't they? I mean it was the Mexicans, I mean...

COLBERT: I mean, first of all, in federal law enforcement people want ultimately to come back from where they are from. So you will find that the head of the border control certainly is from Texas and probably from the El Paso area. The head of what was called the immigration service then and now is called I don't know there are so many different branches but all those people were then and are now Hispanic Americans primarily but certainly people from the area. They often have relatives on the other side. They speak very good Spanish; they understand the area very, very well. There was an obviously tension between organizations because they have different agenda and part of your job, as consul general, is to make sure that the Americans play well in the sandbox together with each other and also to encourage cross-border communications.

I would give receptions and I made a point of inviting people from both sides of the border, and when I had dinner parties I would invite people from both sides of the border. I know once the Bishop of Juarez called me up and said, "When are you going to give another cocktail party I've got some things I want to accomplish with the mayor and I can't see the mayor because of separation of church and state which is so finite there. But if he comes to your house he will come to your house because you are the consul general, I will come because I am the Bishop and I can do my thing at your house."

One thing that I did which was very successful was I used a large chunk of representation money to take over a private dining room of the Juarez Country Club, it is not luxurious by any means - it is an old country club- and invited the U.S. attorney, the state of Texas attorney for the El Paso area, the police chief, the head of the FBI and their Mexican counterparts and had a dinner planned where everybody had to sit Mexican-American-Mexican-American. I said everybody has to come with a driver and when they came in I gave them a shot of tequila, everybody got one shot of tequila except for this one woman who wouldn't take it. After that shot of tequila we had steaks, large steaks, lots of wine, lots of "Ambrosos" that is to say patting each other on the back and everybody had to exchange their business card and telephone numbers. It turned out on a couple occasions thereafter these people were in direct communications, which they hadn't been before and they were bosom buddies and it was a good set up. That was my job.

Q: Well then how did you find your support on problems from Washington, consular affairs and that?

COLBERT: I think they were very good at second guessing you. No I mean on the visa side

excellent, on the OCS side we pretty much solved our problems and then told them about it. We didn't really have any big problems. Basically I found the best way to deal with them was to just flood them with information, and then continue working the problem. I think one of the greatest consular officers of all times in my view was Lou Goelz. Lou Goelz always believed that "don't ask, don't tell" was a good way to operate. Don't ask unless you know the answer and certainly don't tell them any more than you have to.

Q: I think I mentioned before Lou succeeded me both in Seoul and in Naples.

COLBERT: I think we basically tried to solve the problems and keep them informed and if we needed something we asked for it. While I was there the law changed and people were allowed to adjust in the States, even if they had been in the states illegally. There was a payment of a modest fine and that was that, but it meant that our workload dropped a great deal because in the past if you had been illegal you had leave the country to get a visa, an immigrant visa. We had to then downsize by about two-thirds and it was very traumatic particularly for the Mexican employees who thought that they lost their jobs. So we had to come up with an equitable way of doing it. We made liberal use of special immigrant visas, we let people volunteer to be terminated, we paid severance, and we found all kinds of ways to do it so that it wasn't as traumatic. But then a couple years later that procedure lapsed and we had to build back up again.

Q: You've got twenty-five officers on the line, how did you deal with that? This has to be pretty; it had to be a real problem particularly for the younger officers.

COLBERT: First of all by the time I got there well more than half of the officers doing immigrant visas, well more than half of the officers were civil service. They had been hired initially with expectation that it would be only be for five years and the surge would go away and, of course, surges never go away and so the problem continued. How to get them a career path so that they could go beyond CS seven to nine, eleven so on was one challenge. To alleviate the tensions which developed between the FSOs and the GS because FSOs got housing, educational allowance, they had to pull duty, they were available twenty-four hours a day and the civil service people went home, there were all kinds of problems we had to deal with so you had to have an open line of communication. That was a real challenge and then you had to get Washington to understand that these people had to be treated equitably, something I hope that we succeeded in.

Little things. When I arrived there we had maybe 100 FSNs maybe more, and then certainly we had maybe 125 FSNs and perhaps 30 officers, 30 Americans and we didn't have a cafeteria. We had people eating at their desks. Can you imagine the problems with people working and then eating at their desks in such confined space? So we created a lunchroom and that was a big thing. I mean it sounds...a lunchroom...

Q: Oh no.

COLBERT: It was a big morale thing. The OBO, whatever it's called now, Office of Buildings had really seriously miscalculated how many restrooms we needed. So we and all around us

people would queue up very early in the morning to come in to get their immigrant visas or non-immigrant visas, passport and so on. But if you wanted to use a restroom any where around there outside the consulate you had to pay, most people had very modest needs and many of the restaurants you couldn't pee unless you bought something. So, and you are talking 1,600 people a day coming in for one kind of service or another.

One of the challenges was to get more rest rooms and the embassy wasn't going to spend money to build more restrooms; they couldn't see that as a priority. That wasn't every put into the embassy budget. EUR didn't see it as a problem, CA and the bureau of consular affairs didn't do restrooms, and OBO wasn't interested in this problem. So what you had is basically every morning a stampede of people coming in to use our restrooms and then long lines during the day. I could get nobody to focus on this problem, no one wanted to...I couldn't use this money for that I couldn't use this money for that, they wouldn't give me any money.

I got really fed up so we had the inspectors coming. Normally we let people in at seven o'clock and start at eight o'clock or something like that. So I said, "OK, as long as the inspectors are here we don't let the public in until after the inspectors arrive. When the inspectors arrive then let the public in. Simultaneously." Now obviously they are coming through a different gate but they were swamped. I mean you've got a thousand people trying to get to these couple of restrooms. The chief inspector comes in to see me and says, "What, what are...?" "Oh those are the people trying to use the restrooms." He said, "Why don't you do something about that?" I said, "Well do you think it's a problem? Well what do you suggest?" "Well I think you should build more restrooms." I said, "Put it in the report." So they did and we got more restrooms.

