

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

**JULIUS E. COLES**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: Today is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2008 and this is an interview with Julius E. Coles. And do you go by Julius?*

COLES: Yes, Julius is what I use.

*Q: Alright. And what does the E stand for?*

COLES: Earl.

*Q: And this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

Okay, Julius we'll start at the beginning. Where and when were you born?

COLES: I was born in Atlanta, Georgia on February 4, 1942

*Q: After the movie Gone with the Wind came out. Okay, let's talk about your family. Let's talk about the Coles' side; what do you know about them, where do they come from?*

COLES: Well, this is a very interesting story. My father was born near Oskaloosa, Iowa as a bastard child from a black mother and a white father. I had some knowledge of my grandmother because I've seen pictures of her, but I've never known my father's farther side of the family. My father grew up in Iowa as a young man but left from home at a very early age to finish his high school education in St. Louis, Missouri. Up to this point in his life, no one in his family had ever finished high school or gone to college. He felt that education was important for him and that he was not getting enough support from his family in Iowa so he left Iowa and was temporarily adopted by a family in St. Louis who took him in and let him finish his high school education there.

*Q: Do you have any feel for Oskaloosa, Iowa? For the situation there a black father, a*

*white mother, you know this is –*

COLES: This is a black mother and a white father.

*Q: Oh a black mother and white father. But this is a, you know, I think of Iowa of being sort of white bread, corn fed and all that. And this seems – do you have any feel for the situation there or the family's situation?*

COLES: Well, the family situation in general, as I understand it, was that my father grew up in a very poor black family. I don't know all the family relationships and how my father's birth occurred. My father was a very hard driven man and a self-determined man, someone who would leave Iowa and go to St. Louis and then be temporarily adopted by a black family there and who was given the opportunity to go to the black high school in St. Louis. Coming out of that school he went on to a University in Des Moines, Iowa, which is now defunct, so he is the first person in his family to ever reach the college level. After studying for a year at the university in Des Moines, he was granted admission into the University of Chicago in the 1920s, which was in the depression. My father was a very bright man, and he made nearly all A's while studying there.

*Q: Well he obviously was. The family that took your father in St. Louis, do you know what they were doing?*

COLES: I met them only once in my life. My father took me to St. Louis as a child from Atlanta where we were living and we went to visit that family. I gained a great deal of respect for them and what they did for my father. My father obviously did very well in his studies there, and I think he was the valedictorian of his high school class. He gained entrance into a University in Des Moines, Iowa and then spent a year there, and then went to the University of Chicago. At that time he did not have any money, for it was during the depression, to complete his studies and no one gave him a scholarship, so he started working on the railroads as a Pullman Porter out of Chicago.

*Q: Oh, yes. Well this, for that era, the Pullman porters for the black man was an extremely prestigious occupation.*

COLES: Yes it was. My father was a young man who had completed up to that point his sophomore year at college at the University of Chicago and started working on the railroads between Chicago and Atlanta and he met the president of a college in Atlanta, Morris Brown College. My father was also a track star at the University of Chicago and at Des Moines University. He had several records at the Drake Relays. At the famous relay races, especially in the 440 relay race, one of his records lasted for some thirty years.

*Q: Now the Drake Relays of course were the preeminent track event in American sports.*

COLES. Yes. And my father was a part of his college's 440 relay team. If one goes back historically and looks at the relays, my father was a record holder at the Drake Relays. Given the fact that the president of Morris Brown College at the time was interested in his sports capability he offered my father a full scholarship to come to Atlanta to go to

Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia.

*Q: How do you spell that?*

COLES: Morris Brown. I always ask my father, how could you go from the University of Chicago to Morris Brown College, because Morris Brown College was a historically black college and was not at the level of the University of Chicago. His answer was, if someone offered you a free education, you don't care where it is or what institution it is, you would go and get it. This is how he got to Atlanta and attended college.

*Q: Well now I mention your father going to Chicago University, this is the time when the head of it was Hutchins wasn't it?*

COLES: Yes, back in those days.

*Q: Yeah, who was one of the major educators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

COLES: Yes. My father had almost straight A's as a student at the University of Chicago. He never told me this but after his death I went through some of his papers and records and his academic transcript had almost straight A's. He graduated from Morris Brown College with highest honors and was valedictorian of his class; with the year at Iowa and then another year at the University of Chicago and two years at Morris Brown College, he was still at the top of his class. And here was a poor boy that was born in the cornfields of Iowa, who never knew his father, but who pushed himself, as a self-driven man, for high achievement.

*Q: Well, you know this is one of these great American stories because it can happen.*

COLES: Yes.

*Q: Do you know what your father's concentration or field of study was?*

COLES: Interestingly enough, my father was a Social Science and French major throughout college. And so when he graduated from college the first job he had was teaching social science and French at a high school in Atlanta, Georgia called Booker T. Washington High School. My father graduated from Morris Brown College in 1931. Upon graduation, he taught for a year and then went on to work for the US Post Office, because the most honorable jobs open to blacks in those days was that of being a preacher, a teacher, a doctor, a lawyer or working for the post office. My father was being paid in script while teaching in high school, so he decided that he would go and work for the federal government so he became a postal employee very early on in his career around 1934 or 1935 and spent close to 30 years in the postal service.

*Q: Of course, you got to understand when James Harley was postmaster general and particularly during the depression a job at the post office was a –*

COLES: It was a great job.

*Q: It was a great job, yeah. How did your mother and father meet? Do you know?*

COLES: Yes. Let me go back to another point. You asked me the question about the origins of my father and my father's father and how much did I know. But in this age of DNA, I did the DNA test for my own curiosity to see what my origins were on my father's side of the family. It showed that he was a mixture of Russian, German and Spanish on his father's side of the family.

*Q: Spanish?*

COLES: Yes.

*Q: How did Spanish get in there?*

COLES: Who knows?

*Q: Yeah, I know.*

COLES: Over the centuries in terms of Europe, DNA is not an easy issue to resolve because the countries are so close but you also had a lot of trading and you had a lot of movement between countries. I mean you look at Russia, Germany and Spain; that's quite a group of countries. But given the fact that this southern part of Iowa and that he came from, Oskaloosa, which is like the German-Dutch portion of Iowa. This mixture would seem to have some validity. The German and Dutch immigrants came to this part of Iowa to work in the coal mines in the late 1890's and early 1900's.

*Q: Do you know anything about your grandmother?*

COLES: Only that she was not well educated and lived in this part of Iowa. My father had several half-sisters that I did not know very well.

*Q: Yeah. Well this was very much the pattern.*

COLES: In those days, in the 1930s. Yes.

*Q: Yeah.*

COLES: My father was the first member of his family to graduate from high school and college. You also asked me about my mother and how they met. But before we get into that, let me talk about her origins and history.

*Q: Absolutely.*

COLES: Yes. It's another interesting story. Here is a young lady that was born in Richmond, Virginia. Her father was half Cherokee Indian and half Black. Her mother was probably half White and half Black but we never knew them nor did she talk about her background, but she looked as if she was white, married to an Afro-American Indian. And they were originally from Newnan, Georgia and moved from Newnan, Georgia to

Richmond to be with other members of the Gray family. His name, as far as we can determine, was Gray Horse, and he chose the American name of Gray to get away from his Indian heritage, and married this beautiful lady who was half white and half Black who looked very white. So my mother was born in Richmond but the family moved back to Atlanta for my mother to complete her high school education. My mother lived in a section of Atlanta which is very historic and very old called Pittsburgh, which is now one of the poorest areas of Atlanta, but in those days it was an area where the Dobbs and the historical Black families of Atlanta lived. It was one of the best sections of Atlanta for blacks to live during that period of time.

My mother was born into a family of four girls and three boys. All of them worked their way through college and graduated except for the men. My mother was a graduate of Spelman College which is one of the leading African-American institutions in the south and she sold vegetables and coal to work her way through college. My aunts were all teachers and the men in the family, one died young, another remained in a mental institution most of his life, and the last one was a construction person and a doer who worked in a funeral home. But the four women reached MA, JD, and PhD levels. All were great educators in the Atlanta Public School system. They were either school teachers or principals.

My mother and father met through my aunt who was a school principal and was also someone who worked in the USO. My aunt was very interested in my father because he was a very good looking man to begin with, and so they met and my father met her younger sister on one of their dates with my aunt. He fell in love with my mother. Their meeting was the beginning of a relationship that lasted well over 70 years of marriage.

*Q: I wonder, we'll get to you in a minute, but let's talk about your family. This raises a question which I think is well worth looking at and that is sort of the social hierarchy or whatever you want to call it, of Atlanta in the black area. What do you know about this, because it sounds like particularly on your mother's side, but also on your father's side, we're talking about a fairly significant position in that society?*

COLES: Well, we were not wealthy but there were very many wealthy blacks in Atlanta in the 1940's and 1950's. Because Atlanta was a kind of mecca of educational institutions for Blacks. It had its own banking institution, it had its own newspapers, it had its own social structure, and the Black community was a very self-sufficient community. My family would not have been in the upper class in that community but we would be considered middle class, probably higher middle class. My father was a postal worker and my mother was a school teacher.

*Q: But a postal worker again in that society –*

COLES: Was an important position that paid well.

*Q: Was an important position and was a Pullman porter.*

COLES: Right. Those were honorable positions to be held in the black community in those days. Therefore, we would be considered upper middle class, but the top Black

people would have been large land owners, preachers, businessmen, doctors and lawyers who would have been the cream of the cream. They would be the people whose kids would be in the Jack and Jill Clubs. They would be the people who had the social clubs that blacks would be members of in terms of being elite organizations. I was never invited to be a member of the Jack and Jill Club, which was like a social organization for young blacks in the upper class to meet other young blacks.

*Q: Oh, yeah, sort of working on the gene pool.*

COLES: Right. One of the persons that you have probably interviewed in this process that would have been a member of that group is Ambassador Aurelia Brazeal.

*Q: Yes, somebody else did that.*

COLES: Ambassador Brazeal grew up in that community and her father was the Dean of Morehouse College and her mother was one of the top administrators at Spelman College. They would be in the top class of Black society and they would be Jack and Jill members. Even though we were not poor in the black community we were still not a part of the upper class community at that time in our lives. In Atlanta during that period of time, this is in the 1940s, there was a severe class stratification within the black community.

