UGANDA

COUNTRY READER
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STEPHEN LOW
Deputy Chief of Mission
Kampala (1957-1959)

Ambassador Stephen Low was born in Ohio in 1927. He received his bachelor's degree from Yale, and his master's and doctorate from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. In addition to Nigeria, Ambassador Low served in Uganda, Senegal, and Zambia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

LOW: It proved to be a wonderful learning experience. Not many people are given the chance to be "DCM" [deputy chief of mission] in their first overseas assignment - this being a two-man post. Peter, the consul, said at the beginning, "I'm going to do the political work and you do all the rest." The young staff and I puzzled through the consular manual and issued immigrant visas, non-immigrant visas, and protection, economic reporting, and anything else that was needed. I remember one period, when our both our one secretary and Peter were away, Sue, as our interim secretary had to decode the incoming message using the terribly time-consuming one-time-pad system for which she had been specially cleared.

A little over a year after we arrived, the post received its first inspection. I remember being enormously impressed by the inspection process. The chief inspector was Phil Sprouse, an ambassador in Cambodia. His attitude was "Here are people trying to work out how to set up a post as best they can. I'll use my experience to help them." He was great. It was one of the most positive experiences of my career. He and his administrative assistant went through much of

what we had done pointing where we were right, sometimes suggesting alternatives, and sometimes showing us where we had made mistakes. Their attitude was positive and constructive. The experience gave us a great boost, and I think we came out of it quite well.

The consul, Peter Hooper, was one of the best people the Foreign Service produced. He was a remarkable man who had the great talent of being able to discover in everybody he met what it was that they were particularly good at, what they particularly knew or understood. People would go in to see him and I'd think, "How can he possibly spend all that time with that person when he has so much else to do?" But when they'd come out, Peter would share with me the most remarkable insights that he gained from that conversation. He was an enormously talented person, a great diplomat. He didn't have his wife with him and he had three children. So, we were very busy helping with family matters.

Q: You were in Kampala from when to when?

LOW: 1957-1959.

Q: Could you give me a little feeling about what you were getting up in the corridors of the State Department in this 1957 period about Africa as a place to go? There was a time when this as really quite exciting.

LOW: This was before that. When I was in INR, the decision had been taken to open four new posts in 1957; Yaounde, Kampala, Brazzaville, and Abidjan. Bob Foulon, the Philippine desk officer got so much involved in communicating between Peter Hooper, who was going to Kampala, and me that he got interested himself and he went out to open Yaounde. Walt Cutler went out as his deputy. So, we all knew each other. There was an interest, but it was still a kind of hypothetical interest. Joe Palmer was the Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. This was a little before the great excitement over Africa showed itself. That was stimulated in large part by the appearance of the first few African independent countries, starting with Ghana, which began in 1960. So, this was the very, very beginning. One of the interesting moments for me was when Peter went home on home leave and they called a chief of missions conference. So, in my first assignment overseas, I went as (acting) chief of mission to Lourenzo Marques, Mozambique. It was a heady experience for a young Foreign Service officer. Along with each senior representative to an African country I gave a short presentation on Uganda. It was a fascinating country, distinguished from Tanzania and Kenya by the fact that non-native born persons were not permitted to own land there. As a result, there were fewer racial problems than in the other two countries. On the other hand, in many ways, it was less developed than the other two - wealthier because of coffee, but less developed. For us, it was an absolutely fascinating experience.

The lack of contact or knowledge between the U.S. and Uganda was profound. I remember a seminar on the U.S. which the USIA representative set up in Mbale in eastern Uganda. My wife and I both spoke. Someone in the audience asked how the people in Indiana communicated with the people in Ohio. We realized that they saw the United States as a number of separate tribal "Red Indian" communities ruled over by white governors sent out by Washington. It was just extraordinary how little understanding there was. The man who helped us in the kitchen had to

be shown how to use a screwdriver. On the other hand there were some very sophisticated Ugandans. One of our very good friends was the first woman Ugandan to graduate from Oxford. She was a member of the legislature and a very capable person. She became director of the only girls high school in the country. She was married to a Tanzanian from our house.

The diplomatic community was small. The "dean" of the corps was a very bright and able Sudanese from the south of his country. The only other professional diplomat was the Indian. Then the Portuguese and perhaps one other country had honorary consuls. It was very friendly and informal. Relations between us and the British were friendly, but sometimes a little strained. The government and senior officers in London understood why we were there - because we could see independence coming and wanted to begin making contact, understanding the country's dynamics and establishing friendly relations. Some members of the Colonial Service harbored suspicions that we wanted to replace them in Africa. It was not always easy to convince them that we had no desire to assume responsibility there. Good relations between the British and independent Africa were very much in our interest. We might be able to help that but we hoped they would continue to exercise a supportive relationship. At one point, the British Chief Secretary (senior career official, second to the Governor) who was a very tall, gruff man, called me in to his office in Entebbe where the government was and said he had understood that I had been quoted as being in favor of early Ugandan independence. This was something that I certainly never would have said. I have no idea where he got the idea, but I can remember him shaking a bony finger in my face and saying, "Young man, this country is not going to be independent for at least 25 years." Of course, it was independent three years later. Then he added, "We're not going to make any concessions by bringing Ugandans into government until they fully merit it." Of course, the upshot was that at the time of independence there were few Africans in positions of responsibility. But there were many younger officers in the British Colonial Service who were much more forward thinking. We got to know some of them quite well. There was a fair amount of interracial socializing. We used to have square dances at the house which proved quite popular and allowed us to make some good friends among both the African community and many of the British residents.

Q: During this 1957-1959 period, what was the status of Uganda?

LOW: Uganda was a British protectorate with a British governor. There were no Africans in senior positions. It's hard for me to remember where the most senior African official would have been. Mostly clerks. There were, however, a number of well-qualified, intelligent, well-educated Africans in the Legislative Council. We got to know many of them. We began our exchange program, sending some of them to the United States. I picked Milton Obote and sent him to the United States on a one of the first "Leader Grants" from Uganda. He subsequently became the first prime minister of Uganda.

Q: As far as you and Peter Hooper were concerned, at that point, how were you looking at Uganda as a place that really was going to be independent? Were you getting this feeling that Africa was really going to start to change or not?

LOW: Oh yes. It was clear that the independence movement in Africa was gaining momentum. But I don't think even we thought it would be that rapid. Again, some of my British friends were

very suspicious of us and felt we were trying to undermine their authority, which of course was the opposite of our concern. We wanted continuing progress towards greater African representation, involvement, and participation in the government in cooperation with the British government, which had a lot to offer in terms of material help and experience. Our concern was to keep things moving so that they never exploded; so that there was positive progress towards the self government which was inevitable. I think our interest was actually in the British long-term interest. A lot of the younger British people who were there shared that point of view. We worked very easily with them. It was, for the most part, a very positive experience.

Q: What about the upper echelon of the British Colonial Service? Did they sort of feel their time and come and passed?

LOW: No, not at all. The previous governor to Uganda, Sir Andrew Cohen, had been a very political Laborite who had had a very important role in moving British thought ahead, but the current governor, Crawford, was a little old-fashioned and seemed to be largely motivated, along with his chief secretary, to slow things down as much as possible. To do him justice, there was merit in seeing that the process toward self-government was as orderly and positive as possible, and that there was time to prepare the Africans properly. But the Colonial Service leaders thought they had even more time than we did, and, as I say even we didn't realize how fast things were moving. They really didn't do nearly enough to prepare the Africans for the responsibilities they were going to have to assume very soon. That was unfortunate.

Q: What about reverberations from what was happening in Kenya? The Mao Mao thing was going and all that.

LOW: Very little. The problems in Uganda were really quite different. They were interracial between the Indian population and the Africans. Towards the end of the period we were there, there was an indigenous African revolt against Indian merchants. They were the middlemen in the economy. Nobody I knew really understood what was going on. Who was behind the violence, how it was organized, or what its real aims were. It seemed to be an emotional reaction rather than a well-organized and planned political movement with a clear cut objective. We had no handle on what the phenomenon was and how to deal with it, any more than the British did. Fortunately, it eventually petered out. But these were the days when Idi Amin was being formed.

Q: Did he ever cross your radar?

LOW: No, he was a sergeant at that point. But he was formed out of that anti-Indian revolt.

Q: And was eventually essentially expelled. Were you able to get around much there?

LOW: Oh, yes, we traveled a lot. I have always believed that it is terribly important to know the whole countryside, not just the capital city in any country. We visited almost every part of Uganda as well as part of Rwanda-Burundi and the eastern Belgian Congo.

Q: Did you have any dealings with the Sudan?

LOW: Only that the dean of the diplomatic corps was a Sudanese. He had arrived a little before us. He was a very impressive gentleman from the southern part of the Sudan where he had been a district commissioner under the British. We had an occasional American wander across the border and we dealt with that, but we were pretty isolated.

Q: When you reported, did you report to London or back to Washington?

LOW: To Washington. We would repeat everything to London, but the embassy in London played no role at all in our activities or reporting. It was entirely Washington. There was no bureau of African Affairs in the State Department then. Our "desk" was in the Bureau of Near East and African Affairs. Our people had to struggle to be heard. A Bureau of African Affairs was created toward the end of the time I was in Uganda. Joe Satterthwaite was the first assistant secretary of the bureau. That gave us a voice at a higher level.

HENDRICK VAN OSS
Counsel General
Kampala (1960-1962)

Hendrik Van Oss was born in 1917 in Pennsylvania and graduated from Princeton University. He joined the Department of State in 1942 and the Foreign Service in 1945. His career included positions in China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Austria, Uganda, Mozambique, New Zealand, the Congo, and Washington, DC. Mr. Van Oss was interviewed by Lillian Mullins in 1991.

Q: *This is the continuation of the interview with Hendrik Van Oss. Today is June 13, 1991. The first topic today is Mr. Van Oss' period of posting in Uganda. He was Consul General and Principal Officer in Kampala from June 1960 to September 1962.*

How did you happen to get an assignment to Uganda after all the service you had in the Far East?

VAN OSS: After the Far East we went to Vienna for three years and after Vienna I went into the Department's Civil Aviation Division. Promotions were coming slowly in those days and I was still a class-4 officer so I qualified for language training or special training of other sorts. I thought I might as well make a benefit out of adversity so I volunteered for African area specialization. I was accepted in 1959 and sent to SAIA at Johns Hopkins in Washington and had a year of special African area studies.

I was assigned to Bamako, Mali, a new post that I was supposed to open. Nobody knew anything about Mali. The Department had absolutely nothing on it and we were resigned to our fate, but then, fortunately, I was promoted, became a class-3 officer and as a result the Department changed my assignment to Kampala, which was already a firmly established post.

Uganda is really a very sad story. It is a story of what might have been. What it was when I was there was not what it eventually became. When I was there it was a very promising country in the last stages before independence. The British were doing a very good job in preparing the Ugandans for independence. There was no acrimony to speak of between the African population and the British...I was going to say colonial masters, but they weren't. Great Britain had, as you know if you read your history, a special relationship with Uganda. It had treaties with the four main kingdoms and had a special relationship with them. They were protectorates, not really full fledged colonies.

Uganda was a country with considerable promise. It had very fine agricultural possibilities. It had possibly the thickest top soil in the world, I think at least 12 feet of top soil. Everything was very, very fertile. If you stuck wooden poles in the ground to shore up your rose bushes, the poles themselves would sprout. Ugandans would stick palm fronds into the ground lining the streets when their Kabaka or king passed; many of the fronds would take root. So the agricultural potential was considerable. Uganda grew lots of coffee, cotton and had all the other tropical commodities...sugar, palm oil, etc.

Also it had a very healthy climate. Most of the country was over 3,000 feet high. Our house was about 4,500 feet above sea level. The climate could get hot during the day, but at night it usually cooled off and was so chilly that one couldn't give cocktail parties outside without wearing sweaters.

The people of Uganda were relatively well educated. There was probably a higher number of college graduates in Uganda than any other African country, with the possible exception of Nigeria and Ghana. There was a university, Makerere University, which had been established in the twenties and which was a small edition of Oxford. It had different colleges, or houses, students ate in gowns, etc. So, it was based on the British educational system, which, of course, is a very good one.

It had a very strong traditional structure. When discovered about a hundred years before, and when the British first came in 1860, Uganda was not an entity. It consisted of different states or tribes. In the main there were four kingdoms...the kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro and Ankole. Each kingdom had a hereditary king.

In the case of Buganda, which was the largest, richest, and most advanced kingdom, the king or Kabaka could trace his ancestry back at least 600 years. The kingdoms had court customs, their own government structures...especially Buganda, which had its own government even at the time that I was there.

The British were preparing them very carefully for independence. They had established a legislative council which later became known as the National Assembly. They had held an election and had elected members, with a few appointed members as well and they were easing in to the full self government stage when we first got there. The Ugandans would argue and debate legislation in their legislative council. The proceedings were based on the way things are done in Parliament in London. Members bowed to the Speaker on taking their seats. In the intervals members would go upstairs for tea and members of rival parties would joke with each

other. It was a very pleasant atmosphere. Everybody seemed to be friendly and anxious to start the process of self government.

Historically there were no white settlers in Uganda so no white settler problems to worry about. There were about 10,000 whites in the country, but none was allowed to own land. In other words, land could not be alienated to non-Africans. So there was no question of white settlers wanting their own government, or unilateral independence as in Southern Rhodesia.

All the elements seemed in place for Uganda to develop into a successful, independent entity. But things went wrong a few years after I left. So I can't really tell you anything about that except what has already appeared in many papers. I just have to remind you that Milton Obote, the prime minister, ejected the Kabaka, who was president of the first independent government, and drove him into exile. He had to flee for his life. Then Idi Amin, commanding general of the Ugandan army, deposed Obote and perpetrated the horrors we have read about. Then, with the help of Tanzania, Amin was driven out, and after several interim presidents, Vincent Lule and Godfrey Binaisa, Obote returned to power, committing his share of atrocities. Finally, after more civil strife, Obote was again deposed, and Museveni took over as prime minister or president. Perhaps the greatest horror of all now is one of the most severe AIDS epidemics in all of Africa.

So, here was a hopeful, promising country in every sense of the word and just everything went wrong.

Q: *Was there any hint of what might occur while you were there?*

VAN OSS: Oh, there were many hints that you could look back on and put your finger on in hindsight, yes. So-called tribalism was always strong. Uganda was divided into about 11 districts or provinces. Each district had a predominate tribe...if I use tribe it is not in a demeaning sense, it is just an easier expression because tribalism is the curse of Africa and was certainly in evidence in those days. In the sixties, for example, the Baganda in Buganda, which is the largest entity of Uganda, the one that is ruled by the Kabaka, were the best educated, richest, farthest advanced in almost every respect, and as such were the objects of envy and hatred by virtually all other tribal units. In fact there had been a long tradition of warfare in the past between Buganda and Bunyoro.

Q: *Didn't Buganda want a separate status?*

VAN OSS: Yes, Buganda had a special treaty with the British which set them up in a special category. They had their own government, their own parliament, their own prime minister. It was a government that functioned under the Ugandan government in theory but in actuality it functioned pretty much independently. In fact, in December 1960, the Baganda declared unilateral independence. Everybody simply ignored this. The British continued to collect taxes, and to give the annual monetary support that they always had given to the Baganda. There was a lot of drumming on the night of independence and that was about the only celebration. Oh, the Buganda ministers would pay lip service to their independence and say that they don't pay any attention to the Uganda government. In fact there was no change in status. But Buganda always

felt itself to have a special relationship with the British and be deserving of special consideration by the British.

Q: *Was Buganda the largest territory and was it part of the area that included Kampala?*

VAN OSS: Yes. Buganda is the central portion north of Lake Victoria. It is an inner core that covers about a third of the area of Uganda.

Q: *Were they about a third of the population as well?*

VAN OSS: As I recall, roughly a third out of a total of about 7 or 8 million people.

Q: *So most of the people in Kampala would be Baganda.*

VAN OSS: I suppose you are right, but there was a large contingent of bureaucrats who were not Baganda.

My point in all this...we were trying to think of hints of trouble to come...the Baganda didn't get along well with other tribal areas. There was a saying that although the Baganda were the richest and the cleverest, Uganda would never be governed by a Muganda, it would always be a northerner who governs Uganda. And indeed this may well prove to be true, Obote was a Langi from Lira and Idi Amin was a Kakwa from West Nile, so they certainly were northerners. The Baganda have not really had control over the entire country since Uganda's independence.

So had we paid more attention and taken tribalism a little more seriously at the time we were there, we might have foreseen what was going to happen. But this was all submerged pretty much in the preparations for independence. People seemed to be working together regardless of tribe in the legislative council. The underlying animosities simply were not very much in evidence.

Now there was a great deal of animosity in the beginning between Obote, when he was president of the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), and the Kabaka. They had gotten together a few months before the final election, immediately prior to the independence ceremonies when the Ugandans would take over the government. The Kabaka's group called Kabaka Yekka formed an alliance with the Uganda Peoples Congress and defeated the Democratic Party, which became the opposition party. So Obote and the Kabaka were in cahoots for a while and were working together. The agreement was that the Kabaka would become the president, or the ceremonial head of the country, and Obote would be the prime minister, or the executive head. That took place and stayed in position for a year or so. But the personalities of Obote and the Kabaka were such that the partnership could never last, although this was not apparent at the time. If we had analyzed this arrangement more carefully, we probably should have foreseen even while I was still there that this marriage of convenience could never last.

So, yes, the elements were in place for the destruction of Uganda, but they seemed to be in eclipse and all the signs were positive as of the time I left.

On the positive side again, before we get away from this...other positive elements were the fact that there seemed to be complete racial harmony in the country. By that I mean there were a number of interracial marriages among quite well-known people. The English Director of the Kampala museum was married to a Kiganda woman. The head of the Aga Khan school, Brendan McCourt, was married to a Chagga from Tanganyika. There was a great deal of social intercourse between whites and blacks.

Also on the positive side there was a very strong women's movement. There were some very powerful women there. Pouma Kissosonkole who started life as a Xhosa in South Africa was married to Chris Kissosonkole, a prominent Buganda notable. She was really an important official in the international women's movement. Rebecca Mulire was another very impressive woman. Sara Entiko was a member of the legislative council and married to a Tanganyikan artist. There were a number of other well-educated, strong women. In other words, they were not all by any means sitting in the entrances to huts and grinding meal.

One of the fascinating things about Buganda, I thought, was the Kabaka's court. The Kabaka at this time was Freddy Mutesa II who was a young man in his late thirties or early forties. He had been exiled briefly in the early 1950s. That was a traumatic experience for the Baganda and he was eventually brought back in triumph. Among his people he was very well regarded and even revered. He was the spirit and the soul of Buganda. When he was in a room no Muganda could be in a higher place than the Kabaka. In other words, if he was seated, his subjects coming into the same room had to crawl in on their knees. This was always an astonishing thing for visitors from the States to see; even the Kiganda Minister of Finance had to come in on his knees.

The Kabaka, himself, was a quiet, soft-spoken young man. He was also very arcane and very devious. He rarely came out and said exactly what he meant on anything. If you asked him a question he would mumble, "Weeeeeell, yes," or "Hmmmmm, perhaps." He would speak in such a way that you could draw all kinds of inferences, but couldn't pin down exactly what his views were.

One thing that he was very clear on, however, was his opposition to the East African Federation. The East African Federation (EAF) was a brain child of the British who thought that East Africa would be a better economic and political unit with Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda joined together as three partners. While some of the Ugandans were not all that opposed to EAF, the Baganda were. The Kabaka was definitely opposed to it. The reason, I think behind his opposition, was that he felt Kenya was dominated by white settlers and that if Uganda entered into an East African Federation with Kenya, eventually the whites would extend their control over the whole area. He didn't want that. So in his own way he was an ardent African nationalist. But he also was an elitist. He was convinced of the superiority of his tribe, of his nation, and he did not contemplate lightly any situation developing in Uganda in which Buganda took a secondary role.

Q: *Wasn't Nyerere in favor of this Federation?*

VAN OSS: Yes, Nyerere was a very foresighted, intelligent man. He was educated at Makerere University and I think he, in principle, thought the East African Federation was the way to go.

Q: *I just wondered if Nyerere's positive attitude influenced the Kabaka's negative attitude?*

VAN OSS: No, I don't think so. I think the Kabaka came to this on his own. He was also very clever. He was a graduate of Sandhurst and spoke perfect English. If you threw a blanket over his head and heard him talk you wouldn't know he was an African, which is most unusual. Almost 99 percent of the Africans have a distinctive accent of one sort or another when they speak English.

To go to the Kabaka's palace to see him was quite an experience. His palace was a series of very large wooden and thatched-roofed structures. Very elegant, but still basic. There was always drumming going on and music of some sort. The drumming changed whenever the Kabaka would move from one building to another so that somebody in the know could tell exactly where the Kabaka was at all times.

The Kabaka, himself, spoke in a very low voice. My hearing is not the most acute in the world so I was constantly straining to hear what he had to say and the fact that he never spoke very directly on any subject made it extremely difficult to know what he really did say. I suspect that this was done purposely, to give himself the utmost flexibility on every conceivable subject.

There were a number of courtyards and gardens in the palace complex. Whenever he had a reception at night there would be fountains bubbling and a band playing in the background. These receptions would take place in different parts of the palace grounds on different occasions. If you shut your eyes and just listened to the ambiance and the sound you might have thought you were in the Buckingham Palace grounds. That might be a little farfetched, but it wasn't all that different. His ministers were all dressed in dark suits and neckties as was he. These were very dignified, rather pleasant occasions; more European in character than African.

Q: *When you arrived in Kampala in 1960, what were the conditions that you found? What was our Consulate like?*

VAN OSS: There was really nothing unusual about the Consulate. It had just been elevated into a Consulate General so I gloried in that promotion. The housing was quite decent. We first lived on Kololo Hill. We moved very shortly to another place on Makindi Hill, which is right outside of town and one of the nicest places I have ever been in. It was a bungalow, a typical, old, British style bungalow located on top of a hill. We had nine acres of garden and forest around the bungalow. It was the hill that the Kabaka was born on. Our bungalow had a beautiful view of the city of Kampala, Lake Victoria, and surrounding flat top hills. It had a beautiful climate, cool and invigorating. Really one of the most pleasant places I have ever been in in my life.

That is not to say that we didn't have some rather strange experiences. One of them being that our bungalow was in the path of an army ant march. We saw it coming because snakes, insects, and rodents came out of the bushes in flight so we knew something was happening.

Q: *You mean they were getting out of the way?*

VAN OSS: Yes. Then the ants came. They don't come in a broad path, they come in a narrow line about two inches wide and there are thousands and thousands and thousands of them. In fact, after they have passed, the grass is worn away in the two inch wide path. In this case, they came right at the house. We had surrounded the house with ant repellent and this probably deflected them from going inside. But they were underneath the foundations, in all the crevasses, all over the place. And you could easily see how a baby, for example, could be just consumed by these ants...they get into the lungs, nose, eyes, crawl all over.

Q: *That is why the animals were fleeing.*

VAN OSS: Oh yes, any living thing in the path of one of these army ant migrations is in for bad trouble.

Q: *And there is no stopping them?*

VAN OSS: No stopping them. You can deflect them by means of chemicals, I suppose, but it is hard. We were lucky. The one good thing about it is that they go in this rather narrow line so they don't disperse all over the place, unless you step on that path. Then you disperse them and they crawl all over you.

Also once a black mamba snake slithered into the house. I was at the office and the gardeners killed it. My wife was quite excited at that.

We saw monkeys up on Makindi. There were wonderful trails to walk on. There were probably leopards too, but I never saw one.

In any event, our accommodations were basically fine, nothing to complain about. They were not modern and were not luxurious, but they were just comfortable and pleasant. In fact everything about the post was pleasant.

We had about, in our heyday, five officers in the Consulate General, five in AID and several in USIS. Then we had about two dozen local employees, Ugandan nationals of one sort or another. So all together there were about three dozen of us at our peak. When we turned into an Embassy after independence, that number expanded by quite a good deal. When I first got there it was considerably smaller than that.

Our relations with the State Department were splendid, I think. The Department could not have been more helpful in every respect until the very end when they reassigned me somewhere; I didn't like that very much. But apart from that I can't complain about my treatment.

The head of the African Bureau, the Assistant Secretary, was Joe Satterthwaite. After Kennedy was elected, Governor Mennen Williams of Michigan was appointed. Mennen Williams was almost worth a tape by himself, but I won't go into that because I am sure many people have known him. As you know he was a presidential candidate. The good thing about Soapy Williams was that he was a fighter, he was interested in Africa and he did more to put Africa on the map than any other American. He had his weaknesses. He was egotistical, a typical politician in many

ways. But he was also as strong as a horse and had the best will in the world. He was a good man to work under in most ways.

The Desk officers that I had were all good, sympathetic and cooperative. So I can't complain about relations with the Department. When we had personnel difficulties they supported us. When we needed people, they assigned them. And it is interesting to note that my number two...when I went out there it was a fellow by the name of Hap Funk, who was later killed in an automobile accident in Kenya, but he was a splendid officer, one of the best I have ever had. His place was taken by a gentleman named Hank Cohen, who now is Assistant Secretary for African Affairs in the Department. He was equally fine and certainly slated for stardom. I can't really say that I had anything to do with his later eminence. But there is one thing I did do for him; I taught him how to use a stick shift on a land rover, something he hadn't learned up to that time.

Q: *How about your national employees? Were they from different tribes?*

VAN OSS: They were from every conceivable tribe. I would say the dominant group was from the Baganda. But we had Aggrey Willis a Luo related to Oginga Odinga, one of the main African leaders in Kenya. We had some Indian employees. My driver Athmani, as I recall was a Muslim from Toro. Our own household staff...our laundry amah was from Toro. The head "boy" or head servant, was a Muganda, etc. We made a point of not having them all from one ethnic group. We also made it a point of not separating them. They each had their own place to live next to our bungalow, not very elegant quarters, but clean with modern bathroom facilities. While they probably would have preferred to be farther apart from each other because of their tribal differences, I didn't pay too much attention, feeling that by example we should down-play ethnic differences.

I might say also that all of us in the African Bureau in those days...the African Bureau really didn't come into existence until about 1959. There had been people working on Africa like Joe Palmer, Bill Witman, etc. But these were assigned to the Near East Bureau. Some of the African countries were handled by the desk officers of their colonial masters. It was only around 1959 that Satterthwaite became the first Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. I think I was part of the first group of African specialists after the original few like Joe Palmer and Bill Witman who specialized in Africa affairs years before anybody else.

Q: *Mike Hoyt came in.*

VAN OSS: Yes, I remember him.

So, our relations with the Ugandan employees, I thought, were very good. They came to our parties. They were treated like everybody else. Unfortunately their salaries were not very high, but that was true of Foreign Service locally hired personnel all over the world in those days. The Department tried to economize by paying local wages.

Q: *I can remember doing the local wage surveys we had to do every couple of years.*

VAN OSS: Yes, we made a point of not out-bidding the average organization in the country where we were stationed, because that could lead to hard feelings and enhance our negative image as rich Americans.

While we are talking about relations with the people, we had a very successful cultural exchange program in Uganda. The U.S. government sponsored some really top grade entertainment that we brought to Uganda. For example, we had Holiday On Ice, which came in with a huge lift van filled with special ice making equipment. You must understand that most Africans had never seen ice or at least most in Kampala had never seen ice. There may be ice on the top of the Mountains of the Moon in the western part of Uganda, but there certainly is none in Kampala. So we had an arena, a basketball court I think it was, filled with ice and lots of Ugandan spectators sitting in the bleachers. As the first two members of the chorus came out and glided onto the ice one heard an "Ohhhhhh" of wonderment from the audience. I think the audience appreciated those first two slides more than they did all the other intricate skating and acrobatics that went on afterwards. That first impression of gliding on ice was like magic to them.

We also had the Golden Gate Quartet. This was interesting because many Ugandans came up to me afterwards and asked, "Are those American blacks?" I said, "Yes." And they said, "Are you sure they are not American whites who are made up to look like blacks?" I said, "No, they are genuine American blacks." At the party we gave for them Ugandans would come up to one of the singers and would say something to the effect, "You are our brother." And the singer would say, "No, I am not. I am an American." This was before American blacks thought much about returning to their roots. They were proud to be Americans and we were proud of them.

We had Louis Armstrong. He came with his combo and gave several concerts. He was sponsored by the U.S. government. We probably made a mistake, but we accepted Pepsi Cola's offer to stage the event because the Consulate General didn't have any money for such purposes. Pepsi Cola hired the football stadium and put out all sorts of advertisement. We told Pepsi Cola that we would not tolerate any active commercialization at the concert, but they were welcome to have it generally known that they were sponsoring it. Of course Louis Armstrong was not thoroughly briefed on that point and after he said his guttural good night to everybody as he did after all his concerts at home, he said, "Good night all, good night all, drink your Pepsi Cola." I had to ask him afterwards not to say that again and he agreed not to.

We took Armstrong and his wife to see the Kabaka. He had a singer with him, a very corpulent female whose name I have forgotten. She did a lot of gymnastics while singing and at that altitude it was apparently too much of a strain, because in Kenya later during the middle of her performance she keeled over and died. Well, in any event she was still alive in Uganda and she and Louis and his wife, and I think one other went with me to call on the Kabaka. They were very anxious to meet "King Freddy," as they called him.

King Freddy received them in his palace. Various Buganda officials who were great Louis Armstrong fans came into the royal chamber on their knees, and Louis' eyes just popped out of his head when he saw that. At one point the Kabaka, who was amused by all this, trying to make conversation said, "Well, Mr. Armstrong, to what do you attribute your perpetual youthfulness and enthusiasm" Louis Armstrong replied, "Oh, King Freddy, I attribute it to Ex-Lax. Every

night after dinner I take Ex-Lax and my wife does too." The Kabaka gave an embarrassed smile--he didn't quite know how to handle that one. Anyway, Louis' visit was an overwhelming success.

We also had an interesting boxing program. One of the American AID employees, an American named Mitch Biedul, was a former boxer and boxing coach. If there is any sport that the Ugandans like besides soccer and wrestling, it is boxing. They had several amateurs who went quite far in one of the Olympics. Mitch Biedul became their coach. While we were there we invited some American Golden Glove boxers out to box the Ugandans. We had a great evening of boxing. The Americans won two matches, one was tied and they lost a match...a steal I might add, as the officials were heavily prejudiced in Uganda's favor. But never mind, it made for a friendly evening.

What else did we have? We had a conference on African-American poetry. Langston Hughes showed up for that. I had the pleasure of meeting and chatting with him. There were a number of other well-known African poets and black American academicians and writers. It was a very interesting event.

That was really a golden period for our relations with Africa...this early period right before and during the final moments before independence. It was a time of hope for Africans and Americans alike. We in the African Bureau had high hopes that the Africans in some way could find a short cut to stability, could learn from the experiences of the West and in effect could achieve instant democracy instead of having to go through a long period of apprenticeship, trial and error and several hundred years of history to accomplish it. And, of course, we were wrong, but we had high hopes in those days. A lot of that was due to Soapy Williams' enthusiasm, combativeness and success in convincing the U.S. government to provide aid and money. I don't think we have been that successful since in helping Africa.

One of the most important things we did during this great period of enthusiasm was to put into being a very large program of providing teachers for East Africa. I think we sent something like 250 young Americans, all college graduates, some of them with teaching certificates, most of them without. The understanding was that those without teaching certificates would take a full school term of special instruction in British teaching techniques at Makerere University. In my own opinion I didn't think they needed that; I thought they were perfectly able to go out at once and teach. But the British are a little bit stuffy about their education system and tended to look down on our American system. They didn't accept our teaching standards or teaching certificates, so they insisted on this training period. We agreed because we felt it was worth it to get these young Americans in.

So for the better part of a semester, maybe it was two semesters, we had dozens and dozens of Americans at Makerere University studying alongside the African students. They really put a new dimension into Makerere. They did all sorts of things...put on plays, organized extra curricular events, more than carried their weight. Eventually they dispersed to schools throughout East Africa. About a third stayed in Uganda and the rest went to Kenya and Tanzania.

That was a highly successful program. Eventually it was taken over by the Peace Corps. While it was going on a special supervisor, I think his name was Fielding or Fields, came out from

Columbia University Teachers College, the sponsoring organization at home. The U.S. government supplied the money, but Columbia Teachers College picked the students and supervised them in the early stages. It was a great experience for everybody...for me, the students, the Ugandans...I think it was very helpful to all. I don't know what eventually happened to the program, whether the Peace Corps sustained it. I suspect that the whole thing fell apart during the Idi Amin catastrophe.

One of the delights of being in Uganda at this period was that we could do a lot of traveling. Uganda is a beautiful country. Each district has its own characteristics which, I think, account for the differences between the tribal units. You have the Mountains of the Moon in the west, savannah like country in the south, and the hilly country in the Kigesi area, etc.

I did a lot of traveling and was always happy to be on the road. Accommodations were usually reasonably acceptable and the people were always extremely friendly. There were many interesting things to see. For example, in a place called Soroti, up in the northern area, there was a school for the blind which was run by a Nun, Sister Viani. I used to visit the school every time I was in the area because I found it so appealing and impressive. These youngsters, who were mostly born blind, had they not been taken in by the school might have perished because Ugandans in the villages don't know what to do with imperfect human beings. If somebody has had polio, for example, they crawl around and are fed, but a blind youngster is left to his own resources often getting into life threatening difficulties.

The school for the blind must have had five or six dozen blind youngsters of all ages. They were taught all sorts of things...how to play musical instruments, dance. It was really an emotional experience to see these little kids playing on drums, tubas, violins and dancing around. Granted these were British country dances, not African dances, but it was an interesting thing to have in that country.

There were also a number of monasteries run by monks...a number of American monks as a matter of fact. They were always great fun, were delighted to see somebody from the States and to have a new face appear in their midst.

Out in Toro Father McCauley, an American, was ordained a Bishop while I was there. They had a special ceremony for him. He was very well-known and a very fine man.

The northeastern portion of the country is a very wild area called Karamoja. The Karamojong, I guess, were the most primitive people in Uganda, if not in Africa. The men run around without any clothes except for a dark blanket or cloak. They have very elaborate headdresses, caking their hair with mud and cow dung and then letting the whole mess harden and painting it in elaborate colors. They sleep with a special stand under their necks so that the hair will not be mussed while they're asleep. They keep the headdresses intact for as long as they last, which is quite a considerable length of time. They are very interesting people, cattle raisers.

The real old Ugandan hands, the British who had been in Uganda all their lives and loved it, liked that part of Uganda the best because it is the least changed. It is closest to what has always existed there.

Q: *Nomadic?*

VAN OSS: Nomadic, although a lot of them have settled around Moroto and have started to engage in agricultural pursuits. The Catholic missionaries have tried to teach them that. The main problem is that the young Karamojong and the Turkana in neighboring Kenya have standing feuds. The Turkana come and raid the cattle of the Karamojong and then the Karamojong young men go out and blood their spears by taking cattle back from the Turkana and killing a few Turkanas here and there in the process.

That, in fact, is where Idi Amin apparently got his first fame. After Ugandan independence the Uganda government wanted to put a stop to all this nonsense of raids and counter raids between the Karamajong and the Turkana. So after the Turkana committed one of their annual raids the Ugandan government sent up a detachment of soldiers under the command of then-buck sergeant Amin. He took the detachment into Turkana and absolutely razed a Turkana village. There was quite a bit of flak over that. It was the first time he had come to anybody's attention. This was after I had left so I have the story second hand.

I did travel to Karamoja so I saw it. In fact, I went to all corners of the country and was interested in all of them. There was another interesting group in the eastern part of Uganda on the flanks of Mount Elgon, the Sebei. At one point, these people declared their "independence" and were allowed to become a separate district. However, the Sebei treated this as being independent. They held an independence ceremony and I went up there. There was an American anthropologist who was spending his time doing research in Sebei country. That was highly interesting.

So I have done my share of African dancing along with all the others at various ceremonies.

There was one fascinating place on the Kagera River, which flows into Lake Victoria near the border with Tanzania and has as good a claim as any to being the ultimate source of the Nile, that we were very fond of visiting. It was run by an Italian lady named Toni Nuti, who was a hunter and a well- known character in the area. She and her husband had planned to build a hotel on an island in the middle of the Kagera River. He had died before the hotel was finished. In order to stay alive she took in paying guests in her own house. She had four guest bedrooms with baths.

I used to go down there whenever I was in the area and would often take the family down. Toni was a lover of animals and had her own pet antelopes, civet cat in a cage in her window, a sort of pet hippopotamus, although she couldn't get anywhere near him, who made his home on the island and whom she called Lord Nelson. You could get up to about fifty yards of Lord Nelson and then it would begin to show signs of hostility and if you were wise you would beat a hasty retreat. Toni Nuti was a great character, a fine woman, but of the old school. Definitely a colonial type, but still great fun and somebody well worth knowing.

Speaking of that part of Uganda, if you go over a little bit you get to the southernmost tip of Uganda or Kigesi which borders on Rwanda. Shortly before, while we were still in Uganda, neighboring Rwanda erupted into civil war and the lower class Hutu laid waste to the aristocratic

Watusi. A lot of Watusi fled across the border into Uganda and camped in the southern part of Kigesi. These refugees were in bad shape. They were the typical Watusi, tall, slender, good looking people. We (the U.S. government) sent a lot of flour down there to feed the refugees. I took some of it down myself and presented it to the refugees making a little public relations act, taking pictures, etc.

One interesting thing was that the flour was made from sorghum and was yellow in color. The refugees didn't want to eat it because the flour they were accustomed to was white. One of our AID officers from Kenya who was helping in the presentation took it upon himself to explain that the sorghum was a perfectly good flour, so good that we fed it to our cattle in the U.S. I don't remember how I got over that one, but some way or other I persuaded them that while it may be true that cattle ate sorghum, it was also consumed by the best people in the United States and was perfectly decent, acceptable, edible flour. They did eventually eat it and were happy to have it.

Q: *Can you tell us a little bit about the political situation in Uganda during this time?*

VAN OSS: That is a good question. I suppose you could divide the political situation into two general parts. The first was the series of events that concerned the relationship between Buganda and the rest of Uganda. The second was what you might call the striving for independence and the movement toward independence in Uganda as a whole, which was really more important and more interesting to the outside world.

As to the first, when I first arrived in Kampala I was paying my calls on various Ugandan government officials and decided to pay calls on certain Bugandan officials as well because I knew they were very proud and would feel slighted if I didn't. So I made an arrangement to see Michael Kintu, who was then Katikero, or prime minister of Buganda. I frankly admit that I was not thoroughly enough briefed on this point or I would have handled it a little bit differently. What happened was that when I went to see Kintu, he ushered me into a room where there were a number of other gentlemen sitting. It turned out that he was right in the middle of a Buganda cabinet meeting. He had summoned his cabinet to receive the American representative. I had not been pre-warned and had no idea that he was going to do this. It had not occurred to me that this would present any problem whatsoever. So, I went in, nonetheless, shook hands and said "Hello" to everybody. The first question was asked by Amos Sempa, the Buganda Finance Minister, a small, sharp, very chauvinistic Bugandan. He asked, "Why has not the United States government given assistance to the nation of Buganda?" I was taken back by that. I said, "I think we have given assistance to Uganda," not being aware at that early moment of what exact point he was driving at. He said, "Yes, but why not Buganda? We have our own government." Fortunately, Abu Mayanja who was a Bugandan I had met in Washington before I came out to Uganda, came to my rescue. He was one of the more enlightened Bugandans. He said, "Well, Mr. Sempa, this is not a proper question to ask the American Consul General. I am sure that he does not want to hurt your feelings, but it is not necessarily appropriate for the American government to be giving assistance to a Ugandan province." Sempa was a little miffed by that, of course, as he was trying to trip me up. At that point I caught on to what was happening and found the right words to say that we would of course look into the matter but generally speaking our assistance is given to the

national government in place. Apparently my explanation appeased him, as he did not pursue the matter.

The only reason I mention this is to emphasize that one had to be careful all the time, especially when dealing with ardent Bugandan nationalists. One had to show awareness of their differences from other Ugandans, their place in the sun, of their claim to existence as a separate entity. And, of course, in the early days, soon after I arrived, Buganda was beginning to agitate more and more for so-called independence. As I indicated before, Buganda actually did declare its independence in December 1960, soon after we had arrived. The British were very concerned about this development because it had nothing to do with the preparations that they were already beginning to make to give Uganda as a whole its independence. But Buganda claimed it had a special treaty relationship with the British and under that treaty they wanted to be independent from the rest of Uganda. They claimed a right to get their own independence. If the British wouldn't give it to them, they would declare themselves independent anyway and indeed they did. But afterwards the British simply paid no attention. The government of Uganda at that time was in British hands and they simply smiled and went on doing exactly what they had been doing, as if the Buganda declaration of independence had never taken place.

And, indeed, the Buganda, themselves, didn't make very much of it except for a bit of drumming the day after independence was declared. But when the time came for them to get their annual stipend from the British government they conveniently forgot they were independent and accepted the cash with the greatest of pleasure.

While still on Buganda, I might explain that Buganda had its own parliament, its own cabinet, its own governmental structure which was roughly comparable to the state governmental structures in the United States. And it carried out local government activities with the approval of their British protectors.

Q: *Unlike any other tribal area?*

VAN OSS: Some of the other tribal areas had similar structures but of a lower order. What they had in effect were simply courts and social structures, monarchies without any real power. The Omukama of Toro, for example, had his palace, which was just a big house. You called him "Your Highness" when you went to see him. Some of his servants came in on their knees but not to the extent they did in Buganda. Banyoro was probably closest to Buganda in structural terms. The Banyoro, of course, laid claim to part of Buganda, the so-called lost provinces of Bunyoro, which were taken over by the Buganda in the course of their age old struggles with Banyoro.

So a distinction between Buganda and the rest of Uganda was always there and it was a kind of side show to the main developments that were taking place politically throughout the country.

Now, the main political scene. Before I went out to Uganda I heard people like Abu Mayanja, George Kigezi and others, talking about their struggles for independence. They did their best to struggle for independence, but, of course, the British at that point had decided they were going to give Uganda its independence so there wasn't much actual struggling going on when I got there.

There wasn't even much posturing. The battle had been won. They knew they were going to get their independence so this was the administrative preparation stage.

What happened was that the British arranged for elections to be held. These elections were for an interim government which would take control under British tutelage. Some of the British institutions would remain in place. Then the interim government would prepare for the real thing which the British had decided would be on October 9, 1962. This was decided after various conferences with Ugandans and British participating.

Now this is where Buganda independence comes in. When the elections for the interim government were being arranged, most of the Buganda boycotted the elections. The only people in Buganda district who did not join the boycott and who voted were members of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party, predominantly Catholic, was headed by a lawyer named Benedicto Kiwanuka. I believe he was the brother, certainly a relative, of Joseph "Jolly Joe" Kiwanuka, who was one of the original nationalists in Uganda, one of those who really did fight for independence, who was put in jail and for a while accepted by the unknowing Western world as the leader of Uganda's independence movement. In actuality he never did have much of a following and was not an important factor during my time in Uganda.

Benedicto Kiwanuka was a Catholic and I suppose I had better interject here that one of the differences and areas of conflict within Uganda was the religious one. There was a very strong Protestant element, a very strong Catholic element and a very strong Muslim element. The Protestant element tended to be the main religious grouping in Buganda district. The Muslims were in the south and north. The Catholics were spread fairly evenly throughout the country, and there was a significant number in Buganda, who did not really approve of the Buganda independence movement and who supported the interim elections.

The Democratic Party, therefore, won all the Buganda seats...or I think all but one. That really gave Benedicto Kiwanuka's party the victory over Obote and the United Peoples Congress, which by all rights should have won that election because they got the majority of seats in the areas outside of Buganda. But the Buganda seats gave the Democratic Party the election even though they were not the majority party in terms of overall support.

So Benedicto Kiwanuka took over as chief minister and as the first Ugandan head of an all-Ugandan government. He really couldn't govern because he didn't have enough support. He didn't have support within Buganda because his people who supported him comprised only about 10 percent of all Buganda. Eventually Obote and the Uganda Peoples Congress formed an alliance with the Kabaka's supporters who included the overwhelming majority of Baganda. These had formed a political grouping, which claimed that it was not a party exactly, but a movement called Kabaka Yekka, meaning "Kabaka Forever." It was a party of Kabaka supporters. Obote very shrewdly...Obote had very shrewd advisers--Grace Ibingiro, for example, George Kigese, etc...they advised him to try to form an alliance with the Kabaka, which hitherto had been considered a highly unlikely event because the two didn't see eye to eye on anything. The Kabaka was very conservative, Obote considered himself a socialist.

However, Obote was a shrewd politician and knew that to win the election for the government that was going to take over after independence he needed the support of the Baganda. So he formed his alliance with Kabaka Yekka. One of the things I am happiest about in my own reporting is that I foresaw this merger at a time when the people in the Department did not expect it. I predicted it and it came about. It is not often that one's predictions come true, so one cherishes the few times that they do occur.

So the Kabaka Yekka/UPC alliance was formed and won an overwhelming majority and was in position to take charge after independence ceremony. Actually they took over before that on a preliminary basis. Obote became the first real prime minister of independent Uganda.

Q: *He is the one who had J.C. Simpson as economic minister?*

VAN OSS: Yes, Simpson was biracial, that is, he worked effectively with Africans and British alike.

Q: *Also Patel, the Indian?*

VAN OSS: Yes. I have forgotten which ministry he ran. Simpson was a very friendly, intelligent businessman who worked very closely with both the Kabaka and other people in Uganda. He was made their first Minister for Economic Affairs. He was a good, able man.

People have often asked me if I knew Idi Amin and whether he was a factor in Uganda during my assignment there and I can say that he was not. He was then a sergeant in the army. His chief fame was as former heavy weight boxing champion of Uganda. I didn't even know of him as that because he was passe by the time I arrived. There was another heavy weight champion named Okello, if I remember correctly, who was given a thorough thrashing by one of the American Golden Glove amateurs who came in to compete against Ugandan boxers. In fact the fellow who gave him a thrashing was a light heavy weight named Martin. He wasn't even a full fledged heavy weight. He eventually became a professional boxer in the United States and did quite well.

So Idi Amin was not in evidence. There was no way of knowing that he was going to be appointed a general shortly after the British left. And there was no way for me to predict that he was going to be the vehicle through whom Obote eventually got rid of the Kabaka, forcing the Kabaka into exile. That whole episode was after my time. I suppose we should have been able to predict it because of the vast differences between Obote and the Kabaka. As I have said, the Kabaka was a very arcane, mysterious sort of person. He spoke in oracular verse almost. You had to interpret virtually everything he said and it could be done in many ways. He knew his people and he worked underground, behind the scenes. He did not go public, he was a manipulator. Obote was a political creature.

Q: *What tribe did he come from?*

VAN OSS: He was a Langi and came from Lira. I think he was of royal blood, but he was not accepted at Budo College (the Eton of Uganda), if I remember correctly, or perhaps he wasn't accepted at Oxford. In any event, this left a mark on him. He had a perpetual chip on his

shoulder. He always seemed suspicious. As he sat in the legislative council, I would see him glaring out from under heavy eye brows as his colleagues were talking. And yet when one got to know him he had an appealing side to him. He had a warm smile and as with most politicians there was something likable about him, otherwise he probably wouldn't have made it to the top.

One little personal episode. Shortly after the final election we had a party at my house for Obote and his cabinet. One of my guests was Freddy Reinhardt who was then U.S. Ambassador in Rome. He was on a hunting trip in Africa and was ejected from his hotel because he didn't have the proper reservations. I heard about it and invited him and his wife to stay with us. So he happened to be there at the time. The whole cabinet came. When Obote entered the room he was carrying the ubiquitous cane that all African leaders seem to carry as a token of leadership, or scepter or mace of power. He came in with his cane and my second son, who was then about six or seven at that time, spotted the cane. He loved to play the part of Zorro with canes. He seized it as Obote came in the door. Obote said, "Oh, no, no, you can't have that cane, but I will see to it that you get a better one."

I had forgotten all about this and a few weeks later I was in Obote's office for some reason or other, and he handed me a beautiful, white and blue beaded ceremonial cane. He said that I should give that to my son in place of the one he couldn't have. Which I did. That was a very nice thing for him to have done.

Q: *Does he still have it?*

VAN OSS: Yes, it's upstairs.

Anyway Obote and the Kabaka were completely different personalities. The Kabaka paraded in public, of course, and was revered when he paraded. People planted palm fronds and that sort of thing and bowed down before him. But this was ceremonial. Obote was a politician. He made speeches in the legislative council. He was a power hungry, ambitious person. We should have foreseen that Kabaka and Obote could not really function together as a working team. The Kabaka would never accept Obote's prominence and Obote would always resent anything the Kabaka did behind his back. You must understand that an African leader probably is in the mode of traditional African chiefs. An African leader is in effect a tribal chief. Everything goes through him. Everything is decided by him. He wants to know everything that goes on right down to the dotting of an i and crossing of a t. I guess we should have known that Obote would never accept the behind-the-scenes maneuvering at which the Kabaka was so adept. Even if the Kabaka was doing nothing harmful, Obote would consider the mere fact that he was doing something that he (Obote) hadn't authorized in advance and hadn't been briefed on thoroughly, would be suspicious, and would assume that the Kabaka must be doing something that would undermine his position as prime minister. And, indeed, maybe the Kabaka <u>was</u> undermining him.

Now continuing along these lines, we should have been able to predict that Langi and Baganda would never get along. While the British were in control such animosities were submerged in the greater aim of striving for independence and then preparing for independence and getting the government set up. But once the British had left, these animosities came to the forefront and indeed ruined the country. But this was all after I had left. We hoped that the animosities would

remain submerged and indeed in the day-to-day functioning of the government, while I was there, they seemed to be in abeyance.

Q: *So you had every reason to hope?*

VAN OSS: Yes, all these people seemed to be friendly with each other. Even Ben Kiwanuka, the minority leader, was accepted. He would raise Cain with the opposition in the parliamentary proceedings, but then at the tea break the two sides would sip tea and joke with each other. Things seemed to be harmonious, like a little London House of Commons.

Q: *But it was just a copy, it wasn't the real thing.*

VAN OSS: As soon as the British left animosities must have started to build and that is for somebody else to relate because it didn't take place during my time. But it is so sad that it had to develop that way, because the way things were developing while I was there seemed almost ideal and one could see all sorts of hopeful signs.

One of the hopeful signs, for example, was the position of the Indians who were a distinct minority, but a very well-to-do minority. There were at least three special Indian groups. The first was the Indian Ishmaili, the followers of the Aga Khan. They had their own school and were prominent in Kampala. They were very well-to-do, had much of the business in that area, were socially eminent and seemed to be accepted by all. The other two groups were the Mehta group, which owned huge sugar plantations in Uganda, and the Madvani group which was also in sugar, steel and other industries. Both Mehta and Madvani were highly educated, rich, intelligent and attractive Indians. They were well treated and an integral part of the economy. There was no reason to believe that Idi Amin, later when he was in control, would kick them all out of Uganda. I understand that now under Museveni that "Sugar" Mehta is going or has gone back to Uganda. I think Madvani has died, but I don't know for sure. But treatment of Indians is another thing that seemed to be going positively in my day, but turned out badly.

Q: *Are there any other particular characters of interest you can tell us about who were there?*

VAN OSS: Well it is hard to know where to begin and where to stop. One of the more interesting personages was Prince George of Toro, the Omukama of Toro. He was the equivalent of the Kabaka of Buganda, but his bailiwick was Toro, a province in the western part of Uganda--a beautiful part of the world. Now George of Toro was no Kabaka. His "palace" was a relatively small house. He had attendants and a "court" and he was respected, but he had no real power except socially. He was very amusing. He was a great drinker, loved his champaign. I remember once going to visit him and he was lying in bed with his bandaged foot stretched out on the counterpane saying, "Look at me, gout. I am immobilized by gout." He had a great sense of humor. He had been to the States, I think on a Leader Grant. But in any event he had formed a close friendship with an American wrestler. He was very much interested in wrestling. He was a big fellow himself and probably would have been a good wrestler if he had ever tried it. His main claim to fame was that he was the father of Elizabeth of Toro, who eventually became Ugandan Ambassador to the United States and also, eventually Foreign Minister for a brief period under Idi Amin, who treated her abominably. He accused her of all sorts of terrible things,

one being that she had sexual intercourse with somebody in the bathroom of an airport. It was the sort of thing that he did. She was a highly intelligent, very good looking young woman who made a name for herself in her own right. I don't know what has happened to her since. His son, Stephen was also well-known. George, I am afraid has passed on. A very amusing, nice person and of royal blood, in African terms.

There are other interesting people, John Babiho. He was a mountain climber. He had climbed the Mountains of the Moon more frequently than any other living being. One time an American trying to climb the Mountains developed pneumonia, fell hurting his lung and had to be evacuated from the mountain. John Babiho was one of the men who helped to evacuate him. He eventually became minister of forestry or something like that in the Obote government.

Then, of course, there was Godfrey Binaisa, who was attorney general under Obote. He was a close friend of the Consulate General while we were there. A very bright person. He became president after Vincent Lule, who had taken over after Idi Amin was deposed with the help of Tanzanian soldiers. Godfrey Binaisa lasted for a very short time. Then there was an election. Obote was voted back in from his exile in Tanzania.

There was one man I want to mention whom I thought a great deal of and that was Dowdi Ocheng. He was an Acholi, the brother of Martin Aliker. Martin Aliker was a dentist who had been educated in the United States at Northwestern University and who married a black American from Louisville, Kentucky. He was a very well-known, able dentist and a very close friend to all of us. In fact, we went to him for our dental work. He was also a dabbler in real estate and made a fortune by combining his dental practice with his real estate ventures. He became a good friend of Obote and was best man at Obote's wedding. This was after I left. Eventually he went to Kenya where he practiced dentistry and made a fortune.

But his brother Dowdi Ocheng was a politician by trade. He was from Acholi and a member of the Ugandan parliament. He was one of those who really opposed the Obote coup that kicked out the Kabaka. He was an idealist and very courageous. He eventually died of cancer, but he made very forthright speeches in parliament in opposition to what Obote was doing. If he hadn't died of cancer I am sure that he would have been slaughtered by Idi Amin because he was too outspoken and too courageous. He loved to talk about politics. I used to have great conversations with him. He was very informative.

Another one I might mention is Abu Mayanja, a small, slender fellow, who was very prominent in the independence movement before I got to Uganda. I met him in the States before leaving for Kampala. He told stories about leading demonstrations and how he was arrested at one point by the British, who ripped off his shirt and marched him half naked off to jail in front of others who had been arrested. He was upset at that. But I think he had to work hard at being a martyr. He didn't stay in jail very long. When he came out he joined the Kabaka's camp and became a member of the Kabaka's cabinet. He was a good friend and one of the few persons who later wrote me a nice letter of condolence at the assassination of Kennedy when I was stationed in Brazzaville.

Another person of interest was Michael Kintu who was Katikiro, or prime minister in the Kabaka's government. He was unimpressive looking, resembling a big, inflated frog. He didn't say much but he controlled the Kabaka's government with an iron hand. He was a very warm-hearted person underneath it all. I remember seeing him at a church gathering during the Christmas season. The children were putting on a play about Joseph and his multicolored coat...and it was very moving. Kintu was weeping while he was watching the kids act. I never knew he had that much sentiment. It was a moving performance, I remember that.

Grace Ibingiro was another one I might mention. He was of royal blood, related to the Omugabi of Ankole who was in turn related to Rwanda aristocracy. Grace Ibingiro was very young, still unmarried. He was an artist, a good painter and a very clever person. He was a close associate of Obote and he was the one who really engineered the Kabaka Yekka/UPC alliance behind the scenes.

Another man I would like to mention is Basil Bataringaya, a very honorable, honest, likeable politician. He was, I think, the minister of interior in Obote's first cabinet. Later, he was slaughtered by Idi Amin. A good friend, very fine, intelligent and well-educated.

One thing that I took away from Uganda was the realization of how charming African political leaders can be. How well educated some of them are. How bright they are. They need no help from us in political astuteness. They sometimes don't know all that much about economics, but in terms of how to gain popularity, how to gain power, how to keep power, they don't need our help. They can teach us lessons.

I was very happy to be in Uganda, in fact at my first party there...they have a habit of making you say a few words and you have to think of something decent to say. I was not prepared for this because it was my first party. I said, "I am delighted to be here. This is the one place in the world I most want to be, and I mean this sincerely." And I did mean it. I never changed my mind. I was always happy to be there. It was a pleasant assignment from beginning to end. The only thing less than pleasant about it was that I had to leave before the independence ceremony. I was very upset and annoyed about the timing. I didn't think it was necessary to take me out.

MICHAEL PISTOR
Public Affairs Assistant, USIS
Kampala (1960-1961)

Mr. Pistor was born in Oregon and raised in Arizona. After graduating from the University of Arizona and serving with the US Army, in 1959 he joined the United States Information Agency. He served as Public Affairs Officer in Teheran, Kampala, Douala, London and New Delhi. He also held senior positions at USIA headquarters in Washington before being appointed Ambassador to Malawi in1991. Ambassador Pistor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Did you have any thought about where you wanted to go, or was that in the laps of the gods?

PISTOR: It was kind of in the laps of the gods. We enjoyed Iran because it was so exotic and so interesting. The first post, you know how it is– just wonderful. When the time came, we got a telegram that said we would now be going to Kampala, and I said, "Well, that's either in the Far East or in Africa," and discovered immediately that it was in Africa. I know that all of our friends in Iran just blanched and thought this was just going to be a terrible place, it's awful, and "What are you going to do?" But we went, Shirley and I and our little baby, and Shirley was pregnant with our second child, whom we had in Uganda. We moved from a very large, sophisticated operation to a very small two-man post.

Q: What was Uganda like at that time?

PISTOR: It was a transition year during which Uganda changed from a Trust Territory to a fully independent nation. The British were giving up control. They had retained foreign affairs and finance, but the legislative council was elected, the first prime minister was elected, and the government was taking shape. During the time we were there, just before we left in 1962, came the flag ceremony which unfurled Uganda's national flag as the Union Jack descended. But in the months before the Independence Ceremony the majority party, Milton Obote's party, had boycotted the election and refused to take part in the political process . They just stayed at home and would have nothing to do with it, so that the small Catholic party won the election, but everybody except but the Catholic party's leaders knew it was going to be in power for a very short time. And it was– crushed by Obote's popular and powerful party once independence was reached..

Uganda was never a colony, but it displayed colonial trappings. The Governor came to the last Empire Day parade in a white uniform with egret feathers and gold braid, and the bishop was African but was wearing a black cassock and a solar topee. On the parade ground was a statue of Queen Victoria, and we saw the soldiers, African soldiers, from the First World War in their medals and their ragged old uniforms. What a marvelous thing to be able to see the very end of the Empire and with all this pride and sentiment.

We arrived in Kampala one day after Louis Armstrong got there with his small band, and we stayed in the same hotel as Armstrong and his wife Lucille. Shirley and I were able to go with him to the palace of the Kabaka, the hereditary ruler of Buganda, home of the country's largest tribe. We were entertained by the Kabaka's royal drummers, fed by the Kabaka's many servants, and bowed to and smiled at by his wives and court officials. Louis Armstrong gave us the chance to see this royal house still intact, still operating just as it had in the Nineteenth Century with ceremonies borrowed from the Court of St. James's mixed with Baganda's own royal rules and customs. It was absolutely riveting to see this before it all disappeared. Just a few years later the Kabaka – known as King Freddie by the expatriate community– and his loyalist soldiers were attacked by government troops, the palace bombed and burned out and King Freddie driven into exile in London. But during our time the Kingdom was still as it had been.

The PAO, who was expecting me to be a public affairs assistant in a bookkeeping and clerical sense, was very disappointed to see that I was just as ignorant of government accounting systems as he professed to be, and that I was eager to plunge into whatever cultural and information

opportunities Uganda offered. The PAO definitely didn't see– or want– me as a sidekick. But he and I did a film show together at the Royal Palace, at the Kabaka's command or request. Nobody could be taller or higher than the Kabaka, so the courtiers and visitors crawled on the floor in his presence, except the PAO and me. (Americans don't grovel). When do you get a chance to see literal kowtowing like that?

Q: You never do really. What was the outlook for Uganda when you got there?

PISTOR: Thank God I had no money and no influence anywhere, because if I had, I would have used my own money to bet, or the United States' money to lavish on Uganda, because this was the country that was going to lead Africa. It didn't have the colonial hang-ups, it had a very good civil service, it had a marvelous university, Makerere College. The minute you landed in Kampala, there were people you could talk to, who enjoyed talking to you about real things. They weren't kidding. They were interested, lively, educated people, and those who weren't educated wanted to be educated. I really thought Uganda was really going to take off and show the way to success at least to East Africa if not the rest of the continent. Our daughter, Julia, was born in Kampala. Her doctor was an Englishman who taught at Makerere. The hospital was small, plain and surrounded by plantains. When Shirley was taken to the delivery room, I was told to wait on the verandah just outside the door. Shortly, I heard a loud yell from Shirley and then a wail from the baby. A couple of minutes later, the door opened and I was invited in for a cup of tea with Shirley and baby Julia.

Q: Was there any repercussion from the events - I can't think what the name of them were - in Kenya?.

PISTOR: The Mau Mau.

Q: ...the Mau Mau in Kenya.

PISTOR: In Kenya in the 1950's the British colonial government had fixed on the independence leader Jomo Kenyatta as the principal designer of the bloody Mau Mau rebellion. Because Kenyatta had a large following in Kenya and throughout East Africa, they couldn't just throw him in prison without risking serious nationwide disorder, so they isolated him by sending him deep into the hinterland under house arrest, a judicial practice known as "rustication." The demand for immediate independence became so insistent that the colonial authorities were forced to move Kenyatta from "far rustication" to "near rustication." They'd had him out in the absolute wilds, and the popular pressure was so great that when they brought him closer to town they had to begin dealing with him as a legitimate negotiating partner.

This was happening during our time in Kampala. Everything in Uganda itself was on hold because of Obote's boycott of the election.. The British were pulling out, and Benedicto Kiwanuka, of the Catholic party– who was the prime minister of the day– was himself the only person who thought he was going to be able to stay in office. Everybody else knew that as soon as Obote said, "Okay, I'll join the race," that was it.

And this poor little Catholic party began almost immediately to tear down the constitutional safeguards that would make radio independent, for example, or any of these latter-day British guarantees: freedom of assembly, of speech and of the press, because he wanted for his government to be able to seize the initiative and run the place without bothersome democratic hindrances. It was very sad to watch. We thought that Uganda's five big tribal entities could transform themselves into regional party organizations, that they could move from inherited tribal animosities into nation building, and it just didn't work.

We had wonderful audiences for our programs. We were there at the time of the Kennedy-Nixon debates, and we received them from Washington on kinescope and put them on in our dingy little auditorium and library in Kampala, and people lined up all around the block to watch them. These were not sophisticated people from the university, although there were some of those too. These were just guys from on the street. Partly they'd heard there was something interesting to see at USIS, so they stood in line and came in and saw it. Some of them didn't speak English or didn't speak it well enough. You know, Kennedy is easy to hear for us, but that New England twang and rapid delivery is very difficult for somebody, say from Kampala, to grasp at first, but it didn't matter. His animation, his manner, so affected this crowd that there were cheers and applause.. He certainly won that debate in Kampala.

Q: What about Idi Amin? Was he just a non-com somewhere?