Q: Well then I think this is time to call...

COLBERT: Call it a day?

Q: Yes. Where did you go in '97 I guess? Where did you go?

COLBERT: Ah, to my last assignment in Paris. You are going to be rid of me pretty soon.

Q: OK, well we will pick it up there but think over the time about personnel problems because you had so bloody many people.

COLBERT: You mean about Juarez, you are talking about Juarez?

Q: Yes, about Juarez, the problems of initial officers coming and all of a sudden being hit by something like this. This isn't something what they got in the Foreign Service for. I mean that sort of thing.

COLBERT: It sounds like a first tour officer in perhaps in Seoul right?

Q: Yeah.

Larry, do you want to talk a little about your last post, which was Ciudad Juarez?

COLBERT: Uh huh.

Q: What about dealing with the young offices and all, particularly the younger officers going there?

COLBERT: It was a particular challenge for two reasons. One, that you alluded to earlier that the problem of how people come in to be diplomats with all sort of intellectual baggage as to what it is to be a diplomat: they are going to make policy, they are going to make foreign policy, they are going to be a key player in substantive issues and so on. They may be told that the chances are virtually 100 percent that they are going to be doing either admin work at a very basic level as a general services officer or even more likely they are going to be doing visas and ACS work, American Citizen Services work, for at least their first and perhaps their second tour. Some people adjust very well to this reality and others have a feeling this is not really what they came in to do, this is not foreign policy, this is sort of somewhere between social welfare work and being a cop in southeast Washington. It's not that but that's somehow how people see it. So you have a problem of matching the reality of the job that they have with the idea they have in their head when they arrive to do it. I think it's probably less of a problem in Juarez than say it would be in Seoul where you would then or say Manila because there at least they are going "overseas," they are going to a real embassy whereas Juarez they know is a border post and they should know by the time they get there that it's a consular border post.

But you still had the problem with people who want to do I hate the word but 'substantive work'. I hate that word which implies that anything other than that work is not important. But they want to do economic reporting, they want to do political reporting, they want to make foreign policy. How you deal with that I think is to find out if there are those that are among this pool of officers that you have people who are prepared to do other things in addition to their regular job and then get them to volunteer to follow a particular subject and write on it. That subject could be environmental issues because there are a lot of those along the border. It could be provincial politics, which are singularly unimportant, nobody really cares about them but you can still write about them. Any number of things you can find for them to do they get some satisfaction, it gives you a chance for you to write or their rater and you are going to be the reviewer in the rating process to write about something in their work other than they did this many visas or they did this many ACS cases. That works important and that is what they are there for but you give them some other opportunity. Another thing you can do is work out an exchange program so that an officer can get off the visa line or the ACS branch in Mexico City or Guadalajara and you can do an exchange for a period of time. The challenge there is bureaucracy versus reality. If you can get the officers to agree to exchange housing and to just take the part of per diem which covers living expenses other than housing then you can stretch your travel budget a bit to do this. The problem often is that the bean counters say no, the officers have to get full per diem and at that point then you run into a problem because each constituent post has a very finite amount of money for travel and if you start using it for this sort of purpose then it cuts into other things you can do. But that is another thing you can do, with a little bit of imagination you can get the young officers to do other things other than what they are assigned to do so they get more job satisfaction and a richer

experience.

Another thing you can do which we did a lot of is volunteer our junior officers for TDY, temporary duty, where there is a crunch. When I was in Juarez we were sending people to Cuba virtually all the time. There is always a shortage of officers for Cuba and that was one way you could enrich their environment. You could take the officers with you to meetings, you could have them fill in for you at meetings because you couldn't be everywhere, if there was an event which required representation from the consulate you could send a junior officer and so on. We had to explain to them that yes, Sam here is going to go off and do this and he's not going to be doing visas with you and there will be more visas for you to do because he is gone but the next time around it will be you Mary, so please understand why Sam is going. If you get people to understand that we are going to be equitable about this and everybody was going to get a shot at doing something different, then it worked well.

And one thing you could do which I think we did very successfully is get the consumer on the other end to acknowledge that the information that these junior officers were providing. Embassy's can never have enough reporting but in point of fact they don't really care what the constituent posts send in and they really rarely read it and probably the same is true in Washington. The political officer thinks his opus on party X is going to get read with great interest but because of the sheer volume of information coming into Washington from the embassies it doesn't get read but that's doubly true for information sent by constituent posts. Please send us more but they really don't read it.

So what you have to do is say not only do we want you to read it we want you to come back and acknowledge that you got it and if you see something that you like or that we have called to your attention which is useful please send back a cable and say the report done by junior officer Sam Jones was really on point. That's a kudo for them; it can go on their report, the end of the year report. But we took it a little bit further than that. We found that some of the reporting that we were doing was of more interest to people in Washington than it was to the embassy and certainly more interest to other agencies, the CIA, the environmental protection agency, and such, Department of Labor, and the Department of Transportation so that we would find out who the end consumer was at the working level. We would then say, "What would you like to know, what do you want to know about pollution in the New River? What do you want to know about the impact of Maquiadora or waste generation? What particular kind of wastes are you concerned about?" Then we would convince the junior officer to take this on as a project. Then after we had prepared the report we'd make sure that the other agency got on distribution and we'd call them up and say did you like that? Sometimes we actually generate messages back acknowledging, bypassing the State Department that another agency got some information that they would otherwise not gotten. I know that is sort of Machiavellian but it was a way to pump up the junior officers and to encourage them and also get some good work.