*Q: You know, one hears about this in New Orleans for example, and whether you pass the paper bag test or something, I don't know. I also feel guilty when you are talking about Atlanta, because my grandfather, not my great-grandfather my grandfather, helped burn the place down.*

COLES: Sherman.

*Q: He was an officer in Sherman's army.*

COLES: I am very happy that Sherman came through Atlanta and burned it down. (laughter) I said that one time at Stone Mountain Park, and almost got shot and thrown off the train in the park because Sherman was a hero in my book. (laughter)

*Q: Well, I mentioned this to who is it, Barnes the Mayor of Atlanta.*

COLES: Shirley -

*Q: Maynard Barnes?*

COLES: Maynard Jackson.

*Q: Maynard Jackson, yes.*

COLES: His family was in the top social class, the Dobbs, the Mattiwilda Dobbs family, the opera star, and the business people who were in his family. He came from good stock.



*Q: Yeah, well I mean obviously you couldn't have asked for better stock as you came up. What was it like; did you grow up in Atlanta?*

COLES: Yes, I spent all my early life in Atlanta. Interesting enough, I've often considered my parents to be African-American Jews in that they married, lived in a small house near Washington High School where my mother and father first taught together and later in life decided that they would move in with my grandparents which was in this very poor area but in those days was a very nice area called Pittsburgh in Atlanta. We lived there for two years for them to be able to save enough money to build a new house and to buy it completely in cash, which is unheard of for blacks to be in that kind of position, because they couldn't get loans from banks. My parents paid for their second home in cash, a new home in an area that was considered to be one of the first nice neighborhoods of Atlanta. It was called Fountain and Morris Brown Drive. It was an area that was owned by Morris Brown College, and so they gave their alumni an opportunity to buy the land after they no longer needed it for the college. My parents bought land there and built a new home that I spent most of my life in as a child.

*Q: Okay, let's talk a bit about you as a small child. How big was your family?*

COLES: My parents had two children, two boys.

*Q: Where did you rank?*

COLES: I was the youngest, and my brother is the oldest.

*Q: Were you close?*

COLES: We were three and a half years apart. I would not say we were close in the earlier part of our lives even though we lived in the same bedroom. We grew up as children together, fought each other as brothers do, and had different views of life.

*Q: Just give a feel for the thing. Where did your family fall politically, or were they interested in politics at all?*

COLES: My father and mother were very actively involved in politics in Georgia. My father was a lifelong Republican and for him the Republican Party was the party of Lincoln. He never changed from that party even though the political landscape in Georgia changed from the Dixiecrats which were the racists in the early days –

*Q: And they were democrats but –*

COLES: They were Democrats but they were more conservative than Republicans. Republicans for blacks in those days were the liberal party and then in the 1960s that changed. But in the 1940s, 1950s and the early 1960s, the liberal party for blacks in the political system in the United States was the Republican Party. My father to his deathbed remained Republican even though the political landscape had changed. My mother was a diehard Democrat and she remained a Democrat throughout her life.

*Q: Was sort of Roosevelt held as an example of what sort of, you know, the guiding political light or not?*

COLES: Yes, I think they looked upon Roosevelt as a very good president, he was the “New Deal” man and one who brought a lot of change and a lot of benefits to the black community. You had Eleanor Roosevelt who was really loved and respected by the black community and someone who seemed to have understood and who reached out to the black community. The Roosevelt’s used to come often to Georgia.

*Q: Yes, the Warm Springs of course.*

COLES: Yes, Warm Springs and President Roosevelt had a very strong identification with Georgia.

*Q: How about religion, what sort of role did religion play or not play in your family?*

COLES: My parents were Episcopalians. My father was a lay leader in the church. He was very active and I think he was about the closest thing that I could see to being a priest without being a priest. My mother was also very active in the church and they were members of one of the very oldest Episcopal churches in the city of Atlanta called St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, which was established in 1880.

*Q: Where did it fall, high, low medium, do you know?*

COLES: Interesting enough in the Episcopal churches in those days, most blacks went to high churches in terms of how they saw themselves and how they wanted to be identified with more the high church than the middle or low church.

*Q: I say that because I was brought up in the Episcopal Church, high Episcopal Church, as we knew as smells and bells. (laughter)*

COLES: Lots of that, lots of that, especially on Sunday.

*Q: Was the church important in your life, would you say?*

COLES: Well, I would say the answer to that question is yes. We were brought up in the church’s Christian principles. My parents lived a Christian life and were very actively involved in the church. We were in Sunday school every Sunday. My father would also be a lay leader in the church so we had to be there. And later in life, that changed, but in the early part of my life, church was very important, at one point in my life I even considered going into the priesthood.

*Q: What about home life? Your mother was teaching, wasn’t she?*

COLES: Yes, she was a school teacher.

*Q: So did you all get together at the dinner table at night and all, or what was home life like?*

COLES: Home life in 1940s and 1950s was a period of economic struggle for us. My father started us brothers out at a very early age, at ages seven and ten, working selling magazines, delivering newspapers, contributing to the purchase of the family car, and contributing to other family purchases. We were all very heavily involved in the economics of the family, we contributed to the car, we contributed to groceries, we were all working. My mother was a school teacher, my father a postal worker and my brother and I were selling magazines and delivering newspapers. We did this throughout high school and college. We always had a job, we were always doing something, so this work ethic was instilled in us by our father, who had a very strong work ethic. He often stated that we needed to learn to survive and be self-sufficient.

*Q: Were you much of a reader as a school boy?*

COLES: Reading of comic books and reading magazines, but not reading novels. Reading school books studying, but not a lot of leisure reading.

*Q: Talking about early years, what was the neighborhood like, were you able to get out and play with the kids?*

COLES: As I mentioned to you, it was a wonderful neighborhood to be born in. It was a neighborhood that was previously owned by a college. The homes in this neighborhood were built in the 1950s, and all of them were new because it was a new development. We had professors at Morehouse and Spelman College, we had bishops of churches, African Methodist Episcopal Church, bishops of other congregations, educators, postal workers, teachers and businessmen living in the community. One of the more famous Atlanta restaurant owners lived in my neighborhood. He owned a restaurant called Pascal's. Pascal's now in Atlanta, if you go through the airport, owns two restaurants. The Atlanta and National Civil Rights Movement were born in Pascal's restaurant in Atlanta, and one of the Pascal's brothers lived in my neighborhood. It was a nice neighborhood, the family and children interacted with each other. We had no fears, sometimes people from outside our neighborhood would come and beat us up from time to time because we were sort of the "goody two shoes" boys.

*Q: Oh, yeah, that goes you know, (laughter) the old movies that showed the young Jewish boy carrying his violin through an Italian neighborhood and the Italian boys beat him up, that kind of thing.*

COLES: Yes, there was some of that in those days.

*Q: Well, did you grow up, I am speaking of the time getting to elementary school, was this a black a completely black experience for you?*

COLES: All of my education when I started school, and I started early because my mother changed the date on my birth certificate. She put me in school at age four and from age four all the way through high school, all of my education was black. My brother attended black schools, I attended black schools, everything was segregated. I even attended a black college. From about 1946 or 1947 until I graduated from college in

1964, all of my education was entirely with blacks except for a few exchange students at Morehouse in the early 1960s. The first time I went to school with whites was at the University of Geneva in Switzerland when I had won a scholarship from Morehouse College to study abroad.

*Q: Well, did you have any, I mean did you go downtown in Atlanta or were you living you know, I won't say self-segregated, but was this a completely black experience as opposed to getting out and getting into Atlanta?*

COLES: Atlanta in those days was a divided city. There was a white Atlanta and a black Atlanta. I lived in the black Atlanta. Everything I did was in the black community, black movies, black schools, black water fountains, black toilets. I went as a student to work in a country club in Atlanta. I was a short order cook for a while. I was a grass picker on the golf courses. I was a tennis court maintenance person and a bathhouse person. I always worked throughout my college and high school days but always lived in the black society.

*Q: But these were black country clubs?*

COLES: White.

*Q: White country clubs?*

COLES: Yes. I was hired as the Negro to come and work at the white country club, with a white serving suit on and so that I was dressed up for the part of being a "Service Negro".

*Q: Did you, would your parents say stay away from those whites, I mean in other words was it you just didn't want to mess with the white side or just ignore, how did this work?*

COLES: Well, I think there was a fear of the white community. Atlanta was considered to be a very progressive city in those days, more progressive than other southern cities but it was still not an ideal situation, it was a very divided community, a very segregated community. If blacks wanted to get a job that was well paying, it was very difficult to find a job in the black community, so most black young people either went out of Atlanta to work in tobacco farms in Connecticut or places of that nature. If I remained in Atlanta and I needed a job, which I did have, I would work for a white business or a white firm in a black position, as a cook, as a grass cutter, or a golf course crab grass picker, or as a bath house person. I worked at a Country Club called the Cherokee Town and Country Club in the Buckhead area of Atlanta and I worked there for several summers. Interesting enough, toward the latter part of my life before I started traveling, I was almost fired one time because I was chased around the pool by two young white girls. People saw that and said that this Negro has to go but the man who hired me to run the bath house said if he goes, I am going, so he stuck up for me and I was able to survive that summer and remain an employee of the club.

*Q: Well, trying to capture the spirit, did you view whites, just don't mix with them because it only means trouble, or not, as a kid?*

COLES: Well, no. Growing up as a child I was fearful for my own life and somehow getting into trouble. I think one of the most vivid memories of my early childhood was the lynching of Emmett Till and Mississippi and the civil rights workers who were murdered in Mississippi and that whole series of lynchings. The black community in Atlanta was self-sufficient; I didn't need to go out to the white community until I went out for employment. All of my friends, all of my life was in the black community. I didn't know white people, I didn't hate them, but I didn't know them. I was raised to be an inferior person from the white southern perspective who thought of himself as being less capable because all of his education was with blacks. I had never been tested with whites, never went to school with whites, never interacted with whites except in places of employment where I would interact with young white people but then they were guarded as to how far the friendship could go.