PISTOR: I guess he was a sergeant major and a boxer. I remember Shirley and me being invited to a boxing match. I wish I could say that Idi Amin was boxing, but he wasn't. There was, however, a boxing match, and we went in black tie. Local friends said, "You know, if you have mosquito boots, wear them, because you'll be nipped at the ankles." Black tie and mosquito boots— a wonderful remnant of British colonial style. I imagine it was one of the last matches with the fight fans in tuxedos. So in Kampala we had the\ chance to see the end of an era, a definitive change in the pattern of an old, strong relationship, a transition that appeared to be without serious rancor or resentment on either side.

That's why I say I would have bet on success. There was so much excitement in that country and so much hope for the future and so much talent, so many bright people in jobs already that were making a difference, and then the whole thing just went up in smoke and blood.

Q: Were you able to look at sort of the means, the media, there? Was it a good solid media?

PISTOR: No. There were two media. There was the one daily newspaper, edited by an Englishman. It was a solid paper, part of the Aga Khan's Argus Group. Then there was the indigenous press, which we also cultivated, but it was mostly about how many bottles of beer could they wring out of us. Guys sat around and got awfully drunk and then told stories about white guys and black guys.

Q: Was there much of an English or British expatriate community there, because one thinks of Kenya and it's a real problem?

PISTOR: They didn't have the problem because expatriates didn't own land. There were no white settlers. Anybody who worked in Uganda was an administrator or a contract employee– nothing permanent-- in private companies like the United Africa Company and Ford Motors. Most were British and some of them were certainly colonial in style, but they didn't have the bite or the power that the colonials did. We were in Kampala when John Kennedy was elected, and almost the first thing he did as President was to make G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams (former governor of Michigan) Assistant Secretary of State for Africa and send him off on a good will trip.

Williams went first to Kenya and then to Uganda. In Kenya he answered a question posed by a newsman which made the headlines. "Williams Says Africa for the Africans," caused an international furor. When he got to Kampala, the British tabloids had sent cables to their stringers saying in effect, "Jump on this one." There were about two stringers in Uganda, both of them boozing English guys who had been there forever, and one of them got this wonderful cable which could have been written by Evelyn Waugh, listing a set of embarrassing questions to ask Williams. The stringer didn't want to ask them, so he handed the cable to me and I pocketed it.

When Williams and his entourage got to Kampala, they were still somewhat shaken from a nasty little incident in Kenya. Mrs. Williams had a birthmark on her forehead, not a serious one, but noticeable. She was in a reception line in Nairobi shaking hands with members of the (all white) city council and one of them said to her, "Ah, I see you've been kissed by Tom Mboya."

Q: Tom Mboya being the black African labor leader.

PISTOR: That's right, and an independence leader in Kenya. Williams himself was in a conversation with some old- time white settlers and some younger African politicians, altogether a group of five or six.. One of the elderly colonials was holding forth and he pointed at one of the Africans and said to him , "I remember your father when he was dressed in feathers." So this gave Williams a glimpse at what colonial Africa could look like. Now, we didn't have that in Kampala. There might have been such things said behind closed doors, but nothing public. As I say, the expatriates in Uganda were temporary residents and didn't have the resentments the settlers felt at the prospect of the enormous changes already taking place

Q: After that, did you feel that this idea of a year and a year was a pretty good one?

PISTOR: It was pretty good. It's not affordable any longer, but to be able to give somebody a chance at two different cultures and two different-sized operations, with two different sets of problems or opportunities, really was a wonderful thing.

HERMAN J. COHEN
Labor Attaché
Kampala (1962-1963)

Ambassador Herman J. Cohen was born in New York City. After graduating from The City College of New York, he joined the Foreign Service in 1955. His career has included positions in France, Uganda, Zambia, Zaire, Senegal and Rhodesia. Ambassador Cohen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 15, 1996.

Q: What was your first assignment?

COHEN: My first assignment was to Uganda in the labor attaché position. They had a labor attaché position there because the ICFTU Africawide labor training center was there.

Q: ICFTU is

COHEN: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions that was based in Brussels. This was the counterpart of the communist World Federation of Trade Unions, based in Czechoslovakia. The ICFTU provided a lot of technical assistance and support for free labor in Africa. There was a lot of competition with the Soviets, so they started the Africa Labor Training Center and located it in Uganda. We established a labor attaché position there. That was the vacancy and I opted to go there.

Q: You were in Uganda from when to when?

COHEN: I arrived in early '62 after six months of Swahili training, and I left in late '63, approximately two years.

Q: How did you find the Swahili; how helpful was Swahili?

COHEN: It was not very useful in Uganda. It was mainly used in Tanzania and Kenya. Not as much in Uganda but it was helpful in everyday shopping and dealing with all sorts of people.

Q: What was the situation in Uganda when you were there in '63?

COHEN: I arrived in '62. I arrived nine months before independence. It was still British, so we went through the preparation for their independence and then had the first year of independence. It was very interesting to see how the Africans came in and took charge.

Q: How responsive in your view were the British in getting the Ugandans ready? Sometimes that changeover was done grudgingly and other times it was done with real flair.

COHEN: I think Uganda was one of the cases where they did a very good job. There was a very enlightened colonial government there. They left them with a very good infrastructure and a lot of highly educated, trained people, so it was quite a good job.

Q: Who became the head of Uganda? Was there a prime minister?

COHEN: They had a prime minister for a short period. The Queen of England was the head of state. The Prime Minister was Milton Obote. They had multiparty elections. The Ugandan People's Congress, that was one of the two main parties, won the election, and Obote became the Prime Minister.

Q: What about the labor movement? I would have thought that labor would have been a very fragile flower in this type of situation.

COHEN: Well, the British were tolerant of labor unions, so there was a certain development there in various fields. There was something to work with. They were not too weak, not bad.

Q: Were there any sort of issues that you dealt with as the labor officer?

COHEN: Well, we didn't deal too much with domestic issues. We were more interested in labor as a window on the government, on politics, but it was the standard issues of higher wages, better working conditions. They needed a lot of training on how to negotiate.

Q: Were there any problems in I mean we were sending experts in trade unions out from time to time?

COHEN: Yes we were or the AFL-CIO was doing that. We used the cultural exchange programs and USIA. We had frequent visitors. Also people were coming to lecture at the training college of the ICFTU.

Q: I would think that this, particularly labor, there is always a certain amount because you really are telling no matter what country you are going out and saying, look, if you get your act together you can make business pay more. You are tilting at the, jousting with the business community, so in a way it can't help but be a partisan activity.

COHEN: Yes, a certain number of people resented it. Well, government people don't like it because here is a diplomat interfering in internal affairs. Business of course was against, but we tried to do it in a way that we were not trying to promote union objectives. We were promoting union freedom, the freedom to have a union. We tried to impress on the management, we also had a policy of keeping contacts with business, people who are on the other side of the table, and to try to convince them that unions are good for them. If you have unions that negotiate in good faith and you reach agreements, you have a more disciplined work force because the unions will try to uphold the agreements. I think that management understood that.

Q: Well, now did you have much contact with the Ugandan government at that time?

COHEN: Well, I had a funny situation there in the sense that when I arrived, I was assigned to be the labor attaché, but it was a small consulate general. The consul general said to me, "You know we are very small here. We really can't afford to have a full time labor attaché as important as that is, so I also want you to be the consular officer and the administrative officer." So I really had three jobs. In my consular and administrative positions I had a certain amount of interface with government. I think it was customs, immigration, shipping people, as well as the police.

Q: First you had a consul general and then you had an ambassador there?

COHEN: Yes. After independence, we established an embassy, and our new ambassador came in. One of my jobs as administrative officer was to prepare administratively for the shift over because we were going to go from a five-person post to a full-fledged embassy with AID and USIA. We were going to go up to about 80 people. I had to get housing. I had to purchase an ambassador's residence, all sorts of things, so I probably spent about 80% of my time as an administrative officer.

Q: Who was the consul general while you were there?

COHEN: His name was Hendrik Van Oss.

Q: Yes, we have an interview with him. Then who became ambassador?

COHEN: Olcott Deming, a career FSO.

Q: Did you notice a change in operations when you became an embassy outside of sheer size?

COHEN: No, it wasn't that much different. The political and economic reporting had been important even before it became independent, so it wasn't that different.

Q: Well, during this '62'63 period, what was our attitude toward this newly independent state of Uganda?

COHEN: It was pretty much what it was with most of the independent states in Africa which was an emphasis on development. We also had a Cold War objective to make sure they didn't fall under the influence of the Soviet Union. If they remained nonaligned, that was good enough for us, but the main emphasis was development. We wanted to see that AID got in there, they would improve their education, improve their agriculture, their health systems.

Q: Sort of from the viewpoint of the embassy and you being one of the officers there, what was the opinion or perspective from Kampala of developments in Tanganyika and Nyerere and all that?

COHEN: Well the U.S. government loved Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, especially the Kennedys. They thought he was the wave of the future as a progressive revolutionary personality. We sitting in Uganda thought a lot of the things he said were kind of silly, and we resented his influence in U.S. diplomacy, his being the dominant force in East Africa. So, we had some verbal sparring in our telegram traffic.

Q: How about with Kenya; that wasn't independent yet was it?

COHEN: No they became independent in '64, so Uganda was freed two years earlier. Kenya of course, was the economic powerhouse, and there was at that time a federation, an economic

union between Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda. There was one postal system, one railway, one airline, one banking system, and one currency. It was really a good thing and we were getting very disturbed at signs it might be breaking up, so we did a lot to try and preserve it.

Q: In subsequent events, there was a mass exodus of Asians from Uganda. What was the role of the Asians as you saw them in Uganda?

COHEN: They dominated the business community. It was not British or European. The Asians dominated the indigenous business community whether it was small business, sugar plantations, or textile factories. Kampala itself, if you didn't know what it was, if you suddenly dropped in by parachute, looked like an Asian town, the architecture, the colors and what have you.

Q: As administrative officer, did you spend most of your time with Asians trying to get things done rent property, that sort of thing?

COHEN: A lot, yes. I spent quite a bit. For example, I arranged the purchase of an ambassador's residence that in 1962 cost $75,000. The owner was a Pakistani, and we purchased it from him. So, any sort of repair work, we found that the people who were very good at packing and shipping were Sikhs, so there was a lot of interface with them.

Q: What was the feeling on the part of the embassy I mean this was sort of the high time of Africa, the Kennedy spirit and this is the wave of the future, and we were very excited about this whole thing. But, here you are in a town that was heavily Asian. Was there an effort on the part of the officers to sort of get out and for want of a better term into the bush and talk to the real Africans?

COHEN: Yes, we spent a lot of time, but Asians stay completely out of politics. In our dealing with political parties, labor unions, university intellectuals and what have you, it essentially was African, so we did see Africans quite a bit.

Q: I'm not sure, when did Amin come in?

COHEN: Amin came in, I'm not sure, he must have come in 1969 or 1970.

Q: Were there any clouds on the horizon wondering about whither Uganda at this time or whether it would hold on to its democratic...

COHEN: Well, Obote, after being in office for quite a few years sort of succumbed to tribalism. It was really a very disappointing situation because here we had one of the most educated countries in the world with a lot of people very capable of running a government. But, tribalism, that is very strong, and ethnic conflict took over, and the country slowly deteriorated. Obote was a very poor administrator; and there was a lot of corruption, so by the time Idi Amin came in 1969, the country was totally fed up with Obote. Maybe in its initial stages, people welcomed this coup d'état, until they saw what a monster Idi Amin turned out to be.

Q: During this '62'63 period, things were still pretty hot down in the Congo. Did that have any reflection of where you were?

COHEN: Yes, we were right on the Congo's eastern border. We had a lot of administrative work because the U.S. and the UN peacekeeping operation there, and a lot of supplies and a lot of the troops were being ferried in from our side of the border. I remember once we got a telegram from Washington saying the U.S. Air Force would be rotating an Ethiopian regiment down to the Congo and they would be staging through Uganda. We had to be helpful there, and at one point they gave us their requirements of food and aviation gas and so on. I looked at this and went to see the Shell Oil representative about the aviation gas thing. He said, "I've never seen anything like this before. We are going to have to divert ships at sea to bring in enough because this is 100 times our normal usage." So it worked out. We had to take care of hotel rooms and vehicles and all that for the crews, so we were involved.

Q: The government and the populace of Uganda was not opposed to what the UN was doing in the Congo at that time.

COHEN: No. Not at all. There were even American missionaries, a lot of American missionaries in the Congo and from time to time they were being evacuated for safekeeping. They came into Uganda and were welcomed and were allowed to pursue their activities.

Q: Were there any tensions between Kenya and Uganda? Was this a tribal thing or was there a spillover of tribes?

COHEN: When I was there, there was no problem. As I said, there was one economic union, one railway, one monetary system and all that. Things were working out pretty well, and many of the people in Uganda were Kenyans. For example, the head of the labor movement was a guy originally from Kenya, so there weren't that many real problems. Both countries spoke Swahili so they had a common language.

Q: When you left there in '63, what was your feeling whither Uganda at that time?

COHEN: I left on an upbeat note. It looked pretty good. They had a lot of talent. It was economically prosperous; they were making a lot of money from commodity exports. They had a very good infrastructure, especially roads, railway, hotels all over the place, good tourism revenue, so I was very upbeat. After I left, the political situation deteriorated.

Q: What were they exporting?

COHEN: Coffee, cotton, and copper.

Q: Good, rather diversified.

COHEN: Yes.

HORACE G. DAWSON JR.
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIA
Kampala (1962-1964)

Born in Georgia, Ambassador Horace G. Dawson, Jr. entered the foreign service in the early sixties. His assignments included Uganda, Nigeria, Liberia, and the Philippines. Ambassador Dawson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 7, 1991.

Q: *Could you describe what you did when you first came into the USIA.*

DAWSON: Yes, I was assigned to Uganda as cultural affairs officer. I was the first number two at that post. As you know, USIA has a number of one-person posts. And so I was the cultural affairs officer, put there largely because Uganda was becoming increasingly important in East Africa and important to us, and because they had Makerere University College there. And, with my academic background, our betters at USIA felt that it would be a good match to have an academician there in Kampala where the university was, and hopefully we could make some inroads with the faculty and students at that university.

As a cultural officer, I did a number of things there. First of all, I worked hard at making sure that our library was one that university students would feel interested in coming to and using. In short, I devoted my attention to improving our stock of books and magazines and so on. That was very important.

Secondly, I started holding a number of symposia, even conferences, in our facilities there, to attract not just the students but adults in Uganda as well. I encouraged the sending of more and more American speakers out there. I was actually looking toward a time when we could promote American studies on the campus of Makerere. There was no such thing at the time. Indeed, the US was looked upon with great suspicion in these days of the immediate post-colonial period.

Q: *Independence came when?*

DAWSON: It came in '62.

Q: *Sixty-two, and so you arrived...*

DAWSON: Got there just after independence.

And I gave careful attention to selection of Ugandans to go to the United States. I concentrated on the younger, up-and-coming ones instead of the old ones who had been settled there already for a long time, and concentrated also on Americans to be brought there and to whom Ugandans would be exposed. That was a large part of our effort.

I founded two publications out there. One was designed for consumption within the country. It was all about the United States; I think we called it *Press Time USA*. And this gave little capsules

of information about this country, a good deal about African students in the United States and what they were doing, what the US was doing in terms of its AID program for Africa, and indeed concentrating on any accomplishments of any Ugandan student in the United States. That was one publication.

The other one was *Uganda Calling*. And that one was designed for the increasing number of Ugandan students who were coming to the United States for education, and did two things there: it gave them information about home, a lot of it involving what the US was doing in that country for Uganda, and then provided them with information about each other in the United States. A student in Maine did not know that a Ugandan out in California was on the honor roll and probably had won a fellowship. Well, we carried that type of information in *Uganda Calling*. So it was very, very exciting days.

Q: *Today, when one thinks of Uganda, one can't help but think of Idi Amin. But what was it like at this period when you were in Uganda?*

DAWSON: A wonderful assignment. We're talking now, as you said, about immediate post-independence for the country. Uganda was a place where everything worked. I make that point because, later on, when I went to West Africa...

Q: *One heard of Uganda as being sort of a paradise.*

DAWSON: It was a paradise.

Q: *It was considered really much better in many ways than Kenya.*

DAWSON: Oh, yes, by all means.

Q: *Beautiful country.*

DAWSON: It was sort of the smallest, most beautiful place you ever saw in your life. It had two or three fairly large cities--Kampala and Entebbe and Masaka and others around. Good infrastructure. As I said, everything seemed to work. The people were--were and are, I guess--very reserved and not especially outgoing, but once you got to know them, they were cooperative and interested and eager. The university was an extremely good one. They had the undergraduate school there for East Africa. Sort of, I would say, the liberal arts portion of the university was there, plus the medical college, which was attached to Mulago Hospital, a teaching hospital among other things. Uganda had excellent transportation facilities. The railroad started there and went all the way down through Kenya and Tanzania to Mombasa. And it was a part of the East African Federation, which means they used common services: postage, transport, currency. It was an orderly place and, as I said, by all means the most beautiful country you'd ever want to see.

Q: *In a way, you must have been up against the same thing that happened to some of our cultural officers when they went to the Ivory Coast. The British in Uganda must have had first claim, they must have been well entrenched. How did you work? I mean, you both spoke the same language*

and were allies, but at the same time I'm sure you wanted to get the brightest Ugandan students to go to one of our establishment universities as opposed to going to Oxford University.

DAWSON: It was a major problem, actually. And when I said earlier that I was chosen for that post because of my academic background, that's true, and that was the problem that we were dealing with.

One of the big issues at the outset, for example, was that we had begun what is known as a Teachers for East Africa program. The Peace Corps had not been accepted in Uganda yet. But they had agreed (and when I say "they," I mean the Ministry of Education, which had at all of its checkpoints and gatekeeper points British civil servants), they had finally agreed to accept teachers in their secondary schools from the United States. But they required them to study for maybe three months at Makerere, with the assumption being that these teachers were just not prepared to go into these wonderful schools of Uganda without some further brushing-up, on location as it were.

And the British did not want Ugandans to go to the United States, certainly not the best and brightest. They put every obstacle in our way.

The teachers for East Africa, for example, if they were American and had master's degrees, they were paid at the bachelor's level. Whereas the British teacher, especially if he came from Oxford or Cambridge and had a master's degree (which, as we both know, is not something you work for, it's something they give you), was paid at a higher level. And so we had to fight these types of things.

They tried to prevent us from recruiting the bright students who finished at the higher school level and were therefore prepared for university in Uganda or Britain. They tried to prevent us from recruiting those, and left us with those who had merely gone through four years of secondary school, the so-called high school graduates who were not qualified to go to university under their system.

So those were the specific problems I faced when I got there, and they were the ones that USIA sent me to deal with.

Q: *Did you go head-to-head with the British consul, or did you just bypass them and go straight to the Ugandan government and make your pitch?*

DAWSON: I did exactly the second thing: I bypassed the British consul. I went to the Ministry of Education. I became very friendly with a number of the Ugandan officials in the ministry, and even some of the British in time. And it didn't turn out to be a nasty fight or anything like that. I made it very plain that we were interested in helping. And, because of the approach I used, I did not, I think, pose a direct threat to them. I let it be known that we wanted to work with them cooperatively, but indeed we had some places where some of these students could study, and that it might be to their advantage for us to encourage them to go there. We had money to send them. And in time the obstacles that they had been putting in our way tended to vanish.

The Makerere University itself, I began going out there, and in very short order I had become a member of one of the halls. This was the first time this had been done for an American. I became a member of the high table at New Hall. And so the students began to see this. See, they had negative attitudes toward American education as well, so they began to see this and the impact I was making. They began to understand me and to attend the meetings and such things that I was arranging, and so they, too, came around in time.

It was a very exciting nearly three years that I spent there, most of the time working on the kinds of problems you're talking about.

OLCOTT H. DEMING
Ambassador
Uganda (1962-1966)

Ambassador Olcott H. Deming was born in New York in 1909 and was raised in Connecticut. As a Foreign Service officer, he served in Thailand, Japan, and Uganda. Ambassador Deming was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert on April 20, 1988.

DEMING: So in August 1962 I was sent out to take over as Consul General in Uganda until independence came in October when I would become Chargé d'Affaires Ad Interim. This left the Department free to appoint somebody else as Ambassador or to later confirm me as Ambassador.

I proceeded to Uganda which I had visited before. I always thought it was one of the most beautiful places in East Africa. At 4,500 feet on Lake Victoria, the country high plateau, rich and fertile, stretched from the Mountains of the Moon on the west to the Kenya Mountains on the East.

I arrived amid a period of great political activity preparing for the election of the first Prime Minister of Uganda. He would serve under a British Governor general for a year and then would become Prime Minister a fully sovereign country within the British Commonwealth. An ambitious Uganda politician, Apollo Milton Obote, was elected in September the first Prime Minister. He told me later that he preferred to be called Milton, "Because beautiful I am not, but I think I am wise." (He turned out to be neither). Obote was from a northern district of Uganda called Lango, a cattle raising and nomadic tribe. He was a bright man who had been educated at the local university in Uganda, which was run by the British, Makerere University. His ambition was to go on from there to England to the University of London to study. The British were ambivalent about Obote. They felt that he was something of a revolutionary and they did not wish to aid and abet his winning the election by giving him further prepayment. Of course he won the election anyway, at the first and last free and honest election that Uganda was to have.

President Kennedy sent a delegation to Uganda's independence headed by Sen. smith of Massachusetts who had served out Kennedy's term after he became President. there was the

usual gala independence ceremony, the lowering of the British flag and the raising of the Ugandan flag.

Obote had a difficult job ahead of him. Uganda was a strange country made up of districts, principalities, and "kingdoms." There were five main districts when the British took over Uganda in the 19th century, as a protectorate. They found that several districts had strong hereditary chiefs or "kings." Not adverse to royalty the British let them keep their titles and perquisites which naturally pleased these leaders.

Q: *As I recall it, they all had local titles, didn't they, local names, that were a little different?*

DEMING: Yes, strange and wonderful titles. The Omukama of Toro, the Omugabe of Bunyoro, and the Kyabazinga of Busoga, to name three. One province didn't have a chief with a title so at independence the authorities gave him one: the Kingu of Sebei.

In preparation for independence things went forward under the British in a very orderly manner. Her Majesty's Government had built a really beautiful parliament building with a "strangely carved table" and dais very much like a small edition of the British parliament. They had also provided a flag with the crested crane, the national bird of Uganda, rampant on a field of red and yellow and the motto "God and my country." The official national language is English.

The fact that Ugandans had little to do with creating their own flag, building their own parliament, or choosing their own form of government may have been some of the causes of difficulties later on.

In 1963 Uganda came into full independence and things seemed to be going smoothly. By invitation there were still British officers in the police force, the army and the civil service. I was confirmed as Ambassador in January, 1963.

Prime Minister Obote faced tribal problems from the beginning. He was from the Lango tribe in the north. The King, or Kabaka of Buganda, Frederick Mutesa II, was from the south. He came from a long line of hereditary rulers and became head of state, or President, while Obote was Prime Minister. When I presented my credentials, I presented them to the President not to the Prime Minister. This situation caused strong tensions from the beginning.

In January, 1964 there was a mutiny in the Tanzanian army followed shortly by a mutiny in the Uganda army. They closed themselves up in their barracks in Jinja about 40 miles from the capital, and refused to take orders. This presented a crisis to Prime Minister Obote. Obote took a very courageous but difficult step. He went to the British High Commissioner (Ambassador), and asked for immediate military intervention by the British. The High Commissioner later told me that he had said to Obote, that this must be very difficult for you to call for outside military help from us so soon after independence. Obote acknowledged that it was and then said, "How soon can your troops arrive?"

A Highland regiment was stationed in Kenya at the time. Within 24 hours the whole regiment was flown in from Kenya, landed at Entebbe airport and took the 40-mile trip by truck to the barracks in Jinja. They took over without a shot being fire.

After three months it was agreed that the British could leave because things were in an orderly state. By July, 1964 Obote had removed all British officers from his army. He then appointed a military man from his district by the name of Idi Amin. He was promoted from sergeant major to general of the Army! Idi Amin was 6'6", the heavyweight boxing champion of Uganda, and had served with the East Africans rifles under British command in North Africa during the Second World War. His former commanding general later said of him that, he was a natural born soldier but very rough on prisoners.

At this point Obote's relations with the Kabaka and the people deteriorated badly and really a little civil war or struggle for power began. Obote had a deep hatred of the Buganda people who had been favored by the British during the protectorate period. They were better educated, they lived around Lake Victoria, the most productive land, and their capital, Kampala, was now also the capital of the nation.

I might say at this point, Ambassador Torbert, from late 1964 on everything went downhill in Uganda. Civil war breeds civil war. The people of Buganda were withholding their cooperation from the central government and showing their loyalty to the Kabaka, the President. This infuriated Obote. And Obote consolidated his military rule of Uganda and continued his military and civil and political action against the Buganda people in particular. The economy of course went down, badly; tourism ceased. This was a very difficult time for all the Ambassadors accredited to Uganda. The capital was frequently under the curfew and their movements were very restricted. There were roadblocks around the country and a little military state had been inflicted on what could have been a pleasant and happy land.

Foreign aid continued, but in diminishing quantities because it was very difficult for donor countries to persuade people to come and go out into the hinterland and administer the various projects.

Q: *Now, about that time, am I right in remembering that Uganda started to destroy the East Africa Common Services Organization which had been the British hope for keeping those three countries, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, more or less solid.*

DEMING: You're absolutely right, Ambassador Torbert.

Q: *Maybe I'm preceding something you--*

DEMING: No. It was during this period, between 1962 and 1966. The British had taken measures to tie Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania together into an East African Federation. They had built a railway line which ran from Mombasa on the Indian Ocean up over the Kenya Mountains to Kampala. The purpose was to make the colonies self supporting or profitable. Coffee, tea, cotton, industrial diamonds and other products were shipped out of Uganda and British goods in.

The Federation also had common postal, telegraph, monetary systems. The British and we were hopeful that this cooperation would be continued after independence.

I was under some pressure from the Department to do what I could as the representative of the United States to encourage the continuation of this federation. I was instructed Averell Harriman, then Under Secretary in charge of African Affairs, to go to the Prime Minister and urge him he take steps strengthening or continuing the federation. I was to tell him that if he could do that the United States could see its way to providing larger economic assistance to a federation of states than it could to individual ones trying to go on its own. I recall informing the Department that I expected to have a negative reaction because Obote and the Ugandans had always felt inferior to Tanzania and Kenya because they were both on the Indian Ocean and Uganda was landlocked. Also the British base of operations and policy for East Africa was in Nairobi, Kenya.

So I carried out my mission and the Prime Minister heard me out. Then he said, "Is your government trying to bribe me?" I said, "No, we're talking economics and we're talking about steps which we would be willing to take which we think would be helpful to all three of your countries." Obote replied, "I am not interested in strengthening the Federation." I asked him if this was for political, economic or psychological reasons? He looked at me and said, "Mostly psychological. You know, in a Federation before long there will be only one representative at the United Nations for the East African Federation; he will not come from Uganda."

Q: *That's very acute of you to get the reason, I think, which was basically emotional.*

DEMING: I know it has happened to you too. Mr. Ambassador. You are sent to the Prime Minister with a bucket full of holes and you know you're going to come back with no water in it. You are right that Obote's reaction was emotional, not pragmatic. After all, common services for the three countries served Uganda's economic and development interests as well as the others.

I would like to give some views and get yours on the reasons for this type of thing happening in some African countries after they came into independence. The history of colonialism I suppose gave them a feeling of dependency or inferiority. The history of tribalism before they came under European domination also reasserted itself. The minister of Interior of Uganda, all of 28 years old, said to me once that the Africans understood the western system of government much better than we understood theirs. I said, what is the difference? He said we do not believe in a multi-party system in democracy. We are accustomed to choosing a chief and when he's chief nobody disputes his power. Opposition to the chief is regarded as subversion or treason. I said I thought Uganda would have a very difficult time not having a multi-party system to unify the many districts of Uganda. He said he wanted me to understand our difference of views on government. I believe he was telling me something very fundamental; that any challenge to whoever was elected prime minister in Africa was not a normal democratic practice but was subversion. You probably didn't find that in Somalia because it had an utterly the different history. It was mostly a Muslim country, was it not?

Q: *Ninety-nine percent Muslim, more or less. And it was a somewhat different history, and yet you found some of the same problems, tribalism, certainly. But there was a democratic tradition*

in Somalia which was fairly unique among other African countries, although it didn't last long when the crunch came after I left there.

DEMING: Kennedy's New Frontier philosophy gave an enthusiastic welcome to these countries coming into independence. There was a feeling that everything was going to turn out fine now that they were free and democratic. You remember the term, "revolution of rising expectations?" Now that colonialism was gone, all the riches that once went to foreign government would now accrue to the people!

This "expectation" was epitomized in the Uganda Prime Minister's peculiar attitude towards AID from foreign countries. And a lot of aid poured into Uganda, from Canada, from the United States, from Scandinavian countries, from the British and from the UN. But the Prime Minister stressed that he wanted aid with "no string attached." I think he was expecting large infusions of cash! It so happened that at some convention outside Kampala, the Prime Minister was going to talk and I had been invited to talk about foreign aid. The Prime Minister let me know that he wanted to see a copy of my speech before I made it. So I sent it to him. Of course, he didn't send me one of his. I had addressed the matter of aid with "no strings attached." In my talk I said that I represented a country which over many years had been providing assistance to countries coming into independence who were economically needy. I understood the attitude of Uganda that they didn't want "strings attached." But I emphasized that we do not regard them as strings, we regard them as lines of responsibilities.

Q: *That's a very good phrase, I must say. I wish I had thought of it.*

DEMING: I went on to say that aid to Uganda or any other country from the United States comes from American taxpayers. And the taxpayers, through their elected representatives, want to know what has been done with their tax money. I said as Uganda develops economically you may provide aid to neighboring countries and I am sure you will want to know exactly how that aid was spent in order to justify it to your people. The Prime Minister stuck to his thesis that he wanted aid with no strings attached. And there we were.

During this period the UNDP, the United Nations Development Program, was planning assistance to Uganda.

Q: *Based in Vienna now, anyway, perhaps not then.*

DEMING: At that time, Hoffman was head of the agency at the headquarters in New York. Hoffman arrived for a conference in Kampala with representatives of several East African countries to talk about aid and development in general. Addressing the conference at the outset Hoffman made a point. He said, that when he went to Europe to administer the Marshall Plan, he made it clear that European recovery, the rebuilding of Europe, would be achieved by Europeans. And I say to you now in Africa, "That African development will be achieved by Africans."

I talked to the young Ugandan Foreign Minister after that and he was absolutely appalled. He said, "You're leaving us alone!" I said that no, Mr. Hoffman didn't say that. He said that your

development depends on Africans to develop it. You can receive aid from other countries but you have to do the work yourself. Hoffman went on to say that one of Africa's economic problems, or one that could become a problem, was rapidly increasing population. This diminish the impact of the goods and services, food, available for distribution. Perhaps he was stepping on tender ground, but this was resented very much. I was told later that Africans believe that there must be more and more Africans because they must catch up with the white man, and when they breed more blacks then they will be dominant like the whites. There is an area of appalling economic ignorance here!

Q: *Did anybody happen to point out India and China as good examples.*

DEMING: I'm afraid I didn't. It's interesting that you mention India. Uganda had a large number of Indians, mostly of the lower middle class who had been brought in by the British to do the accounting, to supervise the construction, building and so on. At first they were encouraged by Obote to take out citizenship and decide whether they wanted to be Indians or Ugandans following independence. It was a very difficult decision. A number of them did opt to be Ugandan citizens. This was a bitter pill for them later when Idi Amin came to power. All Indians were expelled from the country whether they'd opted for citizenship or not. This meant that the small businessmen

Q: *Tradesmen.*

DEMING: Yes, tradesmen, bank clerks, the tailors, the shop keepers, disappeared and the Ugandans had no liking and no experience in that kind of work. They were basically subsistence farmers. This further destroyed the economy that hadn't been already crippled by the internal warfare. I don't know, Ambassador Torbert, whether you found in Somalia that there was an expatriate group of traders like Lebanese or Chinese or Indians who were an understructure for the economy?

Q: *There was a mere handful of them there and it was such a totally different economy, mostly nomadic, that it was hardly a comparable situation. But I certainly was an observer of this problem not only in Uganda but all of East Africa had the problem to some extent--but Uganda was more ruthless about it than others.*

DEMING: Yes they were. Nyerere did the same thing.

Q: *A little later, yes.*

DEMING: He didn't invite them to become citizens and then throw them out. And the economies of those countries have suffered, partly as a result of that.

I wonder also whether independence being more or less handed to most of these countries without an armed struggle, a political struggle, yes, and a waiting period, but nothing like our own war of independence; whether it didn't come too cheaply to them and they didn't have the pride of having won their independence, no ringing declaration. Do you think that had an effect?

Q: *I think this might be an effect. And it has always interested me to speculate on why it was, although we thought at the time that the British did such a great job of preparing their colonies for independence and the French and the Italians did nothing at all, that by and large that short term results, or medium term results have shown that democracy and self government and all that sort of thing had a more difficult time taking hold in a way in many of the British, not all but many of the British colonies, than it did in the French and Italian. Particularly the French, of course, had many more. And the French were able, it seems to me, to retain influence in their colonies, guidance without a great dissatisfaction on the part of the local people better than the British do.*

I made a much longer digression than any interviewer should in this subject, but we're interviewing you and not me so let's--

DEMING: There are subjects which is interesting to ruminate on.

Q: *Exactly.*

DEMING: It's their problem, the solution is up to Africans. We've seen with few exceptions the handing over of incipiently democratic forms of government and not long before they are one-party states. Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, all independent now and all of the power has been taken in the hands of one man. And it doesn't seem to make the African electorate terribly uncomfortable. If it does they haven't found out how to bring their pressure to bear to change it.

Q: *But a very closely allied subject, I think, is whether the efforts that both the colonial parties and we in the United Nations organization have made to provide economic development have been directed in a constructive manner and whether they really help the countries or whether they are too sudden a wrench from their original way of life without replacing it rapidly enough with anything good. Do you have any particular views on that? That is, economic aid as a partial solution to this and how it's been administered?*

DEMING: My observation in Uganda may not be typical, but we had an active aid program worked out by the World Bank. It was concentrated on agricultural productivity and secondary education. What appeared to me after nearly four years there was that the transfer of technology was easier said than done. We had a hybrid corn program established under the directions of an Agricultural Extension Agent from the United States. It was expected that in a year or two the Ugandans would see the advantage of the greater yield and take off on their own. Long after I left Uganda aid was cut off for several years during Idi Amin's despotic rule. When aid was resumed and the agronomists went back, they asked what had happened to the hybrid seed corn?" "well," they said, "we ate it." Obviously that technique, or idea or will had not been transferred from the Americans to the Ugandans.

Q: *We were in the process of talking about the effectiveness of aid programs. I think we interrupted you in mid-thought on that.*

DEMING: I was discussing the technique of the transfer or the ability to transfer technology from the mind of one to the mind of another, or the hands of one to the hands of another. Some

recipients of aid are prone to say, "well, you do it so well, why don't you just keep doing it?" I think the American answer should be, "Look, I'll show you twice and then you do it." But different cultures have different capabilities. I think India has picked up very quickly on agricultural, green revolution techniques and improved their agriculture production tremendously. In East Africa generally, with independence people flocked to the capital city and settled there, waiting to share the abundance and wealth that was coming with independence. And the real wealth of the country, the agriculture, was left to wither. They would be better off to go back to their traditional ways of subsistence farming.

Q: *I used to feel that the most important man on the AID staff was the consulting anthropologist that somebody was bright enough to bring in and whom, of course, they cut off as soon as they had to cut a budget. He didn't last very long. But he was the man who told me what the problems were more than anyone else.*

DEMING: You need someone like that to tell the technician, who is an expert in some fields, what the attitude of the person receiving the knowledge and technology is and how it gets through to him.

Q: *Exactly.*

DEMING: I will wind up very shortly here.

I left Uganda in 1966 after nearly four years. When I went to the airport the government provided a man with a gun sitting next to the driver with his gun sticking out the window. I was informed of this in advance. I talked to the Foreign Minister, who by then was 31 years old. I said, "You know, you're not at war and this is very upsetting to have an Ambassador in his car have to have an armed guard, not of his own, but yours." The Foreign Minister said, "Well, I'm sorry about it but we have these roadblocks, he said, they stopped me the other day so I can't be sure they won't stop you." I hung up on that. So we went to the airport with a gun sticking out the window. It showed how far the government had deteriorated in its control of its own people and its own affairs.

It was I think four years later, two years after Idi Amin took power that the American Embassy was closed for five years. Idi Amin had threatened "to skin the Marine guards alive." The Marines left within 36 hours and the Ambassador followed. Although Amin assured the Ambassador that "I was just joking!" It was too late. The embassy was in the process of being closed. And everyone knows the tragedy of the Idi Amin years.

I came back to the Department in 1966 and was assigned as Diplomat in Residence at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. I won't go into that. Everyone knows that after four or five years in a faraway post with various difficulties, some health problems, that an assignment like that is extremely welcome. I did some lecturing on the developing countries and the technology of transferring aid to newly-independent people and diplomacy as it actually is in some of the developing countries. It was stimulating to me and I hope it was useful to the students. They tell me it was.

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The separate lines of communication to Washington can be a problem. You never know whether you're being second guessed or "done in" by a fellow agency in your government! I had close relations with my Chief of Station in Uganda. They were into some hanky-panky that I thought was expensive and questionable but I did not feel that I was being hoodwinked or that they were doing anything to undermine my mission or what the Department was trying to do. I don't know what a satisfactory solution is if you have an intelligence operation. It isn't intelligence reporting, it's the operation that is disturbing.

MILES WEDEMAN
Head of Capital Development and Finance, Africa Bureau, USAID
Washington, DC (1962-1968)

Miles Wedeman was born in Maryland in 1923. He received a BA from Swarthmore College in 1943 and his LLB from Harvard in 1949. He also served as a lieutenant overseas from 1943-1946. After joining USAID in 1962, he did development work in Nigeria, Liberia and Uganda. He was also assigned to Korea, Cambodia, and Syria. Mr. Wedeman was interviewed in 1995 by John Kean.

Q: *What about Uganda? Was there any particular focus on Uganda? It was a sort of favored country in some respects.*

WEDEMAN: I don't know if it was favored or not, but we did work on two projects in Uganda. One was the University of East Africa. We had a program for assisting the capital development of the University of East Africa, including the former Ugandan institution at Makerere, near Kampala, the Tanzanian University College at Dar Es Salaam, and to a lesser extent the University College in Nairobi in Kenya. Our main emphasis in the end was on Dar Es Salaam. We never really did get going on anything for Makerere.

The other project in Uganda I will always remember favorably. I won't say it was unique, but it had the great virtue of being home grown in Uganda. This was not like most of our projects which were our ideas. The Ugandan project was a scheme for young Ugandan ranchers to raise cattle. A certain amount of land had been set aside by the Ugandan government for this purpose and the Ugandans had put the project together. It was very, very well thought out. All that was asked of us was the foreign exchange required, about $800, 000, for the purchase of equipment. I and the loan officer went out to look at it and were impressed. It did go forward. Later it fell a victim to all the chaos that later engulfed Uganda. Four years ago I was in Uganda and found what had been the site of the project. Not a trace remained.

Q: Were there differences between the four AID bureaus on capital development?

WEDEMAN: There were four regional bureaus in AID, and the heads of capital development for each one of the four bureaus certainly knew one other, but we weren't necessarily telling each other exactly what we were doing. In some ways it was apples and oranges. In the case of the Africa Bureau there were no commodity support programs. Ed Hutchinson did not believe in commodity support as foreign assistance. I tended to agree with him..

Q: *Perhaps particularly in the circumstances of Africa.*

WEDEMAN: I would agree. Certainly given the limited nature of American assistance and the small size of even the largest African countries, commodity support lending had no real role to play in AID assistance to the continent. With the much larger economies in places such as India and Pakistan where AID had large formal dollar commitments, I wouldn't say you could shovel out huge amounts of money, but you could commit large amounts of money in this fashion. These were much larger economies, and I remember sitting through a meeting of the Development Loan Committee, when an amendment to an existing Indian commodity support program being considered was on the order of something like $100 million-the size of the entire AID Africa development loan program. In a given year AID assistance to these other countries annually could run to hundreds of millions of dollars to any one of them. Emphases changed over the years. By the 1980s the Africa program and the Africa bureau had become much larger players inside the agency than they had been in the 1960s.

Q: *They reached the $400 to $500 million per year level.*

WEDEMAN: That's right. But in terms of interchange of information, I will confess, not a great deal. Sometimes your best source of information was to go to meetings of the Development Loan Committee when the Committee was considering projects from other bureaus, and hear what was said back and forth. On the Development Loan Committee, at least two or three members, were very active. I remember in one case they had up for review a development loan in Argentina. It looked like it was a project but it wasn't a project. It was masquerading as one. In fact, it was a loan to finance local costs, i.e., budgetary support, a much more dubious proposition. The President of the EX-IM Bank, a very shrewd and able fellow, and very colorful at that, Harold Linder, just took the project apart piece by piece, and said, "This is no project. All you are doing is providing X number of dollars for budgetary support for the government of Argentina." And the capital development chief from the Alliance for Progress really had no answer to this. The head of the EX-IM Bank turned to Dave Bell, who was then the Administrator of AID and said, "Dave, I don't think this ought to be approved, but it's your decision." And it was approved. But that's how you learned what was going on sometimes in the other bureaus. Later the Committee was abolished when Bill Gaud became Deputy Administrator. I understand he particularly disliked having to justify projects before the Committee when he was head of the Near East South Asia Bureau.

Q: *There were some differences...*

WEDEMAN: In terms of what people were doing there were considerable differences. In the case of Africa it was entirely projects. The program was managed and administered from Washington. This system for running the program was much resented by the field people who

had come out of ICA. They certainly had a point but, unfortunately, most of them were technical not capital assistance minded and had the PIO/T mindset. When I later served in missions I never really thought the missions were always right and Washington was wrong.

BEAUVEAU B. NALLE
Officer-In-Charge of Uganda Affairs
Washington, DC (1963-1966)

Beauveau B. Nalle was born in Pennsylvania in 1927. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956, serving in Washington, DC, Turkey, Uganda, Liberia, and Belize. Mr. Nalle was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on April 19, 1994.

Q: *Well, you certainly had an interesting beginning of your career, both in Washington and in Turkey. Now I notice that your next move was to something quite different, East Africa. Was this a request or by direct assignment?*

NALLE: In September of 1953, I was in my office on a Friday afternoon getting ready to go on a camping trip with Sheila and the children along the Black Sea coast. I'd signed up for 2 weeks vacation, we had tents and stuff in the car. The phone rang, it's Bob Barnes, the DCM. He said, "Beau are you sitting down?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I'll read you a cable." Which said I was to depart post immediately, go through the counterterrorism course. Do you remember that?

Q: *Yes, I took one.*

NALLE: Take the counterterrorism course and was assigned as Officer-in-Charge of affairs. I said to Bob, "My God, where is it?" He said, "I'm not sure but I think it's in East Africa." He said, "Come down and we'll talk about it." He was a superb DCM, a wonderful man, Bob Barnes. We chatted a little bit about it. "Look," he said, "I think it's a good job." He said, "I think you probably ought to do it." But he said, "If you don't want to do it then I'm more than willing to call the Department and fight for your assignment." But I said, what the hell, let's give it a shot.

So I went back and entered into 8 years of my life that I spent wrestling with Uganda.

Q: *And not only Uganda I gather, didn't you also have Kenya and Tanzania at times?*

NALLE: From time to time, just as backup. We had Paul O'Neill who's the Kenya Desk Officer and a guy by the name of Johnnie Meagher was Tanzania Desk Officer. We had a wonderful office.

We had Jesse McKnight for Office Director who was a super guy. Another man I rank very highly in my list of fine, fine people. He'd worked in the Department of Labor for many years and wasn't much on Foreign Affairs. But knew how Washington worked. It was maybe McCarthy or at least McCarthy's minions, he told to go to hell, one time. He was Director of East

African Affairs, Ed Mulcahy was Deputy Director, Wen Coote was there. We had some wonderful people. And I learned from them a lot about how the Department operates.

Soapy Williams was Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. A fascinating man and I think people are a little unfair to Williams, they kind of laughed and joked at him a little bit.

Q: *He took an interest in African Affairs.*

NALLE: He took a great interest in it. He was a decent human being. He was a funny human being. He was a square dance caller among other things. He would hire, with the vast money that he had in his bank account, he would hire a hillbilly band to come in to the upstairs reception rooms in the State Department and give parties for the African diplomats and we'd all do square dances.

The Africans were just utterly dumb-founded. They simply could not believe that this very senior official in the State Department would come in a red and white bandanna shirt and cowboy boots, and would be calling these tribal dances. We poor Desk Officers were called in on-duty, there's no getting out of it. You took your wife and you went, babysitter or no babysitter.

Q: *Dosey doe.*

NALLE: It was kind of fun. Sheila got a very real kick out of it. Eventually the Africans sort of came to enjoy it. It was a side of America that was a little different.

Q: *That's right, that they wouldn't normally see.*

NALLE: Exactly right. I think the idea that such a senior official could engage in such, what they thought perhaps, undignified, unofficial behavior gave them a little more education about what this country of ours is all about. A little bit, it was no big thing, but it was another piece they would fit into the mosaic.

Q: *Now when you took over, Uganda had recently become independent, did it not?*

NALLE: Yes, they'd been independent for just a year. The tragedy of Uganda is that Tanzania or Tanganyika in those days and then Kenya, had so much to offer. They came very close to unifying the 3 African states.

Uganda had an excellent school system, there were school fees charged but they were very modest. And just about every kid, boy or girl, in the country received an education through the 6th grade. They had a competent, and relatively speaking, honest bureaucracy. Purely Uganda, there were no white British officials left.

Q: *None left in the country.*

NALLE: Not a lot. Mike Davis, a very dear friend of mine, was the Director of the Uganda Institute of Public Affairs. Which was a quasi-government job. He had been District Commissioner in Acholi and he was the last British DC.

But the civil service itself was purely Ugandan. This mind you from a country where there were at least 14 significant tribal vernacular languages spoken. Where the Prime Minister would on occasion speak through an interpreter to his own people.

Yet they had a very effective civil service--a good school system, the judiciary was honest. There were foreigners on the Supreme Court, on the High Court--there was a Cypriot Turk, there was a Brit--but the court became Ugandanized eventually.

The police force was honest and efficient and well trained. There were 2 or 3 British technical specialists with the police force. There was a ballistic man, there was a fingerprint man, but there was nobody in the actual line of command in the police force. One felt comfortable with the police. Even in those days, one did not feel comfortable with the army.

The army was a very real problem, both the officers and the enlisted men came largely from one tribe in Northern Uganda called the Acholi. They're up on the North along the Nile, right up to the Sudan border. The Acholis were basically very nice people. They're big people, they're strong, tall. I'd often thought they'd make wonderful swimmers, long arms and long legs. But they were recruited in the army both for officer and enlisted personnel. In spite of the efforts of the British, they became very aggressive, fairly ill disciplined, very much interested in furthering their own affairs.

Q: *Let's go back and see.*

NALLE: But I don't want to get into the country of Uganda without going over some of the goings on, the activities in the 4 years that I spent as Uganda Desk Officer prior to going to Kampala as Political Officer. Because it was a very interesting and informative period in my life.

Among other things, we went through the anguish and the chaos of the turmoil of the murder of President Kennedy and his subsequent funeral. We had a delegation from Uganda, actually it was the Vice President, who happened to be in town on a Leader Grant. So I had to shepherd him around and that was very interesting.

But being a Desk Officer is one of the 2 or 3 basic ultimate jobs that every FSO has to go through. I found it very interesting for the most part, a good job, a useful job. Although there were times when I got pretty thoroughly tied down by the rigidity of it. By the rigidity of the whole State Department structure.

I didn't for a minute, for example, want to or felt that I should have the right to go up and see the Deputy Under Secretary or even the Assistant Secretary at anytime. But I felt terribly constrained and I think all of us did. That we weren't being very well utilized.

I was there when we went through the change to the Country Director system. I guess this shows the resilience or the rigidity of the bureaucracy. Because we were told that this new system was instituted, that things were going to be much better. That there would be a kind of a river running along with a series of smaller rivers running into it and the collective knowledge would work its way up to the 6th floor. Bugger all happened, there was not one jot nor tittle difference from the old system. A lot of us got pretty cynical about it. We also learned all of us, and I suppose this is only human, how much coincidence, personality, the old-boy network, how much all of these things influence your day-to-day activities.

And I guess in the private world of business, in that great free enterprise system that we all bow down to, I guess the same thing applies.

But one learned that there were certain people up in the Executive Secretariat to whom one could go to get something through in a hurry. One also learned that there were people in the Executive Secretariat who were far more interested in telling you how important they were than they were in getting your paper into the Secretary's office for his meeting with the Ugandan Ambassador.

There were periods of enormous frustration. So much also depended on the whims and fancies. And indeed I might even say the political orientations of ones' superiors. One expects obviously the Secretary of State and those of his immediate suite, will reflect the political beliefs and ideals of the man who appointed him, the President. And that's as it should be. But I got a little startled, my impression is that the situation has gotten worse, at how far down this went.

Q: *But clearly, you must have known that Soapy Williams is a power in the Democratic party.*

NALLE: Indeed I did. I don't point this particular finger at Soapy. I did think a couple of his deputies, Tasca and--that old bald fellow from Baltimore, what the hell was his name--didn't know Africa from Siberia. Bill something or other.

Q: *Not Bill Trimble.*

NALLE: Yeah, right. I mean Trimble didn't know a thing about Africa. Anyway, Wayne Fredericks on the opposite extreme, was sort of more a loyalist than the king, more royalist I mean than the king.

My impression is that this is very much the case now in the Department. That this polarization has seeped its way, along with the political appointment, to positions of Office Director and so on. That the political polarization had become substantially worse. And this is a very sad state of affairs.

But all-in-all the Desk Officer job was a fascinating one. The hours were long, the strain on my family was immense, I was probably drinking too much from time to time. At the same time in spite of the excitement, the occasional vibrancy, there was also a feeling of wheels spinning.

Certainly I got the impression that there was an awful lot of attention from time to time to form and not all that much attention to substance. An otherwise excellent paper would frequently be

sent back at vast waste of time, to correct a very minor typographical error. Now if I were a principal up in the top floor, I would much rather get the paper early so that I could have the chance to look at it than to worry that "weird" was misspelled, that "i" didn't come before "e" or that a sentence in a paragraph by mistake got indented. But no, it would be sent back and some secretary, because we didn't have any of the word processing machines in those days, some secretary would have to retype the whole damned thing.

This irritated the hell out of me. I guess it's a reflection of my own personality to some extent. I'm not the world's tidiest nor am I the world's most efficient individual but I just felt that. I used to laugh at the ponderous words we used: You may wish to tell the Foreign Minister that he's got holes in his head. I mean why don't we just say, our policy is so-and-so and you should tell the Minister this, period. And if Secretary Rusk doesn't like that, he won't do it. Anyway, that's enough.

The Desk Officer job was interesting but very frequently awfully frustrating. And these never ending collection of clearances on one thing and another. Clearances that frequently meant nothing at all because people would just override them.

SAMUEL V. SMITH
Peace Corps Volunteer
Mbale (1965-1966)

Samuel Vick Smith was born in California in 1940 and graduated from New Mexico State University. He served in numerous posts including Nairobi, Vietnam, Madagascar, Tokyo and New Zealand. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Well, you got to Uganda in still '64?

SMITH: No, we arrived on the second day of '65.

Q: You were there from '65 to?

SMITH: All of '65 and all of '66 except a few days.

Q: What was the situation in Uganda when you got there?

SMITH: Okay, well I should give a little background on our Peace Corps group and then Uganda. We were going to be the very first U.S. Peace Corps volunteers in Uganda. We were going to teach high school. They tried as much as possible to get people who could teach science and math and that was one reason that I was there, of course. Our arrival, about twenty or thirty of us, permitted them to double their intake into the government's high schools. A lot of schools weren't government, they were church run. But the government-run schools were able to expand their "freshmen class," double it, because we arrived. Uganda had only been independent, for

three years. At the time it was using the government that had been left to it by the British. The British left a government where there was a parliament and a prime minister chosen the usual way by the majority party in the parliament. The prime minister was A. Milton Ubute. But then there was a president also and the president was King Edward Mutesa II. The king of Buganda. Buganda was one large part of Uganda from which the name obviously comes. Buganda was an old kingdom.

Q: How do you spell it?

SMITH: Well, one is "B," and one is "U." One is Buganda and the other one is Uganda.

Q: Oh, Buganda?

SMITH: Yes, Buganda. Buganda had been an organized kingdom for a long time, I don't know how long, but for well over one-hundred years and the king was Edward Mutesa, II. The British were trying to figure out some way to make this country go in spite of the tribalism that exists throughout Africa and so, since the Baganda were important because they were the largest single unified group, they had to do something for them. So, their king became the president of Uganda. I must hasten to say that the Baganda, who are the people who live in Buganda, are not a majority. They are probably just the largest minority. The country was already riven with tribalism. The southern part of the country borders Lake Victoria, Northern Tanzania, Rwanda and the Congo. That part is inhabited by the so-called Bantu tribes who tended to be farmers. Then in the north you have a couple of other groups. The northern tribes tend to be herders and more war-like. Their languages are completely different. There's nothing in common between the languages in the north and the languages in the south. It's as different as English and Japanese. Completely different. Whereas Swahili was the lingua franca for most of Kenya and almost all of Tanzania, it only worked part of the time in Uganda. In the far north of Uganda, Swahili wasn't much use.

Q: Well, in a way, you were farther away from the Arab trading routes. Wasn't this, Swahili wasn't it a, it's a trading language, isn't it?

SMITH: Yes, but it's not an Arab language. It's a Bantu language with a lot of Arabic words. It's homeland, as you indicated, is down on the coast of the Indian Ocean, Mombasa and Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam. So, the farther away you get, the less Swahili you hear. But even right on the border with the Congo, I was having my Land Rover fixed years later when I was in the Foreign Service and the guy working on it, pulled on the fan belt and said "hi si yake." This isn't ITS. It was the wrong size fan belt. The people in that business, the mechanics and drivers and those sort of trades, spoke Swahili all over the country. When we got to Uganda, there was tribal simmering. While, on the surface everything looked pretty peaceful. I can't remember the words Winston Churchill used, something like the pearl of Africa or something like that, but Uganda was a beautiful place.

Q: Well, it was considered to be unspoiled.

SMITH: Yes, most of it is at an altitude of about 4,000 feet or higher. The climate's good. Unspoiled is a good word for that time. There was something about it that many people don't realize. Before independence it had been known as the "Uganda Protectorate." Kenya was "Kenya Colony." Tanzania was a German colony that the British took at the end of World War I.

Q: Sort of a mandate I guess.

SMITH: I don't think so.

Q: Well, whatever they called it.

SMITH: But in any case, Uganda was not a colony and that was more than a euphemism. It meant that, except for a few extraordinary cases, no Ugandan or his ancestors had had his land stolen by the British colonialists. They were all farming their own land, or if it wasn't their own land, they were farming some other Ugandan's land. The two exceptions: On the eastern border of Uganda with Kenya there was a bit of good wheat land which had shifted borders. So, when the border went farther to the east some of what had been Kenya became Uganda and there were some white farmers farming wheat. On the western border for some reason there were some British tea farmers, maybe just because tea was important. Probably 98% of the land was owned by Ugandans or the government, but not by the colonials. That made a difference, because Kenya had just gotten through the Mau Mau rebellion. Tanzania was already very socialist-leaning. Uganda was not automatically hostile to white people. Most of Kenya wasn't either, but there were a lot of Kenyans both white and black who remembered how bad the Mau Mau rebellion had been.

Q: Well, then when you arrived, where did they send you?

SMITH: Well, I went to the far eastern border outside of the town of Mbale, on the slopes of Mount Elgon which is an extinct volcano 14,000 feet high, as big around as Kilimanjaro, but 5,000 feet shorter because the top blew up. Sort of a huge crater. We lived near a village called Budadiri and we were teaching at Masaba Senior Secondary School. Masaba Senior Secondary School, a former junior secondary school had just been upgraded. When I got there, there was a British volunteer, the only white teacher among the Ugandan teachers, and a new Welsh headmaster. This place was about a seventeen mile taxi ride up dirt, muddy roads, from Mbale, which was the main town. The new headmaster, had the absolutely Welsh name of David Jones. David Jones arrived there to be the new headmaster so it could become an official senior secondary school because he had the credentials the Ugandan headmaster didn't have, and he brought me. So, that meant that there were three white people up there. When I first got there the new headmaster dropped me off and went back to where he was living. My British roommate wasn't there. It was the middle of their main end of the year school-break. Their main break was the end of December to the beginning of January. They had a trimester arrangement. Since there was no place for me to stay, he left me with a Catholic mission and I spent a few days with these Dutch Roman Catholic missionaries who were fascinating, but probably a sidetrack to my story. In that area there were probably three of the Dutch priests and we three - the Welshman, the English roommate and me. We six were the only "European" people up there. The tribe was called the Bagisu. The district was Bugisu and they all spoke Lugisu. The total number of people,

I think, was about 350,000 in all Bugisu. On the slopes of a volcano, with rich volcanic soil and adequate rainfall, the ones who had land were doing very well, growing coffee, the good coffee, Arabica coffee. That's the ones who had land, but if you were the umpteenth son you weren't very well off. It was a rich area. This didn't mean that people weren't dying in infancy from easily curable diseases, but those that survived the first few years grew up to be strong, healthy people.

Q: In the first place, you mentioned, who else was with you in the Peace Corps, were there two of you who were assigned there?

SMITH: No, just me. There was already this British volunteer. Incidentally, the British had this idea long before Humphrey and Kennedy. Humphrey probably got it from them. Their program was called Volunteer Service Overseas, VSO. Like the British, they had two classes. They had graduates and cadets. The cadets were people who had graduated from high school, but not from university and they'd be doing things where you supposedly didn't need a college degree. They were younger and they were treated differently. The graduates, the VSOs were just like us Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: Did you have to go 17 miles everyday there?

SMITH: No, no, we had a house. It was a boarding school. The students all lived there and so did we.

Q: Well, let's talk a little about the students and the classes. How did you find that?

SMITH: We inherited one class, which was in what we would call the sophomore year. I guess they called it the second form and they had been let in before the school had become an official government senior secondary school. It had been a senior secondary school run by the Bugisu district, but not by headquarters down in Kampala. These kids, a class of about thirty-five had been let in, for more than just their scholastic ability. So, I always said there was a third of them who were hopeless and some who had some hope and a third were really good. It was a shame, but that's the way they were. All had parents, who had been able to scrape up the school fees. That's something people don't realize. These people all had to pay school fees. The Uganda government was subsidizing part of this and of course the U.S. government was too, by sending us. The British government also by sending David Jones and their volunteer, but all the kids had to bring school fees at the start of every term. So, for some of these kids, what got them in was that their parents had had enough money and enough pull to get them in. We were teaching under the English system. All things considered, they weren't bad; it was a boarding school, with very young teenagers. We had to be their mother and their father and their teacher. Among other duties, I was called a "housemaster." I was responsible for what went on in one dormitory. Every seven weeks you become "master on duty," like a duty officer. I always said that except for three or four times in my Foreign Service career, being duty officer was never as bad as being master on duty at the Masaba Senior Secondary School.

Q: What sort of things would happen?

SMITH: Well, you had to get up when they did and make sure that they were all up and brushing their teeth, and supervise breakfast to make sure that that went smoothly. Then you had to teach all day. During the lunch hour, you had to give out punishment and in the evening you had to make sure they were all studying. At night you had to go up and make sure they had gone to bed and weren't horsing around. So, it was pretty hellish.

Q: I take it these were all boys?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Any discipline problems?

SMITH: In fact, yes, but in retrospect it was all kind of minor.

Q: Sort of horseplay type thing?

SMITH: Yes, sometimes they would throw rocks at the house. You'd have to discipline them if they didn't go to bed or if another "master," (we were "masters," not teachers,) said that Mandu here has been misbehaving in class so you need to punish him, you'd have to find some punishment for him. But it wasn't that bad. Well, we had incidents. We had a food strike. They said the food wasn't good enough. So I would go up and eat with them and prove that it was edible. Then the English teacher taught Animal Farm and one very bright, but misdirected, young kid used that as a training manual and went after one of the other teachers. By this time there was another British teacher there who didn't handle the kids as well as he should have and they surrounded his house and made lots of noise, but nothing happened.

Q: So, you were teaching according to the British system. Did you find this a difficult or really different way of approaching the language and studies and all that at the high school level?

SMITH: No, I didn't. I should mention one thing about discipline. Whenever they misbehaved in class, it was easy to get them to behave again. All you did was say, "If you're not going to behave I'm not going to teach. I'm going back to my house and when you've decided to calm down and behave send somebody down to get me and I'll come back." We only had to do that about once - because their parents were paying this hard-earned money for them to go to school and if they were sent home for not behaving they would be in deep trouble. They all realized that their only chance for a future in this developing country was an education. So, they wanted an education and so discipline wasn't a real problem.

Q: Was English sort of the language that tied the country together?

SMITH: At that time, yes. Frankly I don't know what they've done now. Tanzania chose Swahili, Kenya used both, but Uganda used English. It was the only thing to tie them together. Swahili is a Bantu language. The southerners can learn it fairly easily, the northerners can't.

Q: Were there any children of Indians there?

SMITH: No. They were in other government schools in other places and also in schools run by their own religious groups. Up in that valley where I lived, there were probably 50,000 or 100,000 people and I think there was one Indian family, about six miles away.

Q: Because one hears in Kampala that you know the Indians were sort of running the small stores.

SMITH: Well, they were running the small commerce and some of the big commerce, too. The Madvani company had great sugar, and Sisal plantations and so forth. I should mention that while I was there, prime minister Obote abrogated the existing constitution and took over the government as President. When King Mutesa, the President, said, "You can't do that, get out; get out of my capital," Obote sent the army to the palace to attack the king. A big rainstorm came. The king got over the wall and escaped to London and the army colonel who assisted Obote to do all this was Idi Amin, a far northerner, from way up in the West Nile province.

Q: You were saying, the infamous Idi Amin?

SMITH: Yes, he came to prominence. I think it was the first year I was there, but it may have been the second year. So, then the government changed and Obote became president. What all this was over was the remnants of the civil war of that time in the Congo. The Ugandans had been giving some sort of aid and comfort to the rebels who'd been forced up into the last northeastern corner of the Congo and apparently they had been holding the rebels treasury for safekeeping. So, questions were asked in the Uganda parliament about what happened to the "Simba Gold." The rebels were called the Simbas which is the Swahili word for lion, as everybody knows. The Simbas were losing, in spite of assistance from Egypt and the Soviet Union. So, supposedly, their treasury and gold was in Uganda for safekeeping and then when the Simbas lost, the question in parliament was, "well, where is the Simba gold?" It was at that point that Obote abrogated the constitution. He didn't like the answer he'd have to give I guess. That was in '66 and it was 1971 that Idi Amin then overthrew his former patron, Obote.

Q: Did you feel any tremors at all from political events?

SMITH: That's a good question and I'm glad you asked it. Where we were, which was about one hundred-seventy-five miles by road from Kampa, it was as if nothing had happened. The only way we would know about it was if we heard something on Radio Uganda, or the BBC, or the Voice of America or we'd read it in the Uganda Argus Newspaper. There was no immediate effect on us.

Q: Did you feel at all the hand of the Peace Corps in the upper reaches of it, did it come around and check on you or did you feel it much or were you pretty much on your own?