One of our junior officers who is now, I think, an FS-1 tells you how long I've been doing this, got a superior honor award from the Department of Labor for reporting he did. They actually wrote recognition for a junior officer, first tour officer, on his reporting and it came as a complete shock to the Department of State personnel system. They didn't quite know how to deal with the

fact that another agency was recognizing a junior officer. So you can do these things.

Pardon me for going on for so long on your question.

Q: Well did you run across...I was in personnel, this was back in the late '60s and I was doing consular personnel. We realized that overstaffing posts such as London, the Canadian posts and the Mexican border posts with April 1 who were problems. They may have been alcoholics, they may have been real personality problems or there was a superfluity of elderly former secretaries who made vice consul who had mothers or fathers and they had to have them there and this was not a very promising group to deal with. It was sort of a downer for young, eager officers to be working next to somebody who is really burned out and had very little interest.

COLBERT: Both in Tijuana, when I was consul general in Tijuana and in Juarez I think I was blessed in that there had been cases like that before me. I had heard about people. I heard about a lady who had been assigned to Juarez because her elderly mother was sick and she was aloud to stay in Juarez well past the normal limit of four years, almost until she retired. Luckily I didn't have that problem. Had I gone to Montreal as I, we'd talked about my chance to go to Montreal as principal officer, in a sense I managed to avoid inheriting what was a terrible mess because of that sort of situation. They had more walking wounded there than I think you would find in Walter Reed after this particular war, people who really weren't up to the job but had been assigned there because it was a "large post" and they could take it. There is a tendency I think, in the State Department to put people who are assignment challenges in large posts such as London, perhaps they have no aptitude for language or in one case I'm told they sent a person to London who had come in under a law suit which said we had to take blind officers and this particular officer was blind but he had grown up and lived in London and he insisted on being assigned to London because since he was blind he knew his way around London. So he could only be assigned to London, which is sort of contrary to the entire worldwide availability idea that we have in the Foreign Service, if in fact it works any more.

But I didn't have those problems in Juarez luckily. The problem that I did have was meshing the junior officers and more senior Foreign Service officers with the predominantly civil service working staff that I had. The civil servant had been hired maybe ten years before what was supposed to be for a five-year period to cover a surge of immigrant visa work. The surge never really went away, the State Department's best laid plans of mice and men they found themselves with people they were hoping to have for five years who were still there now when I arrived. There was tension between the civil service who were under paid and under appreciated and under the Foreign Service. It reminds me of that story the Brits used to say about the Americans in Great Britain, they were over paid, over sexed and over here. The Americans used to respond that the British were under paid, under sexed and under Eisenhower. Well, there was a bit of this tension. The Foreign Service got free housing because they were assigned overseas, they got educational allowance for their children, that is to say the children were bussed across and the children because they got education allowance were actually going for the most part to a private school. The girls were going to Loretta College, which was a Catholic private school, very expensive, very good school but the...I don't remember where the boys went but they could go to public or private school.

One of the anomalies was out of state tuition for public school was comparable to the price of going to a private school. So in a very poor city, El Paso which was a very problematic public school system the children of the Foreign Service families were being bussed across the border to go to private school whereas the civil servants children were going to public school. So there were tensions that were built into the way the thing had been designed. There was really no way we could pay the tuition for the civil service children because the civil service families lived in El Paso and they were commuting across the border.

Anyway there were these tensions so one of the challenges was to do everything humanly possible to look after the civil service employees, nurture them, encourage them, get them salary increases, make sure that they were appreciated and to also deal with the jealousies and unhappiness on the other side why do these civil service people leave precisely at 4:30 every evening, why don't they work during emergencies, why aren't they here on weekends, etc., etc., etc. So that was a real challenge. I think we had some success there, certainly a lot of time invested in it.

Once a month I had a meeting with all the civil service employees. They didn't all come but they were all welcome to come, to hear what they had to say. Once a month I had a meeting with the representatives of the Mexican employees, there were probably close to 200 of those, to hear their concerns. Strangely some things are so simple but you don't know that you have a problem until people feel comfortable to come and talk to you about their concerns. One of the first things I was asked when I had a meeting with the Mexican employees was why didn't we have those little things you put on toilet seats, those little paper things that you pull out, what do you call them. You know, you pull out and put them on the toilet seat.

Q: Yeah, covers.

COLBERT: Yeah, paper covers. They said they just couldn't understand why we didn't have these because we had a lot of people working here and it was a good thing. I said, "We can have them." So we just went out to...we didn't go back to the embassy for Gods sake...we simply used our own post funds and simply went to COSCO or some equivalent and bought the dispensers and in two or three days all the facilities had them. It was a small thing but it would not have occurred to me this was an issue until they brought it to my attention. So sometimes you can solve little issues, which are big issues in the eyes of the people who are concerned.

So we did have lots and lots of those kinds of problems. I've probably talked too much about this, I'm sorry.

DENNIS HAYS
Director of Mexican Affairs
Washington, DC (1995-1996)

Ambassador Hays was born into a US Navy family and was raised in the United States and abroad. He was educated at the University of Florida and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1975, he spent the major portion of his career dealing with Latin American, particularly Mexican and Cuban, Affairs. He also served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Burundi, and from 1997 to 2000 as U.S. Ambassador to Surinam. Ambassador Hays was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2001.

HAYS: In the meantime, I went off to be Director of Mexican Affairs. There were two vacancies in ARA, Caribbean Affairs and Mexican Affairs. With Caribbean affairs you picked up Haiti, and I had questions about our policy in Haiti, and I said I'm not going to go from one Caribbean island problem state to another and then have something horrible happen there. I don't want to do this again. Once is plenty for a given career. So Mexico seemed like fun. And I, in fact, had a wonderful time being Director of Mexico, although it was only for about eight or nine months.