*Q: Okay. Let's talk about school now, elementary school, what was your elementary school like?*

COLES: Well, my elementary school was located two miles from where I lived. We didn't have buses in those days so I used to walk to school together, with the kids in the neighborhood. All whom are still friends today. The elementary school I went to was called E. R. Carter School and it was located on Ashby Street in Atlanta. It was a very good school and a school that helped me in terms of grounding in terms of myself as a person. It had good teachers, teachers who were concerned and interested in you as an individual, who wanted you to develop to be something more than a janitor or someone who would do manual work. They were interested in excellence and in promoting excellence. They worked to develop the kids. What I didn't get in elementary school my mother gave to me when I got home, because she became my tutorer, because she had such high standards and she felt that I wasn't getting enough in the elementary school. It became her job to tutor my brother and myself to make sure that we excelled in our schoolwork. But it was a great school; it was all black, all black teachers, black principal, in a black neighborhood. I was a member of the safety patrol and one of my earlier trips to Washington was as a member of the safety patrol of E.R. Carter School. The first time in my life I had traveled outside the City of Atlanta. I went on a segregated train from Atlanta to Washington to march in the safety patrol parade. Interesting enough we were in separate train cars. There were black and white patrols on a train from Georgia, the white students were in the front cars and the black students were in the back cars and when we got to Washington we were put into a black hotel called the Lincoln Hotel on U Street in Washington and the white people were put in the white hotels downtown. We were put on separate buses, we would march separately in the parade; which was again a reinforcement of the segregated system. That patrol trip to Washington gave me my first experience in Washington and the desire to want to work in such a beautiful city and to be a part of the power structure.

*Q: Was there within again your perception, granted you were quite young and all, a resentment about the situation, or was this just the way it was? Particularly I'm trying to capture that period of time.*

COLES: Well, yes there was resentment. Why should I only have to go to a black school,

why should I have hand-me-down textbooks from white schools, why should my school be inferior in terms of the equipment it has compared to white schools and that was quite obvious the text books we used were hand-me-downs from white schools. And so while the teachers were taught to teach us beyond what the book said, black students were still being put at a disadvantage vis-à-vis white students in society. The first exposure that I ever got to a different world and it made a lasting impression on my life was the attendance, when I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in high school, at a Moral Re-Armament event in the City of Atlanta. Moral Re-Armament, did you ever hear of Moral Re-armament?

*Q: I heard of it, yes.*

COLES: It was a peace organization in the 1950s and 1960s. It had offices in Caux, Switzerland and Mackinaw Island, Michigan. It taught people to live and love each other no matter what their race or their origins. They had four principles: absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, absolute purity and absolute love. The organization had a religious connotation in some ways, but it was nonreligious. They came to Atlanta and put on a play about living together in an integrated world with all races working together, Chinese, Russians, blacks from Africa. At that point in my life I said that I wanted to be a part of that world. And so my whole life from that point on was to extricate myself from the segregated, narrow-minded environment that I lived in Atlanta. I wanted to be a part of the international world that believed in the value of humanity and people. This was the first time that I went to an integrated event in my life where there were people on the stage from different races and they allowed that to happen in Atlanta!

*Q: In elementary but also high school, what subjects particularly grabbed you, and didn't?*

COLES: Well you know, in a black family in those days, mothers and fathers had aspirations of what they wanted their children to be. My brother was the scientist and had a natural bent toward biology and the natural sciences. He was supposed to be the doctor of the family; and he ended up to be the doctor of the family and became a surgeon. I was to be the lawyer and so I mostly gravitated to the social science subjects. I felt more at home in these subjects although I had a very high grade point average in my high school and in elementary school, I did equally well in the sciences as well as the social sciences, but beginning with the 10<sup>th</sup> grade I became a convinced that I wanted to be involved in international affairs, to be a part as I would call a "*citoyen du monde*".

*Q: Yeah. Were you feeling the fact that your mother you know, pushing you because you were a couple of years younger than your classmates weren't you?*

COLES: I was at least one year younger in most cases.

*Q: And that can sometimes you know, we're talking about maturation or whatever it is, kids are you know, sometimes if they are younger than the other ones in physical development and all this can have an effect. Did this have any effect on you do you think, in socialization?*

COLES: Let me say that my brother had more socialization problems than I did. Being

the second child it was easier for me. My brother was very smart, very bright. He left high school at 15 and went on to college at the age of 15 and so he set a high standard. He was an early admission scholar at Morehouse College, graduated at the age of 19 from Morehouse, applied to medical school and they turned him down because he was too young, went to get a master's in biology from Atlanta University to get more maturity and then got into medical school and he was a board certified surgeon by the age of 31. So you have an older brother who is on that track record of success, achievement, and good scholarship. It left a high standard for me to follow. I was more the plodder, more the studier and more needing to have more help and resources to do that.

*Q: Well in high school, first place you said you were always working, what sort of jobs were you doing in high school?*

COLES: Well, in high school for the whole five years I was there, I threw newspapers in the evening, the newspaper was called the Atlanta Journal in those days. Both my brother and I had very large paper routes, and one of the largest paper routes going from the Atlanta University Center to the west side and we had about 200 customers and that's a large paper route for a group of young kids, and we put both of our paper routes together, it was probably more like 300 people. Whatever jobs we had in the summertime was in addition to the jobs that we had in the winter time, but we kept those newspaper routes throughout our college and high school careers. We were excellent news paper carriers, receiving all kinds of honors and so forth in those days. But in the summertime my brother would run a parking lot in Atlanta, he was one of the first blacks to run a parking lot in the heart of the city, and I was working at the country club on golf courses and things like that, but we were always doing something. The first time that I did not work in the summer was when I was given the opportunity through an Episcopalian priest to go to Colorado College to attend a Canterbury conference at Colorado College in 1959. That summer experience took me away from Atlanta and from that time on I began to travel extensively during the summer to international conferences dealing with students and getting more international student exposure.

*Q: You graduated from high school in what year?*

COLES: 1959.

*Q: 1959. You went where, to Morehouse?*

COLES: I only applied to one college, Morehouse College. My brother had gone there. In those days I could not apply to University of Georgia or Emory, Georgia State, Oglethorpe or any other university in the south. If I wanted to go away to school to an integrated school, it would have to have been in the east, to Harvard, Yale, and I didn't think I had the grades or scores to get into these institutions. So it was sort of natural for me to remain in Atlanta. My parents didn't have a lot of money and so Morehouse cost only about \$300 a semester in those days, and that's where I wanted to go. My classmates were such people as Hamilton Holmes who integrated the University of Georgia, David Satcher who became the Surgeon General of the United States, and William P. Robinson who became one of the country's distinguished criminal lawyers. These were my classmates at Morehouse starting in 1959.

*Q: What was Morehouse like in 1959 when you went there? You'd been around the campus a lot already, but what was it like at that point?*

COLES: Well it was interesting enough that I grew up in the shadows of Morehouse College. At night I could see the college right from my bedroom so I grew up with strong Morehouse ties. I was also the younger brother of a Morehouse Man who was at least four years ahead of me. He graduated in 1958 from the college at the age of 19 as I explained to you, so I sort of had a vicarious experience of being with him, and following him and being with the guys in his class. Morehouse was bred into me from a very early age of 14 to 15. It was a small college in those days, there were only 900 students in the whole student body of the college and in my class there were something like probably not more starting out of about 150 people with about 90 to 100 in my graduating class, so it was not a very large school. It was a school that took you and trained you to become the very best you could be. It told you that you were not ready and you would have to work hard to get ready to be able to compete in this society. It gave me every opportunity to learn, and to compete and to prepare myself for what I was going to face living in basically a white world. And the teachers not only taught American history, American economics but they also taught black history and economics, so it was a double stream type of study program.

*Q: Well now, were there teachers who were doing American history who were talking about blacks in American society and slavery and justice and the whole thing, or not?*

COLES: Oh yes, that was a very important part of our study program. I had a course on the economic history of the United States, I had world history, I had history of the United States. These courses were mostly taught by white professors, who were white liberals. There was one I would always remember, he was a civil war historian and who has written one of the classic books about a civil war prison in Georgia.

*Q: Oh yeah, Andersonville.*

COLES: Andersonville, he was a writer about this prison, but he led his class to one of the first civil rights demonstrations in the State Capital of Georgia. We had a sit in to integrate the gallery of the State Capital and we were thrown out and they attempted to arrest us but we got away without being arrested. In those days you had whites and blacks teaching black students everything that they could teach them to prepare them for success in life and to be successful. It was a place of inspiration, a place that I loved and where I learned a great deal. Morehouse sent me aboard twice. As a sophomore each student paid \$1 to send me to Africa for the first time in my life, which was unheard of. One dollar in those days was a lot of money. But they wanted somebody to come back and talk about Africa and learn about Africa, so they paid my way. My fellow students sent me abroad. Later, I was the recipient of a Merrill scholarship. Charles E. Merrill was the son of the founder of Merrill Lynch, Fenner, Dean & Smith. Merrill has spent thousands of dollars to help black students; he created what they called the Merrill Scholarship. The Merrill Scholarship was given to Spelman and Morehouse students and Morehouse and Spelman faculty on one condition. The scholarship provided \$3,000 to leave the United States for a year and not to come back before the end of the year. You didn't have to go to school,



you could travel around the world, you could do whatever you wanted to do, you could work, you could go to school, or you could travel around the world and just leave the United States for a year. Some of the people who received this scholarship included: Marion Wright Edelman, Hershel Sullivan, Alice Walker and some 500 other people. I got one of those scholarships that enabled me to go and study in Switzerland and travel all over Europe.

*Q: Well we'll come to that in a minute, but I'd like to – there was the election of 1960 and this was Kennedy and also civil rights movement was begin to boil, how did this affect you I mean were you engaged in this?*

COLES: I was in school beginning of 1959 so the civil rights movement had its early origins in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Even though it started out in North Carolina at A and T, it had its home in Atlanta. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, SNCC, had its headquarters on my paper route, so I used to deliver papers to SNCC, with Julian Bond and John Lewis. I was a participant in sit in demonstrations in restaurants, I participated in demonstrations in the State Capital, and the anti-war movement. I was very actively involved. My mother had only one condition to my participation in the movement, don't get arrested, because if you do you may get me fired from the Atlanta School Public System. So I would sit in at restaurants in Atlanta, Rich's Department Store, participated in the State Capital sit-ins, but when they asked me to leave I would be one of the ones to leave because I respected my mother's wishes. I was also a driver, driving people and students participating in those sit in movements, so I was there during that whole period of time, it was a very tumultuous period and full of student direct action and involvement.