SMITH: We were pretty much on our own, but they did come around and visit us infrequently. There was a Peace Corps doctor who would come by. The Peace Corps staff was small. There was the director, the deputy director and the doctor. That's all there were. They had about thirty or forty kids spread completely throughout the country and so they couldn't visit us all very often. They'd come by and check up, but not often.

Q: What about the next crew of students who came in after, was that different?

SMITH: Yes, that's good, you picked that up. The group that arrived just as I arrived were much better. The new students, the new "form one" were a whole lot better. I can't say for sure, but probably looking back, actually the group after them was the best. The third group that came in, the group that came in at the beginning of '66, could probably master anything that was being taught in the curriculum. They were up to it. The second group frankly I'm beginning to forget. A lot of them came from our junior secondary school, which was already there, and they weren't as good, but they were still better than the first group.

Q: Well, were you teaching physics or the equivalent or science?

SMITH: I was teaching mathematics and biology and frankly I guess I was teaching physics, too, yes.

Q: Was this a problem, I mean were they sort of prepared for this sort of thing?

SMITH: Some of them were, some of them weren't. In retrospect, they were pretty good.

Q: Did you get any feel for where these students in this on the side of a volcano were going?

SMITH: No, I think I had the same view they had. They wanted to successfully leave that school and go on to university, to Makerere University down in Kampala and then get whatever job they could get. Most of them probably thought of some government job.

Q: The subject really hadn't gotten going too much, but I was wondering whether the concern was in the Peace Corps about Vietnam and all this. Was this around or not?

SMITH: It was around. This was when the Vietnam War was really heating up. So, I paid a lot of attention to that. I was reading Time and Newsweek cover to cover every week and hearing news on the Voice of America, too and the BBC. It was big news, but I didn't have that much contact with other people in the Peace Corps most of the time.

Q: How did you get along with the Welsh headmaster?

SMITH: Good, I got along very well with him. I still correspond with him and his family. Later the first British volunteer left and I still correspond with him. Then two more came and I still correspond with one of them.

Q: Well, did you get out and see much of the country?

SMITH: Yes, a lot, because there were three midterm vacations during the year. One, as I said, around Christmas and New Year's, one around Easter and one around August. Most of us volunteers used that time to travel around, so I traveled a lot.

Q: How did Africa strike you? Was it a place you continued to want to be involved with?

SMITH: Oh, yes. Yes, I thought it was wonderful. You know, I was lucky. The climate in East Africa is good. In those days the political climate was pretty good also and it was a wonderful place to be.

Q: Any problems with the residue of the Simbas and all that?

SMITH: No.

Q: Did we have an ambassador?

SMITH: Yes. When we arrived the first ambassador was still there. Olcott Deming, Rusty Deming's father. He left, and Ambassador Henry Stebbins came. He'd been ambassador in Nepal where the Peace Corps was the *real* Peace Corps and he was very high on the Peace Corps. One of the first things he did was to travel around and visit all the Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: Stebbins?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Henry Stebbins.

SMITH: That's him.

Q: Did you have any interest at the time or any curiosity about the Foreign Service?

SMITH: Well, the Foreign Service stimulated that. They actively recruited Peace Corps volunteers. As you know the Foreign Service was expanding then, too, for the same reason we were there, all the new African independent states. They wanted people like us who had proven we could live in Africa and so they actively recruited us and encouraged us to apply to take the written exam. Some of my colleagues did it and passed, and so I said, "well, if they can, why can't I?" One of the two that did it was a math major. So, I said, in spite of not having studied for the Foreign Service, "if Mike can do it, so can I." So, I took the written and passed it. They said, well, when you get back to the States, take the oral. Then they sent me a letter saying, it's possible we could send a team out to East Africa to give the oral exam. Which embassies could you get to the most easily and how far would it be? So, I told them how long it would take me to get to Nairobi and to Kampala. They sent back and said they were giving the exam in Kampala on these dates, show up.

Q: So, you took the exam there?

SMITH: Of course the written is always given in an embassy and that's where I had taken it the year before, and I took the oral in the embassy in Kampala. There were about eight of us I think. One had come all the way from Malawi.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions or anything about the oral exam?

SMITH: Yes, I remember at that time they were using the good-cop, bad-cop method. You had a panel of three people and one was sort of the moderator and one was the good cop and one was the bad cop. The function of the bad cop apparently was to needle you to see what your reaction was under stress. The way he needled me was to ask me a question and when I couldn't come up with the obvious answer he kept needling me more and more until I said, well, I don't know what you're getting at, but I can't get there. The question was, "Okay, Mr. Smith, you are at the embassy here in Uganda and you're going to send a foreign visitor, a Ugandan government official, back to the United States, to find out about America. What are the places you'd have him visit so that he would know what America is about?" I had him going to farms and industries and God knows where. "But isn't there some other place you want him to visit?" I wracked my brain and I could not think of this other place and it was years later after I was in the Foreign Service I realized where he wanted me to send this guy: The State Department.

Q: I would never send somebody to the State Department.

SMITH: Well, I'm sure that's where, he wanted him to go, to visit the desk. I'm sure that's what he was getting at, but I couldn't come up with that answer. So, that gave him a pretty good chance to needle me.

*Q: Well, then you finished up in the Peace Corps. Well, one thing I'm just interested in, how did you find the Peace Corps, I mean here we were sending many single young men and women out there and the interacting. Was there much you might say socializing and all?*SMITH: A little bit. There were a couple of married couples. One of which quit even before they started. They got there and then they quit and went home. Another couple stayed on. Because we were so spread out, there was very little socializing between each other. We had two big parties at our school that the other volunteers and I organized and we'd get some people to come - both British and American volunteers - who would stay overnight. In places where there was more than one volunteer in the same town they would get together. You know, our job was to be there at the school teaching and so during the sessions we couldn't go anywhere.

Q: Yes, I was just wondering about dating local girls and that sort of thing, was that pretty much out?

SMITH: I don't think it was done a lot, but it was done.

Q: No, because sometimes you know you get these cultural problems and all that.

SMITH: Yes, from both sides.

BEAUVEAU B. NALLE
Political Officer
Kampala (1967-1970)

Beauveau B. Nalle was born in Pennsylvania in 1927. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956, serving in Washington, DC, Turkey, Uganda, Liberia, and Belize. Mr. Nalle was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on April 19, 1994.

NALLE: Anyway, so after 4 years as Uganda Desk Officer, I went to Kampala as Political Officer. And began what I think are among the 4 of the happiest years of my life. I count 3 periods in my life as being truly periods of great joy: the 3 years in Roberts College, the 4 years in Kampala, and the 4 years as Consul General in Izmir, Turkey later on.

We had a good team at the Embassy. A man by the name of Henry Stebbins was the Ambassador. He had formerly been Ambassador to Nepal, he was the first American ambassador to Kathmandu. He was Harvard College, class of 1920 something or other. A man of great personal dignity and self-assurance. A man with no African experience and I don't think any particular strong feelings about Africa.

But a man who knew what an ambassador was all about. A man who knew when to step in and do something, and when to step back and let his staff do it. A man who would listen to advice, accept it or reject it quickly with good reasons. A man with a delightful wife who expected certain things from her staff but who was not overpowering at all. Who was always very nice about asking and not telling, thanking and not ignoring when the job was done.

We lived in a gorgeous house. One of the things I always felt about the Bureau of African Affairs, was that more than any other bureau I had served in, they take care of their people. Housing was very good in Kampala. The AFEX people, Greg Kryza and the others, were constantly looking for ways to make it better.

Our Embassy itself was relatively small. We were limited by the Ugandan government to a total of 15 people, not including the AID mission, the Ugandans were not dumb enough to cut back on that, it was feeding them. It did include Agency people, it did not include USIS. We had a small, I think effective, USIS operation in Kampala.

We had Agency people, we had 2 in the Embassy. One was declared. I would say on the whole, they were very capable people. To the best of my knowledge they were very good team players. I'm not aware of anytime where an Agency guy was out wheeling and dealing, that the ambassador didn't know about it.

Ambassador Stebbins was very firm with his Station people, he'd never let them get out of control. And he told them that he wasn't going to take any nonsense from them. They respected him, I think, and it made the working relationship easier. They knew what their lines were and they followed them.

We had some very good people there. One of the guys was Chief of the Consular Section. We didn't have a tremendous burden of consular work but there was enough. He worked damn hard at it and he was a good consular officer. He said it was worth his while to do it because it was

excellent cover. He could travel around and see people and stuff that as a political officer or economic officer, he couldn't do.

Ritchey was the DCM, a wonderful fellow, he died about 6, 7 months ago and I was very sad to see it happen. Of course Ambassador Stebbins' mysterious death at sea, is something to this day I don't understand. I suspect it was a heart attack and that he, a man of 6'4", had toppled overboard.

But we had a good Embassy. A pretty good AID mission, Will Muller was the AID Director, and I have enormous respect for Will.

It so happened that I spent a period of 14 months as chargé d'affaires between ambassadors. Stebbins retired, Ambassador Ferguson, a political appointee wasn't appointed, didn't arrive until 14 months later. During that 14 months when I was running the Embassy, Will Muller who was several grades my superior and a good many years older than I am, was a model player on the country team and all of that. He never tried to override me, he never tried to pull rank on me, he never tried to play the big boss or anything like that. He accepted me as if I had been an Ambassador. It made my job so infinitely much easier and my respect and affection for Will is very deep as a result of that.

We had some problems. One of the young AID employees had his girlfriend come to visit and she got tired of staying in a hotel and moved in with him. I was waited upon by a delegation of angry AID wives who wanted me to put an end to that situation. I refused to do it. I said that it did not appear to me that this was giving the Embassy a bad name. I didn't hear any loose talk or gossip around town. I got around town a hell of a lot. I didn't hear anybody commenting about it. They were not flaunting their relationship. I said until such time that it becomes a public problem, it's none of my damned business what the guy does, what he and his girlfriend do. The ladies were not happy. But I talked it over with Will Muller and he said, "Yeah, they'd come to me and I told them I'm not going to get involved in it."

We had a very well run operation. We had good relations with the government although Obote was a difficult man to get along with. We had good relations with the other diplomatic missions there. We were very close to the Israelis and obviously close to the Brits.

We were there during the days of ping-pong diplomacy and as we had both the Chinese and the Soviet Embassies in town, it was absolutely fascinating when I was told that I was at liberty to speak to the Chinese. I went to whoever it was at parties, and one thing or another, we'd chat about the weather, Ugandan food and utterly insignificant matters and occasionally venture into policy matters. The minute it was over, Dmitri Safanov, the Soviet, would come up to me, "What did he tell you? What was he saying?" I'd say, "Oh Mr. Ambassador, we were just joking together." "You were talking to him about NATO matters. You were talking to him about Russian policy in Africa." It was hysterical, it was worth the price of admission alone.

Q: *Was this the period when Idi Amin threw Obote out?*

NALLE: It began.

Q: *Did you see it coming?*

NALLE: Yeah, everybody saw it coming. It was like an express train coming down the track. It was not subtle. Uganda at the time of independence had a functioning multiparty government. There was Obote's party, the Uganda People's Congress, the UPC. There was the opposition, the Democratic Party led by a very dear friend, Alex Latim.

And there was a regional grouping of the Buganda tribe, the Baganda people who were the dominant tribe in Uganda and who lived around the Kampala area called the Kabaka Yeka--the Kabaka alone. And all 3 of those parties essentially functioned in parliament.

Obote was becoming more and more authoritarian, more and more vaguely leftist, although I pretty consistently refused to call it leftist. I said it was nationalism, fuzzy head London School of Economics socialism, that kind of stuff. He had a lot of young kids who did have an LSE degree and they reflected that attitude. The London School was well known in the 50s, 60s, and 70s and I think was pretty harmless. If you'd ever suggested to those people that they ought to be real socialists, they'd turn pale with horror.

The army role was growing ever larger. About a year before Amin took over the government, somebody took a potshot at Dr. Obote at the Annual National Congress of the UPC--shot him right through the mouth. The army went amuck. And for about 12 hours it was a pretty horrifying situation. There was no Ambassador, I was Chargé.

It was frightening. They beat up American citizens, they killed a fair number of people, they beat up Brits, there was a strong anti-foreign element in it. There was a strong anti-white element in it. And as I said, it lasted for about 12 hours. I take some pride in having been able to get a formal, written apology from the GOU for all of this.

Amin cut and run. Jumped out the back window of his house in his pajamas and disappeared. Which really mystified us all. Why did he run? We thought he was going to make his move one of these days. Why did he do what he did? We spent a lot of time pondering that.

I was a member of an institution called the Uganda Club. Which was set-up as an answer to the all-British, all-white Kampala Club. I was one of 2 white members of this particular club. Everyone from the Prime Minister to the Cabinet to the Governor was a member and Ugandan. I made it a habit of stopping in there and having a couple of beers every night. The drinking that went on at the Uganda was mind boggling, just unbelievable.

You could be assured of meeting 2 or 3 Cabinet ministers anytime you went up there. I used to take newspaper people there who were thrilled with it. What's his name? Apple, Charlie Mohr, a whole bunch of them I would take there and they loved it.

But one evening after this happened, Amin appeared at the Club. In full uniform with 6 of his senior officers, with sidearms. Everyone was sitting around, laughing and joking. I was at the bar. Suddenly I heard the whole Club go silent. I was wondering, what was going on? I walked

out of the bar and there was Amin, a huge man, an enormous fellow, with his officers with their weapons. Sitting in the main lounge, sitting at attention, not talking just looking around. I thought, Jesus, what's going to happen. They sat there for about half an hour, and then Amin said something in one of the local languages, and they all got up and walked out.

What it was, I'm convinced to this day, was a threat on the part of Amin at reestablishing his position. Because he knew that he was laughed at because he ran away. This was his reprisal, his counter-threat. And it worked. People were scared to death.

Relations got worse and worse between Amin and Obote. A senior army officer was murdered. He was taking a bath on his front porch. It was an old fashioned town, he was sitting out there scrubbing himself, humming away. A land rover drove by, boom boom, and that was the end of Brigadier Okoya. He was one of the senior Acholi officers who were opposed to Amin.

On the night of January 24th, I had Fred Hadsel and Bob Moore visiting me. Sheila and I gave a reception at our house to which we invited mostly Americans because I'd had some complaints from the American community that when hotshot visitors from Washington came through, I did nothing but entertain Ugandans. I said, well goddamn it, that's what I'm here for. I'm here to entertain Ugandans, not Americans. But still and all, in this particular case we did invite mostly Americans.

It was all over around 11:00. Fred had left, that's right, Fred had flown that afternoon after a tennis game down to Nairobi. So it was just Bob. I took him back to the hotel where he was staying, I got back to the house around midnight. A friend of mine who was the Dean of the School of Agriculture at the University, called me and said, "Can you hear machine gun fire?" I said, "Let me step out on the porch." I went out on the balcony and heard the tat-tat-tat all over the city.

And that was it. Obote was out of town at the Commonwealth Conference in Singapore. We all felt when Obote left--the Station Chief, the Israelis--we were all pretty much in agreement, that Obote felt he was in command of things or else he wouldn't have gone off to Singapore. But he did.

And Amin took over the government. I would say inside of 3 days, the killing began and it never stopped. The first people he killed were 6 Canadian missionaries. It didn't get much publicity.

We had about, I forget what our E&E plan said, we had about 800, maybe a thousand Americans in the country. I put in the hold fast in the home system and to my delight and pleasure it worked. We had a notification, a network of radios and stuff, and by-golly the system worked, which surprised me a lot.

There was a tourist group in town and they were a problem because they thought they were important and wanted to get out of town. I said to them, "Look the airport is closed." And later the tour leader turned to me and said, "Well Mr. Nalle, these are important people, they haven't got time to wait around, they're going to miss their connections in Nairobi."

I said, "You're damn right they're going to miss their connections in Nairobi, and they're going to get hungry, they're going to get tired, they're going to get dirty and they're going to want to get their laundry done. And it's not going to be done. Because I don't see any chance of these folks leaving for 4 or 5 days." And that was just the case. They were furious.

One guy, the president of this big liquor distributing company in Hartford, CT., Highblood or Hugh Blind or something, he beat me about that on the head and shoulders. He had to get back to sign a contract. I said, "You can't do it. There are soldiers at the airport who will kill you." He kind of walked away scratching his head.

It was funny if it hadn't been serious. But the killings went on and they never stopped.

Q: *What attitude did we take to that?*

NALLE: Another interesting thing, goddamn there are so many interesting things about this. I was able to get up that night when I heard the firing, got the Deputy Station Chief who lived fairly close to me, and we drove into the office. We didn't get back to our homes for over 48 hours. We were at the office and we turned on the radio, South African broadcasting had it already within 3 hours after the coup. BBC came in about 6 or 7 hours later and VOA was tail-light charlie as usual.

I called the OPS Center and was able to get out one phone call message. I thought of sending a Critic message but I thought, this is not critic material. You know, Uganda and the United States, come on. So I just telephoned the Operations Center and told them what happened. Then all the phones went out and we lost communications completely.

The only thing we did have was a voice-radio with Embassy Nairobi. And bless his heart, dear old Alan Lukens was DCM in Nairobi and every afternoon for about 2 weeks around 4:00 the radio would crackle and it was Luke calling up to know how we were and did we need anything. That was our only communication for about 2 days. Then the communications guys did get things set-up so we could send messages out and receive messages on a limited basis.

The coup took place on a Sunday night. Ambassador Ferguson was away, knowing that Obote was going to Singapore. He went up to Switzerland to put his older daughter in school in Lausanne and take a week's vacation to go skiing. So again I was in-charge of the place. The Station Chief was away, it was his Deputy that I was doing business with. I mean when Obote took off, everybody took off.

So anyway, the coup took place on a Sunday night. And I think it was Tuesday, I got a message from Newsom, David Newsom, saying that we were going to recognize the government. That we recognize countries not governments. That there would be no question, that the issue would not come up. We would not make a formal statement saying that we recognize the government. If asked, we would say that the diplomatic relations had never been broken, they continue on. In retrospect I wonder if we should have done that, but everybody is smarter the day after.

Then I got a message from Amin's principal private secretary, saying that he was convening the Heads of Missions that afternoon and wanted me to attend. I called Dick Slater, the British High Commissioner, and Ohran Ofri, the Israeli Ambassador, and I think I may even have called the Russian but I'm not sure. I said, are you going to the meeting? And they all said, yes. So I went along without consulting Washington. I operated on the theory that Washington put me there cause they thought I could do the job and goddamn it, I'm going to do it.

So I went along and it was a very brief meeting. Amin was pretty articulate, I mean, to digress a minute. Amin was everything people said he was. He was a murderer, he was a racist, he was a thug, a bully, a sadist, quite possibly a cannibal, but people don't face up to the fact that also he was a very shrewd political manipulator.

He just met with us for no more than 10 minutes. He said he wanted relations to continue between his government and all of us. That he was not taking sides to the East-West strife. I remember the Soviet looked over at me and smiled. The Soviets have a sense of humor. That he would continue to look to Great Britain. Dick Slater groaned at that one. It was pretty routine and we all left. I was able to report on it. Then he announced his new Cabinet which had some pretty competent people in it.

The next day I got a message from Slater, the Brit, saying that he had just received a message from Amin that he wanted a one-on-one. And that Amin had mentioned that he was also going to ask me to come in for a one-on-one. The Israelis, because the Israelis had a huge aid program in Uganda in those days, Amin said he wanted the Israelis to come in. Dick had given me a little tip-off. Well in that case I thought I had better talk to the Department. So I called David Newsom. The phone service was getting a lot better or maybe I used the radio, I forget. But anyway I got through to Operations Center and Newsom. And he told me to go to the meeting, listen and say as little as possible. He said make no commitments whatsoever. Which I did.

Amin wanted us to get into the military assistance program and he wanted us to double our economic assistance. And specifically he wanted helicopters and airplanes that could fly to Dar-Es-Salaam and return without refueling. Also that he wanted to join NATO. The guy was off the wall a lot of times. He wanted to join NATO and he was also thinking of joining the Warsaw Pact and in this way (yes, yes, this comes back to me now), by being both a member of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, he could be a balancing act between the 2 super powers. Which was a lovely thought.

Q:*What were his relations with his East African neighbors? Kenya and Tanganyika?*

NALLE: Pretty bad. The East African Federation was a dead duck by then. But even so, they looked at him as a kind of a clown. Although it's interesting there was always an element in Africa and Uganda that supported Amin because he kicked out the whites. A lot of Africans looked up on him because he beat up on white people.

A very good friend of mine and a distinguished professor at Makarari Univ, a university professor, political science man named Ali Mazrui, he was a Kenyan from Lamu island. He was a very bright guy, a distinguished Ph.D. from some American university. He wrote a book. He

wrote several books. But one of the points in his book, or his long article after the takeover, was that Amin was doing a good thing in kicking out the Asians, and in beating up on the whites, and one thing or another. I happened to run into Ali after I was back here in Washington. I said, "Ali, that's just disgusting. You should be ashamed of yourself."

But anyway, then things really started deteriorating. Deaths increased. One man I remember was the Director of the police band. We were at that time planning to send him, I mean before the takeover, we had permission from the commandant and the police to send him to the InterLachen festival at Michigan, where he could get a summer learning band techniques. The police had an excellent band. This guy was a good musician. He graduated from some British band school in the UK and we'd just polish him up a little bit. He was a first class musician. He got beaten to death with re-bar because he was from another tribe.

The son of a very good friend of mine, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, the Permanent Secretary's son was an officer in the army. The night Amin took over the government, he ran away. Then realized that he'd have to come back sooner or later. He went to see his father. His father counseled him that he should go back and see Amin and try to make his peace. He said that he would go along and support him. They met Amin and Amin said, "That's all right my friend, you go back and you join your unit. We'll forget it all." The father said, thank God, and he left. Three days later they started discovering bits and pieces of this young boy chopped up around the barracks.

One of his favorite tricks was to handcuff a person to the steering wheel of an automobile, set the car on fire, and push it down the road. It went on and on. The strain on us was just unbelievable. You talk to Bob Keeley about it at some time. It was never ending.

There was curfew. I had to go out at night one time and one of the Ugandan army armored personnel carriers came down the street. The lids were open and there were people sitting on it looking around with their--they didn't have AKs, no they had a few AK47s, but it was mostly that FN, that NATO gun, the rifle with Fabrique Nationale from Belgium they got from the Australians curiously.

Anyway, you talk about scared. I was able to walk in behind a telephone pole, in some bushes and just lay there shaking. Another time, I was up North with one of the members of the staff, about 2 months after the revolution. I wanted to go to Ocholi country because they were anti-Amin, they were the wrong tribe. And a guy cut loose on us with a burst of automatic fire from his weapon. Which was another unpleasant experience. But it was like that constantly.

Sheila and the children were under terrible strain. There was a fire fight that took place outside our house. We had a lovely house there. I was away on a business trip. I think it was while I was up North getting shot at up there. A fire fight took place outside our house between gangsters and soldiers.

And Sheila and the children literally spent the night in the bathtub. That was about the safest place as any. When I came home from the trip, there were bullet holes in our house. It was stone. It was rough. It was very, very rough.

Q: *No congressional visits during that period?*

NALLE: Not the immediate period, they came later on.

One American who went up North and nearly got killed, was Nick Stroh, from Stroh beer people in Detroit. He was an awfully nice guy. A stringer for a couple of the U.S. newspapers, just starting out on the world of newspapers. He represented a Tampa newspaper, he represented a couple of small papers from Michigan, he was stringing for the Kansas Star, is it?

Q: *Kansas City Star.*

NALLE: Kansas City Star, yeah. He went away on a trip, this was in July, and he left on a Wednesday in his car, went out into the western part of the country. I didn't know.

Q: *Alone or with an interpreter?*

NALLE: With a friend. You didn't use interpreters much in Uganda, most people, you get enough English to get by. I never used an interpreter.

With a friend from the faculty at the Makarari College, an American professor of sociology. He didn't tell me he was going. If he had, I would have tried desperately to talk him out of it because it was not a safe area to be in. But he just went. His wife, Gerda, came and told me this and I said, oh God. He said he would be back Thursday. Thursday rolled by and he never showed up, she came to me. Nothing happened. I started looking around, I talked to police, I talked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Ferguson put out calls through his sources.

Then we were due to leave on Sunday. On Saturday when we should have been finishing our packing, I got an anonymous phone call from a town out in the western region. That 2 white men had been seen being driven around in an army automobile with an army officer driving and someone was beating these guys up. And the phone hung up.

And this is where we really went out of our minds. I went to every Ugandan, every source I had built up in the course of 8 years working in that country, people who were in the habit of sitting down and having long open candid conversations. They'd look at me and say, "Beau, don't ask. Please don't ask me because, just don't ask." Windows were shut in my face, doors slammed in my face. And we left, Sheila, the kids and I left the following Sunday morning.

And Nick Stroh's body was found. Bob Keeley and Ferguson went through hell. But eventually there was an investigation mounted and a British high judge wrote his report, dropped it at the registered mail envelope of the post office and drove directly out of the country. He never went back to Uganda again. Because it pointed a finger directly at Amin and his troops.

And after I left, things got even worse. The Asians were kicked out. It was sad because Uganda was a beautiful, lovely little country. God damn, I spent 8 years working on that place. It was absolutely fascinating.

Q: *Was this entirely the cause of Amin or were there others?*

NALLE: I don't know of any other real cause that you could say, other than Amin's personal ambition. I mean, he was an incredible character. I was up at the Club one evening when there were problems in India. Mrs. Gandhi was Prime Minister and was having difficulties with her Parliament I mentioned this to Amin and he chuckled, "Who wouldn't with all those bloody Asians?" he asked.

ROY STACEY
Uganda Desk Officer, USAID
Washington, DC (1968-1969)

Mr. Stacey was raised in Hawaii and educated at the University of California and George Washington University. Joining USAID in 1963, he served first on the Somali desk in Washington and was subsequently assigned to Mogadishu as Assistant Program Officer. Continuing as an Africa specialist, Mr. Stacey served with USAID in Nairobi, Mbabane, Abidjan, Paris and Harare. From 1986 to 1988, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Following retirement Mr. Stacey worked with the World Bank, also on Southern African Affairs. Mr. Stacey was interviewed by W. Haven North in1999.

Q: What position did you come back to?

STACEY: I came back onto the Uganda desk. I was Uganda desk officer then and I was working with Will Muller on the Uganda program. Again, Uganda seemed like such a glorious opportunity. This was the pre-Idi Amin period of time, and it was one of those countries where anything would grow. They used to say you could stick a pencil in the ground in Uganda and it will sprout. So I worked as the Ugandan desk officer for a year and then was offered this opportunity to go for mid-tour training to the Fletcher School on Participation and Development. I went up to Fletcher from 1969-1970.

Q: It's interesting that early on in your career that you were given a year off.

STACEY: Yes, a total surprise. I was sitting in my office one day and I got a call from Princeton Lyman, who was in PPC in those days. Princeton said "We have a group going up to Fletcher and we've got one more slot. I know you haven't been with the agency very long but would you be interested?" It didn't take me long to decide.

VERNON C. JOHNSON
Mission Director, USAID
Kampala (1970-1973)

Dr. Vernon C. Johnson was born in Mississippi in 1918. He received a bachelor's degree from Southern University in 1948 and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1954. He served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1942-1946. His Foreign Service career included positions in India, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanzania. Dr. Johnson was interviewed April 12, 1994 by W. Haven North.

JOHNSON: After Nigeria, I came back to Washington for a short time and was assigned as USAID Director to Uganda. That was in 1970. It was a nice mission, with 40-50 employees, and, thus, it was small compared with Nigeria. Development of improved ranches for cattle was one of the big projects. We had a major contract at Makerere University; other educational/training programs were supported, agricultural research, a medium size poultry project, and assistance to health rounded out our program. Obote was President when I went there. A few months later he attended a conference in Asia and upon his return a coup had occurred. That's when Idi Amin became the leader. During the coup, we could hear machine guns and large guns firing very near our house in Kampala.

Uganda had been looked upon as having a rather special development prospect in East Africa. It was small and manageable. It was tolerant of its Asian citizens who were good business people. Its biggest asset was Makerere University, which, by any measure, was the finest university in all of Black Africa. Its graduates were spread over East Africa and in Uganda; most government posts were held by Makerere graduates. The university had good teachers who conducted a good bit of research. In fact, students from other countries, even from the U.S., came to Uganda to study under certain Makerere professors.

After a while the presence of Idi Amin was beginning to be felt and things began to change for the worse. This suggests that leadership can make or break the development process. In time, the better Ministers were relieved or they escaped in fear of Amin. Important people including Ministers began to "disappear" which was the common word that Ugandans used. White Peugeots were the common car that some of the C.I.D. people used; if a white Peugeot was parked nearby, people would become very nervous because somebody could end up in the trunk of the car and never seen again. This was fairly common; all kinds of weird and bizarre things occurred that one would never think could occur in a government setting. A top judge in the country was arrested and brought to a cocktail party where ladies were in their finery and the poor man was paraded before the whole group on his hands and knees in mock subservience. Even foreigners were becoming more nervous, because, for AID, our cattle ranches and other project sites were far removed from Kampala; people were posted there. Our Division Chiefs and backstopping officers had to go out to these sites which became more risky. So we reached the point that we just decided that it was not worth the effort.

Q: Was any of this directed against the Americans?

JOHNSON: Not Americans in government but two Americans who lived in the country were killed. Because the climate is so pleasant (the only place where I never used a heater or an air-conditioner), some Americans had moved there including a few black Americans, for example. If

they ran afoul of the government, they sought help from the Embassy to get out of the country. Nobody in the American government was accosted.

I had been in Uganda for three years when we decided to close the Mission. We recommended it to Washington and got approval to close. That's quite a feat itself going through the routine of closing down a Mission. Precise procedures had to be followed: selling things like refrigerators and stoves and whole houses of furniture. Keeping records. The night before we left, we were down to two people, myself and one other; we slept on the floor and left early the next morning.

During our packing to leave, Idi Amin sent for me because he had an idea that the British were forcing our hand. So he wanted to talk with me about it and find out why we were leaving. I went to the Ambassador, who said don't bother. Ambassador Melady said that he would take care of it. The Embassy stayed there after the Mission's closure.

In despotic countries such as Uganda at that time an Ambassador and Mission Director need close and frequent instructions. In this case, the Ambassador thought that our job was to project U.S. interests by maintaining good relations with Idi Amin's government. Most of us, including myself, thought otherwise. This made for friction within the overall U.S. Mission.

Q: What happened to the projects?

JOHNSON: We simply abandoned them. Going back eight years later, there were only remnants of some of the projects. I think that is symptomatic of so many projects, particularly in Africa, that, once the resources from outside are severed, it is very difficult for these project to be sustained. There are several reasons for this. For example, in an AID project that is on-going the resources and funds that are associated with the project give AID leverage to apply pressure on the government to deliver on whatever share they are to provide. However, at the point of phase out, that pressure, as well as the resources, disappears; the counterpart who worked with the project might be effective and efficient technically, but he has no clout to extract funds from the treasury.

Thus, one of the reasons that a lot of technical assistance projects deteriorate after phase out is purely cultural; the person who is left in charge of the project simply does not have access, remember he is just a technician, and to face the Minister of Finance is a real problem for him. So when the project needs resources-gasoline or some other critical item of work begins to lag- it goes down from there. the local technician simply can't do what the American technician (who has a resource base) could do when he was there. Support systems fail to function: there are some technical reasons but access on the part of individuals in terms of class and standards is the critical factor in this.

ARTHUR S. BERGER
Assistant Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Kampala (1971-1972)

Mr. Berger was born and raised in Rhode Island and educated at Yeshiva and Howard Universities. He joined the Foreign Service (USIA) in 1970. Serving primarily in Cultural and Public Affairs, Mr. Berger served abroad in Kampala, Addis Ababa, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Tel Aviv and the Hague, where he was Public Affairs Officer. In his Washington assignments Mr. Berger served at USIA Headquarters as Director of Publications and at the Department of State as Spokesman for the Near East South Asia Bureau. Following retirement Mr. Berger worked with the American Jewish Committee before becoming Director of Communications of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. Mr. Berger was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: *Finally, you went to Uganda in mid-1971?*

BERGER: In June of 1971.

Q: *What was the situation? What was going on?*

BERGER: Well, Idi Amin had come into power about five months earlier. He was consolidating his hold on the military in the country. Things seemed to be quite calm, in fact, when we arrived. Over the next, I would say, six months, they stayed fairly calm. It was a dictatorship, of course. Everything was run by military officers. But there were a number of technocrats in the government. The U.S. relationship was not bad.

And then toward the end of 1971 and early 1972 Amin got into his mind that he really wanted a corridor to the sea. And since Uganda was landlocked a few hundred miles inland, and Kenya and Tanzania were in the way, the only way to do this was to get some land from one of those two countries. He decided that Tanzania was the easier place. So he tried to convince the Israelis, who had major aid programs, both military and civilian assistance programs, to support him in a war against Tanzania and to carve a corridor to the sea. And I think they said: "What, are you crazy?" Which was probably true. He certainly was, in our terms, crazy.

He decided in any event that he was going to do things on his own. The Israelis would not help him, so he kicked them out. He got a lot of support from Qaddafi, Libya who brought in some money, built some mosques and tried to influence, and probably subvert, Amin. We were there until September 26, 1972. The reason I can remember the date very clearly was because over the months of the spring and summer of 1972 the political and security situations deteriorated rapidly.

Amin started having these delusional dreams about paratroopers coming out of the sky. He called the Asian community, which were mainly Indians and Pakistanis, the blood suckers of East Africa and [said] that they had come and were stealing the jobs and wealth away from the Africans. And he was going to get it back. So he took away their citizenship and kicked them out of the country.

One day, in fact, in the summer of 1972. He had already decided to kick the Asians out of the country. I was coming back from a meeting at Makerere University, which was on the outskirts

of Kampala. I was driving an embassy car, an old Chevrolet. I turned the corner to go towards the embassy and had to pass by the British high commission. And there was a big demonstration in the street against the Asians. It was led by some police. Thousands of what they said were students, although they looked a little old to be students. They were on the streets screaming: "Kill the imperialist, kill the Zionist, kick out the British." And I was stuck in traffic. I couldn't move.

Then people started shaking the car. Remember, I'm a junior officer. This isn't supposed to happen! By that summer, because the situation was so precarious, the ambassador ordered us to all carry our diplomatic passports. I had it with me. I took it out of my pocket. And I showed it to one of the people who was right outside of the car window. We didn't have air-conditioning so the windows were wide open. I said: "I'm an American diplomat, can I pass?" And this guy said: "Oh, of course, we are very sorry." And he pushed people away and said: "Please make room, he's an American diplomat." And they let me go. And I went to the garage at the embassy and I could not believe that they let me go. And of course, years later, when American diplomats in Iran were held hostage and the embassy taken over, I thought back to that moment in 1972. I was really lucky.

Q: *Well let's go back. When you arrived in June of '71, was Idi Amin seen as a problem?*

BERGER: He wasn't really a problem for the Americans. He maintained most of the aid relationship. He basically kept the status quo. And a lot of people in Uganda that I knew seemed to think that he wasn't bad. The political situation under Obote, when he was overthrown, and the economic situation were both terrible. So they wanted some stability and he brought some of that.

But then fairly soon afterwards – we began hearing this in the fall of '71 – that there were movements in the military. He was sending people from his own tribe who were in the army – they came from the northwest of the country and it was a very small tribe - into various military bases. They would take out some of the leaders of various other tribes and they would execute them. And this became much more widespread. I guess that part of it was that he gave people from certain tribes the *carte blanche* to go ahead and murder their rivals, who were generally in higher positions. So a lot of the officer corps was being killed.

Then it went on to other parts of government. To the supreme court. But the end of 1971 or early 1972 there was really a climate of fear that had pervaded society. You could still travel around the country. And we did quite a bit of driving around whenever we could. Game parks were only a couple of hours away. The roads were not bad. People were very nice. Hotels in the game parks were wonderful. But the security situation was deteriorating. And by early '72 it had started to go downhill rapidly.

Q: *Who was your ambassador?*

BERGER: There were two ambassadors during the time I was there. The first one was Clarence Clyde Ferguson, who was a political appointee – in fact both were political appointees. He has come out of Harvard Law School. He was a professor at Harvard Law School. And he knew

something about Africa and was really very good. He wanted my experience to be a real variety of job situations in the Embassy. [Editor's Note: Ambassador Ferguson served from June 1970 to July 1972. Thomas Patrick Melady served as Ambassador from July 1972 to February 1973.]

Q: *This is Tape Two, Side A, with Art Berger. Yeah?*

BERGER: So I had a very good public affairs officer, PAO, Bob Rothweiler, who really understood what it meant to train a junior officer. Both he and the ambassador encouraged me to take on all kinds of odd positions in the embassy. I was able to rotate; when the political officer was on vacation – it was a small embassy – I would become the political officer for a month. Or the economic officer. Or the consular officer. And, of course, when the PAO was on vacation I could be acting PAO. I got involved in every aspect, from press relations, cultural relations, American speaker programs, the Fulbright Program, international visitors. It was a well rounded experience. I think it helped me understand the variety of things that we could do in a country as long as you opened your mind to trying to do new things.

Q: *Well let's talk a bit about what you were up to from the USIA perspective. What about cultural relations?*

BERGER: I don't remember all the details, but we had a very small cultural exchange program for – I believe we did have some for students as well – but it was mainly for the opinion leaders, new graduates. I should say, the best and the brightest coming up in society. There was a very good university there, Makerere University. One of the best in Africa.

Q: *I remember. It had quite a reputation.*

BERGER: It had an excellent reputation. And it was well deserved. There were a number of American professors who were there. I think there were one or two in the Fulbright Program. One, in fact, was Paul Theroux, the writer, who was there on a sabbatical. And I'm not sure if it was with the Fulbright Program or on his own. He was teaching creative writing at Makerere University.

Q: *I'm reading a book by him right now.*

BERGER: A wonderful writer.

Q: *Well, when you went out there, the bloom was still on the rose, wasn't it, as far as Uganda was concerned? This was considered to be a place of great promise. And a nice place to go to.*

BERGER: Oh, it was. There was a stereotype of it as "the pearl of Africa" or "the Switzerland of Africa." It was neither of course. But at the same time the living was very comfortable. The standard of living was not bad. The public health facilities were not bad for the early '70s in Africa. It wasn't as well developed or it didn't have as strong an infrastructure as Kenya at that time. Although since that time, of course, Kenya has had a series of dictatorships sort of wracked up in corruption. And as Uganda has had continuing problems.

But in the early '70s, Uganda was really pretty nice. The road system was pretty good. The local telephone system worked. Some doctors said you could drink water out of the tap, although we did not. The Danish aid program had a milk project with a diary, where they brought in dairy cows. We got fresh Danish quality milk and other dairy products. The Israelis had a chicken farm with great chickens. The Americans had all kinds of other agricultural projects.

And the weather was really pleasant. Kind of mid-'80s during the day time, low 60s at night. It rained almost every night. Usually rained two or three times a week during lunch time. Rest of the time it was sunny. It was beautiful. There was always a breeze because it was right next to Lake Victoria. A lot of lush vegetation. There was this sense that almost anything could grow there. And of course the coffee was plentiful. And tea. Wonderful tea plantations. Bananas. Most people didn't realize that Uganda was the largest producer of bananas in the world. Exported very few of them because it was the staple of the country; matoke mixed with peanut sauce and meat or other products.

So the standard of living of the African tribes in Uganda was really not bad compared to many of the others. There was a lot of tension between the Africans and the Asians, Indians and Pakistanis. Mainly Indians from Gujarat State, who were petty bourgeois, the small businessman or the middle-men, the technocrats. There was a sizeable ex-pat community of British and others from the commonwealth. And a number of Africans, especially from East Africa, but also from other English speaking African countries.

Q: *What about the media there? How did you find the media?*

BERGER: Well the media was not very good, not very well developed. There was one television station, black and white, I remember. A local radio station. And one newspaper in English. There were a number of newspapers in local vernacular. All of them basically reported the same thing, as you would expect in a military dictatorship. "His Excellency, President for Life Idi Amin Dada did this yesterday, he's going to do this today, and tomorrow he'll do the following." And there were pictures of him all over the front page. And that's how the news every night began. There was a BBC FM repeater station in Kampala. So we picked it up by short wave. So you could listen to BBC on FM twenty-four hours a day. And that was great.

Q: *Was it a dictatorship while you were there? And did it change? That you could go out and talk to Ugandans in positions of authority?*

BERGER: What I remember is that Ugandans had no hesitation talking, at least initially, about their own lives, about what they thought about the government, almost anything. There was relative freedom on that. I was not there the first five of months after Amin came to power. I think it was a little bit more restrictive when he first came into power, then it loosened up a bit, and it stayed fairly loose of a while. I'm not sure when in the fall, but at some point towards the end of 1971 things got a little bit more restrictive. And this was when the military began having these attacks. Military officers from Amin's tribe and others that were considered loyal to him would attack those tribal members that were not considered loyal. That would also infect, I think, the atmosphere in the rest of society. Because the word got around. People knew what was

happening. So that did take place. And I think it added a measure of instability. People became a little bit more cautions.

But I do remember that in December of 1971 we had a reception at our home. And I remember doing it because – it was the first time that we had this – it was for the holiday of Chanukah, a Jewish festival, which is also a festival of freedom. And I saw this also as a way to invite some of my Ugandan contacts and give them a sense of this tradition of freedom; freedom of belief, the rights of human beings in a society. And it was a wonderful evening. But I do remember within a couple of months afterwards several of the people who were there, including someone who was on one of the courts, disappeared. Everybody was talking about it and said "They took them to the river." Which meant that they killed them and threw their bodies into the river, where the crocodiles would generally eat them.

Q: *You were there for two years?*

BERGER: I was there for fourteen months. We were evacuated September 26, 1972.

Q: *Was there a point when the ambassador or somebody came in and said "You know, this guy Amin is nuts!"*

BERGER: Well I remember – in fact I remember several people – we talked about it. And then David Newsom was the assistant secretary for Africa at the time. And he visited Uganda. And I remember him coming back to the embassy - and I don't know if Ferguson was still the ambassador or he had left and the new ambassador, Thomas Patrick Melady, was there, but I have a feeling that Melady was already there. Newsom had a meeting with Amin and he came back to the embassy and he said something like – and I'm going to paraphrase it – "That was the craziest man I've ever met."

I don't remember anything one-on-one with Amin because I never had that kind of relation or meeting. But I do remember going to a lunch that he gave once for the war college. I think it was very early in my tour. Probably late summer or early fall of '71, before the killings in the army started. But when Newsom came in and came back and said that, and we talked a little bit about it. I think it was just his sense that Amin was talking about all of these crazy things that he wants to do and none of them make sense. None of them are possible. I don't remember any specifics.

Q: *But this began to – you might say – penetrate the zeitgeist of the embassy.*

BERGER: Not just the embassy but the entire society. I think people were very nervous. Became more and more nervous. By late spring and summer of '72 there were carjackings. A military officer would decide he wanted your car so he put a submachine gun inside your window and say "Give me your keys." And if you didn't right away, he would shoot you, throw your body out, and steal the car. And this happened to a lot of people. Bob Rothweiler, I think, lost two cars that way. He gave them up very quickly. There was a lot of robbery. There was a sense of chaos for the general society because the military was running rampant. There were no controls on them. And if you were driving down a street and there were no other cars on the road and you saw a

military vehicle coming towards you, generally you would get off that street right away. You didn't want to be on the street with them because they were so unpredictable.

Q: *How did the expulsion of the Asians and other non-Ugandans affect you?*

BERGER: It did, because it added another element of insecurity to society. We all felt at the embassy that we were part of the American diplomatic mission, we are not going to be affected in our personal lives, but at the same time you could end up in the wrong place at the wrong time and that could be very dangerous.

On our street, two of our neighbors were Indian. And both of them had to leave. And I do remember that one of our neighbors had two daughters who were getting close to the marrying age. And the family had saved up their dowry. Lots of gold jewelry. And their father asked me one day – we had become fairly friendly – we know we have to leave. We are going to, but we don't know how we can out of the country and take our things with us. But we want to leave right now with just a suitcase and no valuables, we can do that. He was a very wealthy man. He was a printer and had several print shops around the country. He said "Would you do me a favor and hold our daughter's dowry, the jewelry for their dowry, in the embassy safe until I find a way of getting it out of the country?" And I said "of course." I probably shouldn't have done it now. But I didn't hesitate. I took it and put it in the embassy safe, in my office safe, and forgot about it, basically.

About two months later, my neighbor came over one night and said "I've found a way for us to get out of the country and to get our daughter's dowry. Can I have the jewelry box back?" So I brought it back the next day. I could have walked off with it. I could have done what I wanted and he would have had no recourse. I didn't think about that until many years later because I didn't really see that I had any other choice. Here was a neighbor, in trouble, asking me if I could help him out temporarily. It didn't seem to be any risk to me. I was convinced there was no risk whatsoever. I think I was right. And I did it for him. Two days later, he stopped by and said goodbye, thanked me for everything, and they headed off to England.

Q: *It's the sort of thing you do, but you would never ask permission. So often when something like this sort of corruption happens – it's happening in Zimbabwe right now – those that come in sort of take over the shopkeeper's stocks, but they have no concept of business, restocking. So they just denude the shelves and then . . .*

BERGER: That was a serious problem because the Indians and Pakistanis were the technocrat class. They were the businessmen. They were the middlemen in so many different things. Tea plantations, coffee plantations, all the small shopkeepers, with very few exceptions. There were very few Africans outside of the main marketplace. In the stores, the shops, they were all run by Asians. And they had to give them up. And they gave them to the central office of the government. It required them to give it. They got a piece of paper, a receipt for it, and they would of course never get paid. And the government generally gave it to Africans, but not necessarily those who had worked in those shops. In the farms – like in Zimbabwe today – not necessarily who knew how to run things, but rather to political cronies from the same tribe. So you had people who knew nothing about running a business coming in, from a rural area, to take

over, say, a print shop. And ran it into the ground, very quickly. They were sold off and scavenged for materials. They didn't know about re-ordering. They had nobody left on the staff, had fired everybody who had worked for the Asians, including many from other African tribes. Brought in their families and though they were going to become wealthy. But of course, they couldn't.

Towards the end, some of the Indians were getting very bitter because their houses were being invaded, their families violated, some of them were getting beaten up and their property stolen. I remember several of them that I knew said: "When we leave, we have to leave our cars and our houses, but we are going to destroy them. We are going to put sugar in the gas tank. We are going to tear out some part of the spark plug or something in the house – the circuit breakers – so they won't be able to have any electricity. We have worked all our lives for this and we are not just going to give it away, especially since we have been treated this way." And there were quite a few people who had a very bitter experience.

Q: *How was Ambassador Melady during that time?*

BERGER: He was a political appointee. He had come from Burundi, I believe. I don't think he was that great an ambassador. I liked him personally, and his wife. They were really lovely people and they really cared about people within the mission. But I don't think he really understood what an ambassador was supposed to be, what he's supposed to do. And I think we know today that, although we try not to interfere with the internal relations of a country, sometimes when you see that something is going so badly we really do have that responsibility. I have met him a number of times in more recent years, since I retired, and I think he is doing a lot of volunteer work for different organization.

Q: *He's very big on Catholic Relief...*

BERGER: …and education as well. He was the president of Seaton Hall University as well. And he's done quite a bit, and his wife as well, when she was at the American Academy in Rome. What he really wanted to do and what he eventually did do was to become U.S. ambassador to the Vatican. That's what he really wanted to do.

Q: *You say you were evacuated. Was this sort of a family evacuation or was this an embassy evacuation?*

BERGER: This was the beginning of the embassy evacuation. We had at that point two children. Our first child was born about six or seven weeks before we went to Uganda. And the second was born about six or seven weeks before we were evacuated in mid-July. At the time we left Uganda, in the third week of September, 1972, the personal security situation had gotten really precarious. There were armed robbers running on the streets.

I remember one morning waking up, it was a Saturday morning, I heard machine gun fire and it sounded like it was right outside my bedroom window. So I got out of bed and rolled on the floor. Then very carefully peaked out the window to see what was going on and I saw some soldiers shooting up the bushes behind our house. I found out later they were chasing some people they

claimed were bank robbers. But it turned out that it had nothing to do with any bank robbery. They were from the wrong tribe and these soldiers wanted their car. So they killed them, they left their bodies there all day, and they went around in a sound truck and said: "This is what we do to the robbers." And thousands of people came to view the bodies. Very, very disgusting and dehumanizing situation.

Then in September of '72, there was an invasion of Ugandan exiles from Tanzania, trying to overthrow Amin. Some were former soldiers who had escaped, others from other tribes, and they had some help from the Tanzanian government. They didn't get very far, but Amin sent out the tanks in the streets and they were going back and forth. The soldiers got ever more brazen in their robbery of the poor civilians. It was mainly the African civilians that suffered from that.

That same time, it was only a very short period after that, the embassy got word that a couple of Americans had been killed. One's name was Stroh, the other Seidel. This was just before the invasion from Tanzania. One was a professor and the other a freelance journalist. Stroh was from the famous Stroh Brewery in Detroit. So his family had some influence. When he went missing his family called their congressman, who called the ambassador and said "Find out what has happened to Nicholas Stroh." And we tried to find out and did eventually find out that the two of them decided to do some research about the army killings. They went to certain military bases and got into one. This was about the time that Amin's picture was on the cover of Time magazine. They did a cover story on him. Amin ordered everybody in the military to buy a copy of it and hang his picture on the wall. And they went to a number of bases and were interviewing people about the intertribal rivalry and killings that were taking place. And apparently some people didn't like them asking questions and there was one base too many that they didn't leave. I don't think their bodies were every found. But the determination was made that they were killed. There was commission of inquiry into that. It was a British judge who was the head of the supreme court at that time, or acting head. He wrote the commission of inquiry report and was supposed to turn it into Amin and instead took the train to Nairobi and mailed it from there because he was afraid what Amin would do to him when he handed in the report.

Let me tell you about another thing that was happening. During the invasion of exiles from Tanzania – during that same week – this gets back to my work on the cultural side – we had a specialist from the United States, somebody who helped broadcasting stations develop news media capability. A woman from a New York TV station. We had her there for a week and in the middle of it the invasion took place and we had to evacuate all the private Americans. So I took her down to the airport. There were roadblocks in a number of places on the way. On the way coming back, one of the roadblocks had disappeared from the place it had been earlier in the afternoon. We had an embassy driver driving the car. He was driving very slowly by that spot. And we heard shooting. And he stopped immediately and we both got out and raised our hands. And these soldiers came over, visibly drunk. Really, really drunk. Too drunk to hold a weapon, clearly. And they pointed them at us and they started beating up the driver who was tribally from the southwest of the country, from an ethnically Rwandan tribe. Tutsi. They were beating him up pretty severely. I was asking them to stop. They didn't touch me. But they started screaming at me.

And then all of a sudden a lieutenant came over. He told them to let go. The driver got up. And he apologized to both of us. And he said to please get back in the car and not to ride on the roads at night. It's dangerous. And then he started screaming at the soldiers. And I asked the driver – his name was David – I asked David – "what he was screaming about." And David said, "I think you really should leave the country." And I said, "What was he screaming about." David said, "I think you really should leave the country. It's not safe." "But what did he say. Tell me." He said, "He was telling them that we have to let these people go because we've already killed two Americans this week."

So I got home and I told my wife, I said, "Barbara, we are leaving. It's really not safe for us. I don't want to go into too much detail about what happened, but I just had a very unpleasant experience and tomorrow morning I'm going to tell the ambassador and ask him to send a cable to the State Department saying that we really must leave." She said, "But why? I'm just beginning to like it here." It takes my wife a long time to get used to a new place. It took her fourteen months or so, until September of 1972.

The next day I went into the embassy and told Rothweiler's successor, Bill Mateer – a former newspaper man from Ohio who was career foreign service, nice guy and I told him…it also happened that that morning there was a broadcast on the news and Idi Amin was on there saying that he had a dream last night. This dream had two parts to it. One part was that the imperialists and Zionists were landing by parachute and that if his soldiers found and imperialists or Zionists, they should shoot them on the spot. And the other one, he wanted to tell everybody that there was a great man that he was trying to model himself on, and that man was Adolf Hitler. He had just read about him. And this was a great person. He was going to build a monument to Hitler. And one of the things that Hitler did was he killed all the Jews of Europe. And Amin said: "If I find any Jews in Uganda, I will finish the job."

So I said to the PAO: "I don't think I really want to stay here anymore." I certainly never kept it a secret that I was Jewish. I became extremely nervous at that point. It was very funny because a cable had just come in from the State Department – I guess FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] had monitored the broadcast and Washington had the transcript. The cable said "anyone who is Jewish or identifies as such, or if you can identify others in the American community who are Jewish, advise them all to leave immediately because the situation is so dangerous." So I spent a good part of that day, first, arranging for our transportation, which was going to be a couple of days later. And GSO managed to get a mover to come in the midst of all of this stuff. And then I went around to people that I knew were Jewish – half a dozen or so – and told them that the embassy was advising them to leave as soon as possible. If they needed any help with a loan, the embassy would help them. But that the situation was getting very bad. But since some people may know that they were Jewish, their lives could be at stake. Some opted to leave. Others, who were American-Ugandans and lived there for years, decided to stay on. I wasn't going to stay.

Q: *What was the thrust of the <u>Time</u> article?*

BERGER: Crazy man.

Q: *It wasn't a laudatory thing?*

BERGER: Oh no. Not at all. But Amin loved the picture. And he had heard of Time Magazine. It was on sale at news stands in Uganda. It was only three or four days later, but it was on sale there. And he ordered all the copies that were left. Bought them up and distributed to all the army camps, had them post it up on their doors because he was proud of it.

Q: *Actually, Amin had been trained by the Israelis, wasn't he? I thought he had Israeli paratrooper wings or something like that?*

BERGER: He did. He did. The Israelis had a – for them - very important military relationship. I guess he was chief of staff of the armed forces under Obote and went to Israel for some training and helped to bring in a number of Israeli trainers. Air force and other forces as well. So they had a number training programs. He did have air force wings.

I remember once, years later, I asked somebody from the Israeli air force who I knew had been in Uganda around that time, I said: "How did Amin get those wings?" He said: "They gave it to him. He didn't really jump out on his own." Somebody held his hand and said "Come on, we're going." And he got his wings. I don't know if that's true, but it's certainly well accepted.

Q: *Well, we too may have kind of fudged a bit on qualifications. How long after you left did we maintain relations with Uganda?*

BERGER: I know that the ambassador left pretty shortly after that. And it had to do with a question about Marine guards. We didn't have any. And I think the ambassador wanted to get some. And he went to Amin and told him that the U.S. was asking permission to bring in the Marine guards to protect the embassy. And Amin told him: "You don't need your Marines. I'm going to send over mine to protect you. They'll sit inside your embassy and make sure nothing happens to you." I think the ambassador got very nervous about that. He must have sent a cable. I was out of Uganda, I was in Ethiopia, at that time. I think that was the beginning of the end.

Also, there was some point, probably early 1973, the ambassador was no longer there. Bob Keeley, who was Chargé, should be able to tell you more because he closed down the embassy. [Editor's Note: Keeley was Chargé when the Embassy closed on November 10, 1973.]

Q: *He's been interviewed. I talked to Bob yesterday. But anyway, this is really very close to the beginning of the end as far as Idi Amin went?*

BERGER: Oh yes. The Peace Corps was evacuated that week because a Peace Corps volunteer had been killed at a road block. We were – and I think there were others with very young children – who were mandatory evacuation.

Q: *The Entebbe thing didn't happen while you were there?*

BERGER: No, that was four years later. That was July 4, 1976.

Q: *So you are evacuated. What happened?*

BERGER: We went to Ethiopia. That was my onward assignment anyways. I was supposed to go in December. My predecessor was still there. But the embassy said, "well, we can always use another hand. We'll make him another assistant cultural officer and there will be a longer transition."

It was a Friday evening, I remember, we got into Nairobi and we were going to spend four days in Nairobi just decompressing and relaxing. And we got to the Nairobi airport and the immigration officer at the airport did not want to let us in. He said, "You have a Ugandan visa, you are a prohibited immigrant." I said: "I'm an American diplomat and I have a valid visa for Kenya. It's a transit visa. Here's my visa for Ethiopia. In four days we are going there." He said, "No, you are a prohibited immigrant." He kept arguing with me and saying "We can't let you in. We can't let you in." I think he was looking for a bribe. I was very naïve at the time and didn't believe in bribing people. And I stood my ground. And he said, "Visa cancelled. Go back into the transit lounge. You and your family will be deported back to Uganda on the first plane in the morning."

And there was somebody from the embassy in Nairobi who was meeting us. In those days there were no hermetically sealed immigration areas. This was the old Entebbe airport. It was really wide open. There were some planters. So I walked over to one of the planters and I saw the guy from the U.S. embassy. And I called him over and I said we were having a problem. I told him what was happening.

And he went over to the immigration officer and said, "You can't do this. He is here. He's a guest of the ambassador for this weekend and he's going on to Ethiopia." The guy said, "Well, I did it and he's not getting out of the airport. I'm putting him on the first plane back to Uganda." They argued for a while and finally the immigration officer said, "I'll let them come into Kenya on one condition: you have your ambassador call the vice president, who was Daniel Arap Moi at the time, to call the chief immigration officer, to order me to let you in. Otherwise, he's out of here." And it happened. It took about two hours and they got it all together. And we were in. Didn't pay the guy a bribe. We spent four relaxing days in Nairobi.

A funny follow-up to that goes to 1997. I'm in New York and participating in a meeting with the Kenyan foreign minister. I said, "I have to tell you. I never thanked your president" – because Arap Moi was president at that point – "for saving our lives, my family and myself, back in September 1973." He asked what happened and I told him. And he said, "And what was the name of that immigration officer?" I had no idea, but I said just tell the president that I said thank you.

Q: *The problems you were having brings up a question. During the sixties, people were thinking that Africa was the wave of the future that this was going to be a wonderful place. And an awful lot of – I would probably include you in this – basically idealistic people came into the Foreign Service who were looking towards Africa. I remember back in the late '50s, in my second post, I asked to go to Nigeria. I mean, this is where the action was. They sent me to Saudi Arabia*

because they were in the same bureau. But did you get the feeling around this time that the bloom was coming off the rose as far as Africa?

BERGER: It had not really that much. There were coups and there were problems. But I think it was the late '70s when you really began to have a deteriorating political and economic situation throughout most of the continent. I went back to Africa in the late '70s on a number of trips because I was a desk officer for francophone and Portuguese speaking West Africa and I did a lot of traveling through many of those countries. At that point you could see things were changing quite a bit more.

In the early '70s it really wasn't that bad. I also think that many of the leaders were still somewhat idealistic and maybe even a little honest. But sense of honesty and mission wore off. I think for people like myself you are right, I was certainly idealistic, I had spent several years in graduate school and did a lot of study of political leadership and economic development in Africa. I thought it was fascinating. The independence movements. I studied a lot about the new leaders that had come up, some from trade unions, some from the military. They were the new modernizers. And it really did sound really exciting to go to Africa and be part of this political experiment.

But I wouldn't go back today. I think that the political leadership in Africa has really destroyed most countries in their capabilities to govern their future. It is very sad.

ROBERT V. KEELEY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Kampala (1971-1973)

Ambassador Robert V. Keeley was born in Lebanon of American parents in 1929. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in Jordan, Mali, Uganda, Cambodia, and ambassadorships to Greece, Mauritius, and Zimbabwe. Ambassador Keeley was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 1991.

Q: *Then in mid-1971, you were assigned to Uganda as Deputy Chief of Mission. How lucky can you be?*

KEELEY: I felt very fortunate. It was a routine assignment. The DCM in Kampala was in his fourth year there and had been on the Uganda desk for the four prior years, so that he had too many years on that one country. It was time for him to move on, both from his point of view and that of the Department. He was the expert in the Department on Uganda, but enough was enough. The Ambassador was a political appointee, the late Clarence Clyde Ferguson--a black lawyer, Harvard trained, originally from Baltimore, from a long-time Republican family--an absolutely wonderful man. He was a renowned lawyer and law professor, having taught constitutional law, civil procedure, and other subjects at Rutgers and Harvard. He had co-authored a book on the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. He had previously served as the State Department's coordinator of the Biafran relief operation during the Nigerian civil war. My

name was on the list of prospective DCMs given to Ferguson. Beau Nalle, the DCM, knew me and probably spoke well of me; in any case Ferguson chose me. He had been teaching at Rutgers at the time prior to his government service and had just returned to New Jersey for family reasons. I invited him to Princeton. I went to pick him up and we spent a day together. He spent the night with us, and we had a small dinner for him which included his friend, Princeton professor Richard Falk. We hit it off well and so he approved my appointment; that was around Christmas 1970.

That was my good luck; it was my first DCM assignment, which is a milestone in a Foreign Service career and is really a testing assignment. If you succeed at that level, your subsequent career is likely to be successful. If you fail at that stage, it often happens that that is the end of your career; you don't go any farther; you don't become an Ambassador or have another DCM assignment; you just drift until retirement. So it is a crucial assignment in an officer's career and not every officer gets the opportunity, although today everyone seeks to become a DCM, and with all the new embassies being opened in the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, etc., there will be more opportunities than ever before.

My bad luck was that in January 1971 Idi Amin took over Uganda. That was about two or three weeks after I had seen Clyde Ferguson. He had gone back to Kampala. One day, I picked up *The New York Times* and read that some guy named Idi Amin had become the President of Uganda. The name didn't mean a thing to me. When I later took the DCM course at FSI before leaving the U.S., Ferguson was one of the lecturers--that was the second time I had met the Ambassador before arriving at the post. By that time, Amin was well established. Ferguson described what had happened. He said that tribalism, which was a major problem throughout the African continent, was probably more severe and savage in Uganda than anywhere else, including Nigeria (which he knew quite well and which had and still has a very severe tribal problem despite a new Constitution). Amin's take-over was not seen as that horrendous at the beginning. The British, the Americans, and the Israelis were, if not delirious, at least quite happy because they were very unhappy with Milton Obote, whom Amin over-threw. Idi Amin, who had impressed some as a buffoon in many ways, did not act in that way in the early days of his regime. He had trained in Israel as a paratrooper; he wore the Israeli paratrooper's wings very proudly; he claimed to be a very close personal friend of Moshe Dayan.

The Western countries--those that were major players in Uganda such as the British and the Americans--were deploring the tribalism--the tribal favoritism and persecution--that was being practiced by Obote. He had established more or less a one party system after a period of a multi-party, very democratic political environment right after independence. Obote had dictated an increasingly leftist economic policy, with more and more socialism and nationalization of private property; he was anti-foreign and anti-investment. So Amin's coup was initially seen as a welcomed change and an opportunity. Furthermore, Idi Amin thought that he could resolve the conflict over the Ugandan monarchies, particularly that of the King of Buganda, King Freddie, who had recently died. The Baganda cheered Amin on because he was going to bring their King's body home and was going to bury him in Bugandan soil. So Amin was seen quite differently at the beginning and was in fact quite popular in his early days. People marched and danced in the streets with their pom-poms and banana leaves, cheering him on.

Q: *What were our interests in Uganda in 1971 and how did we protect those interests?*

KEELEY: We didn't have major interests in Uganda. It is not one of the most significant African countries. We were major purchasers of coffee from there, but didn't have large investments. We had a large number of American missionaries working there and that was an interest. As conditions deteriorated, their well-being probably emerged as a more serious interest on our part. We were still playing second fiddle to the British; they had the major commercial and investment interests there. As the ex-colonial ruler, they had strong sentimental interests as well. The British had an interest in all of East Africa--Uganda as well as Kenya and Tanzania at that time. But we didn't really have any major interests.