Q: So that took you into 1996?

HAYS: Yes, into 1996. I was held up eight months after the confirmation hearings mostly by Janice O'Connell on Senator Dodd's staff who didn't like my Cuba policy and many other things. So bureaucratically, she was able twice to kick me off the business committee hearing by doing a letter asking questions at five o'clock the day before, which then takes a day to work through the system. In the meantime, Senatorial privilege being what it is, my name was removed. Instead of going to post as I was supposed to in August or September of 1996, I ended up going in March of 1997.

Q: She basically kept it within the Foreign Relations Committee? You had a hearing but then they didn't take action on your appointment?

HAYS: I couldn't get out of the business committee.

Q: So you finally went in early 1997. Anything further on Cuba or from your time working on Mexico?

HAYS: Nothing particularly noteworthy.

PAUL E. WHITE
Director, USAID Program
Mexico City (1998-2002)

Mr. White was born and raised in Indiana. He received his education at Sacramento State College, Valparaiso University and the East-West Center in Hawaii. He joined USAID in 1970. During his career with that Agency, Mr. White served in Vientiane, Seoul, Phnom Penh, Panama City, Lima, Guatemala City,

Tokyo and Mexico City. He also had tours of duty at USAID Headquarters in Washington. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: Well in 1998 you left.

WHITE: By 1998 I had planned to depart post and retire. Two things happened, I guess. I started getting pressure from the State Department to accept a nomination to be ambassador to Laos. I also had a strong invitation to go to the embassy in Mexico and run the foreign aid program at the embassy there, in a way similar to what I'd done in Japan. So I decided to do that and I went to Mexico. I was pressured a lot by State to take this position in Laos and I started the process with State and somewhere in the process I withdrew my name as ambassador to Laos. A very difficult decision, maybe the most difficult decision I've ever had to make and it was based on a whole series of factors some personal, some policy related. But anyway I was in Mexico at that point, so I stayed in Mexico from 1998 through I guess 2002 and I retired then.

Q: What were you doing in Mexico?

WHITE: In Mexico we had a very small aid program that was being closed out altogether. Aid has always been a difficult issue with Mexico, because Mexico is one of those very proud countries that doesn't like to admit that it receives aid. So we never, in the history of aid to Mexico, we've never had a government to government program. Rather, we worked with NGOs and others to do specific things in very poor areas or in Chiapas or other places in Mexico, but we did not work through the government. So when I got there, an interesting thing had happened. The whole country was on fire and those fires were generating smoke all the way from Chiapas, if you looked in the satellite photos that smoke was coming up all the way up to Houston and Dallas and the Southwest.

Q: So this was real fire. What was the problem?

WHITE: After a number of very dry years, fires started, partially agricultural fires that got out of control but also storms and lightning and place that had never burned before, like the rain forest in Chiapas, that had always been so wet that it would never burn, had gone through a number of droughts and all of a sudden it was burning. It was causing cities in the United States to have environmental alerts and all of that, so the U.S. Congress started putting pressure on us to do something about it in Mexico. Now the Mexican government, in order to do disaster response you have to get an official request from the government and the government was unwilling to ask us for help. So we found a way. We went in and negotiated with them and got them to send us a letter agreeing to accept our assistance, because that wasn't a request. That letter came in and we were able to provide U.S. firefighters and the U.S. Forest Service. So my first few months there I was working on fires.

Out of that grew something very interesting. That is, the first agreement between us and the government, eventually we worked it in a way that our money didn't go directly to the Mexican government. We worked through a Mexican NGO but the agreement was between us and the government. So that was the first time we had actually come to a government to government

agreement. So that was one large area I worked in.

The next area, that also came from congressional pressure, was tuberculosis. Mexico had a tremendous problem with tuberculosis and people were finding that they could cross the border and get treated in Texas or California, Arizona or New Mexico and so those costs weren't being passed on to the government of Mexico but were being passed on to our hospitals and we were starting to actually shut hospitals down that couldn't afford to continue to treat people on an unreimbursed basis. So the Congress wanted us to work in tuberculosis in Mexico, to strengthen Mexico's government responsibilities there so that people wouldn't cross the border to get treated. For that one we actually came up with a government to government agreement with the Ministry of Health of Mexico. So we worked on tuberculosis.

And we had a number of other programs. Democracy, the democracy program was a tremendous success in Mexico. We worked directly with the government on freedom of information, a new freedom of information law similar to ours. We worked with the Mexican Congress to strengthen their capacities.

So we had a vibrant program in Mexico. Rather than shutting the program down, as was originally intended, the program grew to around \$30-35 million a year.

Q: Now, you talk about democracy programs. This is just about the time when the PRI (Spanish: Partido Revolucionario Institucional) lost a real election [July 2000]. Did we have our fingers in that pie?

WHITE: Yeah, we were involved in the elections by working with NGOs and others as election watchers and we funded President Carter and other election observers to come down and observe the election and of course the PRI was swept out of power after sixty or seventy years of being in power and President (Vicente) Fox came in with a real desire to work with us and to improve relations with the United States. And so there was a tremendous opening of possibilities there for doing things that got shut down after 9/11 a bit. But we were able to, I think, move to a new phase in our relationship with Mexico in our aid program.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Mexican government, the officials there?

WHITE: Yeah, officials, difficult. Mexico's a very proud place and so you had to be exceeding careful with the words you used and what you said. I remember once, a Mexican government official got a hold of the AID website, where we talked about providing assistance for areas of Mexico like Chiapas and that official edited the entire webpage and sent it to me and said, "Here's the kind of things you should be saying." He took out every mention of poverty or assistance or aid or anything like that. So it was a difficult working situation.