*Q: Well, politically, was Maddox the governor at that time?*

COLES: Yes. I remember that one of my duties was to drive a group of students to demonstrate at Lester Maddox's restaurant. At Lester Maddox restaurant, he would have axe handles at the front door, so when we showed up he issued his axe handles to his patrons to chase us with axe handles and to hit us with those axe handles. I remember that very well, I remember Lester Maddox very well. He was a true racist.

*Q: Oh yes very much so.*

COLES: Later he became an ardent integrationist in his latter life, but in the early days of the early 1950s and early 1960s he was really Mr. Racist, so was Herman Tallmadge and all those other people who were in political power at that point in time.

*Q: Did you find as this movement was going on this was pretty much one of university students wasn't it, of black university students, you didn't have much in the way coming from the working class, black working class, or not?*

COLES: The student movement was a very classical movement. You had students who were poor, students from the middle class and those who were wealthy. They were all united for one thing, the end of segregation. It was really a very powerful movement. A lot of the people who you know about now and who are very famous were young students

struggling in those days in the civil rights movement. One of them at Spelman College was the famous writer Alice Walker.

*Q: Who wrote –*

COLES: The Color Purple, among many other books she has written. She was a youngster then and very active in the student movement. She was poor. David Satcher was poor and he was very actively involved. He went to jail. And he had more courage than I did. I mean, my parents put restrictions on me, but he went to jail and there were others who went to jail. I was involved over a period of four or five years when I was an undergraduate, very active in fact. I was secretary of the Morehouse student government in my sophomore year. I was vice president of the student government in my junior year, so I was one of the student leaders during my college days.

*Q: How about social life on the campus you know, one heard depictions of some of the traditionally black universities but this was much later you know, the power of the fraternities and all but I take it you couldn't afford that, this wasn't a part of your time, or not?*

COLES: Well, social life in Atlanta at that point was all at the college. There were some black clubs located near the college but most of us were too young to go to the clubs. We did go to them when we became much older. There were mixers between Morehouse and Spelman giving us an opportunity to socialize, to dance, and to meet women at the colleges. Except for a few exchange students coming from northern institutions, everyone in this social environment was black. We had a few exchange students and surprisingly enough some of us dated those exchange students under the risk of being lynched. All of the dating was in the black community. We never went into the white community and these exchange students were very careful of where they went with us.

*Q: You are talking about exchange students; you are really talking about someone from the north?*

COLES: Right, some were from the north and some from the west. Some of the schools that were exchange students with us included Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, Yale, Pomona College in California and then some of the Christian colleges in Pennsylvania, and Kansas would send some students to Spelman and Morehouse to have the experience of what it is like to be in a black college.

*Q: This is just at the period in the early 1960s when sort of the American discovery of Africa was taking place you know, some of the countries such as Ghana and all were declaring independence, were there any exchange students from Africa there?*

COLES: Very interesting. The first country to gain independence in Africa was in 1957. I entered college in 1959 and that was the time of the Kennedy airlift of students from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to American colleges in the United States. Some of my classmates were from Kenya and Uganda. They were part of the Kennedy airlift financed by the Kennedy family. One of those persons was Mr. Obama's father, who went to the University of Hawaii and later to Harvard.

*Q: Yeah, his father came from Kenya.*

COLES: Yes, his father came from Kenya as a part of the Kennedy airlift. So there was a strong identification of the Kennedy family with Obama going back to the point that Obama's father's education was financed by funds from the Kennedy family. So I went to school with students from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda who were also recipients of these scholarships and some of them came to Morehouse.

*Q: Did this arouse any interest in your part of gee I've got to see Africa and that sort of thing?*

COLES: It did, because I interacted very much with these African students and had a strong identification as you remember going back to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The identification of being a *citoyen du monde* and being with foreign students. I was very comfortable with them. I traveled even with the foreign students. I took them to see the south; I tried to explain our culture and society. One of the trips I will always remember. I took three Kenyan students with me to Monteagle, Tennessee which was a place that was called the Monteagle Training Camp for civil rights workers.

*Q: Yeah, this was Tennessee was sort of where the whole guerilla movement started; much of the training went on there.*

COLES: Yes, it was a training camp for civil rights workers and for civil disobedience. This was the first time I met John Lewis who was at this training camp.

*Q: A very important representative from, where's he from?*

COLES: He was born in Alabama, but spent his later years in Georgia.

*Q: Alabama, yes.*

COLES: Very much so, he became a very strong leader in the civil rights movement. I took this group of Kenyan students to Monteagle, and we traveled in segregated buses. We sat in the back of the bus as we were supposed to but as we moved from Georgia to Tennessee to attend the Monteagle Training Center whites began to fill up the bus and so the bus driver came back to ask us to move further back into the bus. I told the bus driver: "We have African students and diplomats on this bus, I don't think you want to create an incident that could be blown up internationally about our practices. I would suggest that you continue to drive the bus and leave us where we are, and he did. It is sort of interesting that they didn't want to risk the embarrassment of what foreign students would do and so forth. In some of the places that we integrated in the south, some of our students would dress up in turbans and in African dress or as something else, and these students were able to eat, for the whites did not realize that they were black, for they were dressed up in foreign costumes. The people in the restaurants would not want to show their prejudice against a foreigner: whereas, they would show it against an American black.

*Q: It's a hard period to reconstruct but there it was. How did the various, horrible thing, the assassinations of Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy and all that, how did that hit you all?*

COLES: Well, at the time of the assassination of Kennedy, I will never forget where I was, I was in my living room studying for my final exams for college and I cried. It was a very emotional experience. Even though as a young man I didn't vote for Kennedy. The first time I voted was in the election of Nixon and Kennedy. I was skeptical of the Kennedy coming to the south and sending letters to Martin Luther King rather than coming to the South and telling white southerners it was time for change. Nixon did come to the south and even though his presidency was tainted, at that time he confronted the southerners about the need for change, and on the basis of that I voted for Nixon.

*Q: Nixon and Kennedy were not that far apart in a lot of things.*

COLES: Kennedy represented wealth, a person from the aristocracy, a person who didn't come down and fight or speak against the south and the need for change, he was very political. I couldn't take that. I mean that's sort of like an embarrassment to say at a very young age in my life. In Georgia we voted at 18, I voted for Richard Nixon, but I did, on the basis that Kennedy wouldn't confront the problem and Nixon came down and did confront the problem.

I was in graduate school and met Robert Kennedy when I was a student at Princeton. I was at the Woodrow Wilson School and we had a seminar with Robert Kennedy in his apartment in New York. My reaction to Robert Kennedy at that point is that he was not used to dealing with blacks. Ethel Kennedy, his wife, was a much more open, receptive person, and I was the only black student in the class in this meeting and I did not feel a sense of warmth from Robert Kennedy. I felt a sense of warmth from Ethel Kennedy, because she was a warm person, but I saw another patrician from a wealthy family who did not understand or identify with black issues.

*Q: Robert Kennedy, I never warmed to him you know, I mean, but this is just, you know I mean sort of I won't say the sainthood went on but it was, he just, he could be, he seemed to be a very cold person.*

COLES: He was.

*Q: You know things changed later on, I don't know but I always remember him being part of the McCarthy group.*

COLES: Robert Kennedy's assassination was a surprise. When Martin Luther King was assassinated I was in Vietnam; I was with USAID. I remember walking through the USAID building in Saigon that night and a Marine guard told me that King had been assassinated. I didn't believe him, but that's where I was when King was assassinated. So you know, what worried me in the earlier part of my life more than the political assassinations that were occurring was the lynching's of blacks and the treatment of blacks during that period of time. All of the tumultuous civil rights movement and the sit ins and the bus ins and the rioting and so forth. All these people being killed, the students

who were in all those demonstrations and so forth being killed and murdered. Those were the things that really hit me during that period of time. Yes, President Kennedy was a loss because he represented hope but he wasn't there long enough to achieve a great deal. I look back at that point in time, the biggest surprise to me was Johnson and someone that I would never have believed who was that devoted to the civil rights movement. I think the civil rights movement made more achievements under Johnson than any other president in the history of the United States.

*Q: It did, Johnson you know, in the first place he was extremely talented as far as manipulating the political system, he got in the senate and also it wasn't just he was dedicated to equal rights and also to help the poor.*

COLES: Right, but you know one of the most memorable things that I remember in my college life was the fact that Johnson invited my college president, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, to travel with him to conferences and to do other things. I had not up to that point seen blacks travel in a presidential delegation. And so it was Johnson that opened up that whole vista, that whole arena of the possibility of blacks playing an important role in an administration.

*Q: Did you get involved in, how was voting when you reached 21?*

COLES: I started voting when I was 18.

*Q: You go to that era, my goodness. How did that - could you vote?*

COLES: In Atlanta yes we could vote because there was a very large, educated black community in Atlanta and there was a liberal city government, liberal in the sense of a southern liberalism. There was a black police force and a white police force, and the black police force was protective of the black community and served as a shield from the white police officers and other white people in authority. I grew up fearful of whites and white police officers because I didn't look at them as being on my side. I looked at them as being somebody who could do me harm rather than do good for me, even though I was a law abiding citizen it didn't take that much to aggravate them or to get them into a position where they could do something and do harm to you. I have always had a fear of white policeman. Even to this day I can always spot a policeman or police car. I always have a reaction to them and my wife always brings that to my attention. I say that's because I grew up that way, I grew up in fear of white law enforcement officers and what they could do, because most of the time they were on the side of injustice rather than justice when it came to blacks.