Q*: Did we have anything to do with fostering Israeli interests in Uganda?*

KEELEY: I am not sure that we fostered their interests, although they quite clearly had them in Uganda. They were giving military assistance and training; they had a number of construction companies working there. It was one of the places that seemed to welcome Israel, even after the 1967 war, and I arrived four years after that event. Other countries with a stronger Muslim element--e.g., Senegal, Guinea and Mali in West Africa--like many of the Arab states, had broken or diminished their relations with Israel. Uganda had a different attitude, even under Obote. So it was a place the Israelis were more welcomed and could work. That deteriorated almost immediately after Amin took over. But before that, they were very active. Interestingly enough, of course, historians would point out that at one point, some elements of the Zionist movement had considered the idea of establishing a homeland for the Jews in Uganda. I think that was seriously considered also by the British, but was rejected in the end. So there may have been a sentimental connection of some kind for the Israelis with Uganda, which might have been their home if matters had worked out differently from the way they did.

Q: *Over a period of time, Amin apparently deteriorated mentally. Do you have any theories on why that happened?*

KEELEY: Yes, I have a very general theory that I can't really prove, but it results from studying him at close range over a rather lengthy period of time. I should say that I have written something about Uganda as well. It is the other Foreign Service experience that I have recorded extensively. I hope that will be available some day in published form. It is not, at the moment, complete. I intend to cover the period beginning in 1971 when Amin took over, up to November 1973, when we closed our Embassy. What the book is supposed to be is a close examination of how an Embassy operates, what it does in all of its functions--political, economic, consular, security, protection of American citizens, the administrative activities, AID, Peace Corps, USIS--everything. The reason I chose Uganda is that it was a period of heightened activity and tension, with a very difficult host government. The problems faced by the Embassy ran the gamut of everything the Foreign Service has to cope with in a heightened form, in a dangerous situation. It was a smallish Embassy, so that there weren't too many personalities to deal with. I also had a limited time frame to deal with, i.e., something less than three years. In the time I had, I was only able to write up the 1973 portion--from January 1 to when we closed the post. That was the most interesting period and the most difficult, when most of the serious problems arose, including the termination of the Peace Corps and AID programs and eventually USIA and the Embassy. I tried

to cover all the attendant problems from finding a protecting power to turn matters over to, to getting everyone out safely without Idi Amin knowing about it. That was the challenge at the time because we were always concerned with his reactions.

But to tell the complete story, you have to go back to January 1971, when Amin assumed power. I have not yet written up 1971 and 1972. What I have written was based on the Department's files, mainly the Embassy files; so I stuck to what actually happened in its most truthful form as recorded at the time. Obviously, there are many gaps that I had to fill in from memory, but I have tried to limit those to matters of which I had personal knowledge. The point of my effort was to create a kind of textbook for new Foreign Service officers, and the American public as well--that is, for those who are interested in how we operate as diplomats around the world. I have never seen a book quite like what I have in mind, although Martin Herz did one about 215 days in the life of an ambassador in Sofia, or something like that. My book was not being written from the point of view of an ambassador necessarily, although I was the Chargé at the end during most of 1973. I tried to cover all the staff and all the work that was performed and all the problems they faced. It is much too detailed at the moment; it needs severe editing. But I tried to look at diplomacy from the point of view of the people in the trenches. Most histories of a war are written from the point of view of the generals, sitting back at headquarters and maneuvering their men around. My book is about the guys holding the rifles in the trenches, being shot at and shooting back. It doesn't have a lot to do with geopolitics, strategies, or what Henry Kissinger might have been thinking and planning or plotting. It has to do with people coping with difficult day-to-day problems on the ground.

To understand Amin, you have to look very briefly at his biography, his background. He was a Muslim born in the Northwest corner of Uganda, near the Sudan and Zaire borders, which is an area heavily Muslim populated. The British tended to recruit their African troops from the Northern tribes--Acholis, Langis, etc., because they were probably more war-like and therefore perhaps more reliable; furthermore these tribesmen didn't have competing opportunities. The Baganda in southern Uganda dominated the country; they are more numerous; they live in the southern part, around Lake Victoria, an area which is extremely fertile, and they have a surplus of agricultural production. They were also very good businessmen and most of them were interested in making money and in pursuing peaceful activities. The Baganda were also more easily converted to Christianity; that is where the missionaries established most of their schools. The railroad was in Bugandan territory as was the British administration; they had all the advantages, particularly in education. Missionaries also work in very remote areas. Traditionally the British would recruit their soldiers from more rural, less urbanized, less educated populations which have fewer opportunities so that the military becomes their profession and livelihood.

Amin, a poor peasant boy, was recruited into the army. He used to talk about serving in World War II; there is no way that that happened because he was too young. He talked about serving in Burma. That was a myth. He used to be very complimentary about Eisenhower because he fed the same rations to his black troops as he did to the white ones. He talked about all of these things as if he had personally experienced them. There was absolutely no way he could have fought either in Burma or Europe or anywhere else. I think he came to believe his own fantasies. He and others had repeated them often enough that he probably thought that they were actually true. Although on reflection I could be wrong about this: Amin may have been recruited into the

army at a very young age, as a teenager, and it could be that some units of the King's African Rifles were shipped off to other theaters during the war.

Amin was recruited at a very young age. He had had only about four years of education, if that; he was barely literate. He could read, but without any great facility; he couldn't write very well--he always had help in producing documents. He could express himself in English and several local languages; he was not a bad linguist. Initially, I think he was a cook's assistant, which is really a low position even in an African army--the King's (later the Queen's) African Rifles. He essentially peeled potatoes. That would not be surprising given his level of education and general skills. He didn't stay at that level; he got promoted. His advancements came essentially through boxing. He was very tall with a tremendous reach and big hands; he was big and strong and tough in general. You could picture him in any culture as a heavy-weight champion and that is what he was. The Ugandans are very fine boxers; they still prove it to this day in the Olympics; they have a strong boxing tradition which the British encouraged. The main avenue for advancement in boxing was the army.

Amin became the Ugandan army's (that is, the African Rifles') heavy-weight champion. He had the physical attributes, the general toughness and courage; that is what it took to be a champion. His boxing prowess tended to get him promoted. I don't want to be excessively facetious about it, but I think it is descriptive that he worked his way up to sergeant because he could maintain order and discipline amongst rather unruly troops. The pre-independence colonial armies were officered by the British; they may have included some key British technical non-coms--warrant officers--but the fighting troops, the infantry carrying the rifles were Africans, and like most armies, but particularly in a race-divided environment, there were two classes of people: the officers sitting around in their mess and the African troops in the barracks. Idi Amin became prominent as the link between the two: the officers sitting around sipping their tea or their brandy or their port, upon hearing some noises and disruptions outside, would call in Sergeant Amin and tell him to take care of the problem. Amin goes out, there are some shouts and screams as he knocks some heads together and kicks some butts and then silence. The officers resume their sipping and are very appreciative of Idi's performance. They eventually promoted him to top sergeant.

Then comes independence. I don't want to ridicule anyone, but these are facts. The new government says that it can't continue to have its army commanded by British officers. It wants its own officers to command its own troops. Decolonization happened very rapidly. The process of transition was expedited and rather than establishing a long term, slow program of officers' training, the Ugandans promoted their senior non-commissioned officers--there may have been some African officers already by that time, but certainly not enough to fill the gap left by the British. The logical candidates for promotion were people like Idi Amin. He was promoted to the officers' ranks. He then worked his way to the top.

People who have studied Amin's history have found that he advanced by eliminating his rivals in one fashion or another--either physically or by discrediting them or by scaring them or some way or other. His promotions came frequently. My conclusion is that Idi Amin had proven, as some people would describe it, the "Peter Principle." When he was the top sergeant, keeping order in the barracks, that was his strength; he should have stopped or been stopped there. He performed

in that role very ably and well. Had the British remained, all would have been well; that is, Amin would have remained in the barracks. Unfortunately, he was suddenly put in a command position. Psychologically, he probably felt inadequate; he was not dumb. He must have known that he was getting in over his head. On the other hand, this did not necessarily depress him that much because a lot of other people were getting out of their depth. Some of the other lieutenants and captains were no more qualified than he was; on the contrary, he must have known that he was bigger and tougher and stronger and more ruthless. So he decided to move ahead as rapidly as possible. The problem was that with each promotion he became increasingly incompetent.

Finally, he became the chief of the army. Now he was in real trouble. An army chief has to be something more than just rough and tough and brutal. He should have some understanding, some "smarts"--not necessarily education, but a realistic understanding of the world around. Uneducated people can be brilliant in some ways, particularly organizationally. There have been people in African history, before Amin, famous military leaders, who performed incredible military feats but had never gone to a missionary school, who had risen in the ranks by bravery and/or brutality. They were master innate strategists. For example, you just need to read about the Zulu wars in which tribesmen took on the British army. So I don't point to Amin's lack of education; but he was promoted out of his depth. He had learned to use his fists and translated that into how you hold your position, how you protect yourself. He applied all the brutal boxing lessons he had learned against his rivals.

When he became the chief of the army, he became involved in the Congo rebellion. He participated in some shady deals; there have been accusations of thefts of gold, ivory, etc. That history is very complex and I won't tell the details here. But at the end, Amin took over the government out of fear that Obote would do him in. He did what he had done throughout his career; he said that he was in charge and that Obote was done with.

Obote was out of the country attending some conference--in Singapore, I think--when the coup took place. As he was flying back, crossing India, he was told that he had been thrown out and that Amin had just taken over. Amin's behavior after that follows a similar pattern. As head of state, and as head of the government, he was really out of his depth. Not only was he incompetent, but the title and perks really went to his head. He became much more irrational; he viewed himself in megalomaniacal fashion. He thought he could take on the world; he thought he could star on the international stage; he thought he could go to the U.N. and give an address that would make everyone take notice; he thought he could grand-stand anywhere and give speeches. He did become the head of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). He did say ridiculous things. He had T-shirts with his picture on them printed up, saying "Conqueror of the British Empire." He had British businessmen carry him to a meeting in a sedan chair. He gave Nixon advice on "Watergate." He offered to marry Princess Anne of Great Britain. He saw himself as a world class statesman. In the meantime he was making a fool of himself. But he was so vicious and brutal that no one opposed him or laughed at him because they feared for their lives. His goons would have taken any opposition out and cut them into four pieces. So you learned not to laugh, at least within his ear-shot. He became a buffoon-statesman in his own style--a ridiculous figure who caused all sorts of grief abroad and at home.

The world grand-standing was not that harmful. It was more a waste of time and tended to bring down ridicule onto organizations that might have done serious work if they didn't have to deal with people like Amin. The real crime was what he did to the Ugandans and his country. In eight years plus of rule, Amin left the country in an absolutely deplorable condition. The number of people he had killed was almost unbelievable. Many of the educated elite who survived fled into exile. He destroyed Uganda's economy, which had been a well balanced one with a very productive agricultural base. Uganda has never had a famine; you can just stick something in the ground and it grows. It has a wonderful combination of soil, sun, rain-fall throughout the year. From that point of view, it was and is a marvelous country. It has few minerals--a little copper--but it is ideal for some cash crops like coffee and sugar which have been grown there for a long time. These crops were primarily introduced by the British and gave Uganda a great future.

At independence Uganda inherited the finest civil service that I am familiar with that the British left behind in any of their former colonies. The civil servants had a high level of education; they benefited from the interest that the missionaries took in establishing fine primary and secondary schools. The country had Makerere University--the first and major university in East Africa--which trained the cadres of the civil service that ran all the former colonies when they became independent, including Zanzibar, Tanganyika, Kenya--all the British colonies plus others. Because the university was in Kampala, the Ugandans benefited; more than half of the student body was Ugandan. People talk about the ex-Belgian Congo, which had only 12 university graduates at the time of independence; Uganda had literally thousands. They had fine doctors, excellent lawyers, good accountants, teachers and clergy, able and clever businessmen--they had everything an independent state needed.

They also benefited from the fact that they were never really colonized. They had no white settlers. Originally the British went into Uganda to keep the French out. But when the early explorers, the military and the missionaries arrived, they found four very highly organized kingdoms in the southern part of Uganda: Buganda, Toro, Bunyoro and Banyankole. These tribes warred against each other; each had a king, a royal family, an aristocracy, a civil service and an army. They were all organized like a modern state.

The British signed agreements with each kingdom, and with the other tribal chieftains--perhaps eight or ten--in the northern part of the country. One of the stipulations in these agreements was that all the lands remained in the hands of the local tribes. That is in contrast to the Kenya situation, where white settlers moved in, took the best land and colonized the territory. It is true that the settlers developed the land agriculturally, but Uganda didn't need that because it was already doing well in agriculture.

Kampala, the capital, was an African city--more African than most modern cities. People lived all over, regardless of race. There was a large group of Indians who were small merchants and businessmen. Some were very wealthy, some were not. There was no segregation; all people lived together. Kampala was not a city with a white center and suburbs and black slums like Nairobi and some other African cities. Entebbe was the British colonial capital; that is where the airport is. That was kept separate because the Ugandans insisted that Kampala be theirs and it remained so, as the capital of the Kingdom of Buganda.

I have painted a somewhat idyllic picture. Uganda was a marvelous country. Amin destroyed it completely. As I said earlier, he should never have been put in charge of anything, except perhaps a few barracks.

Q: *Did the expulsion of the Indians have a major impact on the country's economic life? Was the expulsion racially motivated?*

KEELEY: It was certainly racial and it did have a negative impact on the economic life of Uganda. The move was very popular among many Africans, although the more thoughtful realized that it would create a disaster. But in general, the expulsion was extremely popular because the Africans didn't like the Indians. It was not entirely a racial matter; it had economic foundations because the Indians were economic competitors. They tended to live on a higher scale than many Ugandans. They were the shop-keepers; they provided credit. Several of them, including the Madhvanis and the Mehtas, were major industrialists who owned large industries--sugar refining plants, mills, a steel plant, breweries, cotton growing plantations and many other things.

The expulsion had popular support. Amin was so simplistic in his thinking that he felt he could just kick out the Indians, appropriate their businesses and properties, and then their new African owners would make all the money that the Indians were making. The problem was that the new "owners" didn't know what they were doing. They simply sold everything on the shelves, but when the stock ran out, they didn't know what to do. They didn't realize that they had to order more supplies with the money they made from selling the old supply. The new "owners" just spent their money, mostly on themselves. They moved into new houses vacated by the expelled Indians, without realizing that they had to be maintained. They just thought that since they had suddenly acquired all this new wealth, more would automatically follow. A lot of the former Indian enterprises went to Amin's former army cronies. He favored them. For example, one day he would expropriate a hotel and give it to a Captain. So the Captain became a hotel owner. Like many of his colleagues, he got so interested in his new venture that he began to neglect his military duties. So the army began to fall apart.

Another person's biography could tell us the basics of what went wrong. I want to give one other example of the destructiveness. There was another person, perhaps a little bit older than Amin--he was then about 50--by the name of Ben Kiwanuka. He had the good fortune to be born near a missionary school in Buganda. He was therefore raised as a Catholic. He was very bright and took well to education. When he finished his first six or eight years of education, he was chosen to go to the premier Catholic secondary school. These schools were mostly used to train future priests, but there was no requirement that a graduate become a priest. Kiwanuka did very well; graduated at the top or close to it in his class. Then went on to Makerere University. Then he was granted a fellowship to a University in London, England. He graduated from there, went to the Inns of Court, got his law degree and returned to Kampala.

He became a very fine lawyer. He also became involved in politics. His family was prominent in Uganda, but not of royal stock. Although having started in relative poverty, he became part of the aristocracy, certainly the educated elite. Eventually he became the head of the Democratic Party--the Catholic party--which won the early elections. Later, it lost the elections and

Kiwanuka became a political prisoner, having been jailed by Obote, a tribal enemy, because Kiwanuka headed up a party primarily consisting of the Baganda and their King, though there was also an extreme royalist party, the Kabaka Yekka. In any case, Kiwanuka spent a number of years in prison. Obote was then overthrown by Amin, who immediately released all political prisoners. That was one of Amin's better moves. Kiwanuka was released and, although very reluctant, he agreed to Amin's request that he become the Chief Justice. Having been a judge before imprisonment, he was fully qualified; furthermore, he was a very intelligent and decent human being.

However, one day, Kiwanuka issued a ruling that offended Amin. It was on a case of nationalization of some British property. The Chief Justice ruled that some compensation had to be paid to the British owner, or something like that. When the word reached Amin, Idi was offended and decided that he could not tolerate such independence. The following day, while Kiwanuka was presiding in his court, in his robes, a number of Amin's goons entered the court, kidnapped the Chief Justice, dragged him out of the building, and he was never seen again. That sort of behavior went on all the time during my assignment from 1971 to 1973. In Kiwanuka's case, Amin decreed the end of a person who had developed over a fifty or sixty year period from a lowly, poor peasant boy to Chief Justice of a country. It was these sorts of actions that wiped out much of Uganda's educated populace. It was almost like Cambodia, except that in Uganda it was done person by person, thereby wiping out all the progress that an individual might have achieved over a sixty year period. That is what Amin did, thereby not only ruining individual lives, but the whole country. Fortunately, he did not destroy all of the educated people, but he was certainly working his way through their ranks when he was overthrown. In large measure he succeeded in decimating Uganda of its leadership. Uganda has not yet recovered from Amin's depredations and will not for a long time. A country does not recover quickly from that kind of regime.

Q: *My impression is that Amin had no feel for international relations. He took what he wanted in Uganda without any regard to international law or even comity. Is that correct?*

KEELEY: That is correct. His first target was the Israelis, on whom he turned soon after taking power. He blamed Uganda's and his problems all on Israel. He suddenly became a militant Muslim; that was a new development since he had not shown many signs of religious devotion before. He became very pro-Arab, partly by becoming a vocal Muslim and partly as a consequence of his anti-Israel attitudes. He lumped together Zionists, imperialists, Israelis, Jews, Americans, British--all those who in his mind were out to destroy him.

We didn't have any major interests in Uganda, as I said. Our problems were operational; how could we just function as an Embassy? We had a Peace Corps contingent of considerable size--mostly secondary school teachers making valuable contributions to the educational system by replacing a lot of the expatriates who had left. They taught math, science, English; the educational infrastructure was good in Uganda, but there was a shortage of teachers, so that the Peace Corps volunteers filled a critical vacuum. At one time, we had double contingents--over 200 volunteers, as I remember it. We had both the incoming group and the outgoing group. One day it was decided to close the Peace Corps program. We had had enough.

It is hard to describe Uganda without discussing events in some chronological order because as I mention various situations, they may seem arbitrary and precipitous, with decisions being made without provocation. In fact, the history of our presence is an accumulation of many events, some small, some larger. So when the Peace Corps program was terminated, it was an accumulation of a long series of many other unhappy events that had been forced on us by Amin.

Uganda was at the time engaged in a mini-war with Tanzania and a threat of an invasion by the Tanzanians was being experienced. Two of our volunteers had been in Queen Elizabeth Park, a game reserve in western Uganda, for the weekend. They had not heard of the tensions with Tanzania. They were driving back to their schools; they came to an unmanned road block and had enough sense not to try to drive through it. They stopped and yelled out for an official so that they could proceed. No one answered; they waited for a while. When no one showed up, they assumed that the road block had been abandoned. So they drove around it. Immediately, they drew gun fire; they had in fact driven into an ambush, set up presumably to capture or kill Tanzanian guerrillas or whatever. One of the volunteers was killed, the other was wounded. That, as far as we were concerned, was just the last straw. The Peace Corps in Washington ordered the termination of the program.

We called in all the teachers from all over the country; many were in extremely remote areas. Many were very unhappy with the decision. Like most of the Peace Corps volunteers, they were very dedicated to their work and their students; they were being pulled out just before the end of a term and the exams. That meant that the students could not complete the courses and might have to repeat them. The volunteers pointed out that there were no replacements in sight and that their departure might mean that their schools might collapse. They saw the decision as an unmitigated disaster. We asked that Washington staff be sent out to help us deal with a very unhappy bunch of teachers. We counseled the volunteers; the Ambassador did some of it; I did some of it. We counseled them as a group, we counseled them as individuals, trying to convince them that they had to leave. It was a firm decision that they had to accept. We felt that the security situation had deteriorated, that their lives were at stake. Some, of course, with justification, pointed out that in their villages there wasn't any security threat; they were loved and appreciated. These volunteers felt that no one would harm them even if they stayed ten years. I am sure that many just viewed us as the worst kind of bureaucrat: arbitrary, people who couldn't be reasonable.

They all had to leave; they had no choice. But some actually returned to Uganda as private citizens, without using their tickets back to the U.S., in order to finish their classes. They returned to finish their classes at their own expense. We tried to discourage them, but we could not prevent their return.

Our problems, as Americans, unlike those of some other foreigners, were not property or investment expropriations, with a few rare exceptions. Amin finally targeted the missionaries, to blame them for his failures and they became constantly harassed. He kept talking about the 22 or 23 sects that had been "imposed on" Uganda. Many of the missionaries represented evangelical churches with odd names that meant nothing to Amin. In his simplicity, he identified only three "religions" as he called them: Catholics, Anglicans--i.e., Church of England, Uganda branch--

and Muslims. No one else was welcomed; no non-Anglican Protestants, no Jews, no Hindus, no Buddhists. That was very frightening.

Many missionaries are difficult to deal with. They believe they are doing "God's work." They did not understand why they should worry about some crazy guy called Idi Amin who might be causing trouble; they were doing "God's work" and couldn't worry about temporal matters. They didn't worry about getting killed; they didn't think they would be, but if they were, it was all in a very good cause. They trusted in the Lord and went about their business. It is very difficult for an Embassy to have any effect on people like that. Try to explain to a missionary that the "Lord may be on his side, but that Amin was crazy." Amin didn't pay any attention to the Lord; in fact, he preferred to go contrary to God's will.

So our interests and problems were essentially protection of American human beings. Just like with the Peace Corps program, we eventually had to terminate our assistance program since we couldn't protect the technical assistance personnel who had to go into the field to do their work. Their Ugandan counter-parts were being killed off or disappeared overnight because they may have said the wrong thing or looked the wrong way. Many of our friends and contacts were being eliminated; you would get to know somebody and three months later he or she would disappear never to be heard from again. It was an absolutely murderous regime.

Q: *Do you have any recollections of personal contacts with Amin?*

KEELEY: I had many, many encounters with Amin, particularly at the end when I was the Chargé. Then I would see him practically every two weeks because of his penchant for sending nasty messages to President Nixon. I would duly send them in with my comments. I would then receive an instruction to call on Amin to complain. I would then get an appointment and before I could complain about his last message, he would give me a new one, worse than the previous one. I would take it, because that was the only thing I could do, and then complain about the previous letter, which of course had absolutely no impact. I would send the latest letter in and then I would get another instruction. It was a never ending process.

It became serious toward the end of January, 1973 after the Vietnam cease fire agreement in Paris negotiated by Kissinger. Messages poured into the White House from all over the world- - from the head of the Soviet Union, from the Pope, from the Chinese, from all sorts of leaders-- congratulating Nixon and the Administration for ending the war. One single message was received deploring Kissinger's efforts and that was from Idi Amin. He told Nixon that it served us right to be defeated by "those small, yellow people who carried spears against your mighty military machine." The exact words escape me, but the essence was that it was only right and proper that the Americans should be defeated by a small country; the U.S. should learn that it can't bully people and pick on them. It was so negative and out of place that we responded by pulling out our Ambassador, Tom Melady. He remained the Ambassador until about September, although he never returned to Kampala. I became Chargé until we closed the Embassy in November. Relations continued to deteriorate.

Sometimes Amin would change his tune and send Nixon a "Get Well" message; once he bid him "a speedy recovery from Watergate," which was about the worst message he could have sent--

Nixon didn't need to be reminded of that problem. You may remember that there was pressure on Nixon to resign after Watergate became so serious that it was leading to impeachment. So Amin sent him a message saying that he shouldn't resign, that he had been elected by the American people, that he should show his bravery and courage by staring down his opponents. Amin said that strong people like himself and Nixon should stand up for their rights. It was the usual crazy message; only Amin saw it as a positive motivational effort on his part. He wrote that message while I was outside his office waiting to see him; I waited for about an hour. I just reread it the other day; it was absolutely hilarious. The text had to be patched up somewhat by Paul Etiang, who was the Ugandan acting Foreign Minister. Amin's effort did not raise his stock in the White House one inch; but it had gotten immune to his rantings.

In September, 1973, Amin sent another nasty message. I can't remember exactly the subject matter; it probably had to do with the Middle East and events leading up to the 1973 war. I was recalled this time, "for consultations" --the standard formula. I came back and went to see David Newsom, then the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. I told him that I was delighted to be back and to be able to take a few weeks of leave, but I expressed the hope that my absence from post would not be too prolonged because we had real problems in Kampala. The Embassy, the last American presence, had shrunk; I was the only political reporting officer since the Department had never filled that position when it had become vacant. I also told Newsom that my absence would not make any impression on Amin; I doubted that he even knew I had left. Even if he knew, he would shrug; he could not have cared less whether the American Chargé was there or not. He might notice my absence if he had another message to send to Nixon and someone strange to him showed up to receive it. Then he might notice that I was not there. He didn't really care when the Ambassador was recalled; he may have been slightly annoyed, but I doubt that he understood the word "recall" or its significance. His annoyance had probably more to do with the possibility of the U.S. closing its Embassy; on a personal level, he could not have cared less who represented the U.S.

I returned to Kampala after three weeks with instructions to reduce the size of the post even further. Then the 1973 Middle East war started. Amin was on the side of the Arabs; we, according to Amin, sided with the Israelis and were therefore intervening in the war. He volunteered Ugandan troops--an offer that was quickly rejected by all Arab countries, or at least totally ignored. That humiliated him; he kept offering to fly them wherever they might be needed. The last thing any Arab state wanted was a horde of Ugandan soldiers, drunken and disorderly, descending on their territory, particularly if led by Idi Amin. He became very frustrated. He called me in and gave me a lecture about the Sixth Fleet, which was moving around the Mediterranean. He showed me on a wall map in his office how the Fleet was moving towards Israel so that we could intervene on its side. I kept trying to interrupt so that I could tell him that the Sixth Fleet had been in the Mediterranean since 1945 and it always moved. Its principal mission at that stage was to be prepared to evacuate Americans if necessary. At the end, he threatened me and all Americans by saying that if war broke out, we would all be viewed as belligerents on his enemy's side and therefore we would all have to be interned, starting with the American Chargé. He had come to believe, from the stories he had heard about World War II, that enemy aliens were taken and put into concentration camps. When the meeting finished, I shook his hand as usual and walked out.

I reported that diatribe to Washington and commented that Amin was once more grandstanding; he was dressed in his fatigues, ready to march to the front. He was frustrated because no one wanted his troops. He wanted to show that he could play in the "big leagues." The Department, however, took the matter very seriously; it assumed, or feared, that Amin would carry out his threats. The last thing the Department wanted was to have some of its diplomats put behind barbed wire by Idi Amin; then it would have to do something to get them out, which would have been difficult, particularly in a remote place like Uganda and with a guy like Amin. Based on my frequent contacts with him, I believed that he wouldn't have done anything. He was just on a stage playing to whatever small audience cared to watch. He always had a TV camera and the press in his office when I met with him. He didn't single me out because he didn't like me, but because I was a convenient foil for his theatrics. He would do his histrionics, then feel better--just like a little child. In any case, he made Washington very nervous.

When the war broke out, Amin was again very frustrated; he didn't know what to do. He didn't lock anyone up, but he did kick out our six Marine security guards: i.e., the American "military force" in Uganda. He gave them 24 or 48 hours to get out. They went to Nairobi. At that point, the Department decided that this was the last straw. With the Marines gone, no one was really providing security for the chancery, so that our classified documents and communication codes were essentially vulnerable. That meant that we had to take turns sleeping overnight in the chancery because without guards it was easily penetrable. We immediately started a destruction program. Our lives were less than idyllic without the Marines standing watch.

We were ordered by the Department to close the Embassy and to leave the country. I was literally given 48 hours to do that. I didn't believe that it was possible in that time-frame. We had leases that had to be broken, property owned by the U.S. to be left in the hands of a protecting power--which we had to find--we had local employees who would have to be terminated and paid. We had less than ten Americans at this stage; the Department did send some administrative help--Jim Mark and Pat Kennedy. But I argued about the time-frame and finally was given two weeks, of which ten days were left.

The last persons out--me, with Pat Kennedy and Ed Nosko, our communicator--left on November 10, 1973. The date is fixed in my mind because it was the date of the annual Marine Birthday Ball. We were obviously not going to have a Marine Ball in Kampala, but we went to Nairobi to celebrate that event. We very much wanted to attend the Marine celebration in Nairobi, to honor our own Marine detachment. Not because Amin had kicked them out, but because they were such a fine bunch of young men who had helped take care of us under very trying circumstances.

THOMAS P. MELADY
Ambassador
Uganda (1972-1973)

Thomas P. Melady was born in Norwich Connecticut. He served in the Army during WWII and attended Duquesne University and the Catholic University after

the war. He served as the Ambassador to Burundi and Uganda. Ambassador Melady was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 13 1995.

Q: *Then you moved to Uganda.*

MELADY: Previous to that I'd been back on the usual consultations. Dr. Kissinger, who was still over at the White House, spoke to me and I was asked if I'd like to go off to the Cameroons. Since our girls at that time were three and five had started in the nursery school, first grade, etc., in a French speaking school in Burundi, my wife said, "Let's go to the Cameroons." Well, I was back on consultations, and both Dr. Kissinger and then Mr. Newsom, Assistant Secretary for Africa, said, "We've got a more interesting assignment for you. We think you ought to go to Uganda where a new general has come into play. We don't know too much about him. You know Uganda..." actually I knew both countries, Uganda and Cameroon, "why don't you take Uganda?" Well, I did and my wife has never forgiven me because we probably could have gone to Cameroon. To make a long story short, I said, "Yes," and went through the usual procedures of being nominated and getting the agrément. And I came back for consultations the end of May, and went through the routine procedures. Again, there wasn't much preparation, nothing like what would have occurred in '89, and I went off to Uganda.

The general assignment was, since Amin was quite unpredictable, minimize American presence, don't get too involved, but hopefully this unpredictable person who the British seem to think could be influenced, will not get himself tied into the eastern bloc. Well, that didn't work. Within a month or two of my arrival, August '72, he went into a violent anti-Semitic period.

Q: *We're talking about Idi Amin.*

MELADY: Idi Amin. We're now in Uganda. He went into a radical anti-Semitic period. Because in trying to raise a substantial grant from the British, they turned him down. And while in London, Mr. Qadhafi contacted him and he stopped off in Libya. This was in Qadhafi's real radical period. Amin essentially bought the Qadhafi requirements which were violently anti-Israeli, which probably would have been not pleasant for us, but not disastrous, but he went from anti-Israeli to anti-Semitic. So the whole thing changed after I got there. I remember he called me to his office...he had given a speech, and we were all told to listen to it on the radio. And the speech was obscenely anti-Semitic. He talked about Hitler who knew how to take care of the Jews, "you kill them, you put them in the soil, they are treacherous." These were the words of Amin. Well, I had given a report of the speech in total to Washington, and I received instructions from the President. I regret to say, he was the only chief of state, who was aroused by it. I had told him about seeing Idi Amin. My instructions were to find out: "Did he really mean that? Was it something that had been written by an aide?" It took me several days to get the appointment, and I went up to Command House, and there he was. And I asked if he meant it, and he said, "Yes, I meant exactly that." Then he went into a long tirade about the Jews, and he grabbed me by the necktie, and he said, "Mr. Ambassador, how many Jews do you have on your staff?" And I said, "Your Excellency, my government doesn't allow me to reveal the racial, ethnic, or religious background of my staff people." We have no official designation of race or religion. And then he continued to grab my necktie, and I tried to pull away from him, and he said, "How many CIA do you have on your staff?" Well, I may have had some people who were thought to

be CIA, or were formerly CIA, but by the time they arrived at my embassy, they were Foreign Service staff officers which allows the ambassador to handle that question. So I responded, "I don't have any CIA people on my staff." He said, "I know you have CIA on your staff. We don't like Jews, we don't like CIA." So I said, "If I did have CIA, they'd be American. And if I did have Jews, they'd be American. They'd be on my staff. Do you mean they're not safe here?" "I can't guarantee them." So I went back and filed a report to the Department, and actually was quite concerned about it. I did have perhaps a dozen people of Jewish background, and a large Peace Corps operation, and I knew several were Jewish, etc. I'd only been there for four or five months. This was actually in September. I got the Jewish people out, I just had to make the decision. So I filed a cable, Top Secret/Eyes Only because I felt it was dangerous because people were being eliminated. I felt that Amin...I'm not a psychiatrist, lacked stability, and was totally unpredictable. So I began to evacuate, and I talked to my Jewish people, and they became concerned. So we found ways to get them out.

I recall about the day after I did that, and had gotten out three or four people, the phone rang and it was the Associated Press and wanted to know if it was true that I was evacuating the Jewish members of my staff. I said it was not true and I hung up. I knew the phones were all bugged by Amin's intelligence people. The next day or two we got a few more out.

I came back in November and I presented the point of view to the White House, I didn't see the President, but Kissinger was still there, and to the State Department people, I said that we ought to close the mission. There was a division of opinion. I held that while most governments at that time, in basic criteria, were authoritarian. There's nothing wrong with authoritarian government, nothing wrong perhaps with dictatorship. There was a critical difference between a dictator and a brutal tyrant. At that point Idi Amin had probably eliminated about 100,000 people. He had made these various threats. He endorsed Hitler. He was a brutal tyrant, and we shouldn't dignify him with a presence of an ambassador. Some said, "You're talking yourself out of a job." And I said, "I believe in this, and I'll return to academic life, to my professorship." What I would say from the White House, there was general agreement, so I was to follow a plan of getting people out, and I remember it was about November, and we had a very good plan for the Peace Corps because there would be the usual holidays of December, and they all could go off to Kenya. So I had to encourage that, and they wouldn't return. Furthermore, I somehow had to get to the Americans living there, overwhelmingly missionaries again, a higher number than in Burundi, about maybe 500, and point out to them there might not always be an embassy there to protect their interests, but not to scare them. I remember it was a delicate assignment.

Well, come January or February '73, the situation got worse, and there were worse kinds of things, and there became some fear about my own security. So I came back again on consultations. While on consultations in '73, the American ambassador to Sudan, Cleo Noel, was kidnapped by the Black September group who were actually headquartered in Uganda as Amin protected them. So the big debate was whether I should go back, and how we were going to close the embassy. About three or four times the State Department had me ready to go back, I had my wife and daughters there. And somebody would come up, CIA or some other intelligence agency, would pick up some dangerous information. My return could be delayed. It went from bad to worse in that period of dealing with the most notorious terrorist. So the decision was to close the embassy, so I stayed in Washington and helped out on the whole business that followed

the plan that when appropriate people would leave. So by the time of the summer of '73 about all of the Peace Corps was out. People tied up with the AID missions, academic people, were out, and it was a fairly successful thing. There was one bad incident where a Peace Corps person didn't follow advice in one area and was shot and killed. There were lots of other incidents, a series of incidents just confirmed the recommendation I had made months before that we close the embassy. It was closed in the fall of...my wife came back in the summer of '73, and my girls, and the mission was closed sometime in '73.

Q: *Was it a matter you felt you couldn't just say, "Okay, we're closing and move out."*

MELADY: There was concern because of the unpredictable nature of Amin. If you dealt with an authoritarian who was predictable, a dictator who was predictable like in most other countries, you probably could have done that. It was my feeling, I must say there was a general confirmation by my colleagues in the Department of State, that given his record, there was total unpredictability, and no regard for human life, and a breakdown of the internal social order, and therefore you had to do it surreptitiously, which we did. Then it was dramatically when the people were out, with the exception of the missionaries, most of whom said they would stay, understanding the dangers involved, and nothing ever happened to them physically. I still stay in contact with some of them twenty years later. But after the withdrawal of official Americans, i.e., Peace Corps, AID, and a few teachers under contract, and the staff was down to a handful of people, then the chargé d'affaires closed the Embassy.

Q: *Who was your DCM at that time?*

MELADY: Bob Keeley.

Q: *How did you find him as a person? I know he's a rather outspoken person, particularly on Greek policy.*

MELADY: He was my predecessor's DCM, and was there when I arrived, a good career officer. Later he was ambassador to--he had two appointments [AE/P-Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Greece]. I have read his articles on Greece. I think now he's now retired. I heard he may be doing a book on Uganda, or maybe it's Greece. His tour in Uganda was longer than mine because he was my predecessor's DCM, and then he stayed a couple of months past me. I had a good staff in both places. I had an excellent staff in Rome.

Q: *Was your impression of Amin that he was crazy?*

MELADY: He's still alive. Let me tell you that I felt...my wife and I wrote the book, I'm sure you have copies here in the library, "Idi Amin, Hitler in Africa." We co-authored it. I urged that he be charged with those crimes. I was always disappointed...when I came back I documented things. But that time I had become a university president so it became a hobby. But I was able to document that the coffee product, which he was selling in New York--the government was selling--the hard dollars went into his "goon" fund. So I urged President Carter to issue an executive order, which he could, prohibiting the purchase of Ugandan products. I remember, thanks to a friend of mine who knew the President, I had an appointment with him. My wife and

I flew down (this is circa 1978, time went on, and in private life, president of Sacred Heart University in Connecticut), and I received word that morning the appointment was canceled and I should see Mr. Young, then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. So I did see Mr. Young, and we came in with the various documentation, which he didn't deny was accurate, but he said he was sort of the President's advisor on African policy, notwithstanding his title as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, thought that I should come through with a recommendation concerning South Africa. And he asked me wasn't South Africa just as bad as Uganda? Well, I knew South Africa. I'd been there...two of my books, written eight years previously were on South Africa. The South Africans were very unhappy with the book, and made me a prohibited alien. But I felt I couldn't make such a recommendation on South Africa, and I felt from what I knew, while certainly I was in total disagreement with apartheid policy, in other things it was not as bad as Uganda. So I told the ambassador that I felt I couldn't...I was thinking of Uganda which I knew pretty well because my wife and I had documented it and produced all the documents. But I didn't know what to do. So I knew there was another way to bring forth an embargo, that was by an act of the United States congress. It was a very usual way to do it.

So through another friend, my wife and I had a ten minute appointment with Senator Church, Foreign Relations Committee chairman. So we flew down again and saw Senator Church. But my wife took over the ten minute conversation, and she began by telling a personal story how the priest, who gave first communion to my older girl, Christine, the next day Amin's bodyguards turned over the car, which was a Volkswagen, doused it with kerosene, and burned him alive. And she told him other stories. And he said, "What are you doing tonight?" And we stayed and had dinner with him. I was always very grateful for it because we gave him the documentation. He didn't know us, we came from another part of the country, another political party, etc., and he introduced the legislation which we helped him on, and which we recruited senators and congressmen for him. I must say it wasn't difficult. It took some effort, and to make a long story short, for the first time in the history of the United States, an embargo was passed by the United States Congress prohibiting the purchase of Ugandan goods. We got on radio and TV. It played a role in bringing down Idi Amin. A role, I wouldn't say major. I suppose the major role was Julius Nyerere's energizing of the invasion. By the way when our book came out, "Idi Amin, Hitler in Africa," it was reviewed one evening by British Broadcasting Corporation, and the next night Ugandan radio, which BBC picked up, Idi Amin said he would "get us," my wife and I. So we began receiving phone threats, and the FBI stepped in and gave us protection when I was president of the university. Nothing ever happened.

Q: *What was your impression of the British during the time you were there? Was their policy, "not to pull the plug"?*

MELADY: Well, it was. Remember the history of Uganda, always a special relationship with the British crown. I collect first editions on Africa, and in Winston Churchill's book (400 copies published), I have one, My Travels in Afric" when he got out of the university, went to Nairobi and he spent an extra week or two after a month for the inaugural of a train trip.

Q: *Oh, yes. I read that book.*

MELADY: He went up there and he met the Kubaka (King) of Buganda, the sovereign of the Uganda Kingdom. And he said, "These people are special, they have a monarchy." So he went back to England. He influenced the British government not to turn Uganda into a colony. Uganda was never a colony. It was a protectorate of the crown. The first black students seen at British universities were from Uganda, one of the four kingdoms of Uganda. British were always very proud of Uganda.

Q: *That was supposed to be a beautiful place.*

MELADY: Very beautiful. Okay, its history went on and then came the sweep of independence in the '60s. They knew the realities. They worked for the orderly transfer of power, presented them with a great surplus in the treasury, with a Bicameral Legislature like their own. A special role for the four monarchies, mostly honorary, but to keep them there. So when Idi Amin came along, the British thought this too will pass. So, being as patient as they could, originally they were, and clearly now, we know whatever estimates they gave the State Department when Idi Amin took over that he could be influenced, and while he wasn't a brilliant man, he was an ex-sergeant, deal with him, it turned to be the wrong estimate. That's hindsight. So now we look back upon it, a lesson for both of us, that once you recognize you have a brutal tyrant, don't expect him to change. That was the theme of my book, and it was hindsight. Although without bragging about my own role, I felt we had a tyrant and urged that we close the embassy, and quite a few professional diplomats and others thought, you never close an embassy because of an dictator. I said, "Not because of a dictator, but you do when it's a brutal tyrant."

So we played with Idi Amin perhaps too long. We had the tragedy of the Air France plane. By the time I was back in Washington I helped with that problem. Israel came out as heroes. If they hadn't sent that group in...

Q: *This was called the raid on Entebbe.*

MELADY: Yes, if they hadn't they all would have been killed. I said that in the State Department, once Idi Amin separated the Jews from the non-Jews, the next step was going to be execution. And, of course, he executed the poor lady, I can't think of her name now, who had both Israeli and American citizenship. We were dealing with that kind of a person. So I say in hindsight, both of us...first of all it's hard for the western mind to grasp total brutality. I tried in doing the book research the response of the American diplomats and the consul in Munich against Hitler. You read some of the responses in reports by our consul in Munich of 1934-1935. They classified Hitler as "a beer bum, he's bombastic, don't pay any attention to him." Well, we saw what happened. That's, of course, hindsight.

So I think in hindsight, I hope we learned a lesson. That once you identify a brutal tyrant, don't expect a change.

HARIADENE JOHNSON
Office Director for East Africa, USAID

Washington, DC (1977-1982)

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

Q: Is there more on that period in your career that you'd like to touch on at this point?

JOHNSON: I think we got it.

In the middle of this time period was when the Tanzanian army started moving against Uganda, the Idi Amin being thrown out and Obote taking over. Their automatic assumption was that we would start up an aid program. It was just inconceivable to them that we wouldn't start one. The question is, whether we would go in with an attempt to reestablish Uganda institutions, which was what most donors, most academics, most people familiar with the scene felt that was the first step. Uganda had had some of the best functioning institutions in Africa and that what we needed to do was go back and put the ministries back together, put the schools back together, etc. etc. And, those who felt that under the New Directions philosophy we should by-pass all of that and go directly to programs that would improve the daily life of people. You had really strong restrictions from the State Department; they didn't want Americans wandering around the country. They didn't want a big USAID office, in fact, they didn't want an USAID office at all. They didn't understand why the Regional Office in Nairobi couldn't handle Uganda by flying up periodically. The USAID initially sent in one person and sent in a second person, a third person and it was like pulling teeth to get each one approved to go in. Part of the trouble in terms of putting American people in was that it was an extremely high crime area. (Craig Buck was our Acting USAID Affairs Officer.) We've got people out there who became a Mission Director. Craig lost three to four cars where people would just set up a road block and then when somebody stopped they would steal a car. And, our State instructions were don't argue with them. They think guns and bullets, you don't. If they want the car, get out of the car and let them have it. He lost three cars, you know, a brand new, land rover; a Toyota that we were shipping in. So, finally he went down to Nairobi to pick up his fourth car and he parked it in the parking lot in Nairobi and then it was stolen from the parking lot in Nairobi.

Q: All the cars?

JOHNSON: All these cars were going to Eastern Zaire which must be one huge parking lot. But, at that point, Craig again gave up and he took from the REDSO Office in Nairobi a ten year old van, beat up, grungy looking, and so he just swapped it for another land rover he had ordered. REDSO would get the land rover when it came and, in the meantime, he took the old, red beat up Capella on the assumption that no one would want a car that was that old. It turned out he was right; he never lost it that way.

But, we had major staffing problems of getting people to go out. At one point, Craig had been down in Nairobi talking with the REDSO Office, caught a little plane to go back up to Kampala.

Out at the airport as he was getting on the plane, he saw all these Embassy people getting off the plane. Well, that's unusual for somebody to come down, but other than that he got on a plane and went to Kampala and he got to Kampala and they said, "what are you doing here, we evacuated our personnel."

I think again, we partially used the same system we used in the Sahel when we went initially for some relief and rehab type project to get things up and running that were clearly within the capacity of the government, etc. They very much wanted us to help with Makerere University, which had been the outstanding college of East Africa. We did get involved later, but at least initially during those early days, there was just too many things that we couldn't figure out how to overcome.

First, technical assistance in terms of the people we provided; secondly, staffing on the Ugandan side. I mean there's an assumption that the educated Ugandan class had been wiped out, and to a remarkable degree they hadn't been. They'd gone into hiding, but as the situation stabilized they started coming out from the boondocks where they'd been on Uncle Joe's third wife's farm. And, to some extent they had been refugees throughout the world and they returned home. We had more of an educated class to work with than we thought in our original planning documents.

The most effective program, I think during the early days was a project worked out by the people at REDSO, where we had imported steel. We had a Commodity Import Program, ESF. It was tied in to polices about what the government did in terms of establishing a foreign exchange policy and re-instituting monetary control. Primarily, REDSO was worried about the tendency for everything to be stolen. Anything that came in, in terms of small portable objects, developed legs and walked off. But, if we brought in this huge quantity of steel, we could be reasonably assured that the steel would get from Nairobi to Uganda to the processing plant. At the processing plant it was turned in to agricultural implements, small hand tools, which unfortunately also included machetes, which were one of the chief weapons of the law and order fight.

Pat Fleuret who was at REDSO at that time, went up to Uganda, worked with a series of farmers coops that had managed to survive Idi Amin. They hadn't done very much, but the structure was still there. And, if you said, is there a coop in town, they'd say, yeah, yeah, Sam's in charge of it. So, we worked with the coop structure on a distribution system that the coops would receive the implements directly at the factory. That meant that there was less than a chance of the implements going into a merchandising chain where they'd be pulled off for other uses. That worked real well. We did it for about three or four years. Now when I think of it again, I give full credit to the REDSO people for devising it. It was very responsive to the situation and it helped us do what the New Directions were pushing in terms of getting out to people. So, it worked really well.

Actually, before we leave East Africa as a whole, I guess I'd like to comment on REDSO. It's a Regional Office in Nairobi, made up of a combination of private sector officers, anthropologists, engineers, and other specialists.

Q: Sector specialists?

JOHNSON: Some Sector Specialists, they had a Senior Agie; they had a Senior Environmentalist, Anthropologists, no problems. No mission had anthropologists. So, they'd ask for the anthropologists to come, you didn't step on anybody's feet, you didn't have to worry about him giving any one recommendation headed east, while the local guy gave one and headed west. Agies, if we had a program at all, we'd have an agie in the country. It was a more diplomatically, difficult to call in the Senior Agie to serve as backup and support for your agriculture program, because the local guy didn't like anybody looking over his shoulder, etc. etc. etc. As a whole, the REDSO Staff were extremely good, and from my point of view, as Director of East Africa, there wasn't absolutely no substitute for excess staff capacity which could be called on to lend a hand in Sudan. We couldn't get our people into Sudan and they filled in the gap. When in Somali, they filled in until we could get people there. In Uganda they stayed with us. Even while the situation was so bad and the State Department didn't want to allow Americans into the country, they would allow the REDSO people to travel in and out. They had full time jobs. They had to justify their existence in terms of budget, OE and staffing, on the basis of existing programs and what they did. But, they always managed to have an excess capacity that we could pull on as we started up programs, just one after the other.

The USAID Personnel System was so slow in responding and the State Department was such an incredible bottleneck; to this day I don't think they really understand why you need USAID people to run an aid program. They honestly believe that you don't need anybody or that you can do it with Embassy people. Later in my life, when I worked on Eastern Europe and Russia, it was the most difficult. At least in Africa and Asia, you could work with Ambassadors and they — Embassy or Econ Officers — would gradually learn what USAID people do by being in a country with USAID. So, by the time two or three rotations passed, they were much easier to work with. As the people who'd never worked with USAID before and when they had had no experience with aid, they honestly saw no need to have anybody there. And, that's what you faced in Sudan, because they had no aid program ongoing, so the Embassy didn't understand why we needed to start one. Not a program but we needed to start a program. They didn't understand why we needed to start USAID staff or have USAID people in country in order to do it. Same was true in Somali and Uganda.

MELISSA FOELSCH WELLS
United Nations Resident Representative
Uganda (1979-1982)

Ambassador Wells was born in Estonia and raised abroad and in the U.S. She was educated at Mount St. Mary's College and Georgetown University. In 1958, she joined the Foreign Service and served in Washington and abroad. Her foreign assignments include posts in Brazil, France, United Kingdom, Trinidad-Tobago, and Switzerland. She also served in senior positions at the United Nations in New York. Her ambassadorial assignments include: Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau (1976-1977); Mozambique (1987-1991); the Democratic Republic of Congo

(1991-1992); and Estonia (1998-2001). Ambassador Wells was interviewed by Ann Miller Moran in 1995.

Q: I want to hear more about Uganda.

WELLS: Ah!

Q: When you were in the ambassadorial seminar, you mentioned being shot at. For the tape, could you go into that?

WELLS: Which time?

Q: Which time? Oh, I didn't know there was more than one. Tell us all the times. It was a terribly dangerous time right after [Idi] Amin had been overthrown.

WELLS: It was. It was very chaotic. It was what you call true anarchy, which is the most frightening of all situations.

Q: You mentioned how the police had all been wiped out; there weren't any police on the streets.

WELLS: That's right. You had a Liberation Army which had been recruited along the way. You had the Tanzanian Army there that, of course, was the spearhead in terms of removing Amin from power. But then there was no institutional framework with which to support an army, you see. You have to feed it, house it, clothe it, pay it!

Q: Had the others been murdered? Is that what had happened?

WELLS: The others ran away. The Amin army right there all disappeared. So you had the Tanzanian Army and you had the Uganda Liberation Army without any institutional framework to support it. What happened was that it generated into soldiers who had weapons just helping themselves, unfortunately, to the local population. You had certain areas, certain units, it depended on commanders and so forth, who disciplined the soldiers, but actually there were quite few. You had a very chaotic situation, really, which is one of the most frightening things. Even if you don't agree with the atrocious policies that somebody may be carrying out, that means that somebody is in charge, and at least you can go and talk to somebody if you're being killed, and civilians are being murdered for transistor radios, for chickens, for wristwatches. So that's where we're talking about.

Where should we start? The best known incident, actually, is a time I was not shot at, but it was the first really close encounter with a gun. I was being driven home, which was in Entebbe, from Kampala. I had actually been at the U.S. Embassy for a reception and it was late--late, like nearly seven o'clock in the evening. By that time, the curfew was in effect. The curfew came into effect later, but no one, for all practical purposes, went out on the streets after seven. It's like a twenty-five minute, half-hour drive from Kampala to Entebbe if you drive very fast.

I was aware that a car was passing us. I was sort of looking off to the left. We drive on the left there, incidentally. It was passing us, but somehow it didn't seem to get on with the job of passing us, and that made me turn my head. I could see that the car was keeping up with us.

There were three men in the car. The driver was on the other side, you see. Two men were at the windows and had pistols. They were keeping up with us, and I sort of looked, and my first reaction was, "Oh, no! Here? Me?" I mean, I'd heard about this. It was always happening to someone else, not to you.

They were saying, "Stop the car."

Of course, all this is split-second. George, the driver, still seemed unaware that this car was keeping up with us, and I said, "George, stop the car! Stop!"

"What, Madam? What?"

I said, "Stop the car!" Because they'll shoot you to get the car.

Q: Sure.

WELLS: Then by that time he realized that we were in trouble, and he started slowing down the car. Then the car pulled right in front of us, and as they got out of their car, I sort of went down on the floor of the car, because I thought they would start shooting. I remember being down there with my nose on the floor of the back seat, thinking, "Is this it? Is this the end? It's going to end here?" And then, again--you see, I'm practical--I said, "I hope they kill me, because I don't want to lie here and suffer." The last thing you want is to need medical help under those circumstances.

There was no shooting, so I came up again, and by this time they were pulling George out of the car. A guy came up to me on this side. I had the window rolled up. He said, "Get out of the car! Get out of the car!"

I remember looking at this revolver, because it was the first revolver I had seen in Uganda. I had been used to either AK47s or Lee Enfield rifles, but I'd never seen this revolver. I thought, "Is that a real gun?" Because it was so small! [Laughter]

Then I thought, "If he shoots, the glass is going to come into my face," which is a stupid thing to think about, because at this point, if you have a hole in your face, whether glass accompanies it or not is totally irrelevant. But this is what happens. Maybe it's vanity. I was not going to reach for anything, because just the week before, or two weeks before, a Canadian priest had been killed on the same road, because, apparently, someone who saw it said that as he got out of the car, he tried to reach for his briefcase. The thieves are not sure whether you're setting off the anti-theft device which will impede their progress out of this place later on or whatever.

"I can't get out of the car! I'm showing you my hands. I can't open the door!" [Laughter] It wasn't funny at that point.

Q: No, I'm sure it wasn't.

WELLS: He comes running around the side. Why I didn't open that door, I do not know. He came out this side, and he opened the door for madam, and I emerged with my hands up. "Hurry up! Hurry up!" George had been dragged across the road there. There was the other man in the driver's seat. So I got out, and then he jumped in. I don't know whether he jumped in the front seat or the back seat. Whatever it was, they turned around and got out of there.

Then I was left there on the side of the road, in the dark, and the first thing I thought was, "Where's George?" He'd been beaten up and was playing dead or wounded on the other side of the road. I got him up, and he was okay. He had a bad gash in his knee. I just put my arms around him and said, "George, we're alive!"

There weren't that many cars on the road. I'd wave and see a car go "Whoooosh!" I thought, "I'm going to be here all night waving at all these cars." I had a very full pleated skirt on, so the next set of headlights I saw, I jumped out in front and started waving my skirts. [Pantomimes the action.]

Q: [Laughter] Oh!

WELLS: That breaks everybody up. But you don't understand, Ann! You've got to get out of the situation.

Q: Of course.

WELLS: They can't see. Everybody drives very fast. I wanted them to make sure they knew this was a mazuna woman standing here. Something is <u>wrong</u>! If you can help, please help. So waving this skirt, the headlights keep coming, and I finally go, "Aaagghh!" and move away, because it was a minibus, which was actually stopping. It stopped later on, but it was going so fast, I didn't know it would stop.

Then they took the news to the hotel that there was this European woman waving her skirts around in the middle of the road. By this point, I was late and everybody called and said, "I wonder if that's Melissa?"

Then another set of headlights came. Again, I'm going this way, and I go like this [gesturing], you know, like, "Please stop the car!" I hear the brakes, "Eeeeeekkkkk!" It turned out to be somebody I knew. I said, "Please take us to the Tanzanian Army headquarters." I knew they had a radio in touch with the Ugandan Army headquarters in Kampala.

Q: This is an embassy car they'd made off with?

WELLS: It was a U.N. car that they stole, yes. That's the story that appeared in Le Monde, and a lot of people know about it. And there were other incidents.

But in terms of what I thought was my closest call was a roadblock just outside of a place called Atiak, north on the road to Nimule towards the Sudan border. I was with some Swedish disaster relief people who had come to help us on the West Nile Project. It was early in the morning, and we were trying to get to Moyo. It was the usual roadblock, and we stopped. We could see that this guy was really tanked up--drunk--and he was very aggressive, incredibly aggressive. He didn't want to see any papers. He was lurching like this. [Wells demonstrates.] I can't understand the language he's talking to the driver. I could see the driver sort of becoming paralyzed. I'm in the front seat. The driver's here. The Swedes are in back.

Then his buddy comes out and pushes him aside, and they start conversing. He looks at the papers. Apparently everything is okay, except then we look, and the drunk is standing in front, over the radiator like this. [Wells demonstrates.] He's like this with his AK47. He takes the safety catch off and he's trying to frighten us, and I can assure you, he is. I just looked and said, "Here it is." I dropped to the bottom of the floor. I had been through other experiences. "This is it."

Q: Terrible.

WELLS: Willingly or not, he's not in charge, he's got his finger right there, he's taken off the safety catch. The car is silent! The Swedes stopped saying, "We're trying to help you. We're trying to help you." They'd stopped. They were collecting their thoughts for the next world at this point, too. I just remember going like this [Wells demonstrates with head in hands.], thinking about my loved ones. By the time I looked up, nothing happened. The buddy had quietly gotten the drunk out and taken him away.

Anyway, what this means, being shot at, yes. We were caught between two trucks who were carrying Ugandan soldiers. We were trying to pass, and we got caught in the gunfire.

Q: No safety glass on the cars?

WELLS: No. There was one time we were on the road trying to get to the border to go to Kenya, and we just turned a corner and there was a Tanzanian soldier, and he had the gun like this. "Stop!" And there was a man bleeding by the side of the road. We stopped the car. Then gunfire started. The soldier jumped into the front seat--I'm sitting here--with his weapon, closed the door, and then shouted at the driver, and the driver immediately turned around and pulled away, and they were shooting at us.

Q: Oh, mercy!

WELLS: There had been an ambush there, and we just happened to arrive at that point, and he wanted to get out of there.

Q: What do all these incidents do to your nerves?

WELLS: What happens, Ann, is after the first time or two--what you have to do is realize, "What am I doing here?"

Q: I'm sure you must have asked yourself that many times.

WELLS: "Why am I here?"

Q: With your family in Nairobi.

WELLS: Exactly. Because I have to explain this to my family. I figured it out that it was necessary because of the relief operations we had. Once I had seen bodies, dead bodies, from the slow violence of starvation, about which you can do something... You can't do all that much about the atrocities... There is no way that I can just turn my back and write a report and hope for the best that somebody else will lead. I know this sounds very heroic and all that, but I've lived it. I have put my life on the line in several cases. The wonderful thing, Ann, is that others do it, too. Then you become a unit.

If anything, there were a number of people, not a lot, but some, who were genuinely very afraid in Uganda. I used to say, "If you really live with fear day in, day out, get out." Because I believe that you attract disaster. It's like dogs know when you're afraid, or something like that. There's a normal healthy level of fear, but if it becomes obsessive, if you see someone out to kill you every minute of the day, that's wrong, and I think it's very bad in terms of the total community.

But the beauty of Uganda was that we got a job done. They said we didn't solve all that many problems, but it's very easy when you're sitting back in a capital writing papers and whatever it is. But when you know that because of what you did people got something to eat, it's as simple and basic as that. They may have been killed the next day because of something else.

We used to have philosophical arguments about this. If we do this, somebody else will do that. Well, you have to live with your own conscience. But we developed a group ethic, almost, and we discussed a lot of things and took tremendous risks to get the job done. I'm so proud of having been a part of that, and I'd like to think I did lead the operation with the example that I used to go out, so other people would go out.

GORDON R. BEYER
Ambassador
Uganda (1980-1983)

Ambassador Gordon R. Beyer received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's degree from Northwestern before entering the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. After his term of service in the Marines, Ambassador Beyer joined the Foreign Service and was posted in Thailand, Japan, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1989.

Q: Great. What a way to break the ice! We haven't got much left on this tape, but let's see if we can get you started in Uganda. I take it that they made good--a rare experience in the Foreign Service, perhaps, that they made good on their suggestion that they find you a post.

BEYER: Yes. Quite a credit, and an interesting assignment, really.

Well, we had selected a man to go to Uganda. He served primarily in Europe. He had never served in Africa, and he had cleared all the hurdles that one does in the Department of State.

His name had actually gotten over to the White House, when he decided, "I don't think I want to go to Uganda."

He had found out enough about Uganda that he decided that he didn't want to go to Uganda. So, suddenly, we were without an ambassador to go to Uganda. The assistant secretary at that time was Dick Moose, and this was about six months before my two years was up.

He said to me, "You have told me that you didn't want to go someplace dull and boring in Africa. How would you like to go to Uganda?" [Laughter]

I had never thought of it, but I said okay. Actually, I had picked the fellow to get us started out there, Dave Halstead, who had been there as a junior officer and was doing a fine job of getting the post started. So that's how I--

Q: The post had been closed for how long?

BEYER: The post had been closed for about seven years. Dave opened it with just a couple of folks, and then slowly we were building the post up.

Q: Amin had already left when you got out there.

BEYER: That's right.

Q: When did you get--you got there in 1980, what time?

BEYER: June of 1980.

Q: What was the state of play? They changed presidents or prime ministers about every three weeks.

BEYER: This was the third government, I guess, and it was called a military commission. It was to hold elections. That was its only job was to hold elections.

The one thing that I thought was sort of interesting about that particular appointment is, I was asked by one of the fellows on the political side of the White House if I would like to talk to the President, call on the President.

I said, "Oh, yes. We would be very pleased to do that."

And so he said, "Would your wife like to do that, too?"
I said, "Yes."
It was just a photo opportunity, obviously, but we thought that would be quite fun. So he arranged it. We met--

Q: This was still Carter.

BEYER: This was still President Carter, yes. We met in Ham Jordan's office, and he showed me the briefing paper that he'd sent to President Carter so I would know what the President might ask, which was very generous of him. Then we went into the President's office.

So we talked a little bit about Uganda, and I was astounded how much he knew about Uganda, I must say--very bright.

At the end of it, he said, "Well, I want to wish you well and, because you are part of my family, I want you to know that, if you ever get into any trouble with the Department of State, and they are not being responsive, I want you to come to me directly."

I was astounded to hear this, because it wasn't in the briefing papers.

So I said, "Well, thank you very much."

Then he kissed Molly, shook my hand, and off we went.

So this fellow--his name has slipped my mind--said to me, "Did you get that business about the family?"

I said, "Yes. What is all that about?"

He said, "Well, you may not remember this, but a couple of years ago, when he first took power here and I came to the White House to work, I called you over to give me a brief--Beard was his last name--to give me a briefing on Somalia.". Tom Beard, I think it was. He was on the political side. He had raised money for President Carter and the Democratic Party.

He said, "I called you over because the Italians in New York were putting pressure on us to do something for Somalia. I called you over to talk about Somalia, and you did. You gave me a very good briefing on Somalia. At the end of that, you told me about the problems that Hermannn Eilts had had in the sense that the Libyans had sent an assassination team to kill Hermann, and between our people and their security folks, they were caught, just after they crossed the border. You said to me, 'Get Billy disengaged from the Libyans. They are really bad folks.'"

Tom said, "Well, I sent a note to this effect to the President and, as you may recall, Billy disengaged from the Libyans, and it caused very little trouble to us. That's the kind of thing the President never forgets, and that's why he added this little comment to you so that you'd know."

Q: That was interesting.

BEYER: Yes. It was interesting, wasn't it? Actually, I needed--

Q: Ambassador Beyer, when we were so rudely interrupted by the end of the tape, we had just finished your interview with President Carter on your way out to Uganda. Do you want to get yourself to Uganda, and tell a little about the hard situation you found when you got there?