There's also a sense among government officials that the gringos are, that there's always an ulterior motive for something. So if you're going in to say, "Can we help you fight fires? We have U.S. firefighters and equipment and spray planes and satellite pictures and all of this" they will say, "Yes, but what do you really want? You wanna take pictures of the Chiapas forest with

your planes so you can use it for military purposes.” So no matter what it was, how simple or how complex, they would seek the ulterior motive and that’s what you would talk about, rather than the real thing that was on the table. So that was, it was a challenge.

Q: How did you find the NGO organizations in Mexico? Was it evolving or was it relatively mature or

WHITE: That’s a good question. There were a number of NGOs that AID had worked with over many years, because that’s, we worked with the NGO community. Those NGOs were fairly strong but there were only a few of them, mainly in environment and population and we had worked with them through U.S. counterpart NGOs and so we had developed strong relationships between the Nature Conservancy U.S. and the Nature Conservancy Mexico or Conservation International U.S. and Conservation International Mexico. So those few NGOs were quite strong and then there were lots of other NGOs that were not very strong. The Mexican government policy towards NGOs was medieval. Again, they felt that NGOs represented an unseen guiding hand that was trying to influence events in Mexico and the funding was coming from elsewhere, mainly from the North but to some extent from Europe. So they were seen as almost subversive in some ways. So part of what we were trying to do was work to strengthen the relationship between the Mexican government and NGOs, have them better understand what NGOs were about. So that was a major part of what I was doing was working on that relationship.

But I think NGOs in general were like NGOs anywhere: a lot of heart and not so much mind. They didn’t have the practicalities down. How do you keep books, how do you write good information reports to donors? But they were out there as best they could to do good.

Q: One of the things about our relations with both Canada and Mexico is that you got government to government, Washington to Ottawa or Washington to Mexico City and then the practical relationship, which is cross borders and governors of states call governors of states or police chiefs call police chiefs or almost any little, did you find yourself and particularly NGO or AID things, that sort of thing happening?

WHITE: Yeah, we did, in our democracy program we funded a lot of exchanges of mayors, for instance, and we found ways that people working on similar problems were able to get together and discuss them. So in the Caribbean coastal area they were working on flood control, how do you keep the bay from invading the city? We would take them to Florida, those mayors and develop a relationship with a mayor who was working on a similar problem there. A lot of what we did in the democracy area in the early days were those kind of exchanges, with governors as well and other local officials. We did similar things with NGOs. But mainly we funded NGO counterparts to work on similar problems. I agree with you that those people to people things are important.

Now NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), this was before my time, but somewhere towards the negotiation of NAFTA someone recognized that NAFTA didn’t deal with environmental issues and out of that, people were able to leverage a huge chunk of money, I forget how much it was, now, either thirty million or fifty million dollars, AID created a Mexican

NGO, environmental NGO, that was able to receive that money in an endowment fund. So that grew directly out of someone's very quick interest and ability to take a NAFTA deficiency and turn it around. So the money went into an environmental endowment fund, managed by this group, who would then use it to work with local Mexican NGOs on environmental issues and that local NGO has been able to attract a lot more money into the endowment fund. It's now up to over a hundred million dollars.

So, again, those were the kinds of activities. We were working on a higher order of development issues in Mexico than we would have been working on in Nigeria or Bangladesh or something.

Q: Did you find yourself working against the entrenched power of the unions? I think of the teachers union or the petroleum workers union, I'm sure there are others, after all this is where PRI's power comes from

WHITE: I think that we did not, only because we weren't working in areas where we would come head to head and head clash with the unions. But, yeah, the unions were really, really strong in Mexico, just like they are here and they keep a lot of things from happening because they're very traditional and conservative and don't like change.

Q: Is there any other area we haven't talked about in Mexico?

WHITE: The population area, I guess, only because that was such an interesting area because you have the Catholic Church. AID had worked in the population area since its very beginnings in Mexico, all through NGOs and there had always been a very serious issue between the population NGOs and the government population program and the Church. But the way we worked through NGOs and the NGOs worked with the Mexican government, those issues largely were deflected away from AID and they had to be handled by the Mexican government. So we weren't battling directly with the Church but we were battling with the U.S. Congress because there were people in the U.S. Congress who don't like the population program and who would continually write congressional letters to the ambassador questioning five women that he had talked to from Chiapas who had had abortions and was AID money involved in this? So there was always a political issue on the table with population.

AID had worked in population from the beginning and the Mexican government had gotten really good and was doing a really good job and so we, as I was moving to Mexico, hoping to use the U.S.-Japan cooperation and the nine billion dollars I had developed for cooperation between the U.S. and the world and Japan, I was planning to implement that in Mexico. AID people were talking about phasing out of the population program in Mexico. So one of my first jobs there was to phase out of a program that we had supported forever and one that I wanted to continue. But we did it. We, in a sense, held a graduation ceremony for Mexico. The Mexican government was concerned about a couple of things. One, we had been a source for condoms and they were willing to provide the money to buy the condoms but they wanted to continue to use the supply channels and all of that. So there were some issues like that but in general it was one of those very happy circumstances where we gave the Mexican government a lot of face and credit and we were able to graduate an AID program.

As I guess a final comment on that, the one thing that I was able to do there that was unique, there were a lot of different players. There was the Mexican social security system, there was the Mexican Ministry of Health, there was a private sector social security system, all of these different health systems and we had worked with all of them in population but there was no overarching program where they all cooperated together. As a part of this graduation exercise we were able to get all of the different players together and go out and visit everybody's projects as a team and see what the strengths and weaknesses of each program was. That set into place a kind of coordination committee that continues, that works on those issues. So I felt good about that.