*Q: Well, what about this, okay you are in essentially an educated black enclave with black policemen more or less as your protectors, but what about, one thinks about the traditional you know, getting out into the country side and all of a sudden the sheriff, the red neck sheriff pulls you over or something, was going outside the area considered a bit dangerous?*

COLES: Let's talk about that a little bit. I rarely if ever left Atlanta except to attend a church conference, visit relatives or help my uncle and aunt drive up to New England to

pick up my cousins who were at prep schools in New England. We would drive from Georgia all the way to New Jersey before we could stop and eat a decent meal. Otherwise, we had packed lunches with chicken and drinks and so forth. We couldn't go into any restaurants, except for the colored entrance, until we got to the New Jersey Turnpike. Very often traveling in the south at that time, since my father looked white, when we needed something to eat he would put a hat on and go into a restaurant and get everything we needed but the rest of the family would have to remain in the car. We went to a drive-in movie theatre and there was a black section and a white section at the drive in and they would see my father and they would put us in the white section and we would sit uncomfortably watching the movie because they misunderstood my father's race. He would go in and get food for us. We didn't generally leave Atlanta but if we did leave Atlanta it could mean trouble for us. And even as a student, the white professors from the history department took us up to north Georgia one time for a retreat with some white students from Emory. The place was raided by policemen from that northern Etowah county area and they told us that we better go back to Atlanta in separate cars and if we didn't do that in a hurry that our lives were at risk. So you can see why we did not travel outside of Atlanta very easily and if one did travel, you traveled on the highway going north to get to New Jersey, that was the first place you could sit down and have a decent meal.

*Q: I'm told there were either by word of mouth or even printed out, there were where you could stop and where you couldn't stop, I mean you know.*

COLES: Yes, there was a black guide book that told you what hotels you could stay in and what restaurants you could eat at all up and down the east coast.

*Q: Well, as a kid, even when I was, I'm 80 years old now and I lived, although my family is not from there, I lived in Annapolis and Annapolis was a very southern town.*

COLES: Yes, in those days.

*Q: In those days, I mean it, there were separate drinking fountains, the neighborhoods were kind of mixed but there wasn't much.*

COLES: Not in Georgia. In rural Georgia yes, you would find farmers and so forth dispersed between white and blacks but in Atlanta the social lines were rigid.

*Q: You know, looking back on this coming out of this thing, is this, obviously it's left an impression, has this been something you have had to overcome or what, resentment, what have you?*

COLES: Well, I can say that I was never really hostile to white people. I was fearful. I felt in certain ways that I was an inferior person because that was what I was taught all my life by the white people and never had an opportunity to be able to compete with them. I talked to you about the first opportunity to come into social contact with white people was at the graduation at my cousin who went to Cushing Academy in Ashburnham, Massachusetts and so he invited me to his graduation and I said fine. His parents wanted me to help them drive all the way to Massachusetts. I drove and when I

got there he told me there is no black female for you to take to the prom and he said you are going to have to take out a white girl. I said I don't think I can do that. I've never been out with a white girl before, what will we talk about and what will we do, it's not possible. And he says there is no other choice. The young lady and I went out that night and had a wonderful time and that experience taught me that people are people. The fact that she was white did not have to prevent us from enjoying a wonderful evening together and exchanging views on many topics. I came back from that experience a different person. I remember that experience every vividly. I was just a 12<sup>th</sup> grader at that time and I would have been 18 or so and it taught me that white people were human beings.

The second life changing experience was when I went to Africa in 1961, as a Crossroads Africa volunteer. I was a sophomore in college. In this group of Crossroad Volunteers there were two blacks and everyone else was white from Dartmouth, Yale and all the great educational institutions. The young lady that was black and I became great friends, but the group opened up and gave me the confidence that I could compete. I was not dumb. I was as bright as some of the other kids that were in that group from some of the greatest U.S. institutions. The experience gave me a sense of self-fulfillment and identity. First, I was in Africa in black countries, Senegal and Mali. I went to the Dogon country in Mali, I went to Mopti, Bandager, Kayes, I went to Bamako, to Rufisque to Segou, all those places in Africa. And here was a young man, in 1961, 19 years old, having this experience. It taught me that I was a human being, that I could compete, that I could relate to whites and that I could enjoy them as a people.

The next experience was going to Europe on this Merrill Scholarship that I talked to you about. I traveled from Le Havre France to Finnish Lapland and worked in a Quaker work camp in Finnish Lapland, went to Russia, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, all the way back across Europe to Paris on a motorcycle. I visited nearly every country in Europe hitchhiking all the way to Portugal, Scotland and northern Finland to North Africa, Morocco, Algeria, all within 15 months. I saw most of Europe traveling for eight months and studying for seven months at the University of Geneva. In my class I had students from Thailand, Russia and Communist China. Here I was studying with students from the whole world. I did well in my French classes; I passed the exam, got into the faculty of social sciences and economics. I said I can't only compete against white America, but I can compete with world class scholars. I'm a human being! I met people, related to people, not on the basis of race, not on the basis of any restrictions. I could go anywhere I wanted to go, to restaurants, to night clubs, party and dance with people of different races, meet people from all over the world, Finland, Sweden, France, and Belgium. I became a human being. I became a confident human being.

*Q: This is so important. I think the racial experience, and I am sure it still goes on but much more so from your generation, you can have people who come out who are just so bitter, it almost destroys them. Because where do you go with bitterness?*

COLES: Well you know, I came back from that European experience. I was in Greece when Martin Luther King gave his speech "I Have a Dream", and my reaction to his speech was, we've been dreaming too damn long. I was hostile toward Martin Luther King's speech but not towards him. I thought that speech was a cop out, because for one whole year, for 15 months of my life I had traveled all over the world and I felt that I had

been treated so well in Europe as a human being. I really did not want to return to a segregated environment. If it wasn't for my parents and their desire for me to finish my education, I probably would have remained in Europe at that point in my life.

*Q: Well let's talk about the African experience first. You were with a group?*

COLES: Yes.

*Q: Who was this with? Was this the Moral Re-Armament group?*

COLES: No, this was Operations Crossroads Africa.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

COLES: This was an organization founded in 1957 by Reverend James H. Robinson in New York, The Church of the Master, from a dream of forging a relationship of friendship between Africans and Americans, not African-Americans, Americans. He started taking groups of young college kids from all over the United States to Africa to work on community development projects, agricultural projects and school projects. I was selected to be one of those volunteers. I wanted to go to Africa, I had never been there. This was in 1961 which would mean I was about 19 years old at that time.

*Q: What were you doing?*

COLES: There were 10 of us, two African-Americans and eight whites. The group was sent to Senegal to build a one room school house in the village of Popenguine which is about 60 miles from Dakar, but in addition to building that school and living in that village with the African students from the Gambia and from Senegal, we also traveled extensively into Mali for about two weeks and that's where I went to the Dogon country, which is one of the ancient civilizations of Africa. We also traveled to Mopti, Bandiagara, Kayes, got a great deal of exposure. Kids from Africa were interested in 1961 in three issues. I remember those three issues very vividly. One was segregation and racism in the United States. Africans were very concerned about the plight of black people. The second was the United States invasion of Cuba and Fidel Castro. At that time the Cuban Liberation Movement had started in 1959, but the American supported invasion of Cuba did not start until later in 1962.

*Q: Yeah, we're talking about the Bay of Pigs.*

COLES: The Bay of Pigs in 1962. The third issue was the death, the execution of Carl Chessman.

*Q: Executed in California for I can't remember, but he had killed some people I think.*

COLES: The idea of capital punishment and the fact that we were killing and executing people by electric chair was a concern to Africans in those days. We would work in the daytime building the schoolhouse and then have discussions about African culture and American culture. I was given the task of preparing a lecture on racism in America.



Interesting enough I worked with a young student from Boston College who was helping me in the preparation of this lecture and then we began what turned out to be a very wonderful and caring relationship as two individuals. She was a little bit older than I was, but that was a very rich experience of meeting someone. The sharing with that individual and the love for that individual, in a relationship that began in Africa and lasted for a while on our return to the U.S. was a wonderful relationship. We traveled all over Senegal together. We were friends and later became pretty much in love with each other. It was a very strong loving relationship that I will never forget.

*Q: Well how did you find Africa per se, we're talking about say in Mali the French had not been benign in their rule there and did you find relationships to the French colonial rule or not?*

COLES: Well that was an interesting period. You must remember that I was coming from the south and not having traveled anywhere outside the United States. I would say one of the first shocks to me was being on a plane. We flew from National Airport to Greenland, then from Greenland to the Azores and then Azores to Dakar on a four engine Constellation aircraft. There were no jets in those days. It took us all about 36 hours to get there and we had a flat tire in the Azores and had to wait for a tire to be flown in to get us out of there.

My first impression of landing in Dakar is that this is not the Africa that I had learned about or believed had existed. It was beautiful, pristine, with sandy beaches, white villas like what you would see on the Riviera. Dakar was, and still is, a beautiful modern city. I said this is unbelievable, it was absolutely fantastic. Modern University of Dakar, we stayed there for a little while then we moved to the village and we met students from the Gambia, from Senegal. These were very scholarly people, writers of literature and they were in the arts and they were dancers and creative people. I learned a lot about Africa. The most important lesson I learned from that experience was I was not an African, I was an American. I had African origins but I was true blue American as any other American. I think that was a very important lesson that stood me well for the rest of my life because when I would see people in Atlanta and when I went back to college and their Afro-centric dress, I would laugh at them and say Africans don't dress like that. I mean, they didn't have a clue because they'd never been to Africa and they identified themselves in a way with Africa that most Africans would laugh at. But you know, often this is a way to search for identity. My own African experience had given me a good grounding in who I was and what my identity was. I didn't have to claim that I was an African. I could enjoy Africa and African people, but I always knew I was not African. I was American and I had to face that reality.

*Q: It was somewhat later through this period where you had the television series Roots and all and the whole idea of the roots in Africa and all and this created quite – there was an exodus of intellectuals to well, to Senegal was one of those places. I think Carmichael went there.*

COLES: Stokely.

*Q: But anyway, this didn't grab you?*

COLES: Well, I was in the student movement but I was always of the feeling that I didn't have to wear African garb to show that I had identification with Africa. I understood what I had seen. Another impression that I came away from my visit to Africa is that I did not understand the influence of French colonialization on Africa. Where did African culture end and where did French culture begin? And so there was a fuzzy line there and over the years of having worked in Africa for 48 years now of my life, I understand that a lot better but I had not read enough or understood enough during that period of time to be able to separate it. In Senegal, that was perhaps the most Francophone or European cultural influence on African society. It looked very European to me at that point, the cars, the restaurants, the food, especially Dakar. It's only when you got into the village that you got into traditional African life. African urban life was very European, very attractive, very beautiful. But this is not to say there was not a French type of racism in Africa. The village that we were working in had a beach and I remember one time going down with my friend to ask for food and identified myself as an American. I was sick and was trying to buy some European food. They gave me a cold shoulder, one, as foreigner and two, as a black person. The fact was that they thought I looked like an Algerian and they put me off to the side. I couldn't hardly find anything or purchase anything. Normally, I would think in this day and time people would have been more forthcoming, but in that period of time the beach in Popenguine was basically a white European beach in an African village. The Africans lived in the village but they were fishermen and they didn't enjoy the pleasure of their beach. I saw French racism, class structure and separation but yet I didn't look upon it as hostile as a segregated environment from Africans. The French led a separate life from the Africans.