BEYER: Well, I should begin by saying it was our favorite post, Molly and mine. It was difficult in the beginning in the sense that security conditions were really quite bad. We had a dusk-to-dawn curfew for our staff, and that lasted for a year and a half. I am pleased, if not proud, that in the three years that I was in Uganda, despite the mayhem going on, we did not have one person injured or one person killed in those three years, despite the fact that, in all of the countries surrounding, Americans were hurt or killed. We feel quite proud of that.

Q: Did you have special security precautions that were responsible for this?

BEYER: No. We just had a disciplined staff. Indeed, a newspaper reporter at one point came, after we'd been there six months or a year. We were in the back of the British High Commission Building--quite a large building--and we occupied the back half of it, on an alley.

He said, "I don't understand this. Nairobi is a big embassy. It looks like a fort, and it's got lots of Marine security guards. Why don't you have any Marine security guards?"

And I really didn't know what to tell him. But, having been a Marine officer myself, I knew that we could not handle young men, young Marines. They just didn't have the discipline that was required to live in that situation. Obviously, I didn't want to tell that to the press. [Laughter]

So I would say such things as, "Well, when we get into permanent quarters, maybe we'll have Marines then, but we don't have them now. We are in, after all, what is a British building, and it wouldn't look proper to have Marines."

The real reason was, we felt that it was too dangerous a situation to have Marine guards.

Q: So what did you have for security?

BEYER: We had a security officer from the Department of State, who was a first-rate fellow. His wife was the GSO, as a matter of fact. All the women at Uganda worked, either in the embassy, for USIA, or at the international school. It was called the Lincoln School.

Indeed, my wife taught at the Lincoln School, and the wife of the USIS officer, who had at that post--his name slips my mind--Mary Lee was the head of the school. It was about 60 per cent Ugandan and about 40 per cent foreign. Our folks were helping it get back on its feet.

Q: This all was taught in English.

BEYER: It was taught in English because that's the official language in Uganda. Uganda has very strong tribes, and I use that advisedly in the sense that you can look at a person, you can look at a Ugandan, and tell what part of the country they come from because the Nilotics of the north are very black and very Negroid in feature, and kinky hair, and so on. The people from the west, the Ankoli, are Semitic in origin like the Masai. They are tall, light colored, straight hair, and aquiline features. Then those of the Baganda around Kampala look like American Negroes. So the differences are really very distinct.

One of the reasons that we were as safe as we were--I talked to Bob Keeley, who closed our post, when I was going out there. Bob was Deputy Assistant Secretary in African Bureau.

I said, "Bob, how dangerous is it?"

He said, "I don't think it's too dangerous if you identify yourselves as Americans. The Ugandans have tried, because it was a British protectorate, not a colony, to keep foreigners out of their political problems. Therefore, they always considered that those who came to the protectorate, whether it was teachers or administrators or medical folks, have come just to help. Therefore, they have no antagonism towards you as an American. You are quite identifiable because you're white."

I said, "Thank you, very much."

Actually, that was a principal aspect of our security--indeed, to the point that I told Washington I didn't want any black Americans assigned to the post. That didn't go down too well in Washington, needless to say.

But, at one point, they did assign--Eddie Dearfield, the head of USIA, when he went on leave, they assigned a young man from Howard University, who is black. When he came into the office, I told him why I didn't want him there but, since he's here, make sure he identified himself as an American so that they would know that he is an American and not a Ugandan. He said he would do so. He was very careful.

But, after a few weeks, we had a plane that brought in supplies and the pouch every week, and we had people go out on that plane to Nairobi for holiday or for a few days' break. So he said he'd like to take the pouch and have a few days in Nairobi.

We said, "Fine."

He didn't have a lot of money, so he decided to stay in an Indian-run hotel in Nairobi. That hotel happened to be near the radio station, and that was the weekend that there was the attempted

coup in Nairobi. He spent most of that weekend on the floor, as the rebels tried to take the radio station and were firing right through his hotel.

So when he came back, if anything, he was a few shades lighter and said that it is even safer in Kampala than it is in Nairobi. [Laughter] At any rate, he did a fine job and left at the end of the summer when Eddie came back. He had done a good job.

But service in Uganda was interesting. I looked at the residence, and I thought it was the worst residence I'd ever seen because it had been used as a French school and had run down terribly. We fixed it up, and Molly worked very hard on it. By the time we left, we considered it one of the best residences we'd ever served in because it was a real, working house, built on the side of a hill, actually near the top of the hill. We could see Murchison Bay from the house. We could look down on the rest of Kampala. It was really quite lovely.

Kampala, of course, is built on hills, much like Rome, and is a very lovely city. It has a climate which, I think, most people forget about. Because it is high, just under 5,000 feet, it seldom gets colder than 65 or warmer than 85, so it's a climate somewhat like Southern California.

Q: We spent some time up there, so I'm familiar with it. It is one of the glory ports of the world, that African highland.

BEYER: It really is. Yes, just lovely. The one thing that I do remember is, I arrived a week before Molly. So I arrived on Friday, and on Saturday I was invited out to the Gayaza Girls' School. The Gayaza Girls' School is a boarding school, out about 15 miles from Kampala. They were celebrating their 75th anniversary.

So I went out there and was put with the rest of the ambassadors and started to chat with the fellow next to me. It turns out that he was the ambassador from Burundi.

He said, "You know, sometimes the reason the Ugandans are so difficult is just because of this thing."

I said, "What?"
He said, "Well, here we are, celebrating the 75th anniversary of a girls' boarding school. You know, in Burundi we are lucky if we have a school that is ten years old."

That was really quite true. The Ugandans were very highly educated, Makerere University, one of the biggest, one of the best universities in Africa and of long standing. It was a fine school which Amin ran into the ground, but they were building it back up when we were there.

Q: What was the government situation as you got there and as you progressed?

BEYER: When I arrived, the military commission had just taken over. Their job was to hold elections. I appealed to Washington for assistance, and they flew in ballot boxes to help. The economic conditions that I mentioned, I think, were as bad as the security conditions. The black market was rampant, and so on.

At one point, I talked to the head of the military commission, and I said, "You really better do something about the black market because it is impossible for an American to do business here, or anybody, to do honest business here."

He said, "I realize that, but that kind of a decision, what kind of an economy we have, we have to put off to the new government. That is a decision they will have to make."

The political parties were reestablished. The Uganda People's Congress was the party that [Milton] Obote headed, and the Democratic Party, the other major party, was headed by Paul Semogerere. Then there were two other parties, the Uganda People's Movement, UPM, which was headed by Yoweri Museveni, and who is currently the head of the Uganda Government, and the Royalist Party, which also didn't do very well.

Museveni's party only won two seats, and he himself was not elected in the election. The election was close. It was disputed. The Democratic Party maintains that the UPC stole the election.

Obote said, "If I was going to steal the election, I wouldn't lose all the seats," which he did, except one around Uganda.

I think, in fact, that probably the UPC did win the election and, though a disputed election, it was probably a better election than Mayor Daley ever ran in Chicago. [Laughter]

Q: Out of that came what?

BEYER: Out of that came Uganda People's Congress government, headed by Milton Obote. He, as president, was elected. It works like the British system. They elect people to the parliament, and then the parliament elects its officials. Obote was elected by his party as president. There was also a prime minister and a vice president.

Paul Muwanga, who had headed the military commission and was a Ugandan, was the vice president. The prime minister was from the north, and his name slips my mind.

Q: The Baganda is the tribe around Kampala?

BEYER: That's right, and a very wealthy, and a very highly educated tribe, as a matter of fact.

Q: Then you began to run--for instance, I note that there was a rocket attack on the Kampala barracks in 1982. Was that a significant event, or was that just something that happened to hit the summary that I read about what went on?

BEYER: The significance of that attack is, the government maintained it was from the Catholic Church, which overlooked the barracks. The rocket people-guerrillas-went into the Catholic Church and used that grounds to fire from. The government couldn't respond to the fire because they were afraid of hitting the church. So they were very unhappy.

Uganda is rather like Ireland, in the sense that I've never been in a country where religion is as much a political factor and where it is so identified with parties. The Uganda People's Congress, the UPC, the party of Milton Obote, is a Protestant, Church of England, party. They have those colors. Anglican officials are part of the party, and so on.

The Democratic Party is a Catholic party and, of course, the Democratic Party was the party of opposition, and they also felt that they'd lost the election unfairly, so on and so forth. So you had this thread going through Uganda.

Q: Are those two Christian elements the vast majority?

BEYER: Those are the vast majority.

Q: In other words, there are no animists--well, there must be some Muslims out there.

BEYER: There are some Muslims. The Arab ambassadors maintain that their Muslims in Uganda were about 22 per cent. Paul Muwanga, for example, the vice president of the UPC, maintains that it was less than ten per cent. So I am not really sure.

But Yoweri Museveni, when he established this new party, this UPM party, Uganda People's Movement, he wanted it to be non-sectarian. He wanted to get away from this political party being identified with a religion. He talked to his father. He was from the west himself. He was an Ankoli. He talked to his father, who was a sub-chief out in the west, to join UPM.

His father said after a long time, apparently, but right before the election, "Yoweri, I can't join your party because I don't want to give up my religion." It was that kind of a feeling. It was really quite strange.

Q: My wife would say the Christian church has a lot to answer for.

BEYER: It was curious in Uganda because the largest number of foreigners were not British or Asian. They were Italian, and they were Italian because they were brothers, and fathers, and sisters, and so on, who taught in these various schools. It was that kind of a difference, too, because the Anglican schools maintained that they were training people to lead the government. The schools of the Roman Catholic Church were schools to teach trades. So there was that kind of a difference--almost a--

Q: Proletariat.

BEYER: Yes, between the two. Very, very strange. Very curious.

One thing that I did want to mention, though, was about this business of President Carter making this comment about help if I needed it. When I was there just a couple of months, the director of AID, who had a very good reputation, was married to a French woman and had a farm in France. So he took off for his farm in France and did not administer a $3 million program to assist some

folks who were starving in Uganda in the far northeast of the country. These were very primitive folks, but we had gotten this money but he didn't administer it.

I was very upset, so I sent an eyes-only telegram to the head of AID saying, "This officer is the kind of fellow who puts off until tomorrow what he should have done yesterday."

This telegram made the circle in Washington and created a great brouhaha, to the point where the deputy director of the Foreign Service sent me a telegram saying that I had to apologize to AFSA, to AID, and so on--

Q: To AFSA!

BEYER: Yes, AFSA got into this because the AID folks in AFSA said, "You are disparaging all of AID people and, therefore, this is really very bad."

So they said that I had to--finally, the deputy director general of the Foreign Service sent this telegram, saying I had to apologize. I had decided that I would resign rather than apologize. So I wrote a long letter to Tom Beard, not to the President, to Tom Beard. I outlined the situation.

I said, "This is what happened. I will not apologize and I will resign, however, if this is what I should do."

But I said I felt really badly about this because I don't know how many people died as a result of not administering this program, but probably thousands and maybe tens of thousands.

I said, "That's pretty hard to live with."

The next thing I knew, everything stopped. I didn't hear anything more from the Department. I didn't hear anything more from AID. I didn't hear anything more from AFSA. It just stopped.

So, eventually, I came back when the new administration came in. They wanted to see who this fellow was, if he had two heads, or whatever.

So I saw Tom and I said, "Tom, what did you do?"

He said, "Well, I got your letter. It made sense to me. I went in to see the President, told him the story. He said, 'Tom, take care of that for me, would you?' So I just called the Secretary of State and the head of AID and told them to knock it off." [Laughter]

I said, "Thank you, very much!"

Q: I must say, that's quite a story--how to have a little backside protection. I take it this AID director was the only AID official there.

BEYER: No. There were other officials, but he did leave within another month or so. He quit AID, got a job working on the Ivory Coast as a consultant, for over six figures--or high six figures, I was told.

I was then very fortunate to get a young AID director named Buck, who was simply first rate and did a marvelous job in the three years that he was there--just a wonderful officer, and we worked very closely together. I was very lucky.

As a matter of fact, one of the things that surprised me most when I left the Foreign Service is, the people in Uganda--in AID, USIA, and the embassy were very close. We depended on one another for safety and security. Every night, in those early days in particular, we were on the radio, checking with everyone to make sure everyone was okay.

That kind of closeness and that kind of support extended even into the American community. There were a group of missionaries there. We were all very close. As a matter of fact, I was able to convince the American community--once we got the pool working. It took us a year and a half to get the pool at the residence going--to use the pool, and they did so.

But when I left the Foreign Service and went down to this lovely place in Lexington, in this lovely museum and research facility and library, and so on, I couldn't believe how the people didn't get along. Here it's this idyllic situation, and they couldn't get along, and yet in a place like Kampala, which particularly for the first year and a half was wild, they got along fine.

Q: I think you can tell a lot of stories about this. The more danger it is, the better--or the more isolated it is, or the more rundown.

BEYER: But also, part of it is the Foreign Service, I think.

Q: Depending partly, but also it is true that it is much easier to coordinate things in the field than it is to get them to coordinate it in Washington, which goes on. How did our relations with Uganda develop over these years?

BEYER: Well, I was fairly close to Obote, because he had been exiled in Tanzania for nine years and, during that period, I was there in Tanzania, also, for three. So we used to talk about our experiences in Tanzania.

When he took over the government in late December of 1980 and from then on, we expected that we would see a form of African socialism. He was, after all, one of the original African socialists. He did a 180-degree turn, however, and became a free-marketeer. He got the government out of all these parastatals and various economic activities. He would either sell them or just give them up, and he would encourage the Ugandans to produce as much as they could and sell wherever they could.

Of course, by that time, selling food just to a place like Kenya was lucrative. So the economic development in those three years that I was there--the two and a half that he was in charge--it

was a miracle. Talk about an economic miracle, that really was one, and it was a marvelous thing to see.

Obote maintained that it wasn't as big a change as we thought it was.

He said, "You know, when I took over in 1962, when I was first president--prime minister of this government--the economy was controlled by the British and the Asians. The Africans were nowhere to be seen. I had to do something to get the Africans into the economy, so I would just nationalize some industries and give them to Africans, give them to Ugandans, and let them run it.

"When I came back, Amin had taken this policy and distorted it to the extent that he had driven the British out. He had driven many of the Asians out. He had confiscated their property. And I realized that we needed those people to come back to help us because we needed their skills."

This goes back to what Bob Keeley had said about the need for skills, that the Ugandans were not unhappy about having foreigners come and help them.

So Obote said, "That's why I pushed through parliament a law to give back to Asians, and the Brits, and anyone else who had had property confiscated, we would give it back to them. We knew we wouldn't get everybody back, but we did get some"--which was true. He did get some.

"We opened the economy because now it was not a question of getting the Africans in the economy. There were too many of them, and they weren't very efficient. What we wanted to do was to get them off the government rolls. We tried to do that."

There is an interesting story, I thought, about this whole business. After the new government took over, Buck and I, the AID director and I, met with the acting minister of finance and the head of the commercial bank. These two men were close to Obote and gave economic advice to Obote.

So Buck and I said to these folks, "You've got to get rid of the black market, and you've got to get a team to help you get going. Wouldn't it be a good idea to bring in someone, perhaps, of a name who might do this?" [Robert] McNamara had just resigned as head of the World Bank.

I said, "Maybe it would be wise to get someone, if you could, like McNamara to come in and be sort of an economic czar and run this place, to help you get started."

They said, "Yes. That sounds reasonable."

So we agreed that they would report it back to the president and I would report it back to Washington. So I reported it back to Washington, and I sent a copy to Bill Harrop, who was the US Ambassador in Kenya at that point. Bill sent a rocket saying, "It's unreasonable to get the Americans so involved in Uganda. This is a bonkers idea." [Laughter] Well, Washington felt the same way.

They said, "Really, what you ought to try to do is get an IMF/IBRD team out there, to give them advice.

So I said, "Okay."

So the next week we had our lunch again with these same two fellows--Buck and I--and I said, "Well, Washington really thinks it would be smarter if you got a team from the IMF or the World Bank to give you a hand rather than a well-known American or a well-known anybody."

They went, "Whew! I'm glad you said that because that's the same way the president feels." [Laughter]

So they did get a good IMF team to come out, actually, headed by a Frenchman but had a good reputation. That team would meet with ambassadors from donor countries about every six weeks, as well as the key economic officials in the government. They would explain what they'd done, and then they would ask donor ambassadors if they couldn't coordinate their programs to support this overall plan, which we did do.

The result was, it wasn't very much money that we put in, but it was in key areas, it was coordinated, and it was coordinated with some of the other things that the bank was doing. The result was this sort of boost to the economy really worked. The economic development just went forward very rapidly, and it was a terribly exciting thing to see. It really was.

Q: You were there a little longer than Obote. You weren't ousted until after Obote was ousted, I take it.

BEYER: No. I left in June of 1983, and Obote was toppled by the military the next year. Then the military was overthrown by this guerilla group that Museveni headed.

There's a story to that, really, because things were going along very well. Even the security situation was getting better. The Army, which was a rag-a-tag outfit was slowly, slowly coming into shape. We were all working on it. The Commonwealth had a training team, headed by a British colonel, who had served in East Africa, knew the Africans well. We were training folks, and so on.

The Army was headed by a fellow named Ojite Ojok, who had gone to Sandhurst and was not politically oriented at all. He was from the same tribe as Obote, so Obote trusted him.

When I left in June, they had almost overcome the insurgency. The Army was almost back in reasonable shape. Then in September, Ojok died in a helicopter accident.

Q: That was Ojite Ojok?

BEYER: Yes. It wasn't until a couple of years later, when I was in Rome--we were staying with the Italian ambassador who was the Ambassador in Kampala when we were there. This Italian

ambassador maintained that Ojok had been killed by the East Germans. I don't know whether that's true, but the Italian Ambassador, Niechele Martinez, was convinced.

Q: Why by the East Germans?

BEYER: Because they had supplied the helicopters, or had supplied some of the people that worked on maintaining the helicopters.

Q: Sounds like an Italian conspiracy theory.

BEYER: Yes, it does, and I don't trust helicopters, anyway. But what it suggested to me is just how important one man can be, and with his loss, everything began to unravel.

Q: Has it unraveled since? I'm not up to date.

BEYER: Yes.

Q: As we leave, as the sun sets over the prairie and as we leave beautiful Uganda--which is beautiful because I've been there--do you have some thoughts about the possibilities of solving some of the insoluble African problems, and whether what we've been doing--trying, and making some progress, and then falling back--is worthwhile? You've already said that certain countries probably can't usefully use our aid. What are your recommendations for future generations?

BEYER: I've written on this because, as I've gotten to know more about the Marshall Plan, I've begun to see that there were certain basic principles in the Marshall Plan which, if we apply them in our AID program, I think they would work.

One of them is, you have to let the people decide what they need and how to go about implementing it. They can take advice from an IMF team, or from donor ambassadors, organizations, their AID people, etc., but they eventually have to decide what is required.

Then secondly, I think that, if a country doesn't follow a free-market system--if it isn't a market system that provides for private enterprise--I'm not sure that our aid is going to work. But I know that it does work in Africa. The market economy and private enterprise work in Africa and, if we follow that kind of line, I think our aid can be effective. If we don't, I don't think our aid works. It may work for somebody else.

I was talking to one official in the African Bureau, and he said, "Well, in Africa, most of the countries are going for market economies and private enterprise. Now we've just got to make sure it works."

There are reasons sometimes why aid doesn't work. I mean, the reason Uganda isn't working today is complicated, but Museveni has gone back to a socialist organization and to supporting the consumer rather than the producer, and on and on--not following what really were the basis of the Marshall Plan. So there are some principles there, I think, that, if we follow them, they will work in some developing countries.

Q: Museveni is still the president, is he?

BEYER: Yes. Nice guy, actually.

Q: The other problem that I have always felt we had was the inability to think in 20- to 30-year terms, and to finance it, which is, because of our budget system--

BEYER: Well, I would disagree there, also. You know, the Marshall Plan was for only four years.

Truman said, "I do not want this program to get involved in the 1952 election. Therefore, I want it to end before 1952." Actually, the program ended in December of 1951.

I think that five years is a reasonable period to assist a country economically. We were only on two-and-a-half years in Uganda when I left, and two-and-a-half more years of that and they were going to be able to be on their own. They weren't going to need any more help from anybody. Maybe something from the World Bank or something, but certainly not from any individual country.

I think our people would put up with a program that's limited--five years and we're out--but enough of a program to make it work. I think that that should be--in most countries that have any wealth at all--enough.

ALLEN C. DAVIS
Ambassador
Uganda (1983-1985)

Ambassador Allen C. Davis was born in Tennessee in 1927. He served in the US Navy from 1945-1953 before receiving his BSFS from Georgetown University in 1956. His career has included positions in Monrovia, Moscow, Algiers, Ouagadougou, Dakar, Kinshasa, and ambassadorships in Guinea and Uganda. Ambassador Davis was interviewed by Peter Moffat on June 26, 1998.

Q: Let's back up just a bit to start Uganda from 1983 when you were assigned as ambassador to Uganda. Can you site this for us in what was going on within Uganda when you arrived?

DAVIS: Uganda had been really dreadfully traumatized and physically very damaged by the Idi Amin years and the fighting that took place when Milton Obote came back from Tanzania with the help of the Tanzanians to be president a second time.

Q: In what year was that?

DAVIS: Wasn't that '79? I think the fighting was in '79. And Gordon Beyer was our first ambassador to him, so I replaced Beyer. Beyer had a pretty good relationship with Obote. He was kind of a champion of Obote and felt that the country was trying, that Obote himself was trying to do a good job and to put down the rebellion as quickly and as humanely as possible, get on with the work of rebuilding the country that had been so damaged and traumatized under Idi Amin. In a way, I guess I went into a situation where Obote felt I should have been at least sympathetic and supportive. It was my impression that the Department did not want that kind of atmosphere in our relationship and was looking to me to kind of hammer Obote to do what needed to be done.

Q: How did he respond to that?

DAVIS: Initially, he was quite friendly and open and I can't remember anything that could be described in any other way in his relationship with us. Over the course of the two years, that changed to a point where it was obvious he considered this kind of pressure on him to be intolerable and to be undermining his regime. As it turns out, that was exactly what it was. It was undermining his regime. He was weakened in the eyes of his population and the eyes of his military and the eyes of his neighbors. The British thought that rather strongly and the British representation there, the high commissioner, obviously felt that we needed to be more sympathetic to him and more helpful to him, which I was trying to do.

Q: With the wisdom of hindsight, do you think there is anything to that?

DAVIS: Obviously there is something to it because the British high commissioner was a very intelligent man. His government had their own analysis of what was going on, and sure, it was unfortunate and very - what shall I say - ugly for a country, ostensibly an ally - someone who wanted to be helpful - to be damaging to stability. I would have to say in retrospect now that while there probably was a truth somewhere in the middle between what we were trying to do and what we were trying to do. If there was only one thing I did in my foreign service career of which I am truly proud, it was hammering Obote to be kinder to the defenseless thousands of people and I am convinced he could have been kinder.

A major theme in almost every conversation I ever had with him would be, "Mr. President, we see what a difficult set of problems you face. We know how difficult it is to rebuild a country after such a regime as that of Idi Amin. But in order for us to help do that, first of all we need to have the facts, we need to have the truth, we need to have a feeling on the part of your government that we are here to help and not to bring you down. When we don't get that it undermines our ability to do it - particularly in the Congress, but with other elements of our government. So, please work with us to get the truth out. Please let us know what we're doing that we ought to stop. Explain it to us why and then tell us what we can do either militarily or in the way of technical assistance that we might offer in advice, but somehow let's establish a relationship where we are working together to do things that I'm convinced we both want."

Upon which, invariably, and very often through a kind of drunken haze, he would absolutely become vehement and say "There is nothing bad going on. There are people who are trying to bring down our government and who do not wish this country well. What you are saying is

false." Eventually, I'm not quite sure how we got him to accept it, but there was a young man who was sent in by the Department of State named Bob. He was a specialist on refugees and displaced people. He was the instrument by which we finally got what we thought were hard facts. And they were almost too difficult even for us to accept - the numbers of people that were dying and wandering around. It was absolutely scandalous.

There were several people in the House and also in the Senate in our legislature that came out to have a look. As you know, the church had a way of promoting some of the citizens there - the Church of England, the Catholic church, the Protestant churches other than the Church of Uganda, which was the local equivalent of the Church of England. So you had these tribal schisms, you had the church schisms, you had the regional and geographic schisms. The country was an absolute "basket of crabs," as the French say. Not easy. Not easy. Obote had a great deal of my sympathy. He really did. And lord knows, I tried to work with him. But eventually I found myself really, in spite of myself, working against him.

Q: How did that happen?

DAVIS: As it became more and more difficult for Obote to control his civilian security folks and his military, there was a rupture between Obote and his commanding general. The general just left Kampala and moved to the north, his home territory and kind of bided his time for the better part of, as best I remember, two or three months. Then I was completing my tour, the household goods were packed in boxes - most of it. My wife and my daughter left Kampala for France, and about three days after they departed my two sons were in the residence some distance from the township when suddenly almost without warning, the general and some forty or fifty trucks - that's all it took, but they were full of military personnel - just moved almost without opposition from the north all the way down through the center of the country into Kampala.

The only words that I think adequately describe it are "all hell broke loose" in Kampala with rocket propelled grenades, all kinds of cannon fire, and small arms fire broke out in town while I was in the office, along with the major part of the staff. We were pinned down in the chancery for the better part of - my memory is beginning to be a little shaky on exactly how long - but I think the better part of three or four days.

And during this time, there was a terribly difficult task of staying in touch with those who were in isolated parts at the time. We didn't know how the invaders from the north - not invaders, but the people who had come into the capital from the north - were going to treat foreigners. As it turned out, they were really not focusing their ire on the foreigners at all. They were focusing on the followers of Obote. Anyway, the embassy had had a very, very tough time with its communications systems which linked us back to the Department. I had been so obstreperous that I had become very irritating to the Department about this. I didn't know what could be done, but assuming surely there was a technology that could keep us in practical communications. So we were using - for the most part - we were relying very heavily on these little moveable sets like the CIA and the military used. When the invasion of the capital took place, telephone lines were just left - the people in the telephone headquarters just apparently fled and left what was plugged in plugged in and what was unplugged, unplugged.

And as it turns out, one phone set in the embassy had been left plugged in at the switchboard and for the better part of three or four days we had an open line, nobody attending to it whatsoever. And everything was happening on this line between the Department. No telephone, no telegraph connection whatsoever. And we couldn't get to the emergency radio that had been at the house of one of the CIA personnel.

The most dramatic thing for me personally was that my two sons - probably late elementary school and high school age, were at home alone. The residence was right beside one of the strongpoints militarily where there was an anti-aircraft gun. This anti- aircraft gun could be lowered and fired at ground targets, so the military were determined to take it. The house was virtually between the anti-aircraft emplacement and the people who were coming up the hill to take it. So there was a great deal of skirmishing around the residence. We did have hand-held walky-talkies.

In a real stroke of luck, we had a British national who was helping us to finish packing the household goods and nailing them into crates. He happened to be at the house working when the strike hit the capital, so he was there with the kids. What they did was barricade all the doors and windows and then with the thought they were going to get hit by heavy artillery shells, they went into the corridors and took heavy mattresses into the corridors. There were bedrooms on both sides of the corridors so you had a little bit of a cushion, and that's where they spent the entire time without electricity. This all came to a kind of traumatic climax when the British fellow got on the hand-held voice set and said, "The forces are bringing up a machine gun - they are setting up a machine gun in front of the house, they are training it on the house and they are asking us to take down the flag. They have asked permission to come and examine what is in the crates. These were the crates of household effects. We told them, "No, this is American territory, and it would not be appropriate. They simply must not come in." And so then there were some North Korean military assistance people there and they seemed to be involved in this little…I don't know what to call it. It was a feint or whether they really meant to fire on the house. He said "And they are now getting down on their stomachs and they are aiming at the house. What do we do?" I said "Yesterday when I met with the colonel who has come in with the forces from the north, I asked him for a telephone number to reach him in case we had this kind of emergency. I will try to reach him."

I hung up and called. Sure enough, I got through to him. I said "There's something dreadful happening at the residence of the American ambassador. There are people in the house, and it looks like there's going to be a firefight either between these people who are setting up a gun emplacement in front of it and the anti-aircraft emplacement. Could you please do something about it?" He said "I'll try." About fifteen minutes later, the British man called back and said "They are picking up the machine gun and they are going back down the hill." It was highly personal, but it also underscored the good luck, I guess, that I had had - either the presence of mind or the good luck the day before to say "But tell me, Colonel, what do we do if an American is about to be set upon and hurt physically or not just injured but killed?" And he had given me his private number. I can't remember - their little strongpoint where we visited them soon after they got to the capital, put out feelers, got back information that they would be glad to receive me. I think they were headquartered in the office of the *gendarmerie.* That was their command post.

Q: I hope your sons were not totally traumatized by that!

DAVIS: They still talk about it with a great deal of pride. They did see people receiving bullets and falling and bleeding. That part of it was pretty shocking to them. But as best I can make out, it also provided wonderful subjects for stories when they got back to their schools. And who knows what all the effects might have been. I think for one thing they had kind of glorified that kind of uprising in their own minds and when they got to see what it was really like with the confusion and the machine-gunning of automobiles, and the ugliness of it, it made quite an impression.

Q: This must have delayed your departure a bit.

DAVIS: It delayed the departure for not very long. I was asked to go to New York and work at the UN with General Walters and his people. Although I asked Jim Bishop if I could stay a little bit longer until things calmed down, he said no, come on out. So maybe my kids were not the traumatized one. Maybe I was.

IRVIN D. COKER
Mission Director, USAID
Kampala (1983-1986)

Irvin D. Coker was born in Petersburg, Virginia in 1935. He graduated from Howard University and served in the U.S. Military in South Korea. His postings abroad included Ghana, Uganda, and Nigeria. Mr. Coker was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1993.

Q: What was the situation there?

COKER: Just before that point, let me go back for just a moment. I had chosen to go to Uganda, while I was studying at Johns Hopkins. Meanwhile, in the African Bureau of AID they had decided to restructure assignments to Uganda. AID had decided to put in two, additional Deputy Assistant Administrator positions at the geographic bureau level. They called me and asked if I would like to take one of these two, new positions as Deputy Assistant Administrator for a geographic area.

I saw that as less of a challenge than going back overseas again. Having been in Ghana and been bitten by the real world of development, I was anxious to go on to Uganda. Since I had been given the opportunity to choose, I chose Uganda and accepted assignment there in June, 1983. I arrived in Uganda at a time when they had theoretically lifted the curfew but, in fact, it was still being applied. At the same time, there was a considerable amount of gunfire being exchanged during the night. That was not easy to get used to. I found myself in an environment where I heard gunfire all during the night.

Q: Who was in the Ugandan Government at that time?

COKER: Milton Obote was the President of Uganda at the time. This was his second term in office. He also led the UNLA, the Ugandan National Liberation Army, a very undisciplined force. However, it provided him with the support that he needed. You may recall that President Obote came from the eastern part of Uganda. Most of his fighting men were Ocholis from the northern part of the country. There are the Gulu Ocholis and Kitkum Ocholis. The highest ranking general among the Ocholis was General Tito Okello, who was a Gulu Ocholi. The bulk of the officers and some of the fighting men came from the eastern part of Uganda. At the same time Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army were fighting against Obote's government from the Lewelt Triangle, which is North of Kampala. The reality was that the Ugandan Army, which was highly undisciplined and generally unpaid and unfed, was creating a lot of problems in the country for President Obote. This situation also served to disrupt the national economy, in many ways. This was a negative element working against attracting foreign investors into Uganda.

I arrived in Uganda in June, 1983. Ambassador Allen Davis, the new Ambassador, had arrived in Uganda a month before I did. John Bennett arrived as the new DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] at about the same time. Craig Buck was the senior AID official at the time. Craig was there to provide me with advice and a transition as I became used to the country before his departure to go to another post. He had started a very dynamic program. We had ACDI (Agricultural Cooperative Development, International), a contract team consisting of six people, dealing with the food production support project. The ACDI was not only involved in working with the unions but with the Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing. They were trying to redevelop the agriculture research farms, working to change the cooperative structure. They moved the cooperatives from central government control toward private enterprise.

We also had a project that involved working with Makerere University to rehabilitate its School of Agriculture and its two research farms. We had a very large participant program tied in to both of these rehabilitation projects. We also had a separate program which was developed in Washington to generate training for participants in the various priority sectors which the Ugandan Government had decided on.

So we set out to develop a decent, development portfolio, initially dealing with the rehabilitation of private enterprise. The largest program called for providing about $32 million in loans.

Q: What were the loans used for?

COKER: The program was set up so that we would be able to use financial institutions, such as the local banks, to administer credit extended under those loans for which application had been made in the agribusiness and processing area. The loans also went to businesses which had some relationship to the agricultural economy. We tried to get those businesses off the ground. They could apply to the local banks for loans for the rehabilitation of agriculture. The specific purpose of these loans was to bring in commodities and equipment to assist them in getting these projects under way.

We also had designed and obtained approval for a cooperative rehabilitation project geared toward piggybacking what the food production project had been doing. Through this project we hoped to reach the different components of the cooperative movement, specifically recognizing the roles that they could play in the overall economy of Uganda. This was an uphill battle. It was going to be taken on after the food production support project had ended. We had a separate contract under which we cooperated with the University of Minnesota and Ohio State University.

We had tied into this a program to fund the reorganization of productive enterprises as a means of getting small and medium sized enterprises rehabilitated. Some of this involved money which we had intended to use to help some of the Asian-owned businesses which had been medium to large in size. We wanted to get those businesses started again.

Q: Was the Ugandan Government receptive to that?

COKER: By that time some Asians, including Asian businessmen, had returned to Uganda, like the Madvani family. They had large tea estates. The Obote Government supported the reactivation of some of these industries.

Q: How did you find trying to implement these projects in the environment of civil unrest in Uganda at that time?

COKER: We found that we could work outside of those geographic areas in which military operations were going on. When I arrived in Uganda and for the first two years, military operations were confined to the Nawira Triangle. There were three districts in that area North of Kampala, in which the whole military campaign was taking place. There were constant clashes between the UNLA [Uganda National Liberation Army] and the NRA [National Resistance Army]. We concentrated our efforts on the western, eastern, and extreme northern parts of the country. The last area of conflict was in the northwestern part of Uganda, in the Arua area, where Idi Amin [former dictator of Uganda] came from. We had a humanitarian assistance program going on there, involving the rehabilitation of agricultural production. We were working to encourage the refugees who had left Uganda and gone into eastern Zaire to come back home. That involved phasing out humanitarian assistance and beginning a program of development assistance in that area.

In the central and western part of Uganda there was little interruption to our programs. The only problems that we had were with a number of security checkpoints when we were traveling on the road to Masaka, on down to Kabale, and out to the Ruwenzori area. We had components of our operating projects in each one of those areas. They were basically being implemented in various parts of Uganda, so we didn't have any real problem in implementing them.

Likewise, in the eastern part of the country we had all of the projects related to agribusinesses. We had no problem working there, including rehabilitating the Serere Research Station, which was located in eastern Uganda. There were many cooperatives located in that area. On the whole, we found little disruption in the projects which we had.

We had a problem in getting to the small scale enterprises which we were trying to get started in the extreme northern part of Uganda, up around Gulu. However, we were able to travel directly from Kampala, the national capital, to Gulu on one of the northern routes, such as the Bombo Road. You could make this trip in two and one-half to three hours, at the most. That was the area where the insurrection or the fighting was taking place. We had to go to the extreme eastern part of the country, head toward the border with Kenya, and then go up North to Lira, and West to Gulu. This involved a kind of "horse shoe" route. This involved a trip of a day and a half going and a day and a half coming back. If you could have gone directly, you could have made the trip in three hours. I took the short route from Kampala to Gulu a couple of times, when I thought that the situation had calmed down. The driver and I would get together and discuss the route to take. When we took the Bombo Road, we found, when we returned, that we would be called in by the Ugandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and told that we had violated their wishes again and had put our lives in jeopardy by going up the Bombo Road. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs told us that the UNLA could have mistaken us for members of the NRA. The NRA could have mistaken us for being part of the UNLA.

We knew that the NRA never went after anyone other than the Ugandan military. They were considered to be very considerate of the native population and non-military targets. There had been no instances when the NRA attacked targets other than the Ugandan Army. So we were basically concerned about the UNLA. They were considered trigger happy people.

Q: Was there any evidence of the old projects which had existed in prior times, or were we starting everything from scratch, as it were?

COKER: There were no projects left over from prior times, except for projects at Makerere University, where we had been very instrumental in establishing the research farm for the School of Agriculture at Makerere University. On the research farm there were still houses that we had built for the professors who were assigned there. There were also classroom facilities for the students, who were assigned to the research farm for a year of academic training. Some of the equipment still on the farm went back to the 1970s and still earlier. In some of the buildings there were signs of what AID had done.

Q: What about work with livestock or the Toro Toro Girls' School. Do you remember seeing any buildings which went back to former times?

COKER: Shortly after I arrived in Uganda, I encountered one of my first headaches, the Toro Toro Girls' School. When I called at the Ministry of Finance and the ad hoc Minister of Finance, Kamuntu, one of the very first things that he brought to my attention was the dilapidated condition of the Girls' School. He felt that we should be responsible for restoring it...

Q: We had originally built the school.

COKER: Yes, we originally built it. It was built near a school that had been built by the Russians. Everything was crumbling at the school that we were associated with, including the ceilings. The school that the Russians had built was basically still intact. It was being used very much as a model, so we were under a lot of pressure to rehabilitate the Girls' School.

The Minister of Finance also used the same occasion of my call on him to talk about the Institute for Public Administration [IPA], which the U.S. Government, through AID, had been responsible for building.

I found myself more sympathetic toward rehabilitating the IPA than I felt for the Girls' School. When I looked into the background of the Girls' School and how that project was funded, I discovered that the U.S. Government made the cash available to the Government of Uganda for building the Girls' School. The Government of Uganda was responsible for contracting for building that school and supervising its construction. I had little sympathy with the Ugandan Government over the condition of the Girls' School because the government, through its own contracting arrangements and its supervision, allowed the builder, whom the government selected, to build an inferior structure for the Girls' School. Now, when the Ugandan Government tried to claim that we were the party responsible for the condition of the school because we had made the money available for its construction, in my view that wasn't proper. Since we gave the Ugandan Government money and they took full responsibility to proceed with the construction of the school, why should its current condition be the responsibility of the U.S. Government, simply because we were the source of the funds? In other words, why should we be responsible for the maintenance and rehabilitation of the Girls' School?

I never found ways of assisting with any aspect of the rehabilitation of the Girls' School. We made funds available to the Ambassador, because of his desire to be involved...

Q: Was this money from the Self Help Fund?

COKER: Yes. On two occasions, while I was in Uganda, the Ambassador approved proposals from the Girls' School and allocated $25,000 each time for rehabilitation work at the school. So the U.S. Government was involved in some aspects of the rehabilitation of the Girls' School.

Q: What about the Institute of Public Administration?

COKER: When I researched the background of the construction of the Institute of Public Administration, I found that we had employed U.S. contractors, not only in the design of the school but also in its actual construction. When I looked into the various problems that had occurred at the school, one of the things that I looked into was the sewage backup that was occurring and therefore was making it difficult to use the kitchen and the toilet facilities. As workers dug up the sewage system, we discovered that the contractor, I'm fairly sure without the knowledge of the AID Mission, had used corrugated, and not cast iron, sewage pipes. Most new buildings settle to some extent. The corrugated pipes used in the sewage system did not work out well, and the sewage problem became acute.

Another area where, I think, major mistakes were made involved the number of electrical appliances we had put into the Girls' School. These appliances were all made for U.S. wattage. However, in Uganda everything was tied to European electrical standards. The electrical equipment which we had provided did not last very long. This included not only the kitchen facilities but also the wiring for the lights and the laundry facilities. To me that was a big mistake

which related to our failure to supervise and monitor expenditures for the Institute of Public Administration.

In the case of the electrical lighting system, more than two-thirds of the wiring was unusable. The electric light bulbs in the fixtures had worn out. People who did not know what the problem was would tamper with the wiring, in an attempt to fix those circuits. They found that, once again, the lighting system was not suited to Ugandan voltage and wattage. The equipment installed met U.S. standards. There was also an inadequate supply of electric light bulbs in the inventory of equipment on hand. This was a serious problem.

So I felt that, with the students and the school being denied access to a number of classrooms, that was detrimental to the overall program. Another aspect of the problem which, I felt, was not our responsibility was that, in the main classroom building, the entire roof was leaking. I made it quite clear that, since the Institute of Public Administration (that is, the IPA) had an annual budget which was part of the Ugandan budget, the maintenance and repair of the roof was not our responsibility. Since a number of Ugandan roofing companies had done the basic construction of the roofs, there was no reason why the IPA should have allowed the roof to fall into such a state of disrepair. They could very easily have used some of the money received annually from the Ugandan Government to contract with a Ugandan roofer and have dealt with the leaks. The leaks in the roof, in turn, tended to ruin much of the electric lighting system.

I wrote up a proposal to do some things that we felt we should not be expected to do. I sent this proposal to AID Washington for approval. This proposal was initially approved. However, at the time it was approved the State Department issued a human rights report which cited gross, human rights violations in Uganda. When that human rights report was released, it had an immediate, negative effect on the proposed assistance to the IPA. Under the legislation covering foreign assistance, if there is evidence of gross human rights violations, the assistance going to that country had to be restricted to the most needy elements of the population. New funding could not be provided to any program in which the direct beneficiaries were not among the most needy. Since money going to the IPA was not going to the most needy, money for doing anything for the Institute in fiscal year 1984 was ultimately denied. By fiscal year 1985 this money had already been shifted to another, required area, not in Uganda but outside Uganda.

Also, by the time we got around to fiscal year 1985, the fighting taking place in Uganda between Museveni's NRA and Obote's UNLA became intense, to the point where we didn't know, day by day, what the situation was going to be. We didn't know whether we were going to be able to deliver any foreign assistance in Uganda. In April, 1985, the UNLA concluded that a campaign against the NRA in the Luwero Triangle, which had started at the very top of the northern portion of this triangle, had since spread out across all three of the districts in the triangle. The UNLA campaign was to spread out into a wedge to squeeze the NRA. An effort was being made to see whether the NRA could be wiped out. The NRA broke through the western line and made its way through the western flanks of UNLA to the Rwenzori Mountains. From these mountains and with the advantage of fighting from the high hills the NRA was able to do a great deal of damage to the UNLA. Many UNLA soldiers were killed.

Fighting became intense, to the point where the senior Acholi officer, General Tito Okello, approached President Obote to ask whether, as Ugandans, they ought to enter into negotiations with Museveni to find out whether they could bring the fighting to an end. That proposal prompted President Obote's government and the majority of officers in it, who happened to be from the Langui area of eastern Uganda, to brand Okello and the Acholi's as traitors. That resulted in fighting taking place in Kampala between the Acholi and the Langui components of the UNLA.

So there we were, in the months of May, June, and July, 1985, in the midst of fighting in Kampala. During that period we basically could not do anything. We heard bombs going off at night, with either the Langui-led or the Acholi-led military factions blowing up the homes of the various officers on each side. There were pitched battles going on, day and night.

Q: Were you in danger?

COKER: At the time, whether we were in our houses or in our offices, we didn't feel that we were in danger. However, when we were moving through Kampala to the various offices, we felt some danger. Several of our vehicles were caught in cross fires and shot up, as the drivers did not know that they were in dangerous areas.

This fighting in Kampala continued until the Acholi side, under Okello, decided that President Obote's government was being unreasonable. They ordered a withdrawal of the Acholi faction of the Army to the North of Kampala (Gulu). However, prior to that, we had seen clear signs that the Acholi faction was being defeated. Traditionally, when they moved the bodies of dead soldiers who had been killed in action, they did so at night, when most people were asleep. However, there were so many dead that they were actually moving truckloads of bodies, covered with the limbs of trees, through the city, during the day. The stench of decomposing bodies of these dead soldiers was quite noticeable. When the people saw that this kind of thing was happening, it was quite upsetting to them. The Acholi troops were taking their dead comrades to a burial ground in the eastern and northern parts of Uganda.

Because the casualties among the UNLA soldiers were so substantial, General Okello had decided that he had to try to bring the fighting to an end. This was contrary to what President Obote and the Langui faction were prepared to accept. With that kind of fighting taking place within Kampala, General Okello decided to withdraw to the North (Gulu) during the third week of July, 1985.

Then the situation began to quiet down for a day or two. We had been hearing that the Acholi troops were being re-grouped to the North, from which position they would resume their attacks on Kampala. However, we had no verifiable evidence that this had occurred or was about to happen.

So on Saturday morning during the last week of July, 1985, and since I was due to go on home leave on the following Wednesday, my staff was in the office, working with me. At about 10:00 AM that morning we heard very heavy gunfire. That was the beginning of the resumption of the Acholi attack on Kampala. Acholi troops had come down the Bombo Road from Gulu and were

attacking Kampala and the Langui faction of the UNLA. By 12:30 PM Saturday July 27th, the Acholi troops had taken Kampala and had overthrown President Obote.

Then General Okello went on the radio to make an announcement of this. He called for a celebration of his victory at 1:30 PM in the central park. The Acholi faction of the UNLA began to loot stores and homes throughout Kampala. Meanwhile, my office staff and I were hunkered down in the AID offices. So we stayed in the AID offices from Saturday morning until Monday afternoon at 4:00 PM, before we could get out. In the interim we were communicating with the Embassy and also with USIS [United States Information Service] via radio. There were no Peace Corps volunteers there at the time.

Q: You weren't in the Embassy.

COKER: No, we had a separate AID office building on one side of Kampala, over in what was called the Nakasero area. The Embassy was downtown, in the rear of the British High Commission office. We were in communication with the Embassy. We were also told that the Embassy was in telephonic communication with the Department of State in Washington.

Between 1:30 and 2:00 PM on that Saturday the connection with Washington was broken. Somehow, the Embassy lost that connection. I think that a transformer was blown up, stopping all of the electricity going to the Embassy. Then the State Department Operations Center was able to get our telephone number, and they called us up.

Q: Where was this Operations Center?

COKER: In Washington in the State Department. They kept a telephone line open to us from about 2:00 PM on Saturday until late in the afternoon of the following Monday. Subsequently, when I met someone who had worked in the Operations Center, dealing with the situation in Kampala, he mentioned, when he found out that I was in Kampala at the time, that they wondered whether we were aware of the size of the telephone bill that had been run up from keeping that line open. I was told that the bill was $52,000! I had not known that, but at least the State Department had communications with Kampala, by using the AID line. Three of us manned that line, 24 hours a day during this period, rotating between myself; Gary Mansavage, my deputy; and Floyd Spears, the Executive Officer of the AID Mission.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Embassy at all during this period?

COKER: We had radio contact with the Embassy. We used a two-way radio to communicate with the Embassy and with the USIS office. We notified the Operations Center of what we had been able to confirm regarding the condition of official Americans and anyone else associated with the Embassy, such as Third Country Nationals. We had Third Country Nationals from the U. K. [United Kingdom] working with us.

During this period from Saturday afternoon to Monday afternoon we had to confirm, twice a day, the whereabouts of our people. The State Department was contacting the next of kin of our people and giving them the condition of their loved ones in Uganda. The Operations Center used

the telephone numbers of our next of kin, using information in the files in Washington. So we were able to keep next of kin in the U.S. informed regarding people on whom we could obtain information in Kampala.

On Monday a decision was reached by the American Embassy and the British High Commission that General Okello and his faction of the Army had taken control of the country. This faction was the element committing most of the human rights violations. We concluded that there probably would be no way by which we could work with them.

It was at that point that the Embassy approached the State Department in Washington about the need to have the AID component of the Mission greatly reduced in size, at least for the time being. As I said before, I was due to leave Kampala on home leave. We were reaching the close out point on the Food Production Support Project. We also had people working on the manpower development project, in cooperation with the Makerere University Research Station. In view of the situation, it was decided that virtually all of the AID personnel in Kampala should be evacuated to Nairobi, [Kenya], at the first opportunity, keeping only a skeleton crew at the AID office in Kampala.

So on the Monday after the seizure of power by General Okello and his faction, the British High Commissioner and the American Ambassador called on Okello and officially notified him that they would begin an orderly withdrawal of their personnel and families from Kampala, to begin on Wednesday morning, July 31, 1985. On Monday, July 29, when the situation began to quiet down, the armored vehicle that had been assigned to me was parked in the garage at my house. The Third Country National who had been assigned to me, Tony Cokane from the United Kingdom, had been in Uganda since 1979. He was a very adventurous type of fellow. When the fighting began in Uganda to overthrow Amin, he was touring in East Africa. He decided to go to Uganda, where he stayed. He was a very handy type of person. He was working at the AID Mission.

Tony Cokane volunteered to take my car, which had diplomatic license plates on it, and drive to my house to pick up the armored vehicle parked there in the garage. This vehicle could hold about 12 people at a time.

Q: It must have been a large vehicle to be able to carry 12 people.

COKER: Yes. It carried grenade launchers in front and rear. Under each one of the left and right front and rear fenders, it had two grenade launchers.

Q: This was the AID Mission Director's vehicle?

COKER: Yes.

Q: Incredible!

COKER: We called it the "Bat Mobile."

Q: I never heard of that.

COKER: AID had outfitted this vehicle with armored protection at a cost of more than $120,000! When I arrived in Uganda in June, 1983, it was the first thing that I received. It was transported in a box and carried on a large truck bed. This vehicle was driven off the truck bed and put in my garage.

Q: Terrible!

COKER: When I saw it, I said to myself: "What in the world have I gotten myself into?" However, the "Bat Mobile" was ultimately very useful. Tony Cokane went to my house and picked up this vehicle from my garage and brought it back to the AID Mission office. Verdell, my wife, and I got into the vehicle. We went to check on some of the AID staff that was still in country.

Fortunately for us, most of our staff had no dependents. Since school was out, most of our dependents were on leave in the U.S. We only had one family there, with two dependent children. They happened to be the two, dependent daughters of my personal secretary, an American. One of the girls was going to school in Kampala and one was in school in Kenya. The two girls were in Kampala at this time, waiting for their mother to go on leave. I also had a limited number of contract personnel with me.

I checked on these people and got back to the office. At that point we received the final orders from the Ambassador on the timing of the evacuation. So, starting on Wednesday morning, July 31, 1985, we began the evacuation process, with the British High Commission staff leaving in 15 vehicle convoys, starting at 7:00 AM. There was a very large number of British citizens in Uganda at the time. The Americans began to leave at 7:30 AM. We alternated, with a British convoy leaving on the hour and another convoy leaving on the half hour.

Q: So you wouldn't clog up the roads?

COKER: So we wouldn't clog up the roads. Instead of 15 vehicles at a time, I took out the whole AID contingent at once. I took 18 vehicles from the Embassy, USIS, and AID. The Ugandan military had cleared the road all the way to the Kenyan border for the British, American, and other convoys. They understood that the convoys were not to be tampered with in any way.

Q: So your effects were left behind.

COKER: Yes. We could only bring one, regular size suitcase. No animals. We left our pet dog there in the hands of Floyd Spears, the Executive Officer of the AID Mission.

In the lead vehicle in the American convoy we had two of the Political Officers from the Embassy. Without the knowledge of the UNLA troops which had cleared the road for us, the Political Officers had Uzi's [Israeli made sub machine guns] in bags, which provided us with at least limited protection. They were intended for use in case of an emergency of some kind.

When we got to the Kenyan border, we discovered that the UNLA commander at the border had not been given the word about the convoy's departure to Kenya.

Q: The Kenyan or the Ugandan commander?

COKER: The Ugandan. The Kenyans were aware of the plan to move us across the border into Kenya, because the Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, had been alerted by two-way radio that we were leaving Kampala for the Ugandan border with Kenya. So the Embassy in Kenya and the AID office in Nairobi had dispatched several vehicles to the Kenyan border to meet us, because they knew that we were packed in our vehicles like sardines. With the vehicles from Embassy Nairobi and the AID office in Kenya, we would be able to spread out once we got to the border.

I took three of the Ambassador's children out with me. The Ambassador's wife was already out of Uganda. I also had Embassy and USIS personnel with me. When we got to the border between Uganda and Kenya, because the Ugandan border guard was not informed that the withdrawal of our people had been ordered by the U.S. Government and authorized by General Okello, he decided not to allow us to take any of our vehicles across the border. However, he said that he knew enough about international conventions to know that he should not interfere with the rights of the people involved to go across the border into Kenya. So he allowed us to drive our vehicles, one by one, up to the border between Uganda and Kenya, allow the people to get out of the vehicle, with their possessions, and walk across the border. However, the vehicles had to go back and be parked in the compound behind the police station at Busia on the Ugandan side of the border.

So I kept one driver, including myself, for each of the 18 cars in our convoy. We parked our vehicles in the compound behind the police station at Busia. Since none of our vehicles was being allowed to cross the border, that meant that all of the vehicles from Kampala that had started moving to the border with Kenya since 7:00 AM that morning were blocked at the border and parked on the grounds of the Uganda Police.

Q: Including the British High Commission vehicles, too?

COKER: Yes. So these vehicles were all in the police station compound. We formed a big, wagon train of cars in a circle. We used that as a means of providing them with protection. So there we were, overnight, with all of the dependents gone, except those who were staying with the cars. We realized that we would need to make arrangements for meals, and so forth. So we scurried around and collected as much as we could find in the way of Ugandan currency. We went into Busia and bought soft drinks and beer. We paid Ugandans to purchase and slaughter goats. The Ugandans were able to bring in drums and charcoal, lit fires, and started cooking the goats. So there we were, around the bonfires eating and drinking brew.

Q: And you didn't want to leave your cars?

COKER: No, we didn't want to leave the cars. If we had done this, we figured that we would never see them again. So we stayed there for a time.

When I discovered that we had this hangup at the Ugandan-Kenyan border, I also discovered that the Italian Embassy had a vehicle there with a two-way radio on it that could reach Kampala. I called Kampala and told them what our situation was. The Italians allowed me to talk to the American Ambassador in Kampala, using their radio. I said that it was important for the American Ambassador and the British High Commissioner, who had worked out the convoy arrangement with General Okello, to know that the Ugandan border commander had not received instructions, and none of the vehicles was being allowed to cross the border. We didn't get any reply that evening, but by 9:00 AM on the following day [August 1, 1985] the Ugandan border commander received the necessary authorization and allowed us to start taking our cars across the border with Kenya. During the previous night we had tried to keep the bonfires going, because Busia is at a pretty high altitude, and it was pretty cold. In the car I had been driving myself, I got a large, American flag, draped myself in it like a blanket to stay warm. No one could mistake the flag for what it was.

Then, as I say, around 9:00 AM on August 1, 1985, we received permission to cross the border into Kenya. We discovered that one of the cars that we had in our 18-car convoy was a new, BMW which belonged to an American who was newly arrived in the Embassy in Kampala. She had brought this vehicle in from Paris, where she had been previously posted. It had not yet been properly registered in Uganda. I decided to talk to the Ugandan border commander. I told him that I would like to sign an "IOU" for this vehicle. They allowed me to do so, and I took the vehicle over to the Kenyan side of the border. When I got to the Kenyan side of the border, I told the Kenyan officials that I didn't have the proper registration papers for the vehicle. I said that I would like to sign an "IOU" for it. However, the Kenyan authorities would not accept an "IOU," so they made me park the vehicle in the compound behind the Kenyan police station, with the understanding that if it wasn't cleared in 30 days' time, the Kenyan border police would sell it.

So, in any case, we made our way down to Nairobi. Meantime, the dependents who had crossed the border on July 31 had been taken to Nairobi by vehicles and one aircraft. The aircraft had been provided by the American Ambassador in Nairobi. It wasn't a very large aircraft, but it was big enough to take the two children of the American Ambassador to Uganda, plus my secretary and her two daughters. So they went to Nairobi. However, all of the others were driven in vehicles to Nairobi. On the next morning some of us who were still at the border decided that they were too tired to travel to Nairobi. They stopped at a nice hotel in Kakamega, [Kenya]. The rest of us continued on to Nairobi.

We got to Nairobi and started arranging for the processing of our people, with the assistance of the AID office and the American Embassy in Nairobi. Some of our people were to stay in Nairobi, some were to go on to Ethiopia to help out at the AID Mission in Ethiopia during the drought that was taking place. Those of us, like myself, who were going on home leave, were processed to return to Washington. We stayed in Nairobi until we arranged to have everybody taken care of.

Q: So all of the AID Mission people and the contractors in Kampala had left Uganda?

COKER: Everyone had left except my deputy, Gary Mansavage, a bachelor. Floyd Spears was the Executive Officer and also a bachelor. They were the only two who stayed on in Kampala,

along with the Foreign Service National staff. We also had Tony Cokane, a Third Country National from the U. K., who stayed in Kampala. Those were the three, non-Ugandans who stayed in the AID Mission. The rest of us were evacuated.

Q: The Ambassador stayed at the Embassy in Kampala.

COKER: The Ambassador stayed in Kampala, along with a Political Officer; the Security Officer; and the USIS Director, who wanted to stay. They were the only ones who stayed from the Embassy staff. So those of us who were evacuated to Nairobi came back to Washington, after we had made the necessary arrangements in Kenya. I began my home leave, but weekly, and sometimes daily, I kept in touch with the situation in Uganda. Then a decision was made to start negotiations between the NRA; the NRM, the National Resistance Movement portion of the NRA; and Okello's group. They started negotiations in Kenya to try to bring some peace to Uganda. I recall that around December 17, 1985, they signed a peace agreement that was supposed to bring peace to Uganda.

By that time a new American Ambassador, Robert Houdek had gone out to Kampala to replace Ambassador Davis. The Department of State had also arranged for a detachment of six or seven Marines to be sent to Kampala to be posted at the Embassy. Prior to that, we didn't have any Marine guards at the Embassy.

So after the various Ugandan factions had signed the peace agreement, I was called over the Christmas holidays and told that I should get ready to go back to Uganda to prepare for reopening the AID program. So on January 11, 1986, my wife Verdell and I flew off to Nairobi, where I rented an apartment for her. Then, on January 15, 1986, I flew back to Kampala to begin work on reopening the AID Mission.

When I arrived back in Kampala, I didn't think that anything was unusual. Things seemed normal. There were Ugandan military personnel everywhere in Kampala. They were at the airport, and there were several road blocks on the road from the airport to Kampala. In Kampala there were road blocks everywhere. I also noticed that there still was a lot of shooting going on.

On January 16, 1986, while I was at the AID office, I could hear artillery pieces going off in the distance. I called the Ambassador and asked him what was going on and whether he could hear the artillery pieces. He said: "Oh, yes, I hear them. That's the NRA army." He said that, in view of the number of killings still going on in Uganda under the auspices of the Acholi faction of the UNLA, the Ugandan Government had allowed many of the former soldiers of Idi Amin, who were in the southern Sudan, to come back to Kampala. That group was also very dangerous. They were also involved in the commission of atrocities. Museveni had also decided that, in view of the killings that were going on, he didn't feel compelled to abide by the agreement which had been signed.

So, with all of the uproar going on in Kampala between the Langui faction of the UNLA and the Acholi faction, and the overthrow of President Obote, and while they were trying to get themselves organized in Kampala, Museveni came out of the Rwenzori area and started marching eastwards. As he marched eastwards, his army began to grow with the addition of a lot

of the people who had been subjected to the abuses by the UNLA. Also, many of them were Tutsi people who had been driven out of either Burundi or Ruanda and had joined this army. In fact, many of them had been fighting at the side of Museveni ever since 1981.

They finally reached Masaka, which is only about 45 miles from Kampala. The best road that you could find in Uganda was the road between Masaka and Kampala. They started to march on Kampala. The UNLA was trying to block them, and you could hear the artillery pieces going off. That went on from the Wednesday, when I arrived back in Kampala [January 15, 1986], through that weekend. Then, on the following Wednesday, January 22, 1986, the sound of the artillery was much louder. There were large contingents of NRA troops passing through Kampala, heading toward the West to fight the UNLA troops. This created a tremendous amount of disruption in Kampala.

I happened to be attending a meeting at the Central Bank at the time. I was negotiating with bank officials on conditions to get the Rehabilitation of Productive Enterprises Project under way. I came out of the bank at 12:00 Noon, and people were scurrying everywhere. Cars were going the wrong way up one-way streets. Everybody was just running for cover.

I returned to the AID office and decided that I would send everybody home. That was on January 22, 1986, at about 1:00 PM. We sent home those whom we were able to pass through the combat lines and to their homes. We decided that those people whom we couldn't send home that they would have to remain in the AID offices until we could get some kind of police escort. So I took some of the staff home with me to my residence. I left the others in the AID offices, with the doors locked. I was able to talk with the Embassy Political Officer and the Security Officer. They were able to get some support from the Ugandan police. So on the next morning, January 23, 1986, we went to the AID compound and were able to get everybody out and got them escorted to their homes. I told them to remain there until the situation settled down. I didn't know what was going to happen. I also got the people at my house escorted to their homes. That left me alone at my house, along with my household staff.

On the morning of January 24, 1986, a Friday, none of us went to the AID offices. Most of the American staff was living in the Kololo Hill area. Kololo Hill is one of the highest points in Kampala proper. The last of the gun emplacements for the UNLA were located there. That was their last, defensive position. By now the Ambassador was living and working out of the Embassy. along with a handful of staff. At about 6:20 AM on that day a large artillery piece went off. I looked at my watch and wondered what this meant. The gun kept firing. Every minute a big gun went off.

I turned on the radio and listened, only to discover that the NRA had broken through the defense perimeter of Kampala itself. NRA soldiers were moving across the campus of Makerere University, coming into different sections of the city from the West. The artillery pieces we could hear were firing at what was called "point blank range," by "bore holing" the target. That is, the gunners lowered the guns level, looked through the bore of the gun, and tried to pinpoint the target. Then they fired straight at the target and into the city.

That went on from Friday morning, January 24, 1986, at 6:20 AM, throughout the whole day. On Friday night and Saturday morning the guns were still firing. Meanwhile, we were all hunkered down to protect ourselves. We kept in touch by radio, not knowing what was going to happen. Some of the American houses were being hit by mortar fire. UNLA troops, many of whom had infiltrated Kampala before this battle began, had AK-47's [Soviet made automatic rifles] and mortars. As NRA troops broke through the outer perimeters, they infiltrated Kampala. They began fighting for each, high level position. Those fighting for Kololo Hill had set up their artillery pieces on the golf course, which is below the hill. They were firing mortar rounds. Admittedly, most of those mortar rounds were going over the target, although some of them were falling short of the target. Then the foundation of the home of the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] was hit, near the living room. The roof of the home of the Political Officer was hit. I told the Ambassador on the phone that some of us might be killed, if NRA forces continued to try to take Kololo Hill, using mortar weapons like this. Those mortar rounds were not hitting the target. The Embassy in Nairobi had good contacts with the NRM faction in Kenya, which was the political movement side of Museveni's Government. The Embassy explained to them what was happening and that there was a good possibility that, since a number of diplomats lived on Kololo Hill, some of them would be killed. Within an hour's time, the mortar firing on Kololo Hill stopped.

Q: It worked!

COKER: They stopped firing mortar rounds and began to use only small arms, such as AK-47 automatic rifles, in the fighting for that hill. That's what saved our people.

Q: But the UNLA forces were still on the hill.

COKER: The UNLA forces were still firing artillery pieces down the hill, they were still firing their Quad-50 machine guns, and they were firing shoulder-held rocket grenade launchers. They had been doing this for some time. There were the so-called NRA "child soldiers" and women fighting for Kololo Hill. We saw women passing by, loaded down with bandoliers of ammunition and AK-47 automatic rifles.