EDWARD H. WILKINSON
Consul General
Guadalajara (1999-2001)

Edward Wilkinson was born in Indiana in 1936. Mr. Wilkinson received his bachelor's degree at Purdue University and served in the army from 1957-1959. His career included positions in Philippines, Mexico, Costa Rica, Argentina, Taiwan, Ecuador, Korea, Thailand, and Germany. Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2002.

Q: Well then, in '99, what happened next?

WILKINSON: In 1999 I was sixty-three years old, and you know in the Foreign Service one must retire at the age of sixty-five. Knowing that this was coming – I had less than two years to go before being mandatorily retired – I looked for a Washington assignment. Frankly, my idea was to come here to Washington, look around and see what I wanted to do next. Did I want to retire immediately? Did I want to move to someplace – Las Vegas for example? My wife and I simply had made no decision even though we talked about it many, many times.

So, I came to an agreement with the Bureau of Consular Affairs to come to the Bureau's executive office and work on a special project there for a year.

In June of 1999, this was all set, and it seemed like a good plan to me. Then out of the blue, I received a phone call from Robyn Bishop, Deputy Executive Director of the Executive Office, Bureau of Consular Affairs. She was the number two person in that office and was essentially the chief Foreign Service personnel officer, if you will, for the Consular Affairs Bureau.

She said, "Ed, we have an opening as consul general in Guadalajara, Mexico, and I know that you had expressed interest in that before. Are you still interested?" So, after I picked myself up off the floor, I said I thought I was. She explained that somebody had retired unexpectedly, etc., etc., and there were some other personnel changes, so all of a sudden there was this opening. Now, maybe she was just being nice to me knowing full well that I was about to retire, but she finished the conversation with, "I can't guarantee it, but if you are interested we'll put your name

in that hat and let's see what develops."

Well, I went home and spoke to my wife that evening. We agreed that there were any number of reasons for us not to take that assignment. The plans for the future would be far easier to make from here in Washington, rather than abroad. And there's the question of locality pay, which is an issue that one doesn't ignore.

But Lisa and I spent roughly eight seconds discussing the matter, then we said, "Let's try to get it; let's go anyway." So – once again, sheer good luck – I was then assigned to Guadalajara, Mexico, as consul general. We got there in September or October of '99.

Q: And you were there until?

WILKINSON: Until June of 2001, about twenty months or so.

Q: Guadalajara has got the reputation of being sort of the retirement home of a great many Americans.

WILKINSON: Well, that's true. The number is a little elusive. You have to nail down the definition. There are people who live there essentially permanently, and some who just come only for the winter, "snowbirds." Those people generally come on tourist cards, valid for a six-month stay. So, you have a number from 20,000 to 50,000 or more U.S. retirees in the general neighborhood of Guadalajara. My Canadian colleague there believed – and I have every reason to think he was right - that even more Canadians than Americans are retired there. And, of course, there are many other nationalities, as well.

One main reason for all these foreigners is, I think, the huge lake, Lake Chapala, located about a forty-five minute drive from Guadalajara. It's the largest lake in Mexico. Unfortunately, for certain reasons, it's getting smaller and smaller and dirtier and dirtier, I'm sorry to say. But it is a place – when the lake was wide, clean and beautiful – where over the years a lot of Americans and other foreigners have retired.

Mexico makes it very convenient – as do many Central American countries – to get the appropriate visa to go there. As a retiree, you can bring in certain things, such as a car, duty free. You can bring in a refrigerator and other items that are relatively expensive in Mexico. They make this as easy as possible to attract people because it's good for the economy.

As you might suspect, a very significant portion of our work in Guadalajara was attending to these Americans. Because a large number were retirees are older folks, we had a large number of deaths to handle. We also had a complete operation with several employees funded by the Social Security Administration that dealt with federal benefits; all federal benefits, not just Social Security.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Mexican government?

WILKINSON: I found it easy. I would apologize regularly to visiting firemen, Congress people and so on, because I found myself describing Mexico and Mexicans in a way that made me sound like a was a member of the Guadalajara Chamber of Commerce. I really, truly enjoyed working and living in Mexico. Now, I'm not going to suggest that every last Mexican was just wonderful. Corruption is endemic in Latin countries, I am sorry to say. It went on there, although, I would say, with the election of President Fox and the ousting of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI, that improved a bit. But corruption was not, by and large, a problem that we had to deal with regularly. It didn't cause us great problems. Quite the contrary; I would say Mexican officialdom worked very hard to be as reasonable with us as they could be.

Q: How about drugs?

WILKINSON: Yes, drugs are a major issue in Mexico. They are readily available. I'm not really sure whether they are more or less available than in the U.S., or at least in certain parts of the U.S., but they're certainly available. And cheaper, I would say. The larger concern, though, is drug trafficking - something that concerned us Americans for obvious reasons. Our U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has many officers stationed at our embassies and consulates around the world. They work with the local authorities in this regard and yes, drugs remain a major concern to us.

Q: Wasn't it out of Guadalajara where there had been a very nasty case of one of our drug agents being kidnaped and killed?

WILKINSON: Yes, there was the case, I can't remember the year - I would say in the middle '80s - when a Drug Enforcement Administration officer, Enrique Camarena, stationed in Guadalajara at the time, was simply kidnaped then brutally murdered. This is, I would suggest, the sort of thing that our Drug Enforcement people have to contend with worldwide. It is a nasty, dangerous business. But their job is to get out amongst the people, find out what's going on regarding trafficking, and that's what they do.

Q: Did you get involved in that at all?

WILKINSON: Security was always an issue, yes, but I personally did not feel in the slightest that I was in danger. The state of Jalisco, where Guadalajara is located, provided the American consul general a full-time bodyguard. Augustine was a marvelous policeman whom I think the world of. He is the kind of policeman - and friend - you'd want anywhere, in anyplace.