*Q: Well, did you find that when you came back from that time, almost uncomfortable to come back to find yourself as constrained as you were within Atlanta, or not?*

COLES: I felt myself to be very constrained and to be careful. After I came back the following year from Europe I felt that I had one year left in college and I shouldn't do anything to get myself into trouble, so I bunkered down in my studies and applied for graduate schools. I applied to five schools. At that point in my life I had always dreamed of going to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Boston. Someone from Princeton came down from the Woodrow Wilson School to recruit minority students to help integrate the Woodrow Wilson School of International Affairs. His name was Peter Bell, who was a student at the school. I became interested in the school and was interviewed by them and went up to Princeton for the first time in my life and that was an interesting experience within itself. I applied to University of Pittsburgh, John Hopkins and Columbia University and got into all of them and got into a bidding war between the University of Pittsburgh GSPIA and the Woodrow Wilson School. GSPIA offered more money but I thought what Princeton offered was prestige and just about the same amount of money. Therefore, I decided to accept the scholarship offered by Princeton.

*Q: So you went to Princeton?*

COLES: Yes, I went to Princeton.

*Q: Before we move to Princeton, how about this Merrill Scholarship, when did this take*

*place?*

COLES: 1962 to 1963.

*Q: So this was before you went off to grad school?*

COLES: Yes.

*Q: Thinking about it at that time the cold war was at its height and the idea of having communist Chinese and Soviet students seems a little bit far out. How was this thing put together?*

COLES: Well, as I said to you, I was a Merrill Scholar from Morehouse College and the Merrill Scholarship program gave \$3,000 for a student to go where he wanted anywhere in the world. I was the recipient of that. There were 6 of us from Morehouse and I think about four girls from Spelman and all of us went to different places. One went to study in Sweden, another to Denmark, I was going to Switzerland and then other students went to Dijon and to other places in France and in Austria. For the first summer there I decided to go to something called the World Youth Festival.

*Q: Oh, my God yes I remember that. That was in Stockholm wasn't it?*

COLES: In Helsinki.

*Q: Helsinki, oh yes this was –*

COLES: 1962.

*Q: This was a big deal.*

COLES: Big deal. It was a meeting of socialist and communist youth from around the world.

*Q: You know this was considered a real challenge to America. I know what you're talking about.*

COLES: So, I was in a Quaker work camp in northern Finland, Finnish Lapland.

*Q: How did you get up there?*

COLES: I applied to the Quaker work camp to have the experience to work with other students from Europe and they accepted me and placed me into this Quaker work camp in northern Finland, in Finnish Lapland. So I spent the summer in Finnish Lapland helping to settle veterans of the Winter War.

*Q: Oh yes, the war between the Soviet Union and Finland 1940-1941 I believe.*

COLES: Yes, and the Finns were very close to the Germans at that time. They were allies

to the Germans, and then the Russians overran them. And so I was assigned to work in a work camp where we were resettling these veterans to farmland in northern Finland. We were building farm houses, cutting down trees, building barns. It was like opening up the Wild West in northern Finland. I was working with students from Finland, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, France, England, from all over the world and all of us sort of said well let's go down to Helsinki and attend the World Youth Festival and see what that's like. I was a little bit scared and skeptical because as an American I was warned that this could get me in a lot of trouble later in life, but a lot of my friends were going to be there so I said I'm going to go myself. I hadn't registered but I did get in and they let me stay with them. Some of the students that you will know the name of at that time who were in school with me were at that Festival, including Alice Walker, and if you read her biography she talks about traveling to Helsinki to attend this World Youth Festival and meeting the soviet poets Solzhenitsyn and Yevtushenko, all of them were there. For the first time in my life I got some exposure to people coming from communist countries. I had never had that interaction. I got a chance to see the Peking opera, I got a chance to see the Russian dancers and folk music and Bulgarian Women's Choir. I was very heavy into culture at this point in my life. I met Cubans for the first time in my life. This was quite an exposure to me. At that time I didn't realize there were two groups of American students, those on the left who I was with and those who were on the right. The CIA had also planted some students to be in the middle.

*Q: Oh yes, CIA was very - his hand was in there he wasn't going to be outsmarted by the Soviets.*

COLES: No, and they were in there and they were taking names and pictures and so forth and so we'll come back to this at a later point. But as I applied to work for the first time as an escort-interpreter for a group of African students my name came up on the list and I was turned down. I was not acceptable as an escort-interpreter for what they called the Reverse Crossroads Africa program, based upon the fact that I was at the Helsinki Festival and had traveled to the Soviet Union and East Germany in those days. When I applied to work for the State Department there was a little problem there. My first job with the US Government was with the Pentagon working for OSD/ISA. I passed the Department of Defense security clearance for top secret clearance. Otherwise I would have been negatively impacted for the rest of my life. I am eternally grateful to the Defense Department for giving me an opportunity for passing the security test. Not that I did anything wrong, but the fact that I was with a group of leftists, and in filling out the forms I had not identified all that I had done and when they came back and asked me the question I had to fill it out in detail, I didn't lie, so they saw my entire record and I made the clearance, but the experience in Finland caused me a lot of grief and problems.

*Q: Were you getting you might say the communist message, was it heavy handed or was it just a lot of fun?*

COLES: It was both. There were a lot of political discussions and a lot of people who were there that talked about colonialism, Lumumba and the Congo, and the civilians in Angola. There was a lot of that, a lot of propaganda discussion. I went to some of that but I found that this was becoming too dogmatic, too political and too one-sided. There was not enough real learning, but it was interesting for me to hear it. Most of my time was

spent looking at the cultural programs from all over the world, African dances, the Peking opera, the Cuban dance group, all those kinds of things, and so that's what I spent all my time doing. I would go to some lectures like Yevtushenko the poet, you know Solzhenitsyn, all these people were there giving readings and things; that was an exposure I never had in my life. Then we traveled from there into Russia. I signed up for the tours. We went to Russia, I went to Leningrad, I went to Moscow, I was down in the Ukraine, Kiev, and I went into Czechoslovakia. I was there after the Russian invasion, so I saw a lot of Russia. I saw and met blacks who were communists who had left the United States and were living in Moscow and Russians sent these black communists to talk with us and talk about their life. I think it backfired on them because these people were living very difficult lives but they were married to Russian women.

*Q: The Russians let's say are not a progressive society, they are about racists as they come.*

COLES: Yes, the student guides we had were very racist and you could see that. We were an integrated group of leftists and progressive American students traveling on Russian trains and the Russian student organization called Sputnik. In those times, we went into Russia and to Leningrad and all these places and saw a lot, I saw the Hermitage, I saw everything in Moscow. I went to the 50<sup>th</sup> year exhibition, the first time I saw a 360 degree cinema, I saw Gagarin when he was in Space on television in Russia. I also saw extreme poverty, especially in the Ukraine and I thought they were worse off than in Africa. This gave me a different view of socialism, and that socialism is no godsend. The Russian bourgeoisie were bureaucrats and they had the wealth, the cars and their lifestyle was high compared to how other people lived was quite different. I would say this experience taught me the realism of communism, the realism of socialism that I didn't have to start reading all this Marxists stuff and believing this stuff because I had had exposure and saw Russia in its realities.

*Q: But was anybody trying to recruit you, you know, KGB types coming up and saying let's have a drink?*

COLES: No, none of that.

*Q: You didn't have the feeling that this was being used as a, this whole peace thing and its offshoots, being used as a recruiting thing; I would have thought that you would have been prime meat for the KGB to catch?*

COLES: If that was the case in fact they presented an opportunity for us to meet black Russians and some of those people I don't know who they'd be working for, but there was no obvious attempt to recruit me. There was no idea of locating who I was, I never had any contact with them at that point, or even a subsequent period in my career. Most of the students we had contact were students, and I don't know of anyone who was recruited during that trip. I don't know even if it would have been good for them to do that of from their own perspective. I had no obvious attempt of anyone trying to recruit me. And having worked in the Foreign Service later in life and understanding how intelligence agencies work and so forth, that confirmed to me there was no attempt to recruit me.

*Q: What were you getting to American blacks living in the Soviet Union at that time, I would have thought this would not have been a very pleasant experience*

COLES: Well there was a bitter thing that once they had left the United States that they could not return. I think a lot of them, who were living there, longed to return back to the States but were unable to do that, but they had developed roots in Russia by marrying Russian women and having children, but they were not living a good life. There was the talk of discrimination in Russian society against people of color. They were discriminated against, but they couldn't retract and go back to the States. They were there and not able to extricate themselves from the situation. They talked about it frequently.

*Q: Well, this is interesting. It sounds like the organizers of this probably didn't have any feel at all for the black experience in Russia; they said well let's get some black Americans that are living here and put them down there –*

COLES: If they were agents, espionage agents, they didn't act like it, because they were so anti-Soviet in terms of what their experiences had been in the Soviet Union. This was interesting because I would have thought it would have been the contrary. If these were Marxists and communists, one would think that these are the people working in agricultural institutions, who are working as scientists and so forth, but these were not uneducated people who had gone there, but I think they had gone there as idealists. There is a book called The God Who Failed, and the God had failed them and they were critical of their situation.

*Q: Yeah, yeah. Well then after this you came back and you were off to Princeton the Woodrow Wilson School?*

COLES: Yes.

*Q: Did you have any idea at this time of getting – this was to get a degree, wasn't it?*

COLES: Yes I was in the degree program. There were 30 of us in the class.

*Q: Did you have anything you were pointed towards?*

COLES: Well, going back again to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade I knew I was going to be in international affairs and the African experience gave me an interest in Africa and that was another point. Yes, I was interested in working in Africa. But it was only when I got to the Woodrow Wilson School that I began to specialize in the problems of developing countries. I specialized in international relations. Modernization was the field of study at that time, we just talked about economic development. From that point on, I geared my studies toward working in the field of economic development.