Let me back up a little and mention something that slipped my mind pertaining to this campaign for Kampala.

July 1985 I mentioned the coup d'etat by Okello on Saturday, July 27, 1985. We were caught in the AID compound from that Saturday morning until 4:00 PM on Monday, July 29, 1985.

When I arrived in Kampala in 1983, one of the things that I did was to stock up on U.S. military C-rations. We not only had C-rations stocked in our houses but also in the AID Compound. We had the largest amount of C-rations allocated to the AID Compound, where most of the staff was located during most of the day. When I arrived in Kampala, the first thing mentioned in the orientation program at the Embassy was that the Security Officer asked me if I had a previous, military background. If you had a previous, military background, you had a choice of weapons that you could select. They had Uzi automatic rifles, 12 gauge shotguns, and .357 Magnum pistols. They had gas masks and bulletproof vests. So I chose a 12 gauge shotgun and a .357

Magnum, along with gas masks for both my wife Verdell and me, along with the bulletproof vests. Our daughter, Shyrl, was not with us. There were just my wife and I in Kampala.

Now return to January 1986 So when the fighting began in Kampala in 1986, after I had gone back to Uganda, following home leave, I still had those guns and that equipment in my possession. When the fighting began in our area on January 24, 1986, I had access to a two-way radio to keep in contact with the Embassy and other, official Americans. I had my own binoculars and other such items.

There was a hill to the West of Kololo Hill. I kept my binoculars trained on that hill, not knowing whether or not the NRA would get up on that hill and start shooting across at Kololo Hill. If there was fire coming from this other hill, in an attempt to silence the positions on Kololo Hill, we would be in a direct line of fire. Fortunately for us, this never happened. However, while I was observing the hill to the West of Kololo Hill, huge explosions were taking place in the valley from artillery or mortar rounds that the NRA was using to try to take Kololo Hill. They were passing over our heads, missing their target, and exploding over on the other side of the hill. As a round would go off below us, there would be a huge puff of smoke. I was able to take pictures of these huge puffs of smoke coming from the explosions.

In any case, going back to that Saturday, January 25, 1986, around 1:00 PM, NRA troops were approaching our position. They were having a lot of success in engaging UNLA forces on those hills. UNLA forces began to withdraw from those hills. All of a sudden, as I watched the situation through my binoculars, I saw elements of UNLA forces, in formation, coming off Kololo Hill. I have pictures of the UNLA troops withdrawing from the hill in two columns, moving on the back route heading East toward Jinja, to get out of the way of the approaching NRA forces.

The fighting continued until late Saturday afternoon and evening. The UNLA still had limited forces and some artillery pieces on Kololo Hill. When night fell, very heavy firing began, going on all around my house. The noise was deafening. I just didn't know what was going to happen. Some instinct told me that I had to get a recording of this firing. Among the equipment I had while I was going through all of this I had some nice, recorded music playing, while I was doing everything else. I took one of my very nice tapes and switched it on to "Record." I set the cassette tape recorder in the window. I recorded some of the firing going on around my compound. The firing continued until about 2:00 AM on Sunday, January 26, 1986, when, all of a sudden, there was a deep silence. I checked my watch. It was 2:00 AM all right. I still didn't know what was going on.

On the next morning, Sunday, January 26, 1986, as soon as daylight came, I climbed to the highest point I could reach in my compound. I saw a Quad .50 caliber machine-gun which the UNLA forces had set up in front of my house. The UNLA troops were using that machine-gun as part of their defensive system. They were occasionally firing down the street, first in one direction and then in the other.

Q: This was right in front of your house?

COKER: Yes. I hadn't been able to figure out what was making all of that noise, but that was what it was. There was this gun with four barrels, .50 caliber, mounted on a jeep. Next to my house was a vacant lot. On the other side of the vacant lot lived ex-Vice President Paul Malwanga. I didn't know that the last element of the UNLA forces, as they were retreating, took off their uniforms and threw them and their equipment into that vacant lot. As I looked out on the Sunday morning, NRA forces had arrived on the scene. At first, I didn't know that they belonged to the NRA, but I saw all of these people in the vacant lot, sorting through the uniforms which had been abandoned by the UNLA forces. They were looking through them, evidently trying to find their size and picking up all of the abandoned weapons.

I asked my servants to go over there and find out what was going on. They returned to my house and were able to tell me that the people in that vacant lot belonged to the NRA and that they had defeated the UNLA. About half an hour later we saw people pouring into the street, celebrating. This expression of joy went on all day long.

I had arrived in Uganda in June, 1983. From then until Sunday, January 26, 1986, I had not seen people able to walk in the streets at night, because of the presence of undisciplined UNLA soldiers. These soldiers invariably challenged the people. They would steal everything that the people had, because they were very poorly paid. However, from January 26 until the present, women, children, and anybody else could walk the streets at night in Kampala.

I have returned to Uganda several times since then, and the change is phenomenal. By the way, Kampala fell into the hands of the NRA on January 26, 1986, which happened to be my birthday! I thought that it was ironic that the NRA took over Kampala on that date.

I did not go out of my compound on that day. There appeared to be no damage to the compound. Not one vehicle had been disturbed or damaged, so we were fortunate. A few other AID houses had bullet holes through the roof. A record player had disappeared from one of the AID houses. We thought that that might have been an inside job. There had been no intrusion into our AID offices compound. We thought that we were very fortunate. The NRA forces appeared to be well disciplined. Museveni had led them since 1981.

Subsequently, after the fall of Kampala to the NRA forces, we had good relations with the Museveni Government. I remember the very first meeting which Ambassador Hodak and I had with Museveni on February 13, 1986. Museveni thanked the American Government for having very strongly supported him and for criticizing the Obote Government for its gross, human rights violations.

President Museveni immediately asked for the withdrawal of the British High Commissioner, who had publicly disputed the attitude of the American Embassy regarding the human rights violations by the Obote Government. The other diplomatic missions knew that we were right about the human rights violations, although they never openly opposed what we had been saying about the Obote Government.

At that meeting with Museveni he made clear what his philosophy was. He said: "Look, I want to run a democratic government. However, I have to restore the economy. We can only get the

economy going if we are able to rehabilitate private enterprise. So I need credit." That was the kind of magic that we were looking for. We had a $32 million project which we were ready to open up, but we hadn't been able to get President Obote to agree on the necessary conditions precedent to implementation. When Okello came into power, we just stopped negotiating. So we had this grant ready.

Q: On the books and ready to be implemented.

COKER: We were ready to go with the first, $18 million segment. So I explained to President Museveni what we had available. We had authorization to make loans to private enterprise through local banks to help to rehabilitate the private sector. He asked me why we hadn't gotten it implemented. I told him that we had tried to do so, but we could not reach agreement with the Obote Government. He said that he would assign one of his aides to work with us on the constraints of this project. In two weeks' time all of the conditions precedent to procurement were met and we were able to sign the project for the rehabilitation of private enterprises.

Q: Where did the money under this project go?

COKER: The money went to the different banks with which we had been able to work out agreements.

Q: Was this money in the form of cash?

COKER: Yes, in cash. There were cash transfers in U.S. dollars to the local banks, so that if the loan applications required a certain amount in U.S. dollars to purchase equipment or a certain amount in Ugandan shillings, the loan would be approved by the banks.

Q: Did we approve the loans under this project?

COKER: Yes. We approved the loans made under it, as well.

Q: So the basic funds were provided in the form of a grant, right?

COKER: Yes. The basic segment of this was in the form of an $18 million grant, which we brought in under the overall total of $32 million.

Q: Were the banks able to function, despite all of that chaos?

COKER: Yes. Surprisingly, there were branches of several of the international banks there in Kampala. There were branches of Barclay's Bank, the Standard Bank, and the Barooda Bank. So several of those banks were in Kampala, ready to participate in this program. They were ready to get started. The Uganda Commercial Bank, the largest of the Government banks, also chose to participate in this program.

Q: They were all participating?

COKER: Yes, they were all participating. So I stayed on in Kampala until June 30, 1986. Meanwhile, I had the opportunity to work with my Ugandan staff to prepare to start receiving back some of the American direct hire personnel who were assigned to the post. Many of my former staff who had been evacuated and had returned to Washington were transferred back to Kampala. Those who were evacuated to Ethiopia returned to Kampala. Eventually, I had all of my staff back and ready to go to work.

Also, the Manpower Development project, which had been conducted by people from the Universities of Iowa and Minnesota, also began to function again.

Q: What kind of manpower development did this involve?

COKER: This was provided for the rehabilitation of the Department of Agriculture and the Research Station at Makerere University. We also worked with the Ministry of Agriculture to improve its capacity to conduct planning and make policies. We also were able to start up the Cooperative Development project. I worked with the Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing. We had one person from ACDI, who was a carry over from the Food Production Support project. We had phased out all of those contractors, since they were coming to the end of their work. They had less than two months to go at the time the coup d'etat occurred. We were also able to arrange for the return of our dependents.

So I stayed in Kampala until June 30, 1986; then I was able to leave Kampala and transfer to the U.S. Mission to the UN in New York, which was my next assignment. Dick Podol came out of the AID Mission to Zaire to replace me in Uganda. We had started a private enterprise development program.

Museveni had let it be known that he wanted to have a democratic government in Uganda. He was convinced that this was the way to go, starting at the grass roots level. However, he did not want a multi-party political system. That was not a concern of mine, but it was a concern of the Ambassador's, who wanted to push for the establishment of political parties right away. Museveni said: "I can run a democratic government, all the way down to the grass roots level. At the same time I can have respect for the rule of law and the administration of justice. I can show that I am concerned about the general welfare of the people. Why should I be concerned about a multi-party political system at this point? We've just begun to take over. We have a long ways to go to get this country restored to some degree of stability. After we have some economic stability and we've gotten some of the wealth shared with the people, then will be the time to talk about a multi-party system."

I noticed that subsequently, over the years, that that is what Museveni has continued to do. He has continued to advocate pretty much what he told us he would do. Some of the political Ambassadors we have had in Uganda since then have tended to disagree with Museveni. Most of them have seen that Museveni has combined the ingredients we look for in a democratic government. There are not yet any political parties, but that hasn't stopped a democratic process from operating from the grass roots level up to the top.

So that ended my three year assignment in Uganda. I am quite pleased to recall many of the things that took place there. Later, I had a chance to work at the UN in New York, where we, the USA, had a questionable relationship going.

Q: In the end, did you see any indication that the credits to get private enterprise going again were actually used for this purpose?

COKER: I saw the beginning of it. I saw the private banks institute the process by receiving the loans and then advertising their availability. The private banks provided some training on how to prepare the applications for these loans. I saw that some of the earlier loans were actually approved. Most of these loans were for the purchase of imported equipment. However, before any of the equipment arrived in Uganda, I had already left the country. I heard later that some difficulties developed in obtaining the equipment, but I never followed the process in detail. These loans not only used up the $18 million of the first segment of the $32 million loan, but they also depleted the $14 million from the second segment. Then additional money was added to the rehabilitation program. This program was a success. In the event, not everything went according to the way it was designed. However, this loan helped to rehabilitate the private sector. Many of the Ugandan business people were able to benefit from loans set aside for small and medium sized enterprises.

Q: Did some of these loans go to Indian businessmen?

COKER: Museveni was quite determined that he would find a way to bring the Indian population back into the country to take advantage of the economic growth that they could help to bring. He has been extremely fair in this particular area. Some of the Indians are despised by some of the black Ugandans. However, many of these Indians were born in Uganda and are Ugandan citizens. Many Indians have come back to Uganda and reclaimed their houses and office buildings. Since there had not been a concerted program of building houses in Uganda since the country became independent, there is a tremendous housing shortage there. When I went back to Uganda in 1989, I found that many of the Ugandan Government officials that I had worked with continued to have trouble with housing. If they had garages, the garages were occupied by other family members or were being rented out to other people. The situation was quite pathetic. Uganda still does not have a significant housing construction program going on, even though many houses are being built. They just don't have a large enough housing construction program under way to relieve the shortage.

Q: Did you find any continuity in the bureaucracy and with the other people you worked with through all of these years of chaos, change, and so forth?

COKER: I have been able to maintain contact with many of the career civil servants. Some of them are in the Ministries of Economics, Finance, Agriculture, and Health.

Q: But in spite of the upheavals, they sort of stayed on in their jobs?

COKER: Yes, they stayed on. It appears that the first thing that Museveni did was to try to keep the civil service intact, to the extent that he could, while he was trying to make it more efficient. I

found that many of the people with whom I had been in contact in the past were still there. I also found that some of them were forcibly retired. Some retired voluntarily and decided to go into private enterprise. I have been able to maintain decent, working relationships with the civil servants that I had known.

In fact, just to skip forward a bit, when I retired from AID in September, 1988, and set up my own consulting company, which I called Coker-Smith, Inc., the first contract that it received involved my going back to Uganda to work on the reorganization and reform of the civil service. So I went to Uganda and designed a project to assist the Ugandan Government in restructuring the civil service. After the project design was approved and funded, I was asked to stay on by Museveni as a commissioner to assist in the development of all of the written details for streamlining the government.

GRETA N. MORRIS
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Kampala (1986-1988)

Ambassador Morris was born and raised in California and educated at the University of California at Los Angeles, University of Redland and Claremont College. Before becoming a Foreign Service Officer she accompanied her FSO husband to Indonesia. In 1980 she entered the Foreign Service (USIA) following which she served variously as Public Affairs, Cultural, or Press Officer in Kenya, Uganda, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. Her Washington assignments at State and USIA concerned primarily African Affairs. She served as US Ambassador to the Marshall Islands from 2000 to 2006. Ambassador Morris was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.

MORRIS: I did this for a year and, as I said, one of the issues that we were focused on was the Fulbright program for Sought Africa. It was the view of the State Department and of the U.S. Information Agency that we should have a Fulbright program with South Africa despite apartheid. Of course, the Board of Foreign Scholarships had a kind of different view; they did not really favor engaging with the South African government in that kind of a program. But I think we made progress along those lines during that year. Shortly after that the Fulbright program did restart for South Africa. I did that for a year; then I went back to Africa, to Uganda, as the public affairs officer.

Q: OK let's talk about…you were there from what '86?

MORRIS: To '88, yes.

Q: Let's talk about Uganda and how stood things there? What had been the recent history before you got back?

MORRIS: The recent history was, of course, going back a few years, you had Milton Obote who was the president. Then you had the long and terrible period of Idi Amin, which of course is very

well known in the United States. Then he was thrown out in 1979 I believe it was, by Milton Obote, who then came back into power. Milton Obote, as I think I mentioned before, was perhaps not as notorious because he was not as colorful as Idi Amin, but he was a terrible and very cruel leader; so the situation had been just getting worse and worse. Actually, in January, I already knew that I was going there. That was when the guerrilla leader Yoweri Museveni defeated Milton Obote. His guerrilla army, the National Resistance Army, arrived in Kampala after a very long guerrilla struggle throughout Uganda. Milton Obote went to a neighboring African country to cool his heels and Yoweri Museveni took over and started his new government the National Resistance government, he called it.

The embassy was basically almost closed and everyone evacuated but because of at that time communications were not quite so sophisticated as they are now, the embassy didn't get the word that it might be better if everybody left and so basically the embassy stayed open. Of course, they had a very serious draw down; all the families had to leave. It was basically the ambassador and a few other trusted members of his staff who were there but that was the situation in January.

Then I went out in August of that year. So this new government had been in power for about eight months when I got there and was still very much finding its way so to speak. Basically it was pretty far to the left and of course the Soviets were very active then and they had a big embassy in Kampala. The Libyans were there and, in fact, the first day I arrived Qadhafi also arrived. Muammar Qadhafi was one of our real sworn enemies in 1986; he arrived with about 800 of his crack troops. That evening we watched him on television as he marched through the streets of Kampala with his cohorts shouting "down, down U.S.A., down, down U.S.A." This was our welcome to Uganda; it was perhaps not the most auspicious beginning. It was a time when the Soviets and Cubans were very active there. The Cubans were providing a lot of assistance to the Ugandan government, medial assistance. They were sending doctors there, for example, and providing medicine. It is hard to imagine in a way the Cubans as a donor country but it worked.

Q: They are very heavy into doctors.

MORRIS: Yes. The North Koreans were there and the Libyans as I already mentioned. Then, of course, there was the Western diplomatic establishment and we were all kind of working together trying to moderate the Ugandan government. President Yoweri Museveni was in many ways very friendly when you would go to meet him. He was always very friendly so he was clearly happy to get assistance from any side that was willing to give assistance including the United States and we had a USAID mission there. But it was a very challenging time both from the standpoint of physical security because there were many Ugandans, just ordinary Ugandans, who had guns. These were guns that they had gotten during the long history of the guerrilla war and they still had them. Basically every night outside of our house you could hear gunfire and sometimes it would be quite close.

Q: Who would be shooting at whom?

MORRIS: In most cases it was people who got drunk in the bars and were just sort of shooting for the heck of it or it might have been a personal fight. It wasn't really…in very few cases was it

ever political. But nonetheless it made for a kind of scary situation and a situation where you didn't really want to be out that late in the evening.

Q: Who was our ambassador there?

MORRIS: Robert Houdek was the ambassador. I think he was a good ambassador to be there at that time because he's a very positive person and really very fearless in many, many ways.

Q: As public affairs officer what were you trying to do and how did you do it?

MORRIS: Again, the whole mission of the embassy, I would say, was to try to develop a strong relationship with the National Resistance government, the National Resistance Movement to call it by its complete name, and to develop good relations. Of course, this was during the Cold War so obviously we wanted their support, but we were also trying to help the country develop and help it to develop a more democratic system of government. So both recover from the years of devastation, develop economically and develop a democratic system of government. The country itself, of course, was just devastated. Everywhere you would go in the city the streets were full of potholes; in virtually all of the buildings, the glass had been shot out, a lot of the buildings had been burned. It was really pretty much of a wreck. Of course, there were still many parts of the country where we couldn't even travel as Americans.

Q: Had there been any movement to replace the Asian shopkeeper class and all?

MORRIS: Of course they had been thrown out during the Amin period and very, very few of them had ventured back. This was one of the big issues, whether their properties were going to be given to Ugandans. Museveni was very sympathetic to that point of view; he wanted to give these properties, these establishments, to people who had supported him; some of the property was transferred but not all of it. He also recognized, I think, a very shrewd person, very smart, that he could use the talent of some of these Asian business people so there was an effort to get some of them to come back. But there was still obviously a lot of skepticism on their part about whether or not they trusted this guerrilla leader and if they really did want to come back to Uganda. I'd like to get back to your question, as I don't think I really ever answered your question, about what was the role of the U.S. Information Service and my role as the public affairs officer. As part of this effort to develop good relations and to try to get support for the United States we tried to work very closely with the press there.

There was one government newspaper and I believe it was called The New Vision, if I'm not mistaken. It very much, of course, towed the government line in every way. The person who was the editor and chief was a man named William Pike who was British and he was a journalist by training; he had been an early supporter of Museveni even during the guerrilla movement. So Museveni brought him to Kampala to run this newspaper so that's what he did. There were quite a number of expatriate journalists who worked with him, a few Ugandan journalists but there weren't a lot of Ugandan journalists, the more independent journalists had been driven underground or they had escaped after many years earlier in the Civil War. This was in many, many ways a professional newspaper but it was not by any means a free or objective newspaper; it was not really a free press and for us it was very, very difficult to break into it and get anything

that we wanted to have published, any press releases from the embassy or other things printed in The New Vision. So that was a big effort.

Then there were other independent newspapers; there was one called the Financial Times. It was a newspaper actually run by a Ugandan, he mainly ran it with his own budget trying to have a responsible pro business, capitalist perspective. Of course, he didn't have much money to pay journalists and most of the journalists were just people he picked up off the street who didn't really know anything at all about journalism. You could always tell which pieces he had written because they were the ones that were well written and actually made sense; in a lot of the other articles in the newspaper it was very difficult to figure out what they were talking about. This was a newspaper that was sympathetic and we were able to get things published from time to time.

Then there were other newspapers that would appear on the scene: the "newspaper of the week" or maybe of the month. In many cases they were basically tabloids or rags that were sponsored by other embassies. The North Koreans would support a newspaper for a while or the Cubans would support a newspaper or the Libyans would support a newspaper. The disinformation in these papers was really pretty appalling including very personal attacks on members of the embassy staff including myself, I might add; so it was a very difficult challenge to try and work with the media there.

We did send a few of these journalists to the United States on international visitor programs and I would say in a couple cases it helped. At least they had a little bit more nuanced feel for the United States when they came back; but it was very challenging to work with the press. I think our real breakthrough, frankly, occurred when Museveni went to the UN and he was giving a speech to the UN General Assembly. His own team, even thought they sent some journalists and ministry of information types with him, they were not able to get the text of this speech back in time to publish it the next day in the paper. But we were able, using our channels through the wireless file, to get the text of the speech and get it to the editor of The New Vision in time to print the next day. I'll have to say William Pike was very grateful; he expressed his gratitude and frankly amazement to me personally so that was a great thing. I think it really changed the dynamics of our relationship with that newspaper.

Q: How did you find…were the Soviets doing much there outside of building stadiums or whatever they do?

MORRIS: No, they weren't really building stadiums at that time but they were certainly trying to send Ugandans to Moscow for education. They would send them on their own equivalent of the international visitors program during which the visitor would be escorted everywhere and never allowed to get out of sight of their escort. They did a lot with media placement; the advantage that they had was that they could pay; they would pay a newspaper big bucks to carry an article particularly one that was critical of the Untied States. This was during the time, you may recall, when the aids epidemic was just really getting started. One of the disinformation stories was that this had been created by the U.S. military at Fort Dietrich; a virus had actually been created by the U.S. military. This was a story that would not die and just kept reappearing in the press in

various guises. I'm not saying the Soviets necessarily had a hand in that but that was the kind of thing they were very active in as far as the press placement was concerned.

Q: What different did it make? You referenced the Soviet efforts, what do you think looking back in retrospect do you think this was just a game that was being played or were there real stakes?

MORRIS: I think there were real stakes with the Ugandan people certainly in being able to develop their country so that they could have a better life. Of course, the other thing that we were doing was to try to help the university get back on its feet; we were able to reestablish a Fulbright program there. The Fulbright program had basically become moribund during the guerrilla war. We were able to reestablish the Fulbright program; start sending Ugandans to the U.S. to get their masters degrees and also to bring American professors to Makerere University to get that university back on its feet. Ultimately, I think it made a difference even though I wouldn't say that Uganda, even now, does everything that we want it to do, obviously it doesn't, but I think the country was able to have a better understanding of economic realities, for example. They were able to develop their economic system, they were able to get the university sort of functioning again and I think now Uganda is in many ways one of the success stories of Africa. It still has plenty of problems but certainly economically it is much more successful than anyone would have imagined.

Q: Were we trying to promote not unity but friendship between Kenya and Uganda? Or how did that play?

MORRIS: That, of course, wasn't specifically one of our roles. I would say at that time there was certainly some mistrust between Kenya and Uganda because Kenya's Daniel Arap Moi was very much in the capitalist camp, so to speak, staunchly anti-Soviet. Museveni was weighing both sides trying to play both sides against the middle, so to speak, to get what he could from one side and then get what he could from the other side. He was constantly playing back and forth.

Q: Did Rwanda, Burundi play any part on influencing what was happening in Uganda?

MORRIS: Not really at that time. Of course, there was a lot of cross border activity and a lot of people from Rwanda and Burundi who lived in Uganda and some Ugandans who lived in those countries. At that time Rwanda, in particular, was a place where people would go to visit the gorillas and it was…

Q: This is G-O-R…

MORRIS: This is correct yes.

Q: Not G-U-R

MORRIS: It was a time when it was possible to do that.

Q: How did our South African policy of constructive engagement play there?

MORRIS: That was something that we constantly had to be trying to explain and not very successfully, I hate to say. The Ugandans, of course, not just the government but ordinary Ugandans, were very supportive of South African Blacks and also Nelson Mandela and they were very anti-apartheid.

Q: Was Zaire breaking up at that time?

MORRIS: No, Mobutu was very firmly in control. It was still at a time when there was a lot of unity among Black African states so there was great reluctance to criticize someone like Mobutu despite the very gross human rights violations that were occurring there. Museveni wasn't going to criticize a fellow African leader.

Q: How did you find the embassy as a social creature, tool or what have you?

MORRIS: Of course, it was a very small embassy at the time. Consequently it was a very close-knit embassy for the most part. There was the ambassador and his wife, my husband was the DCM and I was the PAO. There was an administrative officer, a general services officer; there was a USAID director and his wife, the deputy USAID director and his wife and a then few other members of the embassy staff. So it was a very, very small embassy and consequently getting along was a very high priority.

There was a small expatriate community; the embassy actually shared the property of the British High Commission so we had a lot of interaction with the British High Commissioner and members of his staff. The World Bank was there so there was a World Bank director; the IMF was there. Uganda was getting some funding from the IMF but the IMF was always sort of the villain that everybody loved to hate because the IMF funding always came with various stringent requirements for restructuring. I remember one time one of the newspapers, The Financial Times, which I mentioned was favorable to the United States, had a great headline: "The IMF Is Not All That Bad," That was actually based on an interview that I did with the paper…

Q: How about though, I'm thinking of gunfire, how about social life there? Did you take your pistols out and go shoot it up too or what?

MORRIS: No, we were fairly cautious about going out at night but we did go out from time to time and did some socializing. People did a lot of home entertaining. There was a very, very small American club in Kampala that had a nice little swimming pool and had a very basic cafeteria where you could get pretty good hamburgers and they would have a few other things there but not a lot of variety in the food. But there would be social events there. There was one Chinese restaurant and I think that was the only restaurant where expatriates ever ate. The opportunities for entertaining were pretty much limited to entertaining in our homes; people did a lot of home entertaining and that was quite nice. Sometimes it was a Saturday or Sunday lunch because it was safer to go out for lunch than it was to go out after dark.

Q: How did you find USAID and USIS side Foreign Service nationals?

MORRIS: I would say a few of them were quite good; some of them again were people who didn't have a lot of educational background and so they took quite a bit of coaching. They were very well liked and very nice people; fortunately, we were able to send a few of them to the U.S. for training.

Q: In a former British colony unlike the former French colonies did the system prior to independence foster an intelligencia social commentators and professors who…

MORRIS: Well there were certainly a few; some of the people who had graduated from Makerere University and, of course, some of those had gone to Britain or had gone to the United States. Some of them had gone to the Soviet Union, to Moscow University or Patrice Lumumba University, so there were some intelligent and well-educated people. People like the vice chancellor of Makerere University, for example, but a lot of those people had fled and were no longer there because of the dangerous situation.

Q: What about Makerere University? It had the reputation of being the best university in Africa at one point. At that time how stood it?

MORRIS: It was in very bad shape again because so many people had left. There were very few really well qualified professors who were still there; they were trying to get people to come back, very few really qualified people there at the time. The facilities, like most facilities everywhere in the country, were in very bad shape. I remember we brought a jazz singer with her accompanist to perform in Uganda and she was going to perform at the university. So my staff had to actually go and put the electrical plugs in the sockets on the stage at the university because all of them had been ripped out. There was tremendous looting during the guerrilla movement and fighting before Museveni took over; that affected every place including the university. The university was in very, very bad shape but with the arrival of Museveni and the National Resistance Movement government, other countries started to bring in some foreign scholars to teach at Makerere and as I mentioned we were able to get some Fulbright professors to come and teach there. Things were starting to improve but it was still in pretty bad shape.

Q: Had there been a heavy London School of Economics socialist outlook at the university before reflecting the government would you say?

MORRIS: To a certain extent; I don't think all that much. I would say that the more socialist viewpoint was frankly more from people who had studied in the Soviet Union but not really the intelligencia.

Q: In Tanzania the area had so directed it that he was doing it fairly well it was a disaster.

MORRIS: Right. I would say that Uganda's problems were a bit different.

Q: Was there any spill over from, I guess it was going on at the time, in the Sudan, the Civil War in Sudan North versus South? Did that have any affect on Uganda?

MORRIS: Not so much at that time. Of course, the problems in Somalia and Ethiopia had a greater impact because there were refugees from both countries that would show up in Uganda, as they had in Kenya.

Q: What were our interests in Uganda?

MORRIS: I would say our main interests certainly were in getting Ugandan support and trying to make sure it didn't fall in the Soviet camp. We were trying to help it develop so it wouldn't be a very unstable country in the midst of Africa. Part of that, which I mentioned before, was trying to help with the AIDS crisis; Uganda was very badly affected very early on by HIV aids.

Q: How did that happen because I'm told much of it was transmitted by truck routes?

MORRIS: Yes, and there were lots and lots of truck routes between Kenya and Uganda and also from Zaire. Then there was the guerrilla movement; a lot of people felt that that contributed to the spread of HIV AIDS.

Q: Was the Lord's Movement, or whatever it was called…

MORRIS: The Lord's Resistance Army? The Lord's Resistance Army started around the time that I was there and frankly, at that time, I think a lot of people regarded it as something that wasn't terribly serious. It was almost ludicrous in a tragic way: that the leaders and members of the Army would think that by rubbing grease on their bodies and saying certain religious incantations, they could save themselves from the bullets or the arrows of the other side. It was pretty much a rag tag movement then, but it turned out to have tremendous staying power and it still has not been defeated.

Q: Were the Soviets doing their thing? We are right on the cusp of the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union at that time, did that manifest itself at all or was that from the weakening of Soviet interest or Gorbachev was in?

MORRIS: I would say that one change that I did notice was that toward the end of the time I was there, the Soviets became a bit more friendly and they were actually willing to come to some of the events that we arranged – some of the cultural events, for example.

One of the things that I certainly remember was when we had our first WorldNet broadcast in Uganda. You may remember that WorldNet (a live television broadcast from USIA in Washington) was the creation of Charles Z. Wick, who was the director of USIA during the Reagan administration. Uganda wasn't the last country (but maybe close to it) to get one of the big satellite dishes necessary to pick up the signal for WorldNet. It was something that I thought would be very beneficial as part of our effort to get more information about the United States into Uganda. So USIA sent the satellite dish in a big box and then we had to find somebody who could construct the cement pad and put the dish up. I was able to find a Ugandan, a very enterprising young man, who put the pad and the dish up, got it all hooked up and then we tried it – and lo and behold, it worked! We got the signal, the WorldNet signal, and we were able to receive these broadcasts from Washington. To launch WorldNet in Uganda, we decided we had

to have a special program. We invited some Ugandans, including journalists and people from the government, but we also invited the diplomatic corps including the Soviet ambassador. He came over for this and I think he was really impressed with the live broadcast from Washington, but he was really, really amazed when by moving the dish around, we were able to pick up a live broadcast from Moscow. It was a program from Moscow television. So there was the Soviet ambassador at the USIS headquarters in Kampala watching a live broadcast, it was a cultural program of some kind, from Moscow television. He was very complimentary and I guess that might not have happened in the pre-Gorbachev era.

Q: Did you have disputes with the deputy chief of mission? I mean as the public affairs officer and how were these resolved, if you did?

MORRIS: I think we usually got along pretty well. We were usually on the same sheet of music.

Q: Being your husband I would say.

MORRIS: Yes.

Q: You were there almost four years?

MORRIS: No, two years.

Q: Two years?

MORRIS: Only two years.

Q: In '88?

MORRIS: In '88, yes, it was a two-year assignment because at that time it was still considered a greater hardship post. I would say it earned that.

Q: When you left how did you leave things there?

MORRIS: I felt like we had been able to accomplish quite a bit even in that short two-year period. We had a much more solid relationship with the Ugandan government and I think with the Ugandan people. The worst of the disinformation had died down and I won't say it was just because we were so effective in countering it; I would hope that that helped a little bit, but I think also the atmosphere was changing. I think the Ugandan government was more interested in working with us and receiving our aid and therefore doing some of the things that we wanted and was also less tolerant of some of these really blatant lies. I think when we left the situation was certainly much better; we had been able to create a better relationship between Uganda and the United States and also help the Ugandans get back on their feet and start to address the HIV aids problem, start to have some of the basic structures of development in place, start to get the university back on track. I felt that our small team, which really did work very effectively as a team, was able to accomplish quite a bit.

Q: How did you address the HIV problem?

MORRIS: USAID was very critical in that regard but also the Center for Disease Control was very active. There was a big CDC center in Entebbe.

Q: CDC being the…?

MORRIS: The Center for Disease Control out of…

Q: Atlanta.

MORRIS: …Atlanta, yes. They were very, very active in doing research but also in trying to promote education and distributing condoms. President Museveni was pretty receptive because he could see the devastation that this was already starting to cause. It was even something that within our embassy staff we were very concerned about. I remember I had one person on my staff who just started losing a terrible amount of weight and I was very concerned; he was very concerned also that he might have HIV aids. It turned out that he had tuberculosis, also not a good thing, but it was treatable. But this was something that everybody was very concerned about and everybody knew people who had succumbed so I think there was quite a bit of receptivity to trying to address this problem. Once they were able to get beyond accusing the United States of causing it in Fort Dietrich.

Q: Did the British have much influence there? It had been a colony.

MORRIS: Right, actually it had been a protectorate, I believe is what they called it; it was not actually a colony. Yes, they still certainly had some influence but not as much, I don't think, as the United States because they weren't putting such extensive resources into Uganda at that time. But they certainly still did have some influence.

STEPHEN EISENBRAUN
Uganda Desk Officer, State Department
Washington, DC (1986-1988)

Mr. Eisenbraun was born in central Iowa in 1947 and graduated from the University of Northern Iowa and SAIS. He served in Dhaka, Lahore, Freetown and Mombasa. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Okay. Today is the 16th of May, 2005. You've come back to Washington?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. That was the summer of 1986.

Q: And you were on the Kenya desk?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, it was combined Kenya and Uganda desk.

Q: From when to when?

EISENBRAUN: That was summer of ’86 until about January of ’88, when I started five months of Swahili language training.

Q: All right. So, describe how the Bureau of African affairs was set up at that time. Who was in charge?

EISENBRAUN: The Assistant Secretary was Chet Crocker, an articulate and thoughtful man from the academic world. He had been at Georgetown University, and then he went back to Georgetown when he was finished at the end of his eight years as assistant secretary. I thought he was a really astute fellow; everyone thought he was an astute fellow. He had made his mark in international affairs and I think caught the eye of the early people putting together the foreign policy team of the Reagan administration when he argued for constructive engagement with South Africa instead of total and utter isolation. That appealed to the Reagan administration, I believe, and that’s what brought him in as assistant secretary.

So I dealt with him on Kenyan affairs, which were not his primary concern; his primary concern had to deal with South Africa and other matters in southern Africa, including Angola, where there was still an on-going conflict. I had to learn from scratch matters related to East Africa. It didn’t take long because the American relationship with Kenya and Uganda was not that complex. There was a reasonably good bilateral relationship with Kenya, but it was going downhill steadily because of the corruption of the existing government, that of Daniel arap Moi, who had been in power for many, many years and who ran a relatively benign authoritative government, if such a thing can exist. In other words, if no one in Kenya crossed Moi, then life went on pretty smoothly. But anyone who crossed Moi or members of his party, KANU, then they were in big trouble. There was an element of tension and human rights abuses and certainly corruption within the government, causing difficulty in our bilateral relationship.

Q: Well, let’s stick to Kenya first, then we’ll move over to Uganda. Who was our Ambassador out there when you were on the desk?

EISENBRAUN: I arrived just as Elinor Constable was preparing to go out. My days in the August-September period of 1986 were taken up virtually exclusively by helping prepare Elinor for her Senate hearings. She also didn’t know anything about East Africa or Kenya; she had dealt with other matters, economic matters primarily. So both of us had a lot to learn and it was pretty worthwhile for the two of us to go around together. She wanted to meet a lot of actors up on the Hill and in New York and elsewhere; anyone who had political or business interests in Kenya, and that included military interest also. For example, she and I went on a day’s trip to CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, which had the responsibility for U.S. military interests in Kenya, as well as the greater Middle East.

Q: What were our military and business interests in Kenya at the time?

EISENBRAUN: First the military interest. That involved me also, as I eventually went out as principal officer in Mombasa, which was a port city with a US Consulate devoted to the interests of the US Navy using it as a port of call for refueling and R & R. I'm getting ahead of the story. The military interests were essentially one of pre-building infrastructure for military use, and pre-positioning equipment for any potential conflict in the Middle East or the Horn of Africa. There was also some provision of military assistance to the government. Building infrastructure meant deepening the harbor of Mombasa to accommodate US naval vessels including carriers, and lengthening the runways in Mombasa and in Nairobi to handle the very large cargo planes the military might need to bring in during a regional conflict. .

Q: Were we looking at that time- I mean, the Middle East is always in turmoil, but were we looking at Somalia and Ethiopia as possible trouble points?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, we were, certainly, looking at Somalia, not necessarily as a point of intervention of U.S. troops but nevertheless as an area of concern to us. I think that, though, our military interests in Kenya were more aimed at the Middle East, that is, we wanted a friendly environment where we could land equipment and troops for staging purposes. We learned that there's a lot of redundancy in the military, deliberate redundancy, in pre-positioning elements all around the world, redundancy with the idea that if political conditions exclude the U.S. from one point of entry, there will be three or four other points of entry, so they aren't going to be shut out of any situation strategically. .

The U.S. business interest in Kenya was limited. There was some trade back and forth, some tourism, with Americans on safaris. There was little American direct investment. There were some sales of agricultural products--bulk commodities such as wheat and some rice that came in through the Port of Mombasa. Later on I was to see those ships come in and have to deal with all their problems. We did have an aid relationship and we were trying to work with the health infrastructure, for example, and yet that was a source of tension, that is, the economic assistance relationship because we were demanding a lot of conditions upon our aid, conditions of transparency in the use of the monies provided.

Q: Was AIDS a major problem at that time or was that not yet known?

EISENBRAUN: No, HIV/AIDS was a major concern. This was 1986 when AIDS was already pretty well known, and researchers had discovered how extensive it was in parts of Africa. And at that time it was said that Kenya, and especially the coast of Kenya, had about the highest prevalence of HIV of anywhere else in Africa, if not the world at that time. I think we had some HIV/AIDS programs in place, but probably not very much. We also had a large Peace Corps presence in Kenya as well.

Q: What were we doing, say, with the Moi government? I assume the embassy was reporting on it but you always wonder what an embassy can report on when a government doesn't tolerate opposition.

EISENBRAUN: Well, that's a very perceptive question. There wasn't a lot of political reporting, in comparison with what comes in from India, for example. In fact, when I later served as

principal officer in Mombassa, that was the follow-on to the Kenya assignment, I wanted to move around and meet politicians and try to report what was going on. I found that there wasn't anything going on, essentially. There were party activities of the only party allowed, KANU, that is, the Kenya African National Union, Moi's party. Later, I met Moi's major political hatchet man on the coast, but the truth was, there wasn't a whole lot of political activity. But I'll get to that story later. There was a little bit of underground activity which I was able to tap into a bit but that's a later story.

Q: That was a different time.

EISENBRAUN: Right, that was between 1988 and 90. What little happened politically was all focused in Nairobi, unlike in South Asia, where there is a lot going on in the countryside and you might get a distorted picture by spending all of your time in New Delhi or Islamabad. In Kenya, what passed for politics, at least on the surface, was juggling of responsibilities and authorities within the government and the in-fighting of the various politicians within the official party.

Q: So basically a court battle-

EISENBRAUN: Yes, essentially.

Q: Well, what was our evaluation of President Moi at that time?

EISENBRAUN: We had good and correct relations with him, but we also were quite suspicious of him because of his suspected personal corruption. We knew he had a heavy hand and that he seemed to tolerate, if not foment, corruption throughout his government. So we did not have an easy relationship with Moi. On the other hand, he had been friendly to American interests through the years, the military interests I've spoken of and whatever business interests were there, so we wanted to keep that friendliness alive. It was a balancing act between trying to encourage him to be more responsive to the needs of his citizens, to practice good governance, the rule of law and human rights, while being friendly to our strategic interests.

Q: Were the Soviets or the Cubans messing around in Kenya at the time?

EISENBRAUN: No, I don't think so at all.

Q: How about border events, when there was Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan…

EISENBRAUN: Yes, you were asking about the regional relations that Kenya had with its neighbors, and I said that there was some tension with Somalia where central authority was breaking down in Mogadishu and there were bandits coming across the border and robbing Kenyans. And there were some refugees moving across already into Kenya so that was an unstable situation in the north. And then there had been a great deal of trouble in Uganda during the Idi Amin years. By the time I got to the desk, Idi Amin was in exile and another fellow named Musevani had assumed control. He was a pretty responsible leader, so Uganda was returning to political stability.

Now, there had been an attempt in the earlier years to develop a regional trade and political bloc between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania that hadn't worked very well. However, there was still stability among those three countries and Rwanda- there was stability on the western front as well with Rwanda. So except for Somalia, there wasn't a great deal of regional instability at that time.

Q: Well, was there any reflection of the ever lasting conflict of the Sudan between the north and the south?

EISENBRAUN: The Sudanese rebels had- the SPLA (Sudan Peoples Liberation Army), John Garang was the leader. By the way, he was killed in a helicopter just recently after patching up his long conflict with the government in Khartoum. The SPLA had representatives in Nairobi, and some American Congressmen occasionally met the SPLA there. Our embassy tried to keep very close contact with them and that was a source of some reporting. I think the Kenyan foreign policy toward Sudan was to recognize the government in power in Khartoum while looking the other way, essentially, with the rebels in the southern part of Sudan. Because after all, the rebels were essentially Christian, the government in Khartoum was Muslim, and Moi himself was Christian and he had a very large constituency of Christians in Kenya.

Q: How did the constructive engagement policy vis a vis South Africa work? I mean, how was it perceived by Moi's government?

EISENBRAUN: I don't recall ever dealing with South African issues while on the Kenya desk. The Kenyan Government would probably put in every one of its meetings a statement regarding the need to urge the apartheid government of South Africa to cede its authority, or at least to recognize the majority interest, the Black Africans. They would probably always say that but they weren't particularly antagonistic, as my memory goes, toward our policies of trying to deal with the de Klerk government at that time in South Africa. .

Q: Did UN votes come up at all, getting Kenya to vote in the UN?

EISENBRAUN: That wasn't a major part of our policy. In fact, our interests were fairly limited. Kenya, after all, was going to vote with the African Bloc in the General Assembly. We would certainly lobby them as we would all African countries on certain issues in front of the General Assembly. I those days the General Assembly was stridently against the de Klerk government, and there were some very harsh resolutions against South Africa. I did not follow that issue until I got back to Washington in 1990.

Q: Well then, sort of moving over to Uganda, how was the government there constituted at the time and who was our Ambassador and what were the issues we had with them?

EISENBRAUN: Musevani had assumed control. I believe that they had had some elections and the southern two-thirds of the country had stabilized pretty quickly after some horrific human rights violations and deaths, but the northern third of the country was still unstable and there were a number of indigenous groups fighting against the southern authorities; it was essentially

tribal based. And yet Musevani dealt with a fairly benign hand with the situation in the south and it seemed that he did not have the resources or the inclination to go up into the north and try to subdue that area, so there was sporadic fighting going on, a low level insurgency all the time. In fact, this is 2005, it's still going on and Musevani is still in power. Bob Houdak was our Ambassador in Kampala. He was a life-long Africa specialist, a very pleasant, thoughtful, and vigorous individual. I got a chance to travel around the countryside with him for a week in January of '87.

After Elinor Constable had had her rounds of consultations in Washington and her Senate hearings, which were completely non-controversial, she went out to Kenya. I settled in to the daily affairs of the Kenya desk.

One of the first things that came up that autumn didn't have anything to do with Kenya, but with Sierra Leone in that the Peace Corps had its 25th anniversary celebration in Washington. As part of that program, they had a series of country updates so that returned volunteers could go to these panel discussions on various countries and get updates. And as I had recently returned from Sierra Leone and I had been pretty involved with Peace Corps activities while there, the Peace Corps office in Washington was kind enough to invite me to the 25th anniversary celebration and ask me to be one of a panel of speaker for the Sierra Leone country update. When I got there for that program, I discovered that there were about three or four other people on the panel, most of whom I had known while in Sierra Leone, and maybe 200 people in the audience. So here I was with friends to participate in the update on Sierra Leone.

I'm mentioning this because afterwards, several of these people on the panel introduced me to a larger group of their friends, maybe 10 or 12 people, all of whom had served as volunteers in recent years. There happened to be this lady who had served in Sierra Leone from '83 to '85, departing just before I had arrived in Freetown. I'm mentioning this because I ended up marrying her. We all went to an African restaurant for dinner after the program, and Lorraine and I exchanged telephone numbers. I had just become separated from my first wife, so I was technically available for dating. I didn't have any money and I didn't have much time because I had two little kids living with me, so dates were a cup of coffee or an ice cream cone and maybe a walk around the block. Lorraine had been back from Sierra Leone a year. I already knew I was going out to Mombasa, and Lorraine had been there as a tourist after her Peace Corps tenure in Sierra Leone. So it was pretty logical for us to get together and start dating. Men always say logical. It was pretty romantic, in fact. We got married only weeks before we left for Mombasa in the summer of 1988.

Q: That's very interesting.

EISENBRAUN: In that fall of '86, there was another encounter with the Peace Corps related to my Sierra Leone days. The Director of the Peace Corps in those days was a very popular lady named Lorette Ruppe. She seemed to wield a lot of authority in Washington because of her activism on the part of the Peace Corps. She was popular with volunteers because she traveled around a great deal, she would go out to volunteer's villages, she would sit on the floor of their mud huts and eat whatever food they were eating.

It had come to her attention that I had also spent a great deal of time with Peace Corps volunteers in Sierra Leone, so she invited me to her office as a gesture of thanks. We talked a bit about Sierra Leone and then, since I was on the Kenya desk and there was also a big Peace Corps program in Kenya, we talked a bit about Kenyan affairs and the Peace Corps activities there. Now, it just so happened that I had become quite friendly with the former director of the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, a gentleman named Habib Khan, who I knew had his eye on being Peace Corps director in Kenya. Habib was a naturalized citizen born in Pakistan. I said to Lorette Ruppe, I know that Habib Khan has his eye on being the Peace Corps director in Kenya and I just wanted to say I worked with him really closely in Sierra Leone for an entire year and I think he's pretty good and I hope that you'll give him some very serious consideration for Kenya. This was at the end of a 45 minute cordial meeting, and she said, yes, Habib, well he will never, ever be director in Kenya. I know he wants to go there, but I'll never appoint him. I asked with much surprise, why would that be? We had just agreed he had been effective in Sierra Leone, where there was one of the largest programs in Africa, and perhaps the world. She replied, yes, but he's of Asian origin and there is a large Asian community in Kenya, and Asians don't get along there with the government.

Q: In fact, Idi Amin had thrown them out of Uganda, right?

EISENBRAUN: That's right, in the, what was it, the late '70s? I had learned that the Asian community in Kenya feared that the same might happen to them. So here is Lorette Ruppe saying Habib, because of his national origin, would never be Peace Corps director there. I was shocked to have a federal official telling me this because I think even then it was illegal to discriminate on the basis of national origin. I replied that that's all the more reason for you to show some courage and appoint him as Peace Corps director, in the same fashion that the White House had just appointed Ed Perkins, an African American, to be Ambassador in South Africa.

Well, she was infuriated by my comment about showing some courage, and gone was the niceness of earlier. She said you don't understand anything about this issue; it's completely different from the Ed Perkins situation in South Africa. And that was the end of the conversation, and I was essentially hustled out of the office.

I feel it important these 20 years later that I should relate this story of blatant discrimination. Well, Habib Khan did not become director in Kenya, although he went on to work with USAID in South Africa, ironically. And I burned my bridges with the Peace Corps.

At any rate, I enjoyed my tenure as Kenya desk officer, partly because it was refreshing to deal with new topics, and partly because I was dealing with some very pleasant people. The director of the office was a fellow named David Fisher, who was laidback and knowledgeable about the area, and he let me do whatever I wanted, essentially. And it was a little surprising, at first, that whatever briefing papers I did for the secretary or any ranking official and later on for the White House, they were just passed up the line. I mean, after all, Kenya wasn't that vital to U.S. interests and so it wasn't like the India desk, where every word was agonized over and there were multiple drafts of every document. When you discover that what you are writing is going up unchanged to the most senior levels, it causes you to be a whole lot more careful.

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: In the spring of 1987, President Moi had a working visit to Washington. He came and had lunch with President Reagan, and another lunch with Vice President Bush. As was usual, I as the desk officer had the responsibility of preparing virtually all the briefing papers for the secretary and the others, including at the White House. It's not so complicated to do these papers when it's a relatively small country. It's a mammoth undertaking, however, for a country like India, where I had cut my teeth as a desk officer preparing for a big visit.

The reason I'm telling this story is that President Moi was scheduled to have lunch with Vice President Bush. There were only going to be about 20 guests at the luncheon. When you had to do a briefing paper for Vice President Bush, you just did one, whatever you thought was worthwhile, there were no rigid requirements. So that left some room for creativity. I did write a pretty good paper for the vice president, I thought, and when the office director saw it, he said, did you write this?

Anyway, so it went over to the White House as a backgrounder for the VP's luncheon with President Moi. The morning of the luncheon, I got a call from Don Gregg, who was the chief of staff for Vice President Bush. He said, there's this luncheon today, and the vice president wants to invite you to attend as a guest in thanks for the great briefing paper you did for him. I said, what s that again? Gregg repeated that Bush thought the briefer was unusually helpful, and now there happens to be a place at the table and he wants you to come over and join. I replied, okay, and strolled over. The luncheon was not at the White House, it was opposite the White House just off Lafayette Square; there's a corner house as a museum, called the Stephen Decatur House. He had been a naval hero during the Civil War.

Q: During the Barbary Wars.

EISENBRAUN: Oh? I see. Well, thank you for setting me straight. He had had quite a lovely home on Lafayette Square, which I should go back and tour properly someday, reading all the signs. On that occasion, they had taken over the dining room of the home for the luncheon for President Moi. There were only two other Department officials present, Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker and Ambassador Elinor Constable, and neither knew I was invited. In fact, they knew specifically I wasn't on the guest list because they had seen all the briefing papers. Anyway, I just walked over and had my name checked off and there I was. It was very nice, particularly because I didn't have any official duties; just drink the wine and chat with the Kenyan officials. Afterwards, there was a moment to thank Vice President Bush for including me on the guest list, and he was very gracious about it, saying he hoped that I had enjoyed it.

RICHARD PODOL
Mission Director, USAID
Kampala (1986-1989)

Richard Podol was born in Chicago in 1928. He attended the University of Iowa, where he received his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. He became involved in the Foreign Service in 1954. Mr. Podol has worked in India, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Zaire, and Uganda. He was interviewed by W. Haven North in September 1996.

Q: *So, you finished up in Zaire when?*

PODOL: 1986. Went on mid-tour transfer to Uganda. That's what I was offered and I was delighted to go, though no one else seemed to want to go because of the war that was just finishing up.

Q: *This was the war with Tanzania?*

PODOL: No, this was the civil war. The latest, and I hope the last, civil war, which finally drove Obote out the second time, and his predecessors. I went there on a short visit in May of '86 and the government had captured Kampala in January, so things were just settling down. I heard all the war stories. The AID people had been trapped in the AID Mission for more than 24 hours. They couldn't leave because of the fighting. Fighting on the lawn of the Ambassador's residence, and the shells that were going overhead. So, it was new on everybody's mind. The people who'd been evacuated were just starting to come back in May. So, when I got there in July, it was like starting over again. It was like night and day from Zaire. And I mean that in the positive way. The president was dedicated to development. Again, no Swiss bank account or hint of rip-offs, though some of his subordinates certainly were into it. I met with him a number of times. We'd sit down, hold a conversation, sometimes at his request. We'd go over real issues, he'd make real decisions, and things would happen. It was a delight working with the man. The kind of person he was-

Q: *This was Museveni?*

PODOL: Museveni. AIDS was just becoming known then, and his advisors said, "We have to keep this quiet. It's going to make us look bad." He said, "No, we've got a problem. We want the country to know about it and we want to do something about it." So, it came out in the open, and we had a counter-AIDS program because of this. In other countries, they hid it. Not him. This was the kind of person he was. It was a delight to work in Uganda. In the early days, at night, yes, we turned on the air conditioner to drown out the gunfire, but you learned to live with that. We had his and hers flak jackets.

Q: *You had those?*

PODOL: Yes, we did. My wife and I each had one. We had hand grenades. The AID Mission Director had an armor-plated vehicle that had two rocket launchers in the front. We never drove it because, first of all, the gas mileage was awful, and, secondly, the roads were so rutted that you couldn't make the vehicle just bounce through the ruts. So, I never rode in it. We finally got permission to get rid of it and gave it to the Marines. But that was in mid-1986. Then things returned to normal.

Q: *AID had bought this for the Mission?*

PODOL: Yes. I say this to give you some background of what it was like. The first time I went into the field, in the richest area, around Kampala, which is called the "Luwero Triangle," the center of their coffee growing area. You went down either side of the road and you could pluck the foliage, which had grown in over the road. You'd come to towns and there would be piles of bones. This had been the torture center for the Obote forces. You could see the skeletons. The villages would collect skulls as a reminder. They put them on the side of the road in a kind of a memorial. They'd make several rows of skulls that you'd see. What I'm really trying to share was that the nature of what you had to do in Uganda was really rehabilitation. When the military would go through a building, they'd rip out all the fixtures: the electrical wiring, they'd take the window frames and knobs, because you could sell all that in the market. So, everything was just devastated. I'd say the core of our program initially was, first of all, physical rehabilitation - the agriculture research facility, for example. But also the private sector. There were a lot of dairy farms around, coffee plantations, and they'd gone and destroyed the buildings. So, we had a loan programs set up with one of the banks. We would put up hard currency so they could import what they needed to rebuild their farms. Sometimes, that would be cattle as well as fixtures. So, it was a rehabilitation program primarily, but our focus was on agriculture, agriculture rehabilitation. And we worked with the co-ops. We got into environmental programs, in which there was an interest. And the small loan program. The other area of interest to us was health and then family planning. And then came the focus on AIDS, as that was an issue of great importance. Every couple of weeks, one local person on the staff would die, in the Embassy, for example. They were gone, and AIDS would be the answer. So, it was getting the message out on AIDS.

Q: *What was the Mission strategy for dealing with AIDS?*

PODOL: There were two. There was a major publicity campaign - we weren't the only ones into this - to make people aware of what AIDS was and how it was spread. In the African culture, you were asking a lot, because staying faithful to one's wife was not the norm. Back in Zaire, they had a term for this. You'd invite a Zairois out to an affair and you didn't know who he'd show up with as a female partner. The term was "Deuxième Bureau," the second office. That's the term they gave to their mistress. And it was just as common to bring a mistress to a social affair as the wife, if not more common. And so you had the same situation in Uganda, where you didn't remain faithful to one woman, but you freelanced throughout the society. So, it was socially a very difficult message to get across. So, you tried to do this. The other was to make condoms available: if you were going to fool around, you'd better use your condom. And Africans don't like to use condoms. They say it interferes with the pleasure of sex. We had a problem there. The third, which we started, which really our Division Chief started on his own initiative, were AIDS support groups. These were getting together family members who had a death from AIDS or had somebody dying from AIDS, and providing psychological support to those family members. This idea was accepted and signed in Kampala. That was the core of our program.

Q: *AID started the testing program when you were there?*

PODOL: No.

Q: *Do you recall when started it or not?*

PODOL: I don't really recall. I don't think it had started, but it may have just been about to begin. They found that there was some testing going on, but the quality of the testing was not good. You had to be very careful. We didn't have the controls or the qualified people to do it properly.

Q: *How did you find the government's support in doing the program?*

PODOL: We found that, with the Minister of Health, we got excellent cooperation. Within the Ministry, we found that the number one civil servant could be very difficult to work with. In agriculture, it was the opposite: the Minister was very difficult and the senior civil servants were very easy to work with. So, you had a rather mixed picture.

Q: *And the agriculture, what were you concentrated on?*

PODOL: Primarily working with the Faculty of Agriculture and with the Agriculture Research Institutes. With the Faculty of Agriculture, it meant sending people to the States for advanced degrees, and providing American professors through Ohio State and Minnesota to replace them while they went abroad for training. And in working with the Dean on the curriculum. And rehabilitating their Agriculture Research Station, which was right outside town. That's where they trained their students and did experimental plots and so on. So, physical rehabilitation, staff development, and some curriculum.

Q: *Were you working at all with farming implements or support - cooperatives and things of that sort?*

PODOL: Yes. We had a major program with the agriculture cooperatives. They were quite effective.

Q: *What were they doing?*

PODOL: They were selling. Cooperatives were getting into marketing and milling. We worked on the management of co-ops to improve their management structure.

Q: *Was ACDI involved in it?*

PODOL: Yes, with ACDI (Agricultural Cooperatives Development International). We were also rehabilitating some of the other research stations, which meant going in and putting housing back in shape where people could live in it, and rehabilitating the station. We had a mechanic there who was rebuilding equipment, working with the local people on rebuilding equipment. These kind of things.

Q: *Did you find any of the former AID projects in the country you could rehabilitate or put back on their feet?*

PODOL: A lot of these had been before, but had been suspended and came back.

Q: *What about the USAID-supported Torro School for Girls, a project of the 1960s?*

PODOL: We were not in education at all. Washington at one time called and said, "Hey, we've got our education money. Do you want it?" And we said, "No, we can't handle it." We didn't have the staff to work on it, except for the agriculture faculty. That's about all.

Q: *How big a program was it?*

PODOL: It was growing each year. Uganda was in favor in Washington. It must have crossed the $10-12 million mark, going up to $15 million. We had a PL 480 program, which was different. Uganda had the best soap-making plant in all of Africa. It had shut down during the war. The owner was what they called an "Asian." He came back and reopened the plant and he needed raw material. You had two choices: he could get palm oil from Malaysia, for example, or he could get animal fat from Europe and the U.S. So, our PL 480 program was bringing in the animal fat to make soap. So, we were providing soap for the countryside and, at the same time, gaining local currency, which supported our other programs in cooperation with the government. And for the long-term opening up the possibility of a U.S. export market. They were very, very short of cooking oil at this time, so we brought in oil and sold it through a government agency. So, they had cooking oil on the market. Those were the two PL 480 programs.

Q: *What is your overall impression of the impact of our program there? Was it significant in terms of rehabilitation?*

PODOL: It could have been and should have been, but we're talking time frames again. We were just getting rehabilitation going. It didn't happen overnight. The dairy farms that we worked with, they got their loans, their equipment was being imported, they were going back in business. So, these programs gave every indication of rehabilitating the economy. Exports were picking up in pineapples, for example. Just as I was leaving, the newest program got under way, and that was the return of Asian properties. When Idi Amin kicked the Asians out, the government took over the properties of the Asians and ran them into the ground. Museveni, when he came in, invited the Asians to come back and said they could have their property back. If they couldn't find them, or who knows, then the property would be sold to local Ugandans. A number of the Asians did come back. They were petitioning to get their property back. As I mentioned, the one that came back and took over his soap factory. He came back as a Ugandan. They'd been in Canada. His wife retained her Canadian citizenship, which gave him both an out and a connection for imports and so on. So, that was how they played the game. We had brought somebody in to help them work up their divestiture program. This was the area that was really open to finagling, because the Ugandans really wanted some of these properties. I don't know how this finally shaped up, but this was one we were working on. That was the worrisome one. But we must have been doing something right because in my last two years in Uganda, I received performance pay awards.

Q: *Did you have any particular problems or questions or relationship with the Embassy?*

PODOL: I did have the full support of the Ambassador.

Q: *Who was that?*

PODOL: Robert Houdek, who was the most knowledgeable Ambassador that I've ever worked with. He'd been in Kenya. Then he went to Ethiopia. He really knew East Africa and that was a big plus. We had no problems. But it illustrates another kind of problem that AID might have if it ever was combined with the Embassy. The AID staff was much senior to the Embassy staff, because the State Department people that worked in small African countries were Junior Officers. So, I outranked the DCM and was the same rank as the Ambassador. The Economics Officer was just past his internship on his first real tour. The Political Officer I think was on her first or second tour, several grades below our people. This did not cause us any problems there, but it could have if they had really tried to get involved. They didn't. But if you put the two organizations together, how do you do it with the disparity in ranks in these countries that are not important to the State Department but are important to AID?

Q: *Did that affect who was on the list to be invited to Ugandan functions?*

PODOL: No, it wasn't that. It was, what do you do to merge the two? How can you have the AID people outranking the Embassy people? It would be very difficult to try and get that across. I'd been through 32 years of government service, which the DCM didn't have. Add in the Political and Economic Officers, I have more service than the three of them put together.

Q: *What about relations with Washington?*

PODOL: Great. Chuck Gladson was the Assistant Administrator. He came out to visit us, thought we had an outstanding program, and went back and said, "I want Uganda increased." So, we had excellent cooperation and usually Larry Saiers, one of the Deputies.

Q: *Larry Saiers?*

PODOL: Yes, Larry Saiers was the one we worked with. From time to time, he was a little more difficult because he sometimes tried to nitpick. He said, "You want to bring out four people to work in the university? Why four? Why not three?" You know, the kind of stuff where it can drive you crazy, to have to justify that sort of thing. Other than that, we had no problems. So, I found it was a really delightful post.

Q: *You were there-?*

PODOL: Until July 1989.

Q: *Any more about your Uganda experience?*

PODOL: Maybe just a postscript that might be of interest. Museveni was from the southwestern part of Uganda. He was the first president of Uganda from the south. All the others had been northerners. So, this gave him a range of support in the south, but not in the north, where the

problems still are. But he was from the southwest. His wife, if you were to see his wife, you would think she was a Tutsi, which she wasn't. But she was a cousin of the Tutsis. Museveni's grandfather had come up from Rwanda, or whatever it was called at the time, with his cattle and settled in Western Uganda. The point I'm making is that there were very strong relationships that still exist between the Museveni family and the Tutsis, who are now running Rwanda. So, when the Tutsi refugees had to leave Rwanda, they came into Uganda and were there in Uganda for many years. They fought in Museveni's army against Obote. These were the people that came back and overthrew the Hutu government and now rule. So, you have a very close relationship between the current Rwandan government and the current Ugandan government. The other is, we were pushing Uganda to hold elections, have a constitution. And Museveni was resisting not so much the presidential election, but the constitution. Here again, you get into the question of what is a cohesive nation. At the time of independence, it was a series of Kingdoms, which the British stitched together and called it "Uganda." The Kingship idea is still alive. Museveni invited back the heir to the throne of the people who live around Kampala. That was a big decision: whether he should be allowed to come back or not, and, if he did come back, would there be problems? I ran into this personally once. The head of one of the banks that implemented our loan program took me on a tour of his facilities out west. He was from one of the former Kingdoms in the southwest and his uncle had been the last King. He was a Prince. His cousin would be King if they had restored the Kingdom. So, we went out there. I didn't know what was going to happen. We got out there and, there it was, set up like a throne, he sat on it. All the people would come by, bow, pay their homage, hold a big party for him. Royalty. So, the feeling is still there. The feeling toward the old Kingdoms, tribally-based Kingdoms, is still there. So, you had to worry about "What kind of government can I set up? If I decentralize, what's going to happen?" For them, it's an extremely tough question.

Q: *Do you think that was part of Museveni's concerns about elections?*

PODOL: Absolutely. So, he first had village elections and now they have a Parliament. And they had presidential elections, but that was pretty one-sided. As far as I know, they still don't have a constitution that delineates power to regions, the old Kingdoms. Like everywhere else in Africa, they don't have a common language, which makes it that much more difficult for all these countries. English is the link language, as we found out in India. It was the only common language in India, among the educated people.