Q: What about problems with Americans? I've heard reports that there are parts of Mexico where the people are driving around in their cars and they may be stopped either by policemen or pseudo-policemen or something and robbed and all that.

WILKINSON: Yes, sometimes this happens. There is a tourist police operation that attempts to control that sort of thing. Insofar as I know, these people are pretty clean. The tourist police travel up and down the major highways and if you, as a tourist, break down or have other problems they'll help you.

I might throw in here the observation that, as you may remember I was stationed in Mexico from '67 to '69 and then again from 1999 to 2001. There were huge, huge differences between those two tours as far as life for a foreigner in Mexico is concerned. It is certainly not totally perfect, but it is much, much better than it was.

Q: Did you find yourself, on instructions from the embassy, making representations to the local authorities concerning crime or problems?

WILKINSON: I think the answer to that, in general, is no. I do remember one case that is still pending in which we worked closely with the embassy and with the State Department. An American newspaper reporter, Philip True, who had spent a number of years in Mexico and was married to a Mexican lady, decided to hike northward from the northern part of the state of Jalisco. He walked into what is essentially an indigenous Indian reservation. He was hiking through there and was later found dead.

He worked for the San Antonio News Express, I think it's called, and the editor and the owner of the newspaper have worked very, very hard, together with Mr. True's wife, to try to get satisfaction. But the case continues to drag on and on. They are very unhappy that two particular indigenous people thought to have perpetrated the crime have not been brought to justice. *[These two were recently – April 2004 – convicted; the case is to be appealed, I think.]*

I think that would be very difficult to do, quite honestly, even though there is some circumstantial evidence. I really don't think that you're going to find the kind of evidence that will be necessary to convict. I don't know nearly enough about it to make any comment other than that this is just a gut feeling.

Q: How about Americans in jail? Did you have a number?

WILKINSON: Yes, a rather small number I think, comparatively speaking. The jails were okay, I guess. If you have a little money to spend, you can make your life satisfactory or even a little better. I wouldn't want to leave anybody with the impression that life is a piece of cake in these jails, but our people who have visited them have not come back with problems, complaints, unhappiness. I think they are okay in the big scheme of things.

Q: Well then you left there this year, 2001?

WILKINSON: We just left there last June. But before we left, Lisa and I drove up to the town where we got married, Mazatlán, Sinaloa, about five hours north of Guadalajara. We went to the chapel where we were married. It hadn't changed much, although the beautiful tree in the front courtyard was gone. We had a chance to look around and see how Mazatlán had changed. We even met some friends that we knew thirty-odd years before.

Anyway, when the time came and we had to leave, we drove northward to the town of Zacatecas and later to Saltillo, then up to San Antonio where we had the good fortune to have a cup of

coffee with my predecessor in Guadalajara (who was also with us in Korea) who happened to be in town, O.P. Garza. O.P. is now ambassador to Nicaragua. Then we drove on up to Washington and that's it.

DALE SLAGHT
Career Minister
Mexico City (1999-2002)

Mr. Slaght was born in Oregon in 1943. After serving in various capacities on Capitol Hill and in the Department of Commerce, he joined the State Department under the Commerce-State Exchange Program. As expert in commercial and trade policy, Mr. Slaght had assignments as Commercial Attaché and Minister Counselor at US Embassies and Consulates in Uruguay, Panama, Germany, Canada, Soviet Union and Mexico. He also served as Mexico Desk Officer at the Department of Commerce. Mr. Slaght attained the rank of Career Minister. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

SLAGHT: In '99, I was all set to go to London. I thought that was where my assignment was to be, my last assignment. I was then a career minister, and there was only one other career minister, and he was already on assignment. We only had two. But I had such strong credentials for Mexico, unfortunately, and Mexico was on my bid list, last, but it was on my list. I lived in Mexico, I was the Mexican Office Director in the Department in the early '80's, and I knew NAFTA issues which was now Mexico. We had some problems with our operation there, and they said Dale, I'm sorry, we have to send you to Mexico, so that's where I ended up. I was disappointed at first, but I had a very good tour there. It was a very interesting challenge in Mexico. We drove there and back and forth all the time.

Q: You were in Mexico City from when to when?

SLAGHT: From August of '99 until late June of 2002. Three years.

Q: That's when you were there?

SLAGHT: I came back to Washington, spent a year as a Diplomat in Resident at George Mason University teaching and then spent two months in the department doing a project, and then I retired at the end of the year.

Q: You said you were sent to Mexico, and there were lots of issues. Major issues.

SLAGHT: In Mexico, we're not in the Chancery. We had our own building, a large building which has a trade center. Offices on the second floor. The idea of the trade center when it was built in '82 was to provide a place for U.S. firms to come exhibit their products to sell to Mexicans, and be in a setting that we control: language, entry of the goods, etc. It was a good

idea in '82. But by the late '90's the Mexicans had built these enormous trade centers around, exhibition halls, first class, world class facilities, and more were being built. By 2000 there had been an earthquake in Mexico, and a lot of buildings around our facility in downtown Mexico were damaged. It was kind of a marginal area for an exhibition center

Q: And traffic, I guess.

SLAGHT: There was no place to park. Also, there were I would call them, businesses of ill repute not far away, and the demand for our facility was falling. What to do with a big staff that ran this facility and the facility itself? So the first year I was there, we lost \$500,000 on this thing, and I saw no end to it. So I said, we have to close this place down, fire these people. Not fire them, but let them go. We had people there that had been thirty years working the Trade Center. They hadn't done anything else for a career. It cost us mega bucks, but we did it well. We worked very closely with the Embassy's personnel people to follow the legal steps required under Mexican law to give notice, to help them find new positions if they wanted them, and we closed that location down. We moved USIS, which had a facility behind our building in a building that every time there was an earthquake, they wondered whether it was going to stand up. It needed mega bucks to keep standing. So we moved them into our facility. It saved the USG a ton of money, got us out of a business we didn't need to be in any longer. There were plenty of other trade show facilities around of town. It was very hard on the staff, however. We lost, I think, twenty people. Some left bitter and mad that we had to do this. We took as many as we thought we could justify -- the good ones that we thought we could retrain into different functions. It was a very interesting management play, and I got a lot of satisfaction out of doing it and doing it well.