*Q: How did the career of development come across? Did you have any feel, I mean did anyone say, hey you ought to get into development, I mean because it is sort of an obscure field?*

COLES: In those days it was in the early stage of development, I mean there was no professional program, the Woodrow Wilson School and other schools at that time were just beginning to have a specialization in development. And so I knew I was interested in helping people to help themselves. I had a humanitarian interest in improving the world; an idealistic view of helping people to help themselves. So I studied economic development with that perspective in mind, not knowing that I would go and work with State or for USAID. But as I began to get more and more involved in my studies I became more interested in USAID and there were some mid-career people from State and USAID studying at Princeton when I was there. One of them was Donald Brown who was the brother of Ambassador Brown, another was Richard Parker who was there from the State side at that time. He was a mid-career fellow at Princeton in those days. These Foreign Service people encouraged me to go into the foreign affairs field and the USAID people encouraged me to apply to work for USAID. I spent two years at the Woodrow Wilson School specializing in the problems of the developing world. One of my great teachers in that field was Sir W. Arthur Lewis who was the first black economist to receive the Nobel Prize in economics. He was the second person of color after Martin Luther King to get a Nobel Prize. He was a superb professor and he stimulated my interest in economic development even more. Most of my classes were related to Africa or economic development that I took at Princeton.

*Q: Well now did the Woodrow Wilson School, did it have a focus or thrust would you say you know, some school pointed toward a certain area or certain type of study or was it a pretty across the board?*

COLES: Well Princeton in those days, this is in 1964, had four areas of study. One was pure economics, another was international relations with sub-specializations like modernization and so forth, another one was domestic politics and the fourth field was urbanization. So you could choose to be in one of these four fields, and my field was international relations with sub-specialization in modernization. They pointed us toward public service and going out and make a contribution to the world and mankind, but there was nothing directing me to go to USAID or the foundation world or the World Bank. In that period of time, there was the Vietnam War and a lot of my classmates that were at the Woodrow Wilson School went on to law school to keep themselves out of the war. I didn't want to do that and I was drafted to go to Vietnam as a military person and I fought that on the basis of an occupational deferment because I had been hired by USAID and was being assigned to the Congo. They didn't think that was good enough so I had to appeal my case to the Presidential Appeal Board under General Hershey. I won my case in the Presidential Appeal Board to have an occupational deferment to go work for USAID in Vietnam. Before that the Woodrow Wilson School experience was an interesting experience for me. Princeton in the 1960s was considered the southernmost of northern Ivy League institutions.

*Q: It's sort of like you might say, the Harvard of the south.*

COLES: Yes, and it had a black neighborhood in Princeton that was formed on the basis of the servants that were sent there to be servants to their southern gentlemen that were studying at Princeton. There were even servant's quarters in the graduate dormitories on the lower floors and so forth. This black community that grew up around Princeton grew

out of those people who were servants to this elite group of people who went to Princeton mainly from the south. Princeton was not a very integrated environment in those days.

*Q: Because if you look at it the 1960s was not, things were not that benign or whatever.*

COLES: Well let's see, what was Princeton like in the 1960s when I was there? There were about 20 people of color including Africans in the undergraduate program and there were about six or seven graduate students in the whole graduate school out of 4,000 students in both the undergraduate and graduate colleges. You can see that was a very small academic community. Walking across Princeton campus in those days I would see confederate flags and some hostility on the part of the undergraduate students studying there. I think it was my graduate schoolmates who make me feel very comfortable and very welcome at Princeton. I will never forget my first day at Princeton when we were having orientation. One of the students from Israel in the class asked me where did I go to school. I said Morehouse College and he said where is that? How did you get here? I said I earned my way here, I worked my ass off to get here; I got here just like you did. You had that sort of feeling that I was the token black because I was the only black from the United States in this school for two years I was there and there was one African classmate from Nigeria, but we were the only two people of color in Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School from 1964 to 1966. I was only the fourth black admitted to the school in its history up to this point in time.

*Q: Did you run across my old boss, George Kennan?*

COLES: Yes, George F. Kennan was there.

*Q: Because he was my ambassador in Yugoslavia.*

COLES: Yes. Well George F. Kennan was at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton and he would come over the campus and give lectures. I heard some of his lectures and he was great; a very clear thinker. We used a lot of his books in our classes, so I have nothing but profound respect for him and his writings on the art of diplomacy. I never took a course from him but I have heard him lecture and participated in some of his lectures. He was at the Institute of Advanced Studies at that time.

*Q: Yes. He wasn't very much in support of the Foreign Service in a way.*

COLES: Critical of it in some ways.

*Q: Yeah, very critical. As a matter of fact I asked him one time much later when I started this program in 1985 if he would write a letter of support and he wrote back and said well, basically I do give support to this and it would only be good if you would interview the right people.*

COLES: Was he one of your interviewees?

*Q: No. He's written books, I never thought - but I was trying to get this going and since I had been his chief of consular section in Belgrade when he was ambassador that he*



*might write a nice letter of support, but I really didn't get it.*

COLES: One of the experiences that I did not talk about but which was one of my vivid experiences, since you were stationed in Yugoslavia, is that second summer I spent in Sarajevo at a place called Doproveda up in the mountains where I attended another Quaker seminar dealing with the problems of urbanization in developing countries. While I was there I had the opportunity, this was in 1963, of seeing Tito and Khrushchev going down the streets of Belgrade in a Rolls Royce, which was their first meeting to try and seek some reconciliation.

*Q: Well I was chief of the consular section.*

COLES: In that year?

*Q: Yeah.*

COLES: Well I was there; I was in Yugoslavia at that time. Do you remember that picture, did you see them going down the street in the Rolls Royce?

*Q: I think I watched that.*

COLES: Yeah, they were throwing roses and everything.

*Q: Yeah.*

COLES: That's one of the most vivid memories that I have of my experience in Europe, seeing the reconciliation between Khrushchev and Tito.

*Q: Yep. And I think there is a wonderful picture showing Khrushchev walking behind Madam Tito, Jovanka, and she had a shapely behind and he was, I mean the picture caught him checking her out. (laughter)*

*We are just coming to the point where you entered the foreign serviced as I recall.*

COLES: The last point I think we were talking about was graduate school.

*Q: Graduate school, I wanted to ask you were at Woodrow Wilson School; you were there when to when?*

COLES: I was there from 1964 to 1966.

*Q: How did the school, first place what were you studying there and what was sort of the atmosphere there?*

COLES: I was studying international relations with a specialization in what they called modernization which is economic development. I think the interesting story is how I got to go there. I was in undergraduate school where I was really interested in studying international relations so I looked at five schools, Johns Hopkins at SAIS, Columbia

University, University of Pittsburgh GSPIA, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and never really thought that much about Princeton, but one of the upperclassmen at the Woodrow Wilson School, Peter Bell, felt that there was a shortage of minority candidates. In fact there were none at Princeton, so he went on a crusade and took it on his own to interview candidates. He came to visit me while I was at Morehouse and the faculty referred him to me as one of the candidates and he encouraged me to apply to Princeton. I had never put Princeton on my radar screen because most of the people who are from the south regard Princeton as being a very elitist type institution.

*Q: Well it also had the reputation of both being elitist for the southern whites.*

COLES: The southernmost of the northern institutions it was regarded as being at that time as being very lily white.

*Q: Yeah, very lily, well it was you might say the highest school of the southern white upper class would go to in a way.*

COLES: Yes, very interesting experience. After his encouragement of me to apply there I did apply as I did to the other schools. Princeton called me up for an interview. So I went up to Princeton, I had never seen the institution in my life. I went there, the interview went very well, I passed all the oral tests they gave me in French and they considered my application, including a language test; I was tested on my ability in French, and at the graduate levels one of the requirements for admission was to speak a foreign language in those days. I passed all of that and was admitted. One thing I noted while I was there was the sparsity of African Americans. there were no African Americans at the Woodrow Wilson School and there had not been an African American for about three or four years and there were only about three in the history of the school before my acceptance since when the school was founded in the 1950s. Out of that long history, there were very few African Americans who had gone there to study.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the undergraduate campus at Princeton and its minorities there?*

COLES: Yes, I'll come back to that. But one of the things that I was concerned about, even from the interview, is at the graduate college I didn't see any blacks. I think there were only five or six blacks in the graduate school at that time. I saw one student coming out of the graduate college wearing a robe and he had a hamster in his hands. I said, Lord if I get here I hope they don't turn me into a freak. Because there was some concern that here are these guys coming out of the monastery wearing academic robes going to eat dinner and then having pet hamsters and other things in their hands and looking very serious and not very communicative. It was not I would call a very welcoming environment. Upon my admission into Princeton we were a class of 30 and in the class before me there was a class of 20 and so it was a very small environment; so that meant that we were a total class of first and second year of 50 students. And there were no other African Americans in the classes and there were no African Americans in the class before my class and the only other person of color in the whole class at that time was a Nigerian and so there were two of us, an African American and a Nigerian and everyone else was white. There were no women in my class.

*Q: I was going to ask if there were women.*

COLES: The first class to admit women was the class after mine. So there was one woman, one black and one African and that was the diversity of the population at that time.

*Q: What about the professors?*

COLES: There was one person of color, I was going to say he was African American but he wasn't; he was Caribbean, a famous economist, who was a Nobel Prize winner, Sir Arthur W. Lewis was the only black professor that was there.

You asked me what was the atmosphere like. The atmosphere was an institution that was basically all white and all male for all intents and purposes with very few minority people of color in the whole institution. In the graduate school at the time that I got there were not more than five or six graduate students in the whole institution out of a thousand students and in the undergraduate population there were only about 20 or 30 people of African ancestry and this included people from the Caribbean area, people from Africa and African Americans. I would say there were probably more foreign people of African origins there than there were African Americans. What was it like? There was no social life for us. Because there were no women on the campus and women came there to participate in mixers and most of them who came to mixers at the graduate school or undergraduate school would not associate with people of color because they didn't want to be stigmatized by the other whites. We had a very restricted social life.