Q: *Any more on Uganda?*

PODOL: Yes, I do have one more thing. One lesson that was learned was that, in Africa and maybe beyond Africa, people do not distinguish between public and private resources. That means that, if you are a government official and you have money or jobs, commodities at your disposal, your family, your clan, your village expects you to share those resources with them. If you don't, you become an outcast in your own village. So, the pressure they put on government official is very severe to share resources. Often, it is not resisted. In the agriculture research station of the university, we provided a tractor. Every so often, that tractor would disappear for a day or two and we'd find out it was out plowing the land of somebody nearby. We'd go to the Dean and say, "Why do you do this? That tractor is for your research station and for nobody else." Here we'd go into this situation again, about the demands that are made by his neighbors,

and friends, and family members. They don't distinguish. If those resources are there, you can use them. You were entitled to your share. So, you look at corruption in a little different way when you understand some of the roots of it in these kind of cases.

ROBERT E. GRIBBIN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Kampala (1988-1991)

Ambassador Gribbin was born in 1946 in North Carolina and graduated from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee and SAIS. He served in numerous posts including Bangui, Kigali, Mombasa and Kampala. He was named ambassador to the Central African Republic in 1993 and ambassador to Rwanda in 1996. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: This is the 27th of July. Bob, 1988 you were in Kampala, Uganda, from when to when?

GRIBBIN: I was there for three years.

Q: *1988 to 1991. What was the situation in Uganda when you were there? Do you call it "Ooganda" or "Yooganda?"*

GRIBBIN: People say both. Uganda had gone through its period of relative peace and prosperity just after independence in the 1970s, and then a military coup with Idi Amin at its head took power in 1971. Things deteriorated considerably internally in Uganda during Amin's reign. The U.S. embassy was closed in 1973. Amin was subsequently overthrown via a war with Tanzania that culminated in 1979. He went into exile in Saudi Arabia, and although he tried a very brief comeback to Uganda in 1986 or 1987, he has subsequently stayed in Arabia since. After Amin's ouster, instability in Uganda continued. There were a couple of interim presidents, then Obote came back as president and was more ineffective in his second term than he'd been in the first term. In response to Obote's stolen election, a young politician named Yoweri Museveni went to the bush and began a revolution. He started in 1981. This was a genuine revolution. Museveni's troops fought in rural areas. They solidified grassroots people against an increasingly corrupt inept government and its brutal army. Museveni took power in Kampala in January of 1986. Beginning at that point, he brought more stability to Uganda than it had experienced in years. However, remnants of the Obote era army retreated to the northern part of the country to fight on and even a much smaller offshoot of that force wages an insurgency still today. But an initial problem with the northerners manifested itself in Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement, which was a group of people motivated by this charismatic priestess - this happened in 1986. Her warriors felt they had religious powers and magic charms so as to turn bullets into water. In turn the Holy Spirit Movement attacked Museveni's army. There was a great slaughter outside of Jinja. Members of the NRA, the army, told me later they were terribly embarrassed to have participated in this conflict, but the warriors kept charging at them waving sticks and machetes as they fell before modern machine guns. In any case, internal security problems persisted in Uganda on into the 1980s and indeed into the 1990s and now into the 21st century.

But to go back to the scene, when I arrived in Kampala in 1988, Museveni had been in power for two years. Most of the country was at peace. By and large the rule of law was reestablished. The wreckage that Amin had done to the economy was being addressed. The government would soon ask Asians, whom Amin had expelled, to come back and resume economic activities. Some had already come back and others would come in the course of the time I was there. Museveni was a new broom, sweeping both politically and economically. With some tutelage and a great deal of shared experiences from the Western countries, the World Bank in particular but also USAID, the president learned about the economic reforms and policies recommended for countries like Uganda. Policies included privatization, getting the government out of the businesses that African socialism had gotten governments into, allowing markets to set prices rather than government commodity boards, floating the currency, adopting better monetary and fiscal policy, especially more realistic tax policies. When Museveni headed in that direction, the donor community, including the U.S. Government, began to provide essential resources to help push reforms forward. Once reforms underway were successful, even more resources flowed in. Politically, Uganda was historically torn by both religious and tribal strife that tended to follow the same cleavages in the society. Museveni himself had been stunned by a stolen election. He judged that partisan politics were based on tribal interests rather than individual or national interests. Therefore, his movement declared a non-party democracy whereby political parties still existed, but were forbidden to practice politics. Museveni formed a government of national unity, including people from those various non-active parties along, with his National Resistance Movement, as it was called, and began a substantial reform of the whole political system. Uganda established the National Resistance Council system wherein groups of ten families would chose a councilor. Ten councilors in turn would elect a councilor for the next level, and so forth up to level five, which was also Parliament. Essentially this system of pyramid government provided for indirect representation up to the national level.

This was a time of a great hope for Uganda, but when I got there in 1988 a lot of the hope had not been realized. There were still lingering hatreds and suspicions. An immature army controlled the country. Boys as young as 10 or 12, called *kadogos*, which means 'child' in Swahili, served in the ranks. Both Ugandans and diplomats were unsure of Museveni's credentials. He hadn't yet proved himself to be a democrat or a free marketer. He was known to have come out of the University of Dar Es Salaam, when it was in its Socialist Fabian phase in the 1960s. He schooled with revolutionaries in Mozambique who were Marxists, and so forth. No one was clear exactly what the new president’s orientation would be. However, given the chaos that had been Uganda and the difficulties in the region, the United States was particularly pleased to see the turnaround. We appreciated the considerable hope that Museveni and his government offered for stability and regaining a steady path to the future.

Q: *By this time, 1988, when you got there, Uganda had two neighbors who had gone somewhat different ways. You had Tanzania, where you had Nyerere, who drove the country into the ground in sort of benevolent dictatorship (or maybe not so benevolent), but you know I mean used the socialist thing to a fare-thee-well and destroyed a thriving economy; and you had Mobutu, who was just ruling sort of a kleptocracy with him at the head.*

GRIBBIN: And you had Kenya, which was notoriously corrupt.

Q: *And Kenya, which was corrupt as hell, and of course you had to the north the Sudan, which was in a civil war.*

GRIBBIN: Exactly. These were four distinct models that Uganda chose to eschew. Ugandans learned lessons from them, however. Looking at Tanzania, Uganda learned that the idea of Socialism, Ujama - national ownership of all of the assets of production, was not the way to proceed. In Kenya they saw that a system based on private enterprise could function well, but if the system got corrupted then the system became counter-productive. In Zaire under Mobutu Uganda witnessed the complete collapse of both the economy and the political system. And Sudan was bitterly divided by war and racism. None of these nations were good models.

Q: *What was the tribal pattern in Uganda, and how did it fit into the mix in the area at that time?*

GRIBBIN: Uganda has had internal tribal difficulties dating back centuries. Essentially, the Baganda live in the center of the country. The name Uganda comes from Buganda, Buganda had long been a distinct kingdom. In fact, under the British the territory was the Protectorate of Buganda and Uganda. Buganda had special status with in the protectorate such that the king of Buganda, the Kabaka, was the chief of state of the whole country. One of the problems that Ugandans had to try to iron out after independence was whether or not Buganda should continue to have special status as a legal entity inside Uganda. There were three other historical kingdoms in Uganda that sought the autonomy that Buganda enjoyed. Another key cleavage is between the Bantu speakers, largely southerners and westerners versus northerners, the Acholi and Langi, who are Nilotics. President Obote was from the north. Idi Amin was from another section of the north that was not Nilotic but West Nilotic. He came from a relatively small group, and was a unique phenomenon in and of himself. Uganda's tribes are divided linguistically, culturally, religiously (the Buganda tend to be Catholic whereas northerners tend to be Protestant) and politically. Obote's party was the Ugandan People's Congress from the north, and the two parties in the south were the Democratic Party and Kabaka Yekka, which was the Bugandan royalist party. Since independence Uganda has harbored a very complex internal political situation.

Regarding Tanzania and Kenya, relations with Tanzania were correct and proper. Museveni did his university and revolutionary studies in Tanzania. When he fled Uganda in 1981 to form his rebel movement he went to Tanzania, which he used as a base of operations. Tanzania, of course, had provided the troops to oust Idi Amin in 1979 and Museveni had taken part in that operation. So relations with Tanzania were satisfactory. However, Uganda's relationship with Kenya was not very good. There was antipathy between President Moi and President Museveni. Moi apparently saw Museveni as a younger man who did not pay enough respect to his elder. Museveni, in turn, viewed Moi as an old dinosaur who presided over a corrupt régime and whose time to go was past. In contrast, Museveni viewed himself as a new type of revolutionary leader, a man of the people. Relations with Kenya were very cool. Even when the two leaders would meet, the atmosphere was one of forced civility rather than genuine warmth. Then there were incidents that hampered cordial ties. One involved Alice Lakwena, who received refuge in Kenya -

Q: *She was the foreign minister?*

GRIBBIN: No, she was the high priestess of the Holy Spirit Movement. Uganda wanted her back, to stand trial, and all of that, but Kenya wouldn't return her. So in turn, Uganda would facilitate the departure of dissidents from Kenya, including one case I was involved in. This involved a man named Barrack Mbajah who was the brother of Robert Ouko, the Kenyan foreign minister who was assassinated in 1989 or 90. The general view was that Ouko's murder related to State House politics in Kenya. Perhaps because of that, there was a concerted effort to pin the responsibility on others. One of the people being investigated for the crime was Ouko's brother Barrack Mbajah. He surreptitiously came across the border from Kenya and presented himself at my office to ask for help to get to the United States. I did help, but also thought it necessary to tell the Ugandans about what we were doing and solicit their support for it. They were supportive. But again, they did this not because they believed in this man's alibi – they weren't really concerned with facts - but because they knew his departure would irritate Kenyan authorities.

Q: *Who was your ambassador when you went there?*

GRIBBIN: When I arrived in the summer, in August 1988, the ambassador was Bob Houdek. Bob was in the process of saying farewell, and left about two weeks afterwards. I ended up being the chargé for about three or four months before John Burroughs came. John was my ambassador for the rest of my tour.

Q: *What was his background?*

GRIBBIN: John had been the ambassador in Malawi, and consul general in Capetown, He came into the Foreign Service from a civilian Navy background.

Q: *Well, now, during the time from 1988 to 1991, essentially you're really talking about the Bush years. What was the American interest in Uganda?*

GRIBBIN: Recall that Uganda was in a disreputable neighborhood. Its neighbors were decaying, crumbling, fighting or tainted by corruption. So when Uganda began to emerge from its chaos, we looked to Uganda to become a model for the region. It was a country that had faced problems and found solutions that it was determined to pursue. We judged that those solutions were appropriate. President Museveni was one of the more complex and interesting people I have ever encountered. For example, he would stand up at public rallies and ask people to consider their problems - economic problems, not enough schools, not enough health clinics, inadequate prices for commodities, not enough availability of consumer goods, and he would ask, "How many people here are over 20?" And only about a third of the crowd raised their hands. Everyone one else was under 20. The president would ask, "Who is responsible for Uganda?" He would answer, "We've been independent for 30 years, so most of you never knew the British. This is not the British's fault. Poverty is our fault, it's our country, and if we're going to fix it we have to do it ourselves." That was the sort of straight talking that resonated in donor capitals.

I think there was also an American recognition that the people of Uganda had suffered much over the years. Therefore, from a purely humanitarian perspective, we sort of owed them the opportunity to have a better chance at life.

Q: *Well, the Cold War equation was just about dead, wasn't it, by that time when you got there in 1988? I mean the Soviet influence.*

GRIBBIN: It was dead in Uganda. The Cold War had never been much of a factor in Uganda, and it certainly was not a factor at all by the late 1980s. I was there when German unification took place, I recall my colleagues from the West German Embassy complaining of the difficulties of integrating their East German colleagues into their diplomatic operation. I don't really recall any other east/west issues, so they certainly weren't important.

Q: *How does the president of Uganda do during this period. Obviously, everybody was watching him very carefully to figure out how he was going to operate. He had already been doing it. Did you see any changes in how he worked?*

GRIBBIN: We saw progressive implementation of policies that were appropriate. On the political side, we saw grassroots elections take place in stages. In fact, Uganda was really creating a representative government. On the economic side policies and attitudes evolved. Asians were invited to come back and reoccupy their properties. Privatization, the selling off of government-owned businesses, went forward. There was real evidence, manifested in the growth in GDP, of improving prosperity for the man in the street. This occurred despite the fact that vis a vis security, Kampala remained fairly dangerous. The place was awash in AK-47s.

Q: *Automatic rifles of Soviet manufacture.*

GRIBBIN: There was shooting every night. The army was not well disciplined. In fact, gangs involved in criminal activities turned out to be composed of army and ex-army personnel. We lived on Kololo Hill. Most of the embassy houses were on one of seven Kampala hills. There was an army base on the top of Kololo. Every couple of weeks, if not more often, without fail, somebody would walk down to the perimeter of the army camp and spray a round of AK-47 bullets out over our house. This usually happened in the middle of the night. I would grab the kids out of their beds and we'd all hustle to the safe haven, lock the door and sit in there for an hour or so to see if anything more would transpire. We only had intruders on the grounds once or twice, and the house was pretty well fortified, so we didn't have other difficulties. But there were shooting incidents every night. I remember one morning our GSO got on the radio net - nobody had telephones that worked at the time - and told the RSO that she would not come to work that day because there was a body in the road in front of her gate. Until it was gone she would not be coming in. Sadly, those were sort of things we learned to live with. I was shot at directly once. About half-way into my tour, I was taking my morning jog. I often ran in the morning along the same route. One morning, from this same army camp, some bullets stitched into the road right in front of me. I dove into the ditch, and then people started hollering from up on the hill, *"Mkosa, mkosa!"* which means, 'It's a mistake." Still I waited for some time before I got up and went home. I have never run since. I learned my lesson.

Q: *You say they were firing from the army base - were these essentially young kids with guns?*

GRIBBIN: Some young and some old, but essentially devoid of discipline. We had other security incidents - there were several. One day when the ambassador was playing tennis at the American Club, a hand grenade sailed over the fence and landed on the tennis court and blew up. Fortunately, the ambassador had just left the court. The hand grenade itself was an old one of Chinese manufacture and didn't have an enormous amount of firepower, but nonetheless, the incident galvanized Washington and Kampala security services. The result was to mount a local security detail for the ambassador, which I inherited from time to time when I was chargé. One time when the detail was with me, I attended an event at the International Conference Center. My bodyguard had to check his gun at the gate because the president was going to speak. And so he did. When I came out after the event and found my driver and the security man - his name was Steven - he said, "There's a problem. I can't get my gun back." I asked, "Why is that a problem? You gave it to them, you got the check for it, go back for it, they have to give it back to you." He told me that the guards were so impressed with the gun - it was one the U.S. Government had provided, a .38 police special, I think - that they played around with it, and one of the soldiers accidentally shot another in the leg. Consequently, their chief wanted to keep the gun for evidence for a court martial. Finally, we did manage to get the gun back. But this was the kind of poor discipline that existed in the army. Even soldiers assigned to important security details at principal establishments didn't have their act together.

Q: *Were there any problems? You were there during the Gulf War, and there were reports that there were going to be Iraqi hit squads rolling all around. Did this affect you at all?*

GRIBBIN: We had a solid relationship with the Ugandan intelligence organizations and stayed in close touch about those sorts of issues. I do not recall any specific alerts. The U.S. embassy was located in the back wing of the British High Commission building. We were tenants of the British. When we left in 1973 the embassy had been in an office building that we rented. When we returned to reopen in the early 1980s, it was no longer suitable for us. Since the British High Commission building was about the only secure structure available, the U.S. – at the invitation of HMG - opened what was to be a temporary office in the back of the British High Commission. We were still there when I arrived in 1988. In fact, in 2000 we were still there, although with viable plans finally to move into a building of our own design and construction. So we shared security with the British High Commission, and we had very good cooperation from the Ugandan authorities.

Q: *I never remember which is on top and which is on the bottom of Burundi and Rwanda. Which is the top one?*

GRIBBIN: Rwanda is the top one and Uganda's neighbor.

Q: *What was happening there in the time you were there in Uganda as far as the Hutu- Tutsi problem was concerned?*

GRIBBIN: During this time there were half a million or so Tutsi refugees in Uganda. And a certain number of them - about eight or nine - were core people in Museveni's rise to power, and subsequently key figures in the Ugandan military. Even so, Rwanda was a neighbor. President Museveni and President Habyarimana met periodically to discuss bilateral and regional issues.

The general presumption was that Museveni was more sympathetic to his Tutsi colleagues than he would be to Rwanda's Hutu leadership. In fact, Museveni had cordial relations with Habyarimana. In the months before the invasion from Uganda into Rwanda, he warned Habyarimana on several occasions of the restlessness of his Tutsi cohorts and underlined the need for Habyarimana to make accommodations so that refugees might return home. In response, the Habyarimana government announced some flexibility on visiting, but in the end decided overcrowded Rwanda just didn't have space for returnees and wouldn't take them back. All of this culminated on October 1st, 1990. But first let me tell you another story.

Museveni was quite interested in using our IMET (International Military Education and Training) program as part of an effort to improve military skills and to professionalize his army. I believe we had about $400,000 for the program. We didn't have a military attaché, so it fell to the DCM to manage that program. I dealt with the chief of military training to select candidates for American military schools – infantry, engineering, logistics, mechanics and the like. We finally wrangled a slot at the Command General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, which is perhaps the most senior military training opportunity that the U.S. Army offers. I took that to Museveni, who was also the minister of defense. So something like that would go up to him in any case. He decided that he wanted to send a general, a major general, Fred Rwigema, to the Command General Staff College. Now "General Fred," as he was known, was Tutsi. He was the senior of the Rwandan Tutsi refugees who helped bring Museveni to power. He was at that time the deputy army commander and also the commander of operations in the north. I passed this news to the U.S. Army. The reply noted that the U.S. Army didn't accept generals for training. Generals were deemed by their rank to have already been trained. CGSC welcomed fast track majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels. Museveni was insistent that none of his senior staff had had any military training except what they learned in the bush. He thought it was time for them to be formally trained and this was a good opportunity.

Finally, the president proposed and the U.S. Army agreed that he would bust Rwigema back to colonel and send him off to Command General Staff College. I made the necessary arrangements in the summer of 1990. However, the day before he was to leave, General Rwigema showed up at my house just before midnight and he told me that he would not be going. He said he had convinced the President that on account of pressing family matters he couldn't leave Uganda at that time. After the hoops we had jumped through to arrange matters, I certainly didn't want to lose the slot. I insisted to Rwigema that someone take his place. He agreed. The next day the president's office called to advise that Lieutenant Colonel Paul Kagame would go instead. I rushed to process Kagame's papers and saw him off to Command General Staff College in early July 1990.

Rwigema's reasons for staying home became clear several months later. In September of 1990 Rwigema undertook to organize the national military parade, and rather than do it in Kampala - the year before I think they had done it in Gulu in the north as sort of a show of force - he decided to do it in Mbarara, which is in the southern part of the country. Rwigema began a process moving troops, equipment and such for the parade to Mbarara. In reality he was shifting men, Tutsis who were members of the National Resistance Army, Uganda's army, and materiel south in preparation for invasion of Rwanda. The attack occurred on October 1st, 1990. About

5,000 troops mutinied, took on the name of the Rwandan Patriotic Army and under Rwigema's leadership invaded Rwanda. They were initially fairly successful. They moved rapidly towards Kigali. They might have taken Kigali, and thus all of Rwanda had not the French and the Belgians intervened. Zaire also sent a few ineffectual troops. Thus reinforced the Rwandan Army pushed the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Army back to the northern part of Rwanda where the lines jelled. In the first or second week of this war, General Rwigema who was apparently standing in a truck surveying the front lines was hit by a bullet and killed.

Shortly afterwards, I received the expected phone call from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, reporting that Kagame had left, gone AWOL, if you will, from Fort Leavenworth. He advised that he would go to Uganda and Rwanda to take up the struggle. That's why General Kagame wears the label "U.S. trained," because he spent four months in the United States in the first phases of the Command General Staff College program. Kagame proved, among other things, to be a master strategist. In fact, his tactics were subsequently studied and commended by Americans at the War College. He accomplished his objective with a minimum loss of troops. He inflicted damage on the enemy, and did so without ever coming to a pitched or final battle. Kagame left his enemy a path of retreat.

President Museveni and President Habyarimana both happened to be at the United Nations in New York when the invasion happened. Since President Museveni was in the U.S., Ambassador Burroughs was there as well. I was chargé in Kampala when all of this went down. There was a great deal of internal State Department discussion between Embassy Kampala and Embassy Kigali and Washington about whose responsibility this invasion was and how to stop it. We tried to assess whether and where we had leverage. We asked if Museveni were the architect of all this? If not, was he an unwitting accomplice or what? Museveni quickly returned home. I held a number of discussions with him, about what he knew and didn't know and when he knew it. He professed ignorance of invasion plans but owned up to understanding the Tutsi sentiment of wanting to return home. He also acknowledged that they might be justified in taking up arms to rectify wrongs that could not otherwise be resolved. I found that the president was a master of not knowing things that he knew he should not know, typically involving details of the invasion. Several difficult and tense months ensued, but Museveni held his ground. Outwardly, at least, he did take steps to deny rebel use of Ugandan territory and otherwise conform to requests to try to defuse the conflict. We had information that communicated to us that there was more going on on the Ugandan side than anybody would admit to. Of course, that was not unexpected under the circumstances.

Let me say something about Kenya and Zaire.

Q: *Yes, would you?*

GRIBBIN: Relations with Zaire deteriorated because there seemed to be an alliance or at least a common view between President Moi and President Mobutu about Museveni’s arrogance and his non-respect for their longevity, wisdom and so forth. This began to manifest itself in terms of Kinshasa’s support for anti-Museveni rebel groups congregated along the Zairian border. V*ice versa* there was Ugandan support for the anti-Mobutu groups deployed along the Uganda side of the border. I'm not exactly sure of the timing, but the Ugandan security services had picked up

information that they considered valid to the effect that a plot existed between Kenya and Zaire, between the two presidents, to do something about Museveni. Obviously, this led to a great deal more suspicions about neighbors on the part of Uganda and to the intensification of border violence, particularly with Zaire.

I got involved because I was the French speaker at the embassy and tried to help the Zairians resolve issues with Uganda. The U.S. ambassador in Zaire persuaded Mobutu that the way to the resolve problem was to send a high-level emissary to Kampala, not just for a one-day trip, but to spend the time necessary to sort things out. Consequently, Mobutu sent, I believe his name was Mr. Ngabandi, who was number two in the Zairian intelligence apparatus, over to Kampala to be this ambassador. Ngabandi took over an empty and non-functioning Zairian Embassy, but he immediately came to the American Embassy for orientation. Ambassador Burroughs turned him over to me because I spoke French. I counseled and advised as to who to meet and what needed to be done in terms of convincing the Ugandans that Zaire did not harbor ill intentions towards Uganda, particularly towards its leader. Thus began a several months long exercise that defused tensions between the leaders of those two countries. It also avoided escalation of the border difficulties between them.

Q: *This is an unclassified interview, but Zaire has always had the reputation that the CIA has had considerable influence there, although by this time I imagine it was changing. But did that cause any problems for you all?*

GRIBBIN: I think one of the reasons the Zairian envoy came to us right away was because he was used to dealing with Americans. I was obviously on the diplomatic side rather than the intelligence side of the shop, but the crisis was one that we'd helped identify. The Ugandans had come to us with it because they knew we knew Zaire, in order to ask for ... not good offices - it was much less formal than that - but our help in addressing the problem. And that worked.

Q: *What sort of things, as you were dealing with this, was it to get both sides to stop messing around on the borders of the other side?*

GRIBBIN: Ultimately that was it, but in the first instance we had to get them to gloss over this information - I don't have any idea how accurate it was - that there was some sort of plot. We had to get them to assure each other that it was not the intent of either government to destabilize the other. They needed to rebuild confidence so that messages of good faith and the desire for good relations resonated truthfully. Essentially this was a diplomatic problem. Part of our role was to show both sides that the U.S. took the issue seriously and seriously wanted it resolved. One way the respective governments showed their accord was to clamp down on exiles they could control. Both sides did that.

Q: *Speaking of rebels, a couple of years ago a bunch of tourists were taken up in Uganda by some sort of group, and I think a couple of them were killed. Were there sort of entrepreneurial guerilla groups out in that area going after ransom?*

GRIBBIN: No, no one was doing precisely that. However, there was a history of kidnappings in Uganda during Amin's time, when Amin captured a planeload of American Peace Corps

volunteer trainees on their way to Zaire and held them for a couple of days. That was ultimately one of the reasons why we broke diplomatic relations with Amin in 1973. The problem of tourists becoming victims of violence has been more common in Kenyan game parks where it was really just criminal violence. Laurent Kabila, in his early days, kidnapped some American students from Jane Goodall's camp on Lake Tanganyika and took them back to the Congo where he held them for ransom. That operation ultimately cost Ambassador Beverly Carter his job in Tanzania in 1975, I believe.

Q: *He's now the president of Zaire.*

GRIBBIN: Kabila, yes. The 1999 incident you referred to was organized by Hutu insurgents from Rwanda in Uganda's Impenetrable Forest, the Bwindi Forest. That came many years later and was directly linked to the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In the late 1980s, we had not yet experienced those sorts of problems in Uganda. There were not many tourists. A lot of the game areas, including Murchison Falls National Park, at least the north bank of the park, were out of bounds, and the parks in the far northeast were not safe. We just did not travel to the north where the local insurgency continued unabated. I only went up into the north three or four times, always with military escorts and once in a military helicopter. On one trip I visited Moyo, right on the Sudanese border in regard to Sudanese refugee issues. The day after I left Moyo, which is in Uganda, was bombed by the Sudanese Air Force.

As for resident Americans, there was an American religious sect that we worried about a lot. We feared it risked becoming a Jim Jones type organization, but fortunately it never became that bizarre. Even so, adherents believed that the dead should be physically preserved so that they could be resurrected. This was a strange practice that alienated many nearby Ugandans, so we kept an eye on the Americans. We didn't have a lot of what we called WTs - world travelers, young backpacking tourists - because the border with Zaire was very difficult to cross and Sudan's impossible. Trans-Africa overland traffic had essentially stopped. Nonetheless a few brave souls ventured into Uganda. Queen Elizabeth Park on the border with Zaire reopened. It had been devastated during the Tanzanian occupation from 1979-81. The 5,000 elephants were reduced to a herd of only 300. Other animals had been similarly wiped out. Kob and chimpanzees had suffered greatly. A single lodge reopened during the late 1980s. Neither were there facilities in Murchison Falls Park. In short the animals and the infrastructure needed for tourism were nor longer there.

During the years of chaos, the American missionary community greatly diminished, but in the Museveni years there was a resurgence of missionaries. These were a new breed. Not people who came to Africa to stay for the rest of their lives, but ones that came with special talents - medical or educational or financial and accounting or things like that to help local churches develop expertise that they theretofore had not had. We were also beginning to receive American businessmen.

Q: *What did Uganda produce, and how did they get it out to the market?*

GRIBBIN: At the time of independence, Uganda was one of the richest countries on the continent. Its economy was essentially based on coffee, but tea, cotton, copper, cobalt and

associated minerals were also exported. Exports went by rail or truck to Mombasa, Kenya and then on to the world's markets. These days Uganda grows vegetables and cut flowers that are air-exported to Europe every day. It has gotten into local manufactures, textiles, plastics, soap, and things like that. In the Museveni era the economy is becoming diversified.

Q: *I remember Idi Amin made a big thing about expelling the Asians from Uganda, and of course they were the small merchants and all. Were they being reinserted, or had Ugandans sort of picked up the merchant trade?*

GRIBBIN: Both. Some of the Asians never left. Most of them did. I think 90 to 95 percent of the Asians left. Not only were they important in small commerce, but they were Uganda's big industrialists, owning soap and sugar factories and breweries and things like that. Some Asians came back as early as 1979, when Amin was ousted. Others, whose property was held by the Custodial Board, weren't sure of their rights. When Museveni's government began a process of returning properties to those who could make a viable claim, more returned. Additionally, if the property was not returnable or not wanted by the long departed Asian, then title was actually passed to the Custodial Board which in turn could sell it. For the first time since 1972, many properties, including houses and businesses, were transferred to new owners who put them to use.

In intervening years, much of the small trade had been taken over by Africans, by Ugandans, who were doing pretty well at it. Consequently, the Asians that came back operated bigger businesses. They were more oriented to manufacturing and production than to small commerce.

Q: *How did you find dealing with the Ugandan Government?*

GRIBBIN: We dealt with a wide range of people in the government. Our AID director Dick Podol and his successor Keith Sherper and deputy Fred Winch dealt with the Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning. The embassy dealt with the President's office quite a lot, the Ministry of Defense, the Security Services, and of course the Foreign Ministry. Despite the troubles of the 1970s, Uganda had a cadre of very well educated, very astute, and very smart people that we dealt with. Museveni practiced inclusion. For example, most of the time I was there, the foreign minister was Paul Ssemogerere. Ssemogerere was the head of the Democratic Party, the opposition party. Even so he was a member of the government of national unity. Ssemogerere was a very competent and capable man. Unfortunately, I think he's still waiting his time, which will now never come, to contest directly for the presidency. But he and his multi-party team of intellectuals at the ministry - deputy ministers, the permanent secretary and others were very effective. Uganda exceeded other African countries in involving women in politics and national leadership, not only as appointees in government but also in parliament. The National Assembly had reserved, I think, 60 seats - maybe it was 30 seats - for women, and those women were elected by women. So, in fact, women in Uganda were double-enfranchised. Not only could they vote for the regular contestants in parliamentary races, but they also had a second vote for the women's slot. That was a good idea. Women did bring a different perspective not just to issues of national reconciliation, but also to the establishment of priorities, particularly in education and health care.

AIDS was the enormous social problem.

Q: *Had it already developed?*

GRIBBIN: Although we were just beginning to learn about it, AIDS was well advanced,. The Ugandan Government deserves credit for being very forthright in looking at the problem and in devising ways to address it. Essentially, AIDS probably first broke into a pandemic in Uganda, in the district of Rakai, to the south of Kampala, near Lake Victoria. By the time I arrived in 1988, there were tens of thousands of orphans in Rakai District who had lost one or both of their parents. Organizations like Save the Children were involved in trying to hold families together. A key problem was that no one was left to grow food. Grandmothers couldn't do it. They might have 15 children in their care when they ought to be free from such responsibilities and farm work. The AIDS problem was real, and was also afflicting the people of Kampala. The infection rate among the adult population in Kampala rose to almost 30 percent.

Q: *What was said of the sexual pattern that was spreading this?*

GRIBBIN: AIDS in Africa is a heterosexual problem, not a homosexual problem. Homosexuality is - I wouldn't say unknown in Africa, but it is uncommon. In a heterosexually promiscuous society, which most modern African societies are, AIDS spreads rapidly. In Uganda it initially traveled along the truck routes, transmitted between prostitutes and truck drivers. Soldiers too caught the virus and brought it home. In the cities, older men would often seek out younger women or prostitutes. They would get infected and bring the disease home. The challenge in Uganda was to change people's sexual behavior. Concerned individuals and organizations began a very concerted program to do that. I remember seeing the minister of health standing in the streets of the marketplace holding up condoms and telling people what they were for. The blood bank was cleansed and national HIV testing offered. National organizations - one called TASO - I'm not sure what it stands for, was an AIDS survivors' organization. Survivors joined together for support and to counsel those infected.

In my spare time, I was a member of the Mountain Club of Uganda. The club grouped a few expatriates along with younger Ugandans - Makerere University students and graduates - who enjoyed rock climbing, mountain climbing and hiking. For example, each year we climbed to the highest peak of the Ruwenzori mountains. Of my friends in the Mountain Club, at least five that I could name right now subsequently died of AIDS. Sadly, they never had a life, never a career or a family.

Q: *How tragic.*

GRIBBIN: It was also tragic for the embassy. About a half dozen of our FSNs died of AIDS in the three years I was there.

Q: *Well, I would have thought then and today and tomorrow being in an area where AIDS is high has to make one quite nervous because we're talking about blood, and if you get in an automobile accident or need an emergency operation or what have you, you as a DCM, it's sort of your responsibility - was this difficult for you?*

GRIBBIN: I worried about AIDS. We conversed with medical personnel in the State Department. We adopted what was called a "walking blood bank," where the participant's blood type was known. If your blood were needed, you'd fill out a questionnaire regarding your recent behavior. Your answers included or excluded you from being a blood donor. As DCM I was most worried about the Marines, and when we re-established the Peace Corps program, I worried about volunteers. In fact, we thought long and hard about re-opening the Peace Corps precisely because of the AIDS menace to volunteers. I used to call each newly arrived Marine into my office and give him the good old Dutch Uncle lecture, but you know, when you're 19 that may not always work. I kept a box of condoms on the safe in my office. I would tell the Marine. "There they are. Nobody's going to see you take some. When you're in here checking locks at night, help yourself." I always had to keep filling up that box. That worried me, but it would have worried me more if the box were never touched.

We changed our local employee compensation plan, particularly the death benefits portion of it, because under Ugandan practice, by and large, when a male died, the man's family inherited his assets, not his wife and children. Presumably, one would die at a reasonably elderly age, so grown children would be capable of taking care of themselves and their mother. But if a man died at a young age, then no one took care of his spouse and the children. Additionally, the spouse was probably AIDS-infected as well and on her way to dying. At the request of our local employees, we modified the death benefits program. They knew that if someone died, oftentimes the man's family would clean out his house, take the family possessions and throw the wife and children into the street. It sounds callous, but in fact that's what happened. So our FSNs asked that we put together a system whereby the embassy would parcel out death benefit payments over time and only to the spouse and only in a manner whereby her husband's relatives could not get their hands on it. We made those sorts of adjustments. AIDS was a never-ending tragedy.

Ugandans would jump at every hope. I remember a woman near Masaka, a town to the south, who announced to the press that her daughter was cured of AIDS because she had eaten clay from the back yard. In short order, convoys of cars and buses took dozens of people to eat the dirt from this lady's back yard. This went on for about three or four months until the lady's daughter died of AIDS. Then people concluded that the remedy wasn't effective. I asked people about this, intelligent people, even once somebody who did it. He said, "Well, it might work, you don't know." Victims clung to whatever hope they could muster.

In response to the AIDS epidemic, we had an American medical community resident in Kampala. They were AIDS experts, pediatric experts, cancer experts, epidemiologists all doing research of various sorts. We certainly had no shortage of American doctors if somebody happened to break an ankle or something like that. But, of course, they were there because of AIDS and, more than the rest of us, they saw the impact of AIDS. They dealt with patients who died from AIDS every day. For them it was an opportunity to study something that was unknown. They strove mightily to make a contribution, to try to figure out how to defeat AIDS.

Let me relate a story about Ugandans changing their sexual behavior. It was clear that part of the solution to reducing infections was to limit sexual partners. In that regard Ugandans became very fond of using the term, in public, in the media and in speeches by the president, of "zero grazing." As a cattle-keeping society they understood zero grazing to mean that one didn't go

into somebody else's pastures, but the zero also came from the fact that to zero-graze a cow, you put a rope around her neck and tie her to a stake. She can only eat in a circle. That's her zero and she's always tied to the stake. Ugandans implicitly understood this metaphor right away and it quickly became part of daily discourse. I'm pleased to say now in 2000 that Uganda has made substantial inroads in changing people's sexual behavior. The incidence of new AIDS infection in Uganda is falling - the only place in the world where that's happening. Sadly, the people who were already infected either have died or will die as the disease runs its course.

Q: *Looking at it in the time you were there, were you predicting what this would do, I mean looking at the rate of infection and figuring out these people are going to die in their most productive years, what this is going to do to the economy of Uganda?*

GRIBBIN: Quite clearly it's already had an impact on Uganda. One of the things we the United States wouldn't do is we wouldn't send Ugandans to the United States for military training if they had AIDS or were HIV-positive. Initially, we had the military test them. The chief of training told me that he had to test 10 people so as to have three to choose from for the course. Even that didn't always work. We shipped one Ugandan back from South Carolina in a coffin when he developed full-blown AIDS during training. Due to AIDS Uganda lost the cream of the population in the flower of their economic productivity. Those folks had a higher rate of infection because they had money and were in the modern sector. In short, they were the most able to be promiscuous. The men had the wherewithal to buy beers and women. In rural areas, opportunities were fewer. Think of AIDS as a double whammy, not only do societies lose people in the flower of life, but they lose their best people.

Q: *You mentioned the Peace Corps. You were reintroducing them into Uganda?*

GRIBBIN: Uganda, before Idi Amin, was an excellent country for the Peace Corps. I would encounter people who remembered Mr. Smith or Miss Jones, who was their English teacher at such-and-such a school back when. Since I had been in the Peace Corps myself, I took on the responsibility of convincing Peace Corps Washington that we could re-launch a program in Uganda. The government of Uganda issued an invitation. I renegotiated the treaty that allowed the Peace Corps to be in Uganda. Jack Hjelt, former Peace Corps director from Tanzania, was assigned as director and set up a program. Volunteers arrived just a month or so before I left. They started in vocational education and subsequently added AIDS education and conservation.

Q: *All this time we were involved in various negotiations down in southern Africa about the situation there, in Namibia and Angola and all that. Did Uganda play any role in this as a friend in the African court or anything?*

GRIBBIN: As in most African countries, including Uganda, we kept the government, the Foreign Ministry and the president's office, abreast of developments, including the evolving situation in Namibia. Sam Nujoma came through Kampala from time to time, and we would always try to make sure that we had had a word with his hosts before he visited.

Q: *He was who?*

GRIBBIN: Nujoma was the head of SWAPO, who became the first president of Namibia. Southern African issues were not foremost in Uganda's sphere of interest. Even so, foreign ministry officials were interested in all of Africa and were interested in new leaders. We got involved a bit in Liberian/Nigerian issues, even over in Uganda, as there was an Anglophone connection to those west African states. Uganda's immediate foreign policy horizons were very much confined to its own neighborhood. Sudan was, of course, still in flames. Uganda had always provided some covert and some not so covert support to the southern liberation movement.

Q: *From your perspective there, that Sudanese thing, I'm told, is probably one of the longest and almost one of the greatest world tragedies, but people can't get to see it. There's not a lot of TV there taking pictures of starving people. Were you getting any reflection of what was happening down there?*

GRIBBIN: We did some reporting on what was going on in southern Sudan. We had some contact with the SPLA, but most American diplomatic contacts with the SPLA occurred in Nairobi. Nonetheless, there were thousands of Sudanese refugees in Uganda whom we supported via UNHCR. I went, on one occasion, and the consular officer went more often to visit Sudanese refugee camps. Also, while I was in Kampala, we had a great return of Ugandan refugees – several ten thousands - from Sudan to the West Nile district. These people had fled Uganda after Amin's ouster in 1979. Afterwards the West Nile area of Uganda, which is in the corner adjoining the Sudan and Zaire on the western side of the Nile River was virtually empty because everybody was either in Zaire or in the Sudan. When the political leadership changed to Museveni, the UNHCR, the government of Uganda and donors began a program to convince refugees to come home. They did so, principally because they were confident that in a peaceful Uganda they would be treated kindly. Also conflict was heating up in the Sudan, so it was a good time to leave.

We flew food provided by the World Food Program and others to southern Sudan from Entebbe and from Kenya. Food was also trucked through Uganda as well as through Kenya. Normally, this operation ran smoothly, but I remember one incident that told as much about Ugandan – Kenyan relations as it did about Sudan. The World Food Program regularly flew food from Lokichockio in northwestern Kenya via planes leased from contractors. One of these airplanes, an old C-117, with an American crew and an Isle of Mann registration but which belonged to a pair of Kenyan brothers I knew from Mombasa, got lost and made an emergency landing in northeastern Uganda at Kaabong. Because the airplane was of suspicious registry and was flown by Americans, the Ugandans were convinced that this somehow was part of a Kenyan plot. They arrested and mistreated the Americans. We got the Americans freed and although I didn't expend a whole lot of effort, I helped my Mombasa friends get their plane released as well. It was a misunderstanding, but the point was that that was the sort of misunderstanding that could have negative consequences. When we finally got control of the crew, one of them would not leave the lobby of the embassy until his international flight departed. He spent two nights there with the Marine guard, because he was just not going to leave until he could be put on an airplane.

Q: *Was Libya fishing in troubled waters around this time?*

GRIBBIN: Very much. Libya sought to take advantage of the Muslim minority in Uganda, and it had money. In Kampala Libya would play on Muslim dissent to the Ugandan Government. Amin, you see, had been a Muslim, so his supporters had been Muslims, and even people who had not been Amin's supporters but were Muslims were identified as anti-government. It was fertile ground. Libyan-sponsored preachers and other operatives provided assistance to various Muslim associations and schools. Meanwhile, the Government of Uganda had a correct relationship, if you will, with the Government of Libya. Remember that Museveni fought against Libyans during the Amin era. Given that Museveni maintained proper, rather than warm, relations with Libya, Qadhafi meddled.

Q: *Were Ugandan students, graduate students, going out of the country, and were they all going to the United States, or were they going to Great Britain?*

GRIBBIN: People were going abroad to study, but many were also coming home. Uganda put a program in place called "Return of Talent" that identified Ugandans living abroad with skills that could be used for national development. They were encouraged to return. Their transportation was paid and a government job guaranteed.

Regarding students, many Ugandans preferred Makerere University. Others attended the University of Nairobi or the University of Dar Es Salaam. Overseas, Great Britain was a prime choice because of historic ties and also because it was usually cheaper, but interest in the U.S. expanded enormously. Consequently, we saw more and more Ugandans applying to American schools. Ugandans also went to India for higher education because the Indian Government gave scholarships. The result of all this educational travel was an increasing internationalized group of young intellectuals in Uganda.

Q: *During this period things were really changing around the world. The electronic business, computers, communications, and all, changed the way people operate and all that. I would think that Uganda and some of the African countries would be a little better prepared for it because - this is what I gather from what you said about education - they were more educated, hard-working, and all that. Was that a fact?*

GRIBBIN: It has become a fact, but when I was there, Uganda's infrastructure was decrepit. Even though Uganda produced hydro-electricity from the Nile at Owen Falls, the transmission system had not been maintained. On several occasions the four stabilizers in my garage blew up when what must have been a thousand volt spike came down the line.

In our 30 embassy households rarely more than one or two phones worked, so we used VHF radios for internal communication. We looked at the possibility of building our own telephone system because there was no hope that the Ugandan telephone system would ever be resurrected, but then heard about cellular telephones. Rather than run our own microwave system, we decided to wait. Today Kampala has about three competing cell phone systems. Clearly, cell phones are a marvelous jump ahead for places like Uganda that were unable to provide sufficient lines. They can skip the arduous process of installing poles, lines, exchanges, etc and go straight to towers and hand held phones. In this way Uganda benefited from being behind, if you will. However, electricity still has to go via a line.

But computers - we were in the dawn of the computer age in Kampala. We had some computers inside the embassy obviously, but they were not linked together nor to any sort of Internet. Today Kampala is very much a computerized place. And it's very much hooked into the Internet. You can look up Makerere University sites on the Internet from the U.S. and *vice versa*. Undoubtedly the information revolution has hooked African intellectuals into the world system. Even though it's still very much only the intellectuals, that is remarkable enough and will make a real difference.

IRVIN D. COKER
Commission for the Reform of the Public Service
New York & Uganda (1989-1991)

Irvin D. Coker was born in Petersburg, Virginia in 1935. He graduated from Howard University and served in the U.S. Military in South Korea. His postings abroad included Ghana, Uganda, and Nigeria. Mr. Coker was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1993.

Q: We were talking about your work in Uganda and particularly with the Commission for the Reform of the Public Service. What was that about?

COKER: President Museveni took over the Ugandan Government in 1986. He initially said that the government could not get the process of economic growth started in Uganda. He waited until 1988 to ask the UNDP [United Nations Development Program] for assistance in coming up with an organized approach to reforming the public service. In that connection the UNDP said that they were willing to pay for technical assistance to accomplish the necessary reforms.

I was approached by the UNDP...

Q: You had retired from AID by this time?

COKER: Yes. I retired in September, 1988, leaving the U.S. Mission to the UN. I left AID and set up the firm of Coker-Smith. The first request for assistance that we received came from the OPS [Office of Project Services] of the UNDP. This was in response to a request from the UNDP office in Uganda. They asked for someone who had extensive knowledge about Uganda, who had a public service background, and who could lead an effort to design a project to reorganize and restructure the Ugandan public service. The UNDP office in Uganda submitted my name. The Office of the President of Uganda and the UNDP office in New York approved the request and asked me to undertake that effort.

So I went out to Uganda in January, 1989, to get started. Initially, my task was to design the effort to restructure the Ugandan public service. My first question in undertaking this effort involved what the total process should cover. I took three months to design the effort, covering all of the different branches of the Ugandan Government, including the civil service, which they

considered to be separate from the teachers' service, the judiciary, local government, the police force, the prison service, and the fire service. All of those were considered to be a part of the overall public service and excluded anything that was parastatal. So I didn't have to be concerned about anything that was parastatal.

At the end of three months I had a design concept for a project which I had to present to the UNDP in Uganda and the Ugandan Government. When they approved the project design concept, it then had to be submitted to UNDP headquarters in New York for approval.

Q: What were the main features of your project design?

COKER: The main features involved looking at the public service as a whole. First, it involved determining the total complement of the public service. It turned out that everybody had different figures for the size of the public service, even down to the different components of it. I had to determine whether there were overlapping jurisdictions in terms of the different functions and, therefore, what duplications existed. What were the qualifications established for the different functions, how were they staffed, and what were the qualifications for the different staffs?

The idea was to see whether or not we could get an idea of the number of the existing public servants. That is, how many of them were legally listed in the records of the Public Service Commission and how many were qualified for the various positions. We had to do a census type count of the number of public servants and a diagnostic study of the functions of each of the government ministries, all the way down from the ministerial level to the lowest level within the ministry.

Then my task was to come up with a rational approach to how the public service should be structured. Then, tied to that structure, what the staff complement should be to perform these functions and which ministries and organs within them should be recommended for abolition? So those were some of the main features.

Q: It's very comprehensive. Roughly, how many employees did it cover?

COKER: At the time the government thought that there were about 320,000 public servants in a country with a population of 16 million. The government was the employer of first and last resort at the time. The government had 34 ministries that we had to deal with.

My recommendation was that we would have to establish a Public Service Review and Reorganization Commission to meet the responsibility of developing the detail design so that we could develop a bottom line recommendation as to what government ministries and offices ought to exist and to convince the President to approve this proposal. Then the implementation could start.

Q: It was a very political affair.

COKER: It was very much a political matter, because there were a lot of political appointments involved, especially at the minister and deputy minister level. There were also a lot of permanent

employees, like the Permanent Secretaries of the different ministries. This was the first echelon within the bureaucracy. All of them were nervous about what was going to happen. We also had called for the first personnel evaluations ever conducted concerning every employee who belonged to the public service. This had never been done before. This was something that even the World Bank had said couldn't and shouldn't be done. In any case, that was another task that we had ahead of us.

So we felt that there had to be a Public Service Review and Reorganization Commission, authorized by the President, to give this effort the necessary authority to do its work and to get the cooperation of the various ministries to cooperate with it. We felt that this was necessary to develop the overall, detailed blueprint on how this ought to be done.

This project was approved by UNDP headquarters in New York about six weeks after they had received it. The UNDP then provided the initial funding of $1.4 million for the Public Service Review and Reorganization Commission. The Commission had 10 commissioners, including seven Ugandans, mostly from the private sector. Three of these seven Ugandans had formerly been public servants but were now in the private sector. The other three commissioners were international. One of them was from Ghana and one from Nigeria, in addition to me (USA). We had a staff of 15 professional employees to support the work of the 10 commissioners for much of the high level work. We also had a lower support staff of secretaries, drivers, and others. The 15 professional employees and other support staff were all part of the official civil service of the Government of Uganda.

We worked for 18 months in all. We broke up the overall job into several tasks. We then had each one of the commissioners involved with a particular committee and responsible for so many tasks. In this way we allocated the total number of tasks that had to be accomplished. We had time frames for achieving these tasks. We laid out a time sequence of which activities had to occur first. We also had milestones that we had to achieve and on which we could report on a quarterly basis as to where we stood to both the UNDP in New York and to the Ugandan Government.

We worked directly with all of the aid donor organizations and tried to bring them on board and ensure that they were informed of what we were doing. So we worked on this process.

Q: Who chaired the work?

COKER: The Chairman was Dr. Clark from Ghana. He had worked on the reform of the Public Service in Ghana. We asked the Ugandan Government to choose an outsider as the Chairperson of the Commission. The Ugandan Government indicated that it wanted to do this job in this way to minimize the impact on the Chairman of the various ethnic groups that we were working on. Dr. Clark, who had worked out of Green Hill in Ghana, the Ghana Institute of Management and Administration (GIMPA) and had gone off to London with his family. We were able to get him to leave London and come to Uganda to be the Chairman of the Commission. Dr. Clark arrived in Uganda in May, 1989. We also had Chief Jerome Udargi from Nigeria. He was the first of the Nigerian Permanent Secretaries prior to Nigerian independence. He had also worked on the reform of the public service in Nigeria and contributed to the reform of the public service in

Gambia, Kenya, and two other countries in Africa. So he was also a valuable resource on this job. The other commissioners, as I mentioned, were all Ugandans.

So we set out to develop the overall plan of work. We undertook detailed analyses of each one of the 34 ministries. We identified where there were duplications. Many of these ministries had been established and given responsibilities to meet certain political commitments.

We conducted a census of these ministries and departments and discovered that we had far fewer documented civil servants than the government said that it had for payroll purposes. We even used several means of testing the actual payroll and the numbers of people employed by the government. We took the Public Service Commission's rolls, like those of our Office of Personnel Management, which listed all of the registered public servants. So the Public Service Commission had that information, supposedly broken down by Department or Ministry. We used that list to compare with the payroll. We only authorized the payrolls to be compared for those individuals that we could document from the Public Service Commission's rolls. We tried this out with the Office of Teaching Services of the Ministry of Education. There were approximately 125 fewer people working for whom payroll checks had traditionally been prepared than those listed on the Ministry rolls. So we didn't prepare those 125 checks. We waited for two or three months but never received any complaints from individuals saying that they hadn't been paid.

Q: Did they exist?

COKER: We discovered that they didn't exist.

Q: Somebody was getting an extra check.

COKER: Exactly. We then ended up trying this process with every one of the government departments and ministries. We would do this by divisions within a given department or ministry, more or less as a random sample test. What this showed to us was that each one of those ministries was sending in time sheets to pay people who did not exist. This was clearly being done intentionally. The pay for the public servants was so inadequate that people could not survive on it. So one way of getting enough money to enable them to survive was to pad the payrolls. We were never able to determine where the spread effect was and who actually received all of that money, though we had some fairly good ideas.

Clearly, we knew that each one of those ministries and departments within the ministries had padded payrolls. We did not know whether the money was being spread among the various employees as a way of giving them the compensation that they deserved. However, at least it told us why we had a problem and, therefore, we had to keep that in mind. Coming out of our overall effort was an attempt to find some way to pay some kind of living wage, as a means of trying to cut down on the level of corruption.

When we performed a test on an overall group, we even discovered that among the casual laborers of a given department, there were more than 30,000 "ghost workers" who did not exist. When you are talking about 320,000 civil servants, supposedly including the casual laborers, and

we found in one check that we had 30,000 "ghosts," this told us that we had a serious problem. In fact, we already knew that we had a serious problem from doing the tests on the payroll.

Now I'm going to skip ahead. During the analyses of the 34 ministries we discovered that there was some significant duplication of functions in many of the ministries. We were able to make a recommendation that the number of ministries should be reduced from 34 down to 21. We recommended that this total number could further be reduced if the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Planning were combined. In some countries, as you know, these two ministries are combined. However, we said that this was something that the government should tackle later on. That is, it should go through the first phase of removing other than substantive ministries and reducing the total to 21.

After conducting the total census of the civil service and recommending that the civil service should be reduced to 21 ministries, as opposed to the previous total of 34, we also recommended that the public service should not exceed a total of 160,000 employees. Therefore, there had to be some way of downsizing the employment rolls to that total. So we devised a retrenchment program for the public service. The retrenchment program was tied to the fact that once we did the assessment of each employee and made sure that a performance evaluation was made on everybody under the supervision of the senior civil servants, then that supervisor had to do a rating of the raters. So, all up and down the line, performance evaluations were made on every public servant.

Q: How good were those?

COKER: We found, in some instances, that the people were not honest. We did not know that some supervisors were doing performance evaluations on members of their families. We didn't always know who was related to a supervisor. We were able to ascertain why the performances were considered suspect, because some people were providing useful information. They asked us whether we were really aware that John Doe was really the first cousin or a part of the extended family of So and So. Therefore, we had a basis for concluding that a given officer's evaluation was not necessarily as depicted in the performance evaluation. We also discovered that a large number of civil servants had already exceeded the mandatory retirement age.

There were many employees who had certain levels of disability and couldn't even perform the work that they were assigned to do. We found a large number of people left over from the former Idi Amin era who had been brought into the civil service during that period of time. In fact, they had never been tested and had never even filed proper papers for qualification in their jobs. So we had to go through a process of having them file their qualification to see whether any of them were able to do their jobs. We found that a large number of these people had not even completed secondary school. They were clearly not qualified. Some of them held commissioner positions, some of them were rectors. They were occupying positions for which they truly were not qualified.

We filed a report, a "White Paper," which was a review of the work done by the Government Reorganization and Review Commission. This report dealt with everything from a reduction in the number of ministries and why this should be done. We also prepared an implementation

schedule on how these changes were to be made. We had a plan on how the excess number of employees should be declared redundant and how they should be removed from employment. We had a program that dealt with those who had reached or exceeded the mandatory retirement age. They would be retired, effective immediately. However, if they had good ideas on proposals for funding projects which were beneficial or productive for the country, they might be provided with funding to help them get started.

That particular approach was made available, not only to those that were scheduled to be retired but also to any public servants who were not scheduled to leave. If they volunteered to leave the public service and they had proposals which we thought would be good for funding and which could add to the productive sector, loan funds would be available to them.

Regarding civil servants in the support area, we had talked earlier on with the World Bank about starting a lot of civil projects. This would prevent these individuals from being simply dumped on the community. They would have employment on jobs involving civil works. We were disappointed with that aspect of it. Even after the World Bank had agreed that they would make these projects available, in the end, when implementation came around, these civil works jobs were not approved. So we had a situation where many of these laborers were simply dismissed and left to find their way in the community. That created a hardship.

We also proposed a schedule for achieving a living wage over a period of time for the remaining public servants. We categorized the remaining civil servants, who would be in this group of 160,000 still employed. The civil service would be lean and mean and would be composed of those who were performers. These were people who had demonstrated that they not only had the academic capacity but, in fact, were highly regarded by their peers as being excellent performers. If we had a lean civil service, this could begin to have a very positive effect on getting things changed in the economy to help stimulate economic growth. So we laid out a program for improving wages. We were able to convince some of the aid donors, especially the multilateral donors, to support a program under which they would be willing to abide by a pay scale attached to donor funded projects. This would provide a level of remuneration that would bring them as close as possible to a living wage and which would enable them to survive.

We also recommended a program of stating in monetary terms the large number of fringe benefits which the civil service had inherited from the colonial past and continued to benefit from. They wanted to say that if the British civil servants were entitled to these benefits, Ugandans should also benefit from them, since they were now in the civil service. These benefits included housing, education, transportation, and other facilities. It was simply not feasible to do this. So we said that these benefits were part of the reason why civil servants were not receiving a net, disposable wage which would enable them to live off their earnings. However, we said that we had to find ways of paying them a respectable wage.

One of the problems that we encountered with this was that civil servants not attached to donor funded projects became demoralized. A relatively small percentage of civil servants were attached to donor funded projects. They received close to a living wage. However, whether a worker was attached to a donor funded project or not, he or she was still shopping at the same

stores. Those workers attached to donor funded projects had more money to buy the things that they needed.

Q: Were the aid donors topping up the wages paid to workers attached to donor funded projects?

COKER: They were topping up or subsidizing the wages paid to these workers. So we had a problem with some donors who were topping up wages, especially the UN, and some of the Nordic countries. However, the U.S., the Canadians, the U. K., and many of the countries of the European Union did not top up the wages of those working on donor funded projects. What they did was to have periodic reviews of the compensation being paid to civil servants attached to donor funded projects. In addition, they made in kind payments and also looked for opportunities to send people on field assignments. These people were entitled to a per diem allowance while on travel status.

Q: Then they were topping up through the back door.

COKER: That's right. They also arranged for training assignments, which became very common.

Q: You mean workshops.

COKER: Workshops in every category that you could think of. The Ugandan Government and the aid donors agreed in 1992 that over a period of four, consecutive years, that is, during 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1995, the donors, as governments, put the restructuring into effect. In this way they exercised greater control over expenditures, as well as generating a larger amount of revenue. As revenues increased and expenditures went down, they would be able to absorb more of the costs and would be able to pay more to public servants. Therefore, we arranged for the government, on an annual basis during four, consecutive years, to try to adjust its budget so that its excess revenue could account for 25% of the 100% that we had anticipated would be required.

Q: I see. So the aid donor countries were providing budget support for payrolls?

COKER: Some of them were providing certain budget support for payrolls, but most of the donor countries did not. Where they didn't provide budget support, they used the back door means we have already described. Then other countries...

Q: This was on a piecemeal basis and not as a part of a general fund.

COKER: Right. It was not in the general fund. The aid donor countries backed away from the idea of contributing to a general fund. The Ugandan Government wanted a general fund, but clearly not a single donor country would agree to that.

Q: What did you think about it?

COKER: I thought that it was a bad idea because I didn't think that it would be managed properly. I liked the idea of being able to compensate all of the public service in a better way because I found myself engaged in open discussions with political figures and cabinet ministers,

debating with them over the fact that in the newspapers and on the radio they were openly calling the civil servants corrupt and lazy, giving them the kinds of names that were demoralizing the public servants. However, at the same time, these political leaders were being given such large allowances, not pay but allowances, that they, in turn, were not hurting at all. Therefore, they had the equivalent of a living wage. For example, every time a Member of Parliament sat in the Chamber, he received a sizable sitting allowance on a daily basis. He got money for housing. If he was from up country, he got money to rent decent housing in Kampala. He had access to a car and a driver. He had all of the money required to support the car. So they weren't hurting.

The same thing was true of the cabinet ministers and the deputy ministers. They had equivalent kinds of pay packages. Yet, at the same time, they were demoralized. They referred to the rest of the civil servants as corrupt and lazy. What we knew was that when we measured the net income of a civil servant, against the cost of living, they were getting something less than a living wage.

So who wouldn't be corrupt? If they had families to feed and were coming to work on a daily basis, even if they only worked 10 minutes or one hour, they were probably not being properly compensated even for that. Many of the public servants would come to their government offices to use the telephone to try to generate income to support their families. Some of them would steal a ream of paper, which they could then sell for about 6,000 shillings to help to pay the school fees of their children. Everything seemed to be disappearing. Things appeared to disappear because that was the cost of survival. Here we were going around, demoralizing the civil servants by doing what we were doing. In fact, they were a bunch of fat cats supervising the civil servants. We had some lively TV debates on these issues.

Meanwhile, we were working to try to establish a system of decent wages. I'm proud to say that during each of the three, consecutive years, 1993, 1994, 1995, and at the beginning of 1996, the Government of Uganda made substantive pay increases to the civil servants. The government also monetized the housing and transportation allowances provided to civil servants, that is, calculated them in monetary terms. These were then added to the total compensation package.

Q: You mean that they were given money instead of services in kind?

COKER: That's correct. For those who were fortunate enough to live in government housing, and there were only a few of them, a program was established to allow them to purchase the government housing that they occupied, at a nominal price. Or, they could choose to leave government housing, and someone else could bid on it. Since there had not been a concerted, government housing construction program in Uganda for many decades, and even now they don't have such a program, it was difficult for people to have access to quality housing. However, by at least monetizing housing allowances, and giving the people the money equivalent of the housing, the private sector began to start filling the housing shortage. The private sector started building programs to make housing of some kind available to the people.

Some people were able to save money through the various travel programs that they were undertaking. After acquiring a plot of land, each time they returned home from a trip abroad, they would take some of the money that they brought back in the form of savings from per diem

and other allowances and would buy additional building materials for their homes until they had it built. Quite a few people built their homes that way.

Q: Did they raise the issue of a living wage? What was achieved in the way of raising wages to a living level?

COKER: By the end of 1995 the wages paid by the Ugandan Government to public servants were close to 75% of what was categorized as a living wage.

The Ugandan Government wanted to renege on letting 1996 be the final year for contributions by donor countries under this particular program. There were some difficulties at the Paris Club meeting in 1995. The Ugandan Government persuaded the aid donors to agree that they would call in a mediating group to try to mediate the cessation of this program, under which the aid donors contributed money to help to make up the difference between what the government had achieved toward paying a living wage and the wages it was actually paying.

This gave me an opportunity. I was contacted by the UNDP, with the approval of the Ugandan Government, and asked to head up a separate team to come in and review the overall program in this regard. We started from the point in 1992 where the Ugandan Government and the aid donors had agreed to raise wages. We considered what the government had achieved in each of the ensuing years up to 1996. Then we assessed whether the government's operating budget was adequate, up to 1996, to meet the objective of a living wage, as well as whether the budget projection for the 1996-1997 year was going to provide sufficient funding for the Ugandan Government to close the remaining gap.

What we discovered was that the Ugandan Government, through the changes it had made in financial management and in decentralized tax collections, exercising very firm controls on expenditures, had, in fact, generated enough revenue to put itself in a position where it did not have to compete in borrowing money. In fact, the government had a savings account. It had a surplus. It had also generated more than six months' income in foreign exchange earnings to cover Ugandan imports. As far as the Ugandan budget was concerned, the government had an operating profit. When you looked at the government's operating budget, revenue not only exceeded expenditure projections but it had become possible for the government to pay 100% of the living wage for public servants, without the aid donors contributing any more money for this purpose. Therefore, our recommendation was that there was no longer any need for the continued existence of this incentive program after July 1, 1996. We persuaded the aid donors and the Ugandan Government to agree on this. The government said: "Well, you can't blame us for trying. If we could get away with it, and the aid donors did not object, why not have the aid donors pay into this incentive program for another year and add to our surplus?"

In any case, the aid donors came out ahead on this incentive program. In July, 1996, Uganda became the second developing country able to pay its public servants on a par with the private sector.

Q: What was the first country?

COKER: Singapore. So Singapore and then Uganda had achieved parity between the pay of public servants and that of people employed in the private sector. They saw a reversal in the flow of Ugandans who had been leaving the country and going to work for regional organizations. Ugandans were now coming back to Uganda after working for regional organizations abroad. There was a tremendous inflow of highly qualified Ugandans able to return home and accept positions in private sector work, taking over many of the jobs performed by international experts from outside of Uganda.

That situation created some problems among the donors because, as you know, many of the donor programs called for a certain number of experts coming from their own countries. To some extent this has created a requirement for the Ugandan Government to ask donors to look very seriously at the numbers of international experts that they wanted to assign to each of the projects which they were supporting in Uganda. There was now a significant number of well-trained Ugandans available.

Q: You think that the donors, despite that accomplishment, were still doing some topping up of wages to protect certain people or keep them employed in Uganda?