Q: How were things running with the Mexican-American Free Trade Agreement?

SLAGHT: Very good. Canada sends 90% of their exports to the United States, probably 90% plus now. Mexico approaches that now, too. They are very highly dependent on the U.S. economy which can be risky for both countries, but they are. A lot of U.S. firms have operations there. We found, for example, in the textile area, that U.S. firms in North Carolina shut down their operations that required a lot of hand labor to sew garments together and moved those to Mexico. But that increased 5-, 6-, 10-fold the amount of material -- textile fabric -- that they would produce to send to Mexico for the final assembly operation. It was a very strange phenomena where half the textile industry, the apparel industry, was supportive of us, and half wasn't. If they were integrated, then they generally supported us. If they were just in the final assembly operation, then they were against it. Very interesting. That process continues.

Q: What was your impression of Mexican both business operations and the manufacturing operations?

SLAGHT: Very, very sophisticated. I seldom left a plant where I didn't leave impressed at the quality of what was being done and the quality of management. Ford has an assembly operation in the northern city of Hermosillo, the state of Sonora. That plant is now the model plant for Ford around the world. They bring in management and labor teams from their operations around the

world to see how it's done in Hermosillo because it's done so well there. Chrysler opened an engineering center in Toluca, south of Mexico City, not just for the plant there but for their Brazilian operations, and their European operations. You have engineers - they were going to hire up to a thousand of them, I don't know if they did that or not - a thousand new engineers designing Chrysler products worldwide. Mexico is not the sleepy agricultural based society that you and I perhaps have in our mind. It's still a country that has some issues to deal with, but it's come a long way, and NAFTA's helped. NAFTA's helped, indeed!

Q: Did you find the new government under Fox. Did this break up the old pre-monopoly and all of that?

SLAGHT: That was a great time to be in Mexico because the election occurred then, and the 80 years, a little bit less, of PRI domination in the politics of the country came to an end. Unfortunately, the expectations of Mr. Fox and his new team were so high that there were few of us in the Embassy that thought he'd be able to deliver anywhere near what the Mexican public expected, particularly since the Congress was still PRI dominated, the PAN party, Fox's party, did not have the majority there. And that's, in fact, the way it turned out. In fact, to be frank, Fox has done very little of the things that had to be done for the economy there. A major restructuring of the electrical distribution system and the generation of electricity is urgently needed. Brown-outs there at any time, in my view, could cripple industry. What industry has done, if they were large enough, they have created their own co-generation plants and then sold off extra to others in the area, just to be sure they'd have it, because they saw it coming, too. Pemex, the big oil facility there, is not doing anywhere near the kind of investment into the plant and exploration that needs to be done.

I don't know about corruption, but the dominance of the union is still an issue. It happens in the electricity sector, too. The ministry that runs the electricity distribution system is...it's not to the same extent, but it's like the railroad industry in the United States when they turned from the coal-fired to the electric locomotives, and the union demanded that the coal shovelers should be still on the trains. That's what's going on, at least in part of Mexico. Education helped. They're working on these issues, but Fox was never able to use his early popularity to the degree we all hoped he could have to change some of these basic structural issues in the Mexican economy.

Q: What was your observation? How much of this economic worth penetrated into the villages? You think of the Indian villages that supplied a lot of the stoop labor in the United States. Was it making inroads?

SLAGHT: I suppose that you could argue that health and education improved, and probably statistics would show that's the case. But still, the migration roots in Mexico is still from the country into the city or from the country directly into the United States. There's not much left in rural Mexican towns. Our agricultural products now can come into Mexico. I guess in 2008 the final tariffs are going to be lifted for some of the most sensitive products, but a lot of our products are coming in now into Mexico. Corn. Mexico imports corn from the United States. It's remarkable. This has hurt the small farmers who essentially were hand-to-mouth and needed to be subsidized.

Q: How about corruption? One always hears about the police and all this. How did American manufacturers find this?

SLAGHT: It continues to be a problem, most sensitive in the war on drugs. You read every couple of months about some chief of police in a border town or somewhere in Mexico being on the take. Many of his staff as well. There were three containers of blue jeans that came out of a U.S. subsidiary southeast of Mexico City in 2000, heading to the United States, and the trucks were hijacked. In the final analysis, the perpetrators were police who knew the routes, knew what to do, and had people to sell these goods to. Is it better? Probably it's better than what it was. I have an older brother that loves to travel but refuses to go to Mexico because if he were ever stopped on the road, he feared the police would be more of a hindrance than a help. He visited us in Mexico. He rented a car and went all around, had no problems. He left with a different sense which was good. It is an issue, however. It is endemic in the society. These people are underpaid and view the only way out of their situation is to take a bite out of someone else. Mordida they call it. It will take years for that to leave.

Q: Did you see a change or was the part of the professional economic management class expanding there?

SLAGHT: Oh, yes. Mexican middle class, upper middle class, grew by leaps and bounds as investments were made in the Mexican economy by U.S. and Mexicans themselves. One of the problems with Mexico was that so much of the Mexican money was going to the United States and not being invested in Mexico. NAFTA took care of a lot of that, gave them a sense that they could invest confidently in their own country. Stability of the currency, the peso, and stability in the governmental structure helped.

End of reader