COKER: I couldn't prove that that was the case. However, I surmise that there were probably still some such cases. You could not get donors to confess that, in fact, they were continuing to do this. Since we knew that most of the bilateral aid donors didn't do this, it was thus the UN which was doing it. Basically, the Ugandan Government felt that it could hold the UN's feet to the fire by having our team come in to study the problem. We were a group of people from the bilateral aid donors, and not from the multilateral aid donors. What we saw was an opportunity for the Ugandan Government to take advantage of UN agencies which had been topping up wages. The UN was very pleased at this development.

Q: Did the World Bank also...

COKER: The World Bank, the UNDP, and every one of the UN agencies were on board in this connection. The UN General Assembly had passed a resolution supporting this change. The UNDP was also on board and said that it was opposed to further topping up of salaries of international civil servants.

This set a precedent. I'm fairly certain that many of the other countries will follow suit and try to have the same thing done. However, that was considered to be a fairly successful reform. The World Bank considers the reform of the public service in Uganda as THE model. Originally, the World Bank considered that Ghana was THE model. That was a reform which was completed.

Q: Were your recommendations carried out?

COKER: All of the recommendations were carried out, including the merger of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. This was done over a period of two years. Then the Ugandan Government decided to separate the two ministries again, for essentially political reasons. Now there is a Ministry of Economic Planning and a Ministry of Finance. These are separate ministries.

I see creeping back into the cabinet some Ministers Without Portfolio. So they evidently didn't get away from the habit of appointing more cabinet ministers. To fulfill certain, political commitments, they appointed a number of ministers without portfolio. That practice entitled these ministers to have a certain number of people on their staffs. At the same time, all of this additional expenses for the national budget. I find that the Ugandans have gone a long ways to stay the course on these reforms, which is a good development to see. Anyway, this was a good experience.

Q: It was very impressive.

COKER: I thoroughly enjoyed working on this reform process. I was glad to see that the World Bank wanted to use what we did in Uganda as a model at the country level. They openly said that they wanted to use us as an example. We had been told repeatedly that, when it came down to the company which I was running at the time, we were too small. The World Bank would prefer to have very large companies to undertake these kinds of reforms.

In July, 1997, I ran into this attitude in Kenya. A World Bank officer indicated that the bank was pressuring the Kenyan Government to reinstate the reform of the public service. However, he said: "Irv, you should be aware of the fact that we are recommending that only a very large firm should be called in to handle this." That was a disappointment. We had found that large firms charged very substantial fees. As far as my firm was concerned, we had been able to assemble a good cadre of experts to work on a matter of this kind.

We now have a group of experts who had this experience in Uganda. We could put them together far more cheaply than the big firms could do and we could accomplish the same thing. We might be even better. We had a successful model and we could do the same thing elsewhere. However, the World Bank looked at this matter quite differently.

Q: That was an excellent discussion. Is there anything else in Uganda which you would like to mention?

COKER: I think that basically, by and large, Uganda has a form of democracy which creates some difficulties for the Department of State. It creates some difficulties for our legislators because of the fact that Uganda does not have an open, multi-party political system. The emphasis is all on the theme of unity. What I found was that the Ugandans practice democracy all the way down to the grass roots level, under the National Resistance Movement. The elections to choose their representatives are also held from the grass roots level on up. They also have true respect for human rights and they exercise the rule of law.

So my philosophy has been that for the time being, while Uganda is still trying to get on its feet, economically, so that it can share the wealth with the entire population, we should not be pushing for something which is openly multiparty. That is, as long as the present system is, in fact, supported by basic documents. Uganda is a practicing democracy.

Q: Do the voters have a choice?

COKER: They have a choice.

Q: Do they have a variety of candidates and all of that?

COKER: They have all of the elements of a democratic system. Participating in it are former members of the UPC [Uganda People's Congress], which was the party of President Obote, and of the DP [Democratic Party], which was the opposition. They are active in political life, and individual people can see that they still use the labels of the UPC and of the DP. So there is a Parliament that is elected by the people from the base up. Many of the members of that Parliament are former members of the political parties that existed. They are running under that movement. We see that Uganda is getting wealthier and wealthier.

Q: There are still some rebel movements.

COKER: There still are some rebel movements. You still have former Obote supporters; you still have some former supporters of Idi Amin; you still have former supporters of Okello still active. Some of them operate from southern Sudan into the northern areas of Uganda. Some of these people operate from eastern Zaire or the Congo into the western part of Uganda. Basically, these rebel movements have not been very effective. However, at the same time they are a nuisance. They require the Ugandan Government to spend some of its valuable resources that could be used for other purposes in the country to put down these rebel movements.

I found an honest attempt on the part of the Museveni government to forgive these rebels and ask them to come back and assimilate into the community. I saw this process happen with Tito Okello and with several of the people who were diplomats under the two Obote governments. They stayed away initially. Then they began to put out feelers and finally came back into the Uganda. Some of them are now members of the Ugandan Parliament. I knew quite a few of them.

When I go back to Uganda now, I can see Parliament functioning. Now there is freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press. When I read the accounts of what took place on the previous day in Parliament and I see the names of individuals whom I know and who were previously members of Parliament, as well as the kinds of things that they were talking about in Parliament, I can conclude that they are truly challenging the Ugandan Government. They challenge various aspects of different laws as to whether they are best for the country, or whether they are more parochial in intention. It is all very active and very lively.

I find that there are some ethnic problems in Uganda, which I disliked. Development is not being allocated across the country in anything like a truly equitable manner. It appears that in the eastern part of Uganda the government may have allowed the Karamojong people, who happen to think that all of the cattle in the world belong to them, to raid the herds of cattle belonging to other people. They are unchallenged. Now the Karamojongs carry AK-47 automatic rifles. Previously, they would raid cattle herds and just take the cattle. Now they shoot up houses, they kill people, they burn down property. I don't see that there is a concerted effort by the government to stop this kind of activity, when it has the capacity to do so. The government allows defense forces to be formed by the communities concerned. It would be far better to train

these defense forces so that these communities can protect themselves against raids by the Karamojong's.

Sometimes, it has been discovered that some of the Karamojong raiders have been infiltrated by members of rebel groups who have become renegades and who are only interested in looting the property of other people for their own gain. I see that as a problem.

Unfortunately, the people in the northern area of Uganda have not been able to achieve much development because of the frequent incursions by raiders from southern Sudan. I think that that is hurting the kind of development that could be taking place in the North.

Q: What about the overall economic situation?

COKER: The overall economic situation is extremely good. There is very little inflation. When President Museveni came in, there was double digit inflation, in the 60-70% range, on an annual basis. That went to triple digit inflation, exceeding almost 200%. For the last four years inflation has been held down to less than 5%. The Ugandan currency has not been depreciating but has, in fact, been appreciating against all other currencies. It has been stable against the U.S. dollar, as well as against the British pound. At the same time virtually all of the other African currencies have been going down in value.

There are many, private sector business firms being established, foreign investments are coming in, and Ugandan businesses have returned and are investing in the country. There is a fairly friendly investment climate. There are still some problems with the investment code, even though Uganda has established a one stop shop for investors. This has not prevented some of the long established ministries from exercising control over approval of investments. This pertains in particular to new firms and investments starting up. New firms still have to go through some hoops and jump hurdles. That slows down the process for getting new businesses started, to some extent, and it creates some frustration. However, I understand that the Ugandan Government is working on that. I find this another instance where the bureaucracy is refusing to accept backing away and being involved in the process. It is creating some slow downs in this connection.

Q: Did you have any involvement in addressing the HIV/AIDS problem?

COKER: We didn't but we found that AID, the World Bank, and the European Union were all very effective with their programs, because of the fact that President Museveni was quite open in feeling that education, along with treatment, was extremely important. He allowed the launching of the very first, major AIDS education program in Uganda. That program has been extremely helpful in reducing the rate of spread of HIV there. Entire districts have been wiped out by AIDS. The only people you find in some districts are elderly people and infants. However, by and large, I am pleased with what I have seen in Uganda.

On another subject, I don't know just what the motive of the Ugandan Government is in the conflict between the Tutsis and the Hutus. President Museveni himself is a Tutsi. I find it difficult to think that there is not an overall grand plan behind what the Tutsis are doing, of

which he is an intimate part. I think that the U.S. has basically turned its eyes away, in some respects, from the role that Museveni is possibly playing with the Rwandans in that sub-region of Africa and the destabilizing of the former Zaire. I feel that Museveni must have played a role in this affair. I think that the U.S. and South Africa have played a part in making sure that material was made available to rebel forces in southern Sudan to fight the civil war there. Part of this material may have been used there and part of it in eastern Zaire. I don't know the details but I feel that there is some cooperation going on between the Ugandan Government and the surrounding governments, where there are ethnic differences between the Hutus and the Tutsis.

A. ELLEN SHIPPY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Kampala (1991-1994)

Ambassador Shippy was born in Colorado and raised in New Mexico. She was educated at the University of New Mexico and the George Washington School of Law. After a tour with the Peace Corps in El Salvador, Ms. Shippy joined the Foreign Service, where she served first in positions dealing with Latin America and later in with those concerning Asian and African affairs. She served as Political Counselor in Bangladesh, Deputy Chief of Mission in Uganda and she served as Ambassador to Malawi from 1998 to 2000. Ambassador Shippy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Today is March 8, 2002. You are off to Kampala, Uganda in 1991. Who was the ambassador again?

SHIPPY: Johnnie Carson.

Q: Johnnie Carson. You were there from 1991 until when?

SHIPPY: 1994.

Q: 1994. What was the situation in Kampala or in Uganda at that time?

SHIPPY: It was a very hopeful time for the country. Yoweri Museveni was the president. He was trying to open up the economy, bring in business, settle the longstanding issue with the Asian population to bring Asian investment back in.

Q: This was after they were all kicked out. Idi Amin kicked out so many particularly Indian and Chinese too.

SHIPPY: In East Africa "Asian" means "South Asian." Yes, so that had been an ongoing issue. Museveni was trying to rectify it. In fact he did. Some Asian families came back and resettled in Uganda. Most did not. They had made lives elsewhere. Some of them did put new investment money into the country, so that was all good. HIV/AIDS was a major issue. Museveni from the

beginning, the early days of the pandemic, had taken a very public stance against it; he was one of the more enlightened leaders.

Q: What could you do against this disease? I mean what was the government's position?

SHIPPY: A lot of it was education, just talking about it publicly which many countries didn't do, educating the most vulnerable groups, including teenagers. They were doing a great job there. One of the local newspapers once a month ran an insert directed towards teenagers about sex, body functions, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. It was great.

Q: Were we taking any role in that?

SHIPPY: We had a major program there, funded through USAID. There was a woman detailed from CDC whose job was to work on HIV/AIDS issues with the Ugandans.

Q: That is the Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta.

SHIPPY: It is actually the Centers for Disease Control. A woman from CDC was in charge of the USAID efforts on HIV/AIDS. She did incredible work: publicity, prevention, education, promoting the use of condoms as a way to protect people. Also, a lot of research was going on in Uganda about transmission, mother-child transmission. At that point the whole issue of the cocktail had not really become…

Q: You had better explain what the cocktail was.

SHIPPY: The "cocktail" is a combination of three drugs that seems to inhibit the development of the disease. There are questions about at what stage you start doing it, how long it is done and so forth. It is very expensive, so there is a lot of discussion about that these days, but in 1991 to 1994, there wasn't much. The elite in Uganda would go to Europe for treatment, including the cocktail, but the majority of the people didn't have that option.

Q: Were you seeing a significant number of the population of Uganda either suffering from AIDS or at least were exposed to it as in some countries where the potential is horrendous?

SHIPPY: A significant percentage were HIV positive, but I don't remember the figures. There were regions of the country where a large part of the adult population of working years had died. There was one province on the truck route where there weren't many adults left. You had a situation where grandparents ended up taking care of the children, their grandchildren. USAID had projects in this area, health and education projects. The army was heavily hit. You didn't, when you walked the streets of Kampala, you didn't necessarily notice sick and dying people. It wasn't quite like that. It was like a regular city, but there were a lot of people who were HIV positive, but hadn't developed symptoms, and others who had developed symptoms. The hospitals were completely overwhelmed.

Q: Well with something like AIDS, I would have thought that being assigned to Uganda, you and others would make you rather nervous because you get into an unforeseen accident and there is blood. You know you are never quite sure what will happen.

SHIPPY: The biggest health risk, or at least one of the biggest health risks in Uganda, was traffic accidents, not necessarily because of HIV/AIDS, but because, particularly if the accidents happened outside of Kampala, there was very little in the way of health facilities. Not much could be done for accident victims. I never worried about the dangers of traveling. It is just one of the things you do in your job. With respect to HIV/AIDS, certainly people had house staff, and you would take proper precautions, but tuberculosis was a greater issue vis-à-vis house staff.

Q: With Uganda, were we during this time, how were relations say with Kenya? Was this one of the things?

SHIPPY: Relations were tense. At one point Kenyan President Moi and Ugandan President Museveni met. That was considered a step forward, but relations were never good. Uganda believed that Kenya supported a rebel group which stayed in Kenya and made forays across the border. This group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), later became more active and committed atrocities on Ugandan villagers, including stealing young boys to be soldiers in the LRA. But when I was there they made occasional forays in northern Uganda, and burnt schools or whatever, but weren't as bad as they became.

Q: How about, I am not sure. I have my Rwandas and Burundis mixed up, but which is the one that abuts on to Uganda?

SHIPPY: Rwanda.

Q: What was the situation between Rwanda and Uganda at that time?

SHIPPY: It was fine. There were soldiers in the Ugandan army that some people considered Rwandans, and some were Rwandans. It was a standard line of criticism, that Museveni used Rwandans in his army. Rwandan Tutsis who had fled Rwanda in an earlier time, had joined Museveni in the bush and had been part of his army as he took control of Uganda. Then, not too long after Museveni took control, there was a movement of the Tutsis back into Rwanda to fight the Hutu government there. Some of Museveni's senior army officials left the Ugandan Army and joined this rebel uprising in Rwanda. So there were issues there. The Rwandan government claimed the Ugandans were funneling arms to the Tutsis in Rwanda.

Q: Did we get involved in this relationship?

SHIPPY: No.

Q: What were we doing, just reporting what the charges and countercharges were?

SHIPPY: Yes, and we met with Paul Kagame, who would later become the Rwandan Minister of Defense; he is now President of Rwanda. Kagame, who was one of the rebel leaders at the time,

would come to Kampala from time to time, and we would meet with him. The rebels held part at least of the northern section of Rwanda. On one occasion we had a visitor out from Washington, and I took him to the northern part of Rwanda. We crossed the border – which was held by the rebels -- so he could meet with Kagame. Yes, we were talking.

Q: Had the great massacre that took place there, the genocide, did that take place while you were there?

SHIPPY: It did.

Q: Did we get involved in that, I mean your embassy?

SHIPPY: We didn't get involved in the Rwandan side of things, but bodies began showing up in Lake Victoria. They had floated down the river from Rwanda and were becoming a health menace as well as obviously a terrible thing. Our USAID director at the time, Keith Sherper, organized a multilateral effort to deal with the situation. They got bulldozers down to the area and made proper mass burials, if there is such a thing. (Villagers had been taking the bodies and burying them in shallow graves on the beaches, where dogs and pigs would dig them up. It was a terrible situation.)

Q: We weren't being called upon to go to the Ugandan government to use their influence to stop the atrocities.

SHIPPY: I believe we were. Actually I was on leave during the worst of that, but I believe we were. Museveni had no influence on the Hutus, who were the ones committing the atrocities. They considered him a Tutsi supporter.

Q: Yes, so in a way, were we concerned that we were seeing a Tutsi backlash or in other words the Tutsis were massing on the Ugandan soil to go back in?

SHIPPY: But they weren't; they were already in.

Q: So the supply line was a supply line for these troops?

SHIPPY: There were allegations that some supplies were going through Uganda.

Q: What about was Qadhafi doing anything while you were there?

SHIPPY: Let's see, that was the period where he would not agree to let those two guys stand trial, so we made…

Q: This was the Pan Am 103?

SHIPPY: Yes, Pan Am 103. We made various representations to Museveni asking him to weigh in. He felt some tie with Qadhafi because Qadhafi had helped Museveni when Museveni was in the bush, so there was not a lot of response on that issue.

Q: Did we have any, was this the time, there was a time when, I think it was some Americans who were kidnapped and killed? Was that during this time or not?

SHIPPY: No, and I don't even…

Q: Maybe I have got it wrong.

SHIPPY: Are you talking about the kidnapping from the gorilla park that took place, in 1998 or 1999?

Q: Oh, I see. So this is…

SHIPPY: Later, maybe 1998 or 1999.

Q: Well I take it things were on a fairly solid keel with…

SHIPPY: Right. Another comment, we saw a lot of different people. We also had conversations with John Garang, the rebel leader from southern Sudan, when he would come down to Kampala. He was the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. He has a PhD in Agricultural Economics from Grinnell College in Iowa. So we would see him; we saw various interesting people.

Q: How was the Sudan situation? Did we see that, were we trying to play any role; from your perspective was the embassy doing anything?

SHIPPY: Many Sudanese refugees had crossed into Uganda. One time I made a visit up to the refugee camps. The refugee camps are not great places to live. Museveni and other East African leaders formed a group to try and negotiate the Sudanese issue. We were working on the Sudan issue more out of Nairobi than Uganda, so we as an embassy in Uganda were less involved than those in the US Embassy in Nairobi.

Q: What was your estimate and maybe the embassy's estimate of Museveni as a leader?

SHIPPY: I think Museveni is a leader who has a vision for his country. He has an idea of where he would like to go. He practiced tolerance, whereas many if not all of his predecessors when they came in would take vengeance against whoever they had kicked out or overthrown. Museveni tried to create an inclusive government that brought in representatives from all the different groups. He is articulate. He is very well educated. He speaks extremely well. He took a proactive approach to HIV/AIDS long before most other African leaders.

He has some ideas that we completely disagree with. Museveni's organization, the National Resistance Movement, NRM, is officially a "non-party." It runs the country and is a party in everything but name, but political parties were not allowed to run candidates in elections. They were allowed to exist. They were allowed to have newspapers, rallies, but they couldn't, as a political party, run candidates. They obviously ran candidates, but the candidates couldn't say, "I

am a member of X party." Museveni's basis for this was that history in Uganda tied political parties into religious groups. The Catholics are one political party; Protestants are a different one.

Much of the violence in Uganda did in fact stem originally from the differences in the religious groups, beginning with missionaries. That translated into the political parties, so Museveni believes that political parties are responsible for a great part of the violence that Uganda has suffered. Uganda has suffered dreadful violence. You have Idi Amin. And Milton Obote, who probably killed more people than Idi Amin, but didn't get the press Idi Amin did because Obote didn't have a vivid personality. Uganda has had a horrible time, and Museveni believed the political parties were responsible. That was the reason for his having a non-party and for the prohibitions on political parties, and full political party activity.

Ugandans approved a new constitution while I was there. As part of that process, the people voted as to whether they wanted to continue with the non-party state or have political parties. Then there was to be another vote on that issue in five years. The first vote confirmed the non-party status. As I say, I think there is another one that should be coming up. But obviously the people in the political parties don't like this at all. There were a lot of delegations to see us, to get us and others, the Europeans and other countries, to weigh in. We had many discussions with Museveni and his government about this, but so far it hasn't changed. All that said, the elections that took place when I was there were reasonably good elections. Again the candidates weren't identified by political party, but certainly the political parties were running candidates. The elections were reasonably good.

While I was in Uganda, Museveni was saying that he would serve as president for 10 years and then retire to his farm and go back to raising cattle. He is now saying something different. It seems to me he would be doing his country a great service if he would indeed step down and not get into this "I am the only person who can lead" attitude.

Q: Well now did his stand on AIDS which includes the use of condoms run across the Catholic Church?

SHIPPY: It did, and for a long time he, himself, did not promote the use of condoms. He didn't approve of that. He is a very religious person.

Q: He is Catholic?

SHIPPY: No, I don't think he is, but I don't remember what he is. Museveni was against the use of condoms at first, but eventually supported using them as a way to prevent HIV infection. I don't remember the Catholic Church saying anything against the campaign to promote the use of condoms. While it might have been better if he had spoken out sooner, in the end he did speak out for the use of condoms. Many other people and organizations, including newspapers, promoted the use of condoms.

Q: How about Uganda on the international field? Did you find them reasonably supportive in the UN and other places?

SHIPPY: Reasonably so. They would not take a position opposed to an OAU (Organization of African Unity, now known as the African Union) position.

Q: So the lobby for that went on in each country.

SHIPPY: Let me just go back to HIV/AIDS a minute. It was an interesting situation. There is a reasonable percentage of Muslims in Uganda. The woman who did the HIV/AIDS projects for USAID had a project going with Muslims. She had a project going with the Catholic Church, obviously not promoting condoms. She had a program going with the Army. Just to have a USAID program connected in any way with an army is very unusual. You have to get all sorts of special permission. People across all categories recognized the problem, and that something had to be done. To go back to the other issue, the US embassies in each country lobbied on all the different issues.

Q: Were there any other issues we haven't touched on?

SHIPPY: We tried to promote U.S. investment, but it was a hard sell. Uganda is very far away, and it is not a traditional market, so a lot of work will have to continue to be done on that one. But some of the steps that Museveni was taking to make the country a place where the rule of law prevails, all that helped.

E. MICHAEL SOUTHWICK
Ambassador
Uganda (1994-1997)

Ambassador Southwick was born in California and raised in California and Idaho. Educated at Stanford University, he entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Basically an Africa specialist, Mr. Southwick served largely in African posts, including Burundi, Rwanda, Niger, Kenya and Uganda, where from 1994 to 1997 he was United States Ambassador. He also served in Switzerland and Nepal. In his Washington assignments, he dealt with African and United Nations matters. The ambassador was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Okay, how did the Uganda assignment come about?

SOUTHWICK: Well, I was hoping for an ambassadorial assignment. In '93 there was some talk about this with Washington because that was when my three year tour in Kenya was supposedly coming to an end. The best thing they could come up with at the time was the Comoros. These islands have a two or three person post, a little island out in the Indian Ocean. Just to show you how crazily things worked, I was called by Washington saying they had already put my name in at the White House for Comoros. I said no one talked to me about it and I said, I don't think I want to go there. But everybody wants to be ambassador I was told. I said, not everybody wants to be ambassador to the Comoros. I took a pouch run down there from Nairobi and thought unless I wanted to read all the works of Proust or Shakespeare or something like that, that was

not the place for me, so I came back and told them to try elsewhere. I got a lot of advice from people saying they'll never ask you again, but they did. There was a transition for Kenya and Ambassador Hempstone left in early '93. The Democrats hadn't gotten organized to get a new ambassador. It was thought that this would take a while. They asked me to stay on as chargé and then to stay on for a full year as soon as they got an ambassador out there which I did.

Anyway, you get all of these forms and you have a sort of obstacle course of being an ambassador where they do background checks. You fill out elaborate forms about your financial viability and that kind of thing. It takes a while and it's kind of nerve wracking I think for most of us, at least that's what my colleagues say, but I was able to leave Kenya in June. The whole family was with me except for my older son and we spent a little bit of time in Italy, in Florence, and then we went back to the States. I began my preparations there.

Q: What was as you went, what were American interests, what was happening in Uganda just before you got out there?

SOUTHWICK: Uganda had been a case of some renown among Africanists at least. Also I think among the wider public, at least the public that pays any attention to the newspapers, because Idi Amin had been one of its first leaders. He had taken the country down to rack and ruin. He seized power in 1971 and quickly started turning the place into a nightmare. A lot of people were killed. A lot of interrogations late at night. The place was a shambles that led to a war with Tanzania, of all places, with Julius Nyerere the next-door neighbor. He sort of took upon himself to clean up Uganda. They had a war and Idi Amin lost and was deposed and fled eventually to Saudi Arabia. There was a troubled period for a year or two in which the country struggled to have an election. It had an election, but it was not a satisfactory election from the point of view of someone named Yoweri Museveni in the '70s, so he went to the bush. This was in 1980 and in 1986 his bush warfare landed him victory and he entered Kampala and took charge as president of Uganda by force. By the time I got there Museveni had gained a reputation as being astute, pragmatic, someone who was on the ball in terms of economic policy, and was trying to bring some of the Asians back that Idi Amin had kicked out. He was also glib, a good conversationalist, and he was a very likable guy in the eyes of Washington and more generally the international community. So, when I went there I didn't think I would have problems about management and policy with regard to the economy. I knew there was a political transition process underway, but it seemed like it was underway, it was moving towards a new constitution and elections and civilian government. In many ways it was quite a contrast to Kenya.

Q: Was there any problem with the senate getting confirmation?

SOUTHWICK: No. It went through without any difficulty. I was not personally a controversial person. Our policy toward Uganda was not controversial and fortunately there were no little, how should I call it, little things that somehow, sometimes, for no apparent reason tie up ambassadorial appointments.

Q: Yes, particularly with Senator Helms trying to make a point or something or not.

SOUTHWICK: The only thing that got somebody's attention, this was well before it was announced, was I'd had a spate of security violations in Nairobi. They needed to get that resolved, what the circumstances were. I was very worried about that, thinking that the preoccupation of security that had been carried to the extreme, that that might knock me out of the picture, but it didn't. So, the confirmation went well. I went up there with three other ambassadors, a new one who was going to Tanzania, the person who was going to Mauritania and there was one other, the Seychelles. It went smoothly. It seemed at the time to take a long time to get things scheduled, but frankly by the end of July I was ready to go.

Q: Had you taken the ambassadorial course?

SOUTHWICK: I was able to take the ambassadorial course.

Q: How did you find that?

SOUTHWICK: I thought it was pretty good. I found that I wasn't as taken with it as I had been about the DCM course some years before. The DCM course was more elaborate and more intense. I think a function of the fact that being a DCM is in some ways a more difficult job than being an ambassador. There had been a lot of cases of DCMs in the Foreign Service not doing terribly well for one reason or another. The ambassadorial charm course or whatever you want to call it was, I thought it sort of hit high points and so forth and gave very general advice and had some good people coming in to talk to us.

Q: Did you have a DCM in mind?

SOUTHWICK: Well, this is interesting. Both the DCM and the ambassador were changing in Kampala at the same time.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

SOUTHWICK: The ambassador before me was Johnny Carson. He's still in the Foreign Service. Johnny's DCM, Ellen Shippy was moving off so we had to get a DCM. I was not technically in a position to select a DCM, but being part of the Africa bureau old boy network, they consulted me on it; they gave me a list of names. The person we both wanted was someone who had been serving as the supervisory general services officer in Kampala. A very attractive officer, a bright officer named Wayne Bush. He and I went up there roughly the same time. He got there a couple of weeks before I did.

Q: You were in Uganda from when to when?

SOUTHWICK: From '94, I guess it was August '94 to August of '97, the usual three years.

Q: When you got there, how were you received?

SOUTHWICK: Quite well, even before I presented credentials the president wanted to see me about a problem.

Q: The president of Uganda?

SOUTHWICK: The president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni. He wanted to see me because at our request he had sent about 1,000 Ugandan troops to Liberia to help with a peacekeeping operation there. That operation wasn't going very well and he wanted to tell me that he wanted to take the troops home. That was one of the first issues that we had to deal with. I found Museveni, as other people had found him, a very good conversationalist. Somebody who you could talk to about issues in a very intelligent fashion. Someone who thought for himself. A very attractive figure. I came to learn as time went on that was both a good thing and a bad thing.

Q: What was his background?

SOUTHWICK: He was mostly a military person, but only really when he decided to go to the bush in 1980. He and I were the same age within a couple of months. We were both born in 1944, '45. He had been an undergraduate at the University of Dar es Salaam in the mid to late '60s. At that time the University of Dar es Salaam was very leftist, almost what some people would say communist in its orientation. Museveni had invibed a lot of this radicalism at the university and was a student leader and one of his heroes was an author named Walter Rodney. He's written a lot about the Third World, about revolution, how struggling peoples achieve dignity and so forth. He was very taken by that and somewhat by the Marxist vision I would say, not hook, line and sinker, but somewhat by that analytical way of looking at the universe. He had been in power for seven years by the time I saw him and on economic policy, thanks to some efforts by the U.S. and some other donors, he had become convinced that capitalism was okay and that was the right model. He wanted investment and the private sector to flourish in his country. He did it for social means. He said, we've got a lot to do to build this country up and I need wealth to do that and capitalism produces wealth and this communist stuff doesn't. That was basically how he viewed the situation. He did, I think, have and still has a view that violence is an appropriate means to solve certain kinds of problems. He used it when he didn't like the results of the election in 1980. He was responsible for backing a Rwandan force that invaded Rwanda from Uganda. These are people who had been serving in the Ugandan army in 1990. During the time I was in Uganda, he backed a force that went into what was Zaire, became the Congo again, to overthrow Mobutu. Then, over time, he got more heavily involved militarily in Southern Sudan. He was quite vain about his military abilities and strangely his bravado and claims never bore truth. His army was not very good. It couldn't quell an ongoing insurrection in the Northern part of the country. It performed very poorly in Congo. It was not a match for the Rwandans when they got into it sometimes and I think they were mediocre at best in the Sudan.

Q: Did you ever figure out why the army wasn't very good?

SOUTHWICK: I'm not sure. We did have a defense attaché there during all the time I was there. One of them was particularly good and spent a lot of time with some of these soldiers in the field. Had a small IMET training program with them and you got the impression that it was really a kind of a bush army, which had expanded and then contracted. Theoretically you would think the best people would stay in it, but one also suspects that they did not. Not very good leadership,

not very good training, not very good funding. An army, which despite all of these adventures that I had mentioned, was basically there to keep Museveni in power.

Q: Had the British been training the troops?

SOUTHWICK: The British had had some programs there over time. In the colonial period they'd train the army. As usual with British colonial policies, however successful they are at the time, they leave legacies. One of them in Uganda is that they had concentrated their military training on one or two groups in the tribal structure. There were a number of tribes and depending on how you count them, it could be 40, it could be 13. There are really about five big ones and they had been arranged traditionally in kingdoms. That was a kind of a source of instability.

Q: How was security in Uganda because sometimes when an army is not very good they're out making roadblocks and basically going after the citizenry as sort of quasi-bandits?

SOUTHWICK: The accepted wisdom, not entirely true, was that Museveni had pacified the lower two-thirds of the country, but not the northern third where there was a strange insurrection going on under the leadership of someone named Joseph Kony. His group was called the Lord's Resistance Army. They had a messianic kind of message. They wanted to reestablish a government under the principles of the Ten Commandments. The original founder of this had been a woman, sort of a sorceress if you wish named Alice Auma who had wound up in a refugee camp in Kenya. Kony had taken over this movement and they kidnapped and terrorized essentially their own people. They were Acholi. They were terrorizing the Acholi. They would kidnap children, school children, women, make people do bestial acts to prove their loyalty, kill their friends, chop people up, atrocities of all kinds, burning huts with people in them. It's still going on and frankly it is still one of the most unexplainable guerrilla movements in the world.

Q: Every once in a while some Europeans and some Americans get caught and a few of them killed.

SOUTHWICK: Yes. Not so much today. They have tended to stay away from Europeans. There are a fair number of Italians in that part of the country with the missions and some aid workers and refugee camps and so forth. They were mainly predators against their own people, the Acholi. The Acholi had been one of these groups that had been favored by the British at least as far as military training was concerned and they had offered the most resistance to Museveni during the civil war. One of the explanations for this whole phenomenon is that Museveni really didn't want to have this thing come to an end because it was making these people who had never supported him suffer.

Q: When we got there, let's take the troop deployment to Liberia. What did you do, did we try to stop it?

SOUTHWICK: This effort had been underway in the State Department for some time trying to pay Africans to do some of these dirty jobs. So this was to get some African troops to go to Liberia which was a mess and assist in the pacification of the country and more specifically to

help in arms collection. When Museveni had his first conversation with me he said he'd just been over there to Liberia and he said, "That isn't a government, that's a gang of crooks." They're not serious people, there's no way to do business over there with people like that and it's just a folly for him to continue working there. Frankly he was right. He was right as events proved then and certainly subsequently. True, this was Charles Taylor and some of those goons. I was under heavy pressure to get them to stay at least a little bit longer. This is a Foreign Service problem. Hope springs eternal for most of us even in the most lousy situations. When our brains are really telling us one thing, our hopes and emotions are telling us something else. We think that somehow we'll be able to pull it off if we just stay in there; perhaps putting good money after bad money. That was the idea, stay engaged, stay the course, make these programs work.

Q: What was your relationship with Museveni?

SOUTHWICK: For most of the time until the very end it was very good. We got along very well together. The Africans pay a lot of attention to what they call people who are born about the same time and you are age mates. So, we were age mates and he was conscious of that and I was conscious of it as being a factor. We had experienced history pretty much together, and the fate of the events of the world and what had happened in the world more widely; what had happened in Africa, where Africa was coming from. Each of us had been through that. Both of us were kind of speculative and liked to talk philosophically and liked to talk about political theories and were fascinated with the whole problem of leadership. We could spend hours together and often did. I spent one whole day with him once from breakfast until after dinner conversation, just the two of us.

Q: Did you find, was he the man?

SOUTHWICK: He was the man. I can't say it was a Louis XIV system because I don't think Africa could run a Louis XIV system. France, Louis XIV, but it was akin to that. He made the decisions. He had a no party system. It was based on the movement. Museveni felt, as did many leaders in Africa in the '60s, that a multiparty democracy wouldn't work. It just fed on the divisions, on tribe origin and all the rest of it. He felt that that was the wrong way to go. So, when he came to power in '86 he kept this movement structure as kind of a loose thing, everybody's part of a movement, whether you want to be or not and this was how he hoped to govern the country. He didn't want to call it a party because then he'd be accused of having a one party state. He recognized that that was not going to go down well, but as long as he called it a movement and no party state, it was okay. This eventually became a source of friction between us and, leaving us personally, frankly between the United States and Uganda.

Q: One remembers the Idi Amin's expulsion of the Indian traders from Uganda, which in a way, cut out the whole source of supply because the people who took their place sort of sat in the store and once the canned goods and all were gone, I mean there was no way to resupply.

SOUTHWICK: Literally that's almost exactly right. There's an anecdote I had heard about Idi Amin when I was still in Rwanda. The local Mercedes dealer had been robbed of all of his vehicles. A few days afterwards one of the people in Idi Amin's staff came by and said, "When is your stock going to be replenished because I want to pick up my car?" Zero idea about how an

economy worked. Zero sense of responsibility in terms of if you get something, you pay for it. No concept. The economy actually nose-dived. I'm told, I've never checked this out with scholars, but Uganda is a tremendously fruitful place. It's got a lot of rainfall, pineapples, bananas, nobody ever starved even during the worst of it. It's 4,000 feet high, most of it, its rainfall is very steady and there's practically no history in the southern part of the country, where most of the people are, of a drought.

Q: Well, when you were there, what was the economy like and how was it developing during the time you were there?

SOUTHWICK: I wouldn't call it a one crop, but it had been traditionally a major coffee producer. They had been a major tea producer. They had produced pyrethrum, to some extent. It's a white flower, it is a natural insecticide. They had some minerals over towards the West of the country. They were potentially a breadbasket and they also had possibilities with tourism. A lot of people think of Kenya as the place for tourism in East Africa, but if you go back towards the period before independence, Uganda was developing at about the same pace. It had two major game parks which were roughly equal I would say of anything in Kenya. Then the Ugandans discovered they had something that hardly anybody else had and that was mountain gorillas. They had a park that they shared with Rwanda and Congo where there was one group of gorillas, about 300 strong. Then about four years ago, in another forest about 40 miles away, a forest called the impenetrable forest aptly enough, they found that there were gorillas there, about 300 of them. These are the only places where mountain gorillas exist.

Q: What were we doing in Uganda encouraging to send our troops?

SOUTHWICK: Well, we had the troops there. We were putting a lot of money into Uganda by African standards, by aid standards. We had an aid program of about $50 to $60 million dollars which was high for an African country. The donors were in there in force. Uganda had become the darling of the donors basically because you had a leader who was enlightened, who was pursuing the right kinds of economic policies and was perceived to be managing a decent political transition. He also, by the time I got there, became known as one of the first leaders anywhere in the world to recognize and do something about the AIDS crisis. He learned about this from Fidel Castro. Uganda had sent some troops to Cuba to be trained and Fidel, I'm told by Museveni, got on the telephone and said, some of your troops have this terrible disease. Museveni said, oh no, we don't because homosexuality doesn't exist in Africa. Castro says, well, I won't go there, but your troops have AIDS. About that time in the '80s the AIDS epidemic was really spreading in the African Great Lakes area, Rwanda, Burundi, the Eastern Congo, into Uganda.

Anyway, Museveni got right on it and he intuitively or rationally perceived since there is no cure for this thing, the only thing that can work is prevention; that's a matter of public education and sensitization. He went on a massive campaign to demystify this disease and to try to take away the social stigma of it. In Uganda there were all kinds of support groups of people with AIDS. There were billboards in all the towns about AIDS. Everybody knew that there was an epidemic going on. It was inescapable. This was at a time when a lot of people in other countries refused to recognize it.

Q: Were we involved in this?

SOUTHWICK: Yes we were. Our National Institute of Health (NIH) flocked to Uganda and we had some programs there to do tests. One of them was frankly trying to keep ahead of the virus. The AIDS virus as you probably know mutates and as the '90s progressed we had gotten to the point where we had some drugs like AZT which was counteractive. There was a huge fear in the scientific community that the virus would mutate into a different form for which AZT would not be effective. That was one of the factors, but a lot of it was just telling people you don't have to get this disease and this is how you avoid getting it.

Q: What about running the embassy with Americans and AIDS because AIDS can be transmitted by blood, too.

SOUTHWICK: Yes, there was a little bit of fear about that and I think you know you can touch somebody with a sore. If you have a sore and you touch somebody with a sore you might get AIDS that way, but we basically felt we could live okay and live normally there. We tested our own staff, Americans. Well, the State Department is already testing its people for medical clearances. One of the things I should mention, our embassy at that time was the backroom of the British High Commission. The British High Commission was a modern building on Parliament Way, a relatively nice street leading to parliament. Like a lot of other countries, including the British with Idi Amin towards the end we all left, so we abandoned our embassy.

Q: We actually snuck out; Bob Keeley did.

SOUTHWICK: Yes, Keeley did.

Q: Sort of like <u>The Sound of Music</u>.

SOUTHWICK: The Trapp family pretty soon was gone. Until Amin, our embassy had been two floors in an office building downtown. When we left, we decided to turn it over to the French. The French were the protecting power. This is how we do this in diplomacy. We fully expected that when we went back in that we would get it back, but the French had since moved in and they felt that they should stay there. They were very happy with our quarters. They even showed me when I would go over there to see the French ambassador the safe with the great seal of the United States on it. We were left with anything we could find. So the British embassy essentially gave us a part of their building, not a huge building, a fairly large one and in the back of it there were some staff apartments and we converted it into a less than impressive, less consumptuous embassy.

Q: Were they planning to do something about it?

SOUTHWICK: Well, they were. This embassy was such a laughing stock and it was very inconvenient to run and AID of course had offices in a different part of town, USIA had offices in a different part of town, had a warehouse in another part of town. The whole thing was undignified to put it mildly, but there were plans. About the time I got there, through Johnny

Carson's efforts, we had gotten a seven acre parcel in the Southern part of the town where we planned to construct a building and everything was well advanced. Kampala had gotten up to about number two or three in the priorities of the foreign buildings office, OBO I guess it's now called. My grapevine told me that even though Kampala had gotten up there, don't expect it to stay very long. We were looking around for alternatives. The new office building was being constructed, but nothing ever came of it. After my time we had the embassy bombings in East Africa and there was a plot to blow up our part of the British High Commission which never materialized. After that it was felt that we had to build something and something has been constructed since on that property.

Q: How big was your embassy?

SOUTHWICK: If you count the AID people and all the rest of it, there were about 60 or 65 direct hire. In the embassy itself in terms of the core staff you had myself, you had a DCM, you had a Political Econ officer, you had a refugee officer and you had a consular officer and an administrative officer and a budget and fiscal officer. In terms of reporting, it was basically just three or four people if you count the USIA public affairs office. I'm sure typical.

Q: I'm sure you had other agencies at this location.

SOUTHWICK: Yes, we had the usual other agency there and we had a defense attaché sort of on and off, but that later became permanent. I didn't feel bereft except Nairobi had spoiled me because we had a political section with about six people in it. We had an Econ section with three or four people in it. We had a USIA full contingent there, four or five people, so there were always plenty of people around to do the work. I felt that when I got to Kampala that there would be less work, fewer people, that it would all kind of even out. It didn't and people had to work like dogs.

Q: Looking at it, having gone from one extreme to the other, was there a justification for the sparse personnel in Uganda and for the generous ones in Kenya or was it just a matter of the popularity of the place?

SOUTHWICK: Popularity of the place, historical legacy, the fact that Kenya is on the coast. It's a more important country than Uganda. It has a seaport of some significance. It was a very popular post. When I'd been in personnel, as I think I mentioned, Kenya was not a place that posed any staffing difficulty whatsoever when every other post in Africa did. Every single one, except Nairobi. That's changed of course now. The long and short of it was that Kenya had too many people. Kampala didn't have enough. During the time I was there, for three years we were quite busy. When I arrived we had a deployment ending with a whole lot of troops who were there because of the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. They were about ready to leave. I think it had gotten up to about 1,000 troops. That requires quite a bit of management even though the military comes and to a certain extent manages itself. Then we had this insurrection of the Lords Resistance Army, which had to be covered. Then we found out that the political transition was running into roadblocks or certainly potholes, and it would have been nice to fill that out with some additional reporting capably. Towards the end we had this phenomenon of potential

intervention by the Western countries in Eastern Congo to prevent further genocide. At the end of my time there we had this civil war in the Congo. There was a lot going on.

Q: Talk a bit about why it had troops, these were American troops. What had they been doing?

SOUTHWICK: The American troops after the genocide. There was a lot of migration of Hutus from Rwanda into Eastern Zaire which is very close to the Ugandan border. There are some ethnic ties for the Hutus and Tutsis with their analogues in Uganda. Uganda was helping with the logistics of this problem, refugees, water, all the things that happened when there were all these people. The nearest really good airport was at Entebbe which is right on Lake Victoria, about 30 miles south of Kampala. That became kind of a staging area. They also eventually used the airport at Goma, but at that time in '94 it was essentially kind of a relief operation more than anything else. We were worried about the refugee camps exploding and becoming a base for incursions into Rwanda. That's when the French and others were thinking about sending troops into these refugee camps in the Congo or moving them further away from the border. We didn't want to get involved very much in that. The Canadians did and the French did and the U.S. had more logistic capacity so we did some of that. Then as you may remember, one fine day the refugees decided that they would go back to Rwanda, not all of them, but tens of thousands of them did in a matter of days. This whole necessity for intervention in there kind of collapsed and I was glad of it.

Q: Well, looking at Uganda, its got interesting neighbors. To the North, you've got the Sudan.

SOUTHWICK: The civil war.

Q: Where did Uganda fit in the civil war because I always thought it was kind of black African and Christian against more or less Arab.

SOUTHWICK: That whole vast area of the Southern Sudan had not been touched by anybody forever including the British who had had nominal control. With the Anglo Egyptian Sudan, if you look at old maps, they kind of left it alone and didn't let anybody go in there except a few missionaries. Ethnically it is very different from the Arabized North of the country; linguistically, ethnically, any way you wanted to look at it. A civil war had been going on in its current phase since 1983 there. The leader of the peoples liberation army was somebody named John Garang who was U.S. educated at Iowa State, had a Ph.D. Somebody I had gotten to know actually quite well when I was in Nairobi.

Q: You were saying Museveni felt?

SOUTHWICK: Yes, Museveni felt that he could make the difference in all of this. If he got involved in this struggle in Southern Sudan, not working for Garang, but working alongside of him, he could liberate Southern Sudan or at least force Khartoum to the negotiating table. He sent troops in there from time to time to accomplish just that.

Q: Were they allied with the Southerners?

SOUTHWICK: Well, it's a strange thing and it took me a while to figure this out, but I came to the conclusion that Museveni and Garang were rivals and mistrusted each other. They both considered themselves intellectuals. They both considered themselves great bush fighters, guerrilla warfare specialists, but they cast aspersions on each other. They had a common enemy in Khartoum, but I think the cooperation was always a big effort, let's put it that way. Occasionally it would work pretty well, but it would never work successfully enough to bring Khartoum down.

Q: How about relations with Kenya?

SOUTHWICK: I'm sure I made an impact on that one because I knew the Kenya hierarchy from top to bottom and I had a very good personal relationship with President Moi. In the months after I got to Uganda it came increasingly clear that Museveni felt that Kenya was ripe for intervention, and that maybe he should infiltrate some people down there or at least suborn some politicians with money and so forth. In other words, sort of mix it up with Kenya because he had a low regard for Moi and he felt that the place was right for change. I went to see Museveni and I saw some of his top people in the security services. I said you can trust your own people on this, but if you really check with them, Kenya is not susceptible to manipulation from here and you should just lay off. Their army is much better than yours. It's bigger than yours, they control your access to the sea and if they get mad, you'll be toast. I arranged for the top security people of both countries to meet each other at Museveni's ranch. This was all arranged in a very clandestine way. We established a hot line for the security people and the key military people on both sides who could be in touch with each other all the time about any problems along the border. There were problems along the border, tribal problems having to do with cattle rustling stuff that went back from before the colonial period. So there were plenty of things to talk about. I really felt that I helped make a difference there in convincing Museveni that he had enough on his hands. He doesn't need anything more. Just let the transition in Kenya be dictated by internal dynamics.

Q: How about Tanzania?

SOUTHWICK: Tanzania, it was a decent relationship. There's not a whole lot going on between these two countries even though they share Lake Victoria. Tanzania has its own outlets to the sea.

Q: It has Dar es Salaam, doesn't it?

SOUTHWICK: Yes.

Q: Mombasa to Kampala. The lions.

SOUTHWICK: The Lions of Tsavo, yes, there's a novel and a movie about this. But see, when the British got into that part of the world, they thought they needed to build the railway to Uganda because that's the place they thought was rich. They didn't think Kenya was rich. If you see Out of Africa, you see the famous scene with Meryl Streep and so forth, presumably in Nairobi, but the train says Uganda Railway on it. It was the Uganda Railway.

Q: Did Nyerere strike a positive note with the Scandinavian donors because Nyerere really wooed them and had them eating out of his hand.

SOUTHWICK: Oh, yes, it was pathetic.

Q: Nyerere had kind of passed on hadn't he by this time?

SOUTHWICK: Well, his luster had faded because things had not worked there. There was a lot of corruption, a lot of these things didn't work. I feel on the basis of my Foreign Service experience in Third World countries that the hardest thing to do is to help another country. It is so difficult, so complex. Outsiders, no matter how well intentioned or how smart, still really don't know what we're doing. We don't know what we're doing. We've made a lot of mistakes and I fear in many cases made things worse, but the Scandinavians were in Tanzania in force except the Norwegians. The Norwegians came to see me shortly after I got there and they were thinking of coming into Uganda. I said you know since my grandmother is Norwegian I can speak frankly. I said, "Why don't you go find someplace else? There are too many people here. The place is getting spoiled. We're crawling all over each other, the donor community. Sure there's plenty to do, but is this where you really can make a big difference?"

Q: Well, did you, I mean looking at donors and all this, did you maybe differentiate between the non-governmental agencies or the semi-autonomist ones because the line gets a little bit hazy in some areas, but were these people coming into a place like Uganda and then the government. I mean were they making a difference and were these things that they were doing taking?

SOUTHWICK: Well, they come in and they rent villas, you know houses by our standards. They live in a Western style. They all make quite good money. Vast multiples of a per capita income of a country, earn a lot more than their Ugandan counterparts. This story is the same all over Africa. They have elaborate projects where a lot of the money it's like a boomerang. Ostensibly it's going to Uganda, but it's really paying for expatriate workers, their salaries and their support and travel, overhead expenses. Over my career I became very cynical and very negative about aid. I sometimes tell people half seriously and sometimes totally seriously, the World Bank should be closed down. I have never seen a good World Bank project ever. Yet all these poor countries are stuck with the bills for multibillion-dollar projects that have produced nothing which were undertaken by corrupt governments. Never brought to fruition, yet the bill is still there. The whole thing needs to be rethought. Museveni said something very telling once at some conference, a conference on aid. He said, "I like aid foreign assistance. I don't like aidism." I had heard many African leaders tell me that because hearing it sounded like Ronald Reagan. It was just a very debilitating thing to have people come in who want to do everything for you. He says, after a while, nobody has any initiative, nobody has any ideas. The only thing people think of is getting on the feeding at the trough. Here is a country with a GNP of about three or four billion dollars and about a billion of that is foreign assistance. It's the biggest industry. Bigger than coffee, bigger than tea, bigger than tourism.

Q: How was the economy doing? I'm talking about the shopkeepers and that type of thing, you know, getting out. After Idi Amin had sort of cleared out the whole entrepreneurial Indian class.

SOUTHWICK: It was slowly coming back because Museveni made it clear that after kind of a vetting process he was willing to take some of the Asians back or any of them who could get through this vetting process. There was a family there called the Madhvani family. They had come over to East Africa from India about 70 or 80 years ago and got involved in sugar. They got involved in other things, breweries, light industry and so forth. The Madhvani complex of industries was said to control about 7% or 8% of the GNP of the country. They had a huge estate east of Kampala in the middle of a big sugar plantation. Thousands and thousands of acres, but they were about 7% or 8%, maybe 10%, 11% no one knew for sure of the economy and Museveni got them to come back and get back in business. They did with some World Bank help and some other help. Museveni would sometimes say that I need five or six Madhvanis.

Q: When you were there how were you dealing with the press?

SOUTHWICK: Well, we tried to understand it. I knew a lot of the press corps in Nairobi and when business was slow in Nairobi some of them would come up to Uganda. This was Newsweek, Time and the New York Times and some of the others and that was the story in Uganda. They would go up there and they would come as perplexed as everybody else was, but they would write it up and there would be a story. Because of this connection with the press and because of my work with Hempstone, I got pretty good about working with the press. I don't want to say using the press because I think we use each other in a situation like that, but there were a lot of articles about Uganda which simply would not have happened had I not been there. These people had a little bit of time to spare. This carried forward the notion that Uganda was this place in Africa that was doing well and was recovering and was overcoming the legacy of Idi Amin.

Q: Was there an Idi Amin movement, loyalists?

SOUTHWICK: No, they pretty much fizzled out and his family had either been bought off or were in exile. Idi Amin himself was in a kind of house arrest in Saudi Arabia. He died a year or two ago. There was some thought about bringing him back and putting him on trial. I once had a discussion about this with Museveni. I later learned a whole lot more about war crimes and human rights from a UN perspective and all the rest of it. I think that he thought this would be more trouble and would create more problems than it would solve. I feel that one of the things that he didn't want to happen was to have a full scale investigation about what everybody had done including Museveni and his forces during the civil war.

Q: Did anyone check the deep freezes?

SOUTHWICK: No. There are funny stories about Idi Amin. He hired this Swiss or Frenchman to do a documentary. It's a famous movie. It's still around. I think you can get it on DVD about Idi Amin. The French speaking Swiss who was doing it eventually decided he was dealing with a crazy man, but that he better just do it as if it isn't crazy. Yet the craziness of the whole situation emerges loud and clear. You'll have a picture of a cabinet meeting where Idi Amin is saying that the cabinet ministers are to ensure that the people love their government. Then there will be a voice over and say this minister was found floating in the Nile the next day. The Idi Amin legacy was still there.

Q: What about the Congo while you were there?

SOUTHWICK: The Congo was clearly slated for change. You could tell the Mobutu regime was nearing the end and the question was what would happen there. I think Museveni decided he wanted to back the winner, whoever emerged on top in the post-Mobutu period. Of course the United States and a lot of countries wanted to manage the process internally within the Congo and keep the neighboring states out of it, but Museveni got mixed up to some degree with this fellow Kabila and decided to back him with Rwanda in an effort to overthrow Mobutu and this worked. As soon as they started working together, Kabila, Museveni and Kagame in Rwanda, this thing sort of really worked well. I remember calling Washington and saying have you seen the initial reports? I said, "I think these rebel troops can get to Kinshasa the capital, it's about 1500 miles away, about as fast as they can walk because there's nothing around to stop them except crocodiles. How are they going to get there?" The whole place is crumbling and that's what happened. Museveni didn't know much about Kabila. He asked us what we knew. I asked him what he knew because we don't know much except some contacts in the late '60s and early '70s.

Q: He was involved in some kidnapping of Americans.

SOUTHWICK: He was and he was also involved with (*inaudible)* came out to that part of Africa and worked with Kabila. I found the articles by (*inaudible)* thought Kabila was a nut case. Of course Kabila thought about (*inaudible)*. I knew that kidnapping case because it was Stanford students. A little bit of a connection there. The big issue in Uganda was the political transformation of the country to a reasonably good democratic system. I was not starry eyed about this. I thought it was quite realistic having gone through all the problems that Kenya had gone through. But I was very assiduous in pursuing my belief that Uganda really had a wonderful opportunity in the case of Museveni, a really good, gifted leader to lead the country to this place where it could be self-sustaining as a democracy. In other words, to do what didn't happen at independence. As time went by during my time there, it became clear that Museveni did not want to continue that process. He wanted to stop it and put the brakes on democratization and put in place forever this one party state, this movement system. That's when I felt that we the United States needed to blow the whistle and with Washington's approval, that's exactly what we did.

Q: How does one blow the whistle because the inertia of a policy and an ambassador going out and saying this guy is not going anywhere? This often, we've got aid things going and we've got military alliances and all. It doesn't happen that way usually.

SOUTHWICK: No, it doesn't, but I had learned a few things from Hempstone, maybe enough where he had become very outspoken in his criticisms of the Moi government. I decided very reluctantly that we did have to go public. Then this all came to a head. We did issue a press release. This was in the constitutional process and what parliament was doing and about the provision of the new constitution, which would allow essentially the entrenchment of perpetuity of this whole party system. My instructions from George Moose, the assistant secretary when I came out to Uganda, was that as long as there was a political process unfolding and moving that

we should be satisfied with that. I agreed because I don't think you should rush these things in too much of a headlong fashion. That had happened in Kenya and it hadn't worked out as well as we had hoped. It should be more organic, more systematic, more take some time with it, what have you, as long as there was movement. What I saw of this constitutional process, they were going to stop the clock. I knew George Moose and he knew me and I felt I had the confidence of Washington so we did go public and it caused an uproar. Museveni had not been used to being criticized at all by anybody except his, you know, cronies.

Q: When you say you went public, who went public how?

SOUTHWICK: The embassy with a press release. I knew how to do a lot of press releases from my time in Kenya. It was not a strident or nasty kind of press release. It said that we're concerned about what is happening here because if this provision of the constitution is put in place it will stop this process which had been going on very well and needs to continue. I don't want to say it was mild. We knew however it was done, it would have a shock value, but it tried to leave a lot of room open. Because of that I started getting in the papers. Certainly the local papers and then internationally.

Q: What about your discussion with Museveni?

SOUTHWICK: Well, we had a lot of discussions and here's where I had to do my homework and it's about the nature of democracy, the nature of human rights. What is in our constitution. I, like a lot of Americans, feel that you just know all of this stuff, you're born knowing it and is that a factor or not. Like one of the questions I had going out to Uganda and I asked all kinds of people this question: do you have to have a multiparty system to have democracy? Is it an essential for democracy? Some political scientists were saying, well, no, you have this, you have that. You can create some theoretical things, but I found that two basic rights, which are widely agreed upon, do say that you have to have a multiparty system and that is the right of assembly and the right of association. We have that in the United States, but that is what was being denied in Uganda, the right of association to have with the party, the right of assembly, being able to meet, being able to organize. Museveni and I had endless discussions on those things and his arguments back to me were that the people aren't ready. These divisions, that his opposition consisted of nefarious people and he just couldn't allow it to happen. During this period Museveni was getting more and more vain about himself. He was using his own press agency and this became a problem as well. He was getting all this adulatory press. I think some of it was what I had helped cook up with my journalist friends; it sort of backfired to that degree. I held my ground and Washington backed me up and George Moose backed me up and there were two elections there. They didn't move and they went into the movement system and it didn't look very good.

Q: What were, let's say particularly the British and maybe the French embassies, what were they doing? Were we out in front on this?

SOUTHWICK: Well, we were a little bit more because we're the United States of America and whether we want to be in the back, we can't be in the back. I have always felt that we worked very closely with our closest allies; certainly the British in places where the British were

paramount, the French where they were paramount and then more broadly with the donor community: the Europeans and the Japanese and that had been successful in Kenya. With Edward Clay who was the British High Commissioner there, he and I were talking together all the time and I also found a good interlocutor in the form of the Italian ambassador who was one of Italy's foremost Africanists and he and I became good friends. They lived across the street from me and we spent a lot of time together just socially and sometimes on weekends, just two couples. Edward Clay is currently the British High Commissioner in Kenya and he's going public with some scathing criticisms of the government there, democratically elected government over corruption. He's doing some of this stuff that I learned from Hempstone and I think he learned a little bit from me. I can't say it was all successful and if I had to do it all over again, I'd have to think whether I'd want to do it all over again because you pay a cost.

Q: What about the academic world? I would think that you would get quite a few students because it's English speaking and that's probably the main thing and it's not a bad place to go to.

SOUTHWICK: Makerere had been the main university of Eastern Africa, and with the British Museveni was trying to rehabilitate it to some extent during the period that I was there and subsequently. Yes, academics. They were looking at Uganda as a place that could make it. I was trying to make sure that this country made it. I felt that if Uganda, which had been the first country in Africa to go down the toilet in a major way with Idi Amin, if it could recover and do well it would send a signal to the rest of Africa. Uganda is important to itself, but also for the signal it sent. I was very concerned and my confidence then was stronger frankly than it is now that Africa could do that.

Q: What did you feel that we were teaching students in the United States about Africa, was it realistic?

SOUTHWICK: Well, I think it's a complex subject and I'm going to know more about this. I'm doing a little bit of research for a presentation I have to give at the U.S. Institute of Peace to some secondary school teachers who teach in secondary school about Africa. What should be known and what should be said. You don't want what I call the "roots version" of Africa which is Africa is an Eden-like place where everybody was living in peace and harmony in a loving relationship with each other in nature and then foreigners came in and destroyed it all. Africa was never like that. There were elements of that at various times and various places. Africa isn't the Rwandan genocide either. So, somewhere in this vast middle you have to construct an image of Africa which is realistic, but also, I think allows some room for hope and allows some room for investment of time and resources. That's the problem. I think in my own career, and I still believe this, here we are 10 years later, we had the Somalia episode. Then we had the genocide in Rwanda and I think in terms of the Western image of Africa and certainly the U.S. image of Africa, after those two events, it was a big turnoff. I think it's pretty much stayed there.

Q: Well, we had another almost genocide in the Sudan in Darfur.

SOUTHWICK: That's right.

Q: You know, and this is a place where there are pictures of starving children and hopeless looking mothers.

SOUTHWICK: Yes, I think on average, a sophisticated American or even a caring American looks at this as we've tried, we can't do it, let's hope that somehow they'll straighten themselves out over the next decade or two or three and then maybe we can do business with them.

Q: Did you get any moderately high level visits or delegations while you were there?

SOUTHWICK: Yes, we did get a few. We didn't get the Secretary of State, but we did get Hillary Clinton for two nights, three days on the tail end of a visit she made to Africa. This was the springtime of the year I left and she was fantastic. I'm aware of all of these views of Hillary Clinton that are less than favorable, but based on my experience, watching an American first lady do a visit with grace, with style, with content, working hard, being good with people, A+, A+, A+. She was a big hit with absolutely everybody. She had Chelsea with her.

Q: What about the women's movement because AIDS, in a way, has been devastating particularly to women because this men imposing the disease on women in a sense.

SOUTHWICK: That's right because men are more promiscuous, even in marriage.

Q: Yes. I mean I've heard reports of men demanding younger and younger brides on the assumption that the younger, if you get a 13 year old girl she's unlikely to have AIDS. Really pretty horrible things. What were we doing in that regard?

SOUTHWICK: Well, you know, this is another place where Museveni's radical leftist past I think served him well. He came in and he was very pro-woman in terms of their education, putting things in the constitution to make sure that they were represented in parliament, a very serious affirmative action program, far more draconian than anything we've seen here for either women or blacks or other disadvantaged people. The thing that I always found interesting about it, I could not discern in any way, shape or form as hard as I looked that there was any kind of backlash against this. The women were ready to take advantage of it. '95 was the year of the Beijing Women's Conference and I don't think it's appreciated in this country how much that meant worldwide to women in Third World countries.

Q: No, Hillary Clinton played a big role in that.

SOUTHWICK: Yes, she gave a fantastic speech.

Q: I've done an interview with Teresa Loar. This is a very big thing. Did women come back; I mean was there a group of women who were charged up by these?

SOUTHWICK: They were charged up before they went to Beijing and when they came back they were unstoppable. I think a lot of countries sent quite a few women, a lot of the aid organizations including ourselves helped fund this. I think it has worked out really well.

Q: Well, in this type of organization then you feel that that type of aid works.

SOUTHWICK: Yes, I've always felt the education part of aid, to the extent that it works, that's the part that works best. You change peoples' views. You empower them with tools of education. Getting back to this whole question of sexuality in those societies, one of the things in Uganda is it is a heavily Christianized country and part of it is the more fundamental.

Q: 59 martyrs or how many martyrs were there in Uganda?

SOUTHWICK: Yes, there were, and the Pope had been to Uganda before my time. He had been there. One of the previous kings was homosexual and wanted to have sex with I don't know what it was, a dozen or so boys and they refused and they were put to death. Museveni's wife is very religious, very devout and probably more on the fundamentalist conservative side and she has bought into this abstinence approach.

Q: This is to prevent AIDS.

SOUTHWICK: To prevent AIDS and it certainly cuts down the cost. I mean abstinence obviously works. Somewhat surprisingly it has. I've been reading a little bit about this recently that abstinence has worked pretty well and it's obviously not going to work with everybody, but for those who are willing to at least think about that, it's been good.

Q: Was Libya messing around in there at all?

SOUTHWICK: Well, Museveni had a soft spot for Qadhafi because Qadhafi had aided him during the Ugandan civil war. This is where the Burundi connection commanded some of these armies had come through Burundi. Museveni was sort of reluctant to openly criticize Qadhafi because I think Qadhafi still gave him money and Museveni was grateful for the help during the civil war. But I think Museveni as much as everybody else thought Qadhafi was a nut case out of touch with reality.

Q: Did the French play much of a role there?

SOUTHWICK: They did because they had this interest in Rwanda and they regarded Uganda as a country that thwarted their efforts there. The French had wanted to be more active in Rwanda. They had been supporting the Hutu, (*inaudible*) a government before the genocide. They did launch an operation there to kind of stabilize the situation. During my time there, as we were having all the trouble with the refugee camps where the Hutus were in Eastern Zaire, they wanted to come in. The French ambassador, a very intellectual, bright person, and I were good friends. I like the French and I like to kid them and they like to kid us obviously. Sometimes it isn't just kidding. They felt that Museveni was up to no good, not to be trusted, the whole intervention in Eastern Zaire proved that and that after democratization my French counterpart felt that the British and ourselves were kind of deluding ourselves that Museveni would pursue a democratic path. The only thing that would stop him was to take his money away. Obviously there was no one in a mood to do that. The French were active there. They didn't have much of

an aid program. They did most of their things through the European Union. They have aided most of the African Francophone countries.

End of reader