*Q: Well how about could you sort of work the Rutgers circuit which must have had more African Americans?*

COLES: Yes, that what we did. We would go to Rutgers, we would go to Philadelphia to meet African American women or women of color at these institutions, we would go to New York, we would go to Boston, and we would go to Washington whenever we had an opportunity. We would very often associate with undergraduates, people of color, and then when they would invite their dates down that they would maybe bring an extra date for to meet the other people so we had visitors coming from New York and so forth. The blacks usually entertained among themselves for their social life.

*Q: I was wondering whether Howard being sort of again like Morehouse an elite African American colleges, was this sort of a fertile hunting ground for you all?*

COLES: To come back to Washington?

*Q: Well or to invite a date up from Howard?*

COLES: Yes very much so. Washington had a large African American population as well as New York and Howard University was there so we would come down as far as Washington. In addition, there was a large community of foreign women at Princeton from Scandinavia and France and we would often socialize and date some of the foreign

women who were living in the Princeton community at that time. In fact, I met my first wife at Princeton and she was Swedish.

*Q: Well still on the ratio thing before we move on to other things, how was the civil rights movement, things were really ticking during this era, I mean it was a very major period in civil rights demonstrations and all that, how was this playing at Princeton or was there much interest?*

COLES: Yes there was interest and discussion among students. The civil rights movement was in high gear at that point in time 1964 to 1966. You also had the Vietnam War and I think that occupied a lot of students in terms of what was going to happen to them once they got out of school. I felt myself very estranged from the undergraduate community and recall walking or riding my bicycle across campus and seeing confederate flags flying out of windows. I always had very strong feelings when I saw confederate flags. To me it was a symbol of the Ku Klux Klan and it was a symbol of racism and people who had a certain attitude. I found it to be somewhat of a hostile environment in undergraduate dormitories looking up at windows and so forth. My own colleagues and my own classmates were very friendly, very open to me. I remember the first day we came together there was a foreign student from Israel who asked how did you get here? He asked me that question, where did you come from? I said I came from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Where is that? It is a small African American institution. How did you get here? I got here just like you did; I worked my ass off to earn my degree to get here. There was some skepticism that I was a token black and that I might not be qualified to be in the institution and the question was, how did you get here? And I found that to be a very interesting experience that I never forgot.

*Q: Did you find yourself sort of playing the role or did you find yourself, I don't want to overemphasize the word but, almost sort of militant as the black representative or not?*

COLES: I don't think I looked upon myself as a militant. I was very collegial with my classmates, they were very helpful. It was not an environment of competition, it was an environment of what can we do to help each other and to get out of this and to survive, all of us, and to pass the courses, so we studied together, we worked in study groups together, we did projects together. This was a very reinforcing relationship among these 30 people in my class and that was a very positive reinforcement because if I needed help I could ask them to help me. Very often that didn't happen in undergraduate institutions where you felt competitiveness and you wanted to do better than your colleagues. I think there was really a spirit of cooperation among my fellow students and I felt very good about that.

*Q: Well how were sort of the curriculum and the study method, you mentioned working together, what were you studying and what were the themes?*

COLES: Well in the first year we all took the same kinds of classes together. It was the second year you began specializing in your chosen area of specialization.

There was a special policy seminar dealing with the question of transportation so we studied the establishment of a Jet Port outside of New York City to relieve the pressure

on JFK Kennedy Airport and this was in northern New Jersey in the Jersey Lake district. We did research as a team to interview people and their reactions to the location of a Jet Port, but it taught me a lot about domestic issues and about how you find out information from people. This public policy seminar was really a group exercise, different groups were given different areas to work on, some people worked on southern New Jersey about the Jet Port, some worked in northern New Jersey, some worked in Newark and some worked outside even further in New York. We went through this process of finding out what was the reaction and what was the proper place to locate a Jet Port outside of New York City.

Another course was in micro and macro economics, a very difficult course, very quantitatively oriented. I did not have a background in calculus, which I needed to do well in this course. I hadn't even taken calculus and to pass this course it is like everything was taught in differential equations. So for someone who had only gotten to the level of algebra and did not understand calculus well, this was very difficult for me. In fact Princeton took three of us, all of us were from the south, one from Duke, one from Chapel Hill and myself, and put us in a tutorial course to learn calculus, and they gave us a special course. I found that course to be the most difficult course that I studied for at Princeton.

Another course dealt with the whole question of labor economics and then getting into that kind of analysis. Another one dealt with economic development and policy issues, another course dealt with sociology and how do you analyze societies and how do you compare modernized societies against non-modernized societies. That was also a very difficult course, and then there was a course in public administration and dealing with case studies in public administration. These were all fascinating courses.

*Q: It sounds like a very thorough exposure. Where were the students, starting with those you were dealing with and maybe others too, what were they pointing towards? Did you get any feel for what they were there for?*

COLES: There were four fields that you could study and specialize, one was economics, another was foreign policy, the third was development economics and the fourth one was domestic policy for people interested in the problems in urbanization and that. The people who were in foreign policy were going to the state department, the economists were headed for economic work in the State Department generally or to international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF and the people like myself were going into foundations or into government work. We were spread pretty evenly between domestic and international issues.

*Q: And you all pretty well I take it, you and your colleagues, knew what you wanted to do at this point?*

COLES: Yes for the most part I think that was the case. Some people because of the war in Vietnam decided they needed to go on to law school to stay out of the war. But those of us who didn't have any desire to continue our education at that point. I think we had a pretty good idea of where we wanted to go. There were some people from West Point in the class, military career military who were being sent there for two years of training,

there were people there from Harvard, from Yale, from Berkley; they were from all over the country, top students. One of my classmates was a Rhodes Scholar.

*Q: Well was there, I take it this group was very serious, but it was the time of the 1960s, you were in the middle of the 1960s with the rebellion, challenging authority and all, or was this sort of somebody's else was doing that and you all were sticking to your studies?*

COLES: The civil rights struggle on Princeton campus was almost nonexistent. There were no demonstrations. That came later after I left there. You didn't see a lot of rebellion on the part of minority students there. They were all serious to get out of there and so there was no challenge of the administration. There was discussion of the racial situation in the country and the idea or desire to get more black faculty or black students, but there was not the atmosphere of rebellion. There was an atmosphere of fear about the Vietnam War and being drafted and being killed in the war that I think was more pressing on the most of the students at the school than the civil rights struggle and what was happening there.

*Q: How did you stand vis-à-vis the Vietnam War?*

COLES: I was opposed to the Vietnam War and had demonstrated as an undergraduate against the war in Vietnam and was very actively engaged in that. While I was at Princeton I actually got drafted and took my physical at one of the military forts in New Jersey. I passed my physical and I had to appeal to my status.

*Q: Camp Kilmer or something?*

COLES: There's another camp in New Jersey.

*Q: I got discharged from Camp Kilmer much earlier.*

COLES: There's another fort, I forgot the name of it, but it still exists in New Jersey. I went to take my physical and pass the exam I had applied for an occupational deferment because at that time I had applied to USAID and was going to be assigned to the Congo, which was having its own civil war at the time. My draft board felt that wasn't dangerous enough for me so they denied my occupational deferment on the basis that I was going into Foreign Service. I applied for duty in Vietnam and was assigned to Vietnam but that was denied also as occupational deferment by my draft board. My mother contacted someone who was important and who was knowledgeable and had a knowledge of General Hershey and they felt my case was so egregious in terms of how they handled the case. The Presidential Appeal Board took my case out of the state and brought it to the presidential level and they gave me an occupational deferment to enable me to go to Vietnam as a civilian for two years as opposed to being in the military. I felt that coming out of graduate school at the time I had three or four options: go to jail, I could go to Canada, or I could go into the Army or I could go and try and go as a civilian and get an occupational deferment on the basis of that. I chose the route of occupational deferment. I did not believe I would come out of Vietnam alive because there were so many civilians who were killed there. Before I go into that I think it is very interesting to see what was happening at that time when I began to complete my studies at Princeton and to look for a

job.

Most of my colleagues were applying to Ford Foundation, World Bank and those kinds of places. There was no one really recruiting me, no one coming after me. I pretty much knew what I wanted to do at that time, I wanted to be involved in development and I wanted to be a part of USAID. I came down to Washington and tried to interview with USAID and could not get an interview. No one wanted to interview a black from Princeton University who had studied in Europe, who had language skills and so forth, I could not get an appointment with the people in USAID personnel.

*Q: It's incredible really, isn't it?*

COLES: It's very incredible. So what I did when I was denied an opportunity to be interviewed I called back to Princeton, and there were some mid-career people who were studying with me. I asked them could you help me to get an interview because the people here are refusing to see me. One of the people I talked to was Don Brown. Do you know that name? His brother became an Ambassador to several countries. There were two brothers, Don Brown and the other Brown who was Ambassador to Tunisia and I think he was an Ambassador in Europe. Do you know who I'm talking about now?

*Q: I think so. The name is familiar, but I don't know –*

COLES: Well Don Brown was a very high executive in USAID so he called down to Washington to one of his friends whose name was Richard Cashin, and Richard Cashin was the office director for central and coastal West African affairs, and he said sure I'll see the young man. I called up Mr. Cashin and asked for an interview. Mr. Cashin and I talked, the interview went well. Mr. Cashin called over to the personnel people and said I have a young man in my office that I want you to interview and I want you to do it today. The people who had refused to see me were now seeing me because they were told they had to see me. I went over for the interview, the guy who had denied that he wanted to talk to me pushed off his seat and said "my God you have important people that you know here". He was forced to talk to me when he was unwilling to talk to me before somebody weighed in.

*Q: Were you I take it but I want to nail this down, was this do you feel this is on strictly on racial grounds?*

COLES: Well I would say that to me it would seem like that. I always had a high regard, because my father was a government employee, that if I ever had a chance for a successful career, it would be with the government. The fact that I had done well and gone to prestigious institutions and could not get an interview I thought was remarkable. I was really disheartened when I could not get an interview.

*Q: I find it incredible. I mean things I won't say things made an earth change, but this was the Johnson Administration.*

COLES: This was in 1966. This is when things were beginning to change and this is when the civil rights movement was in full bloom and so forth. It would seem to me that

if a foreign affairs agency at that time had such a candidate who was so well qualified they would have been hot to trot but that was not the case, I could not get an interview. The only way I got an interview was to call back to Princeton to get a mid-career to get one of his friends to see if he could intercede in my behalf, and that's the only way I got that interview. I will never forget that.

*Q: Well how did that interview go?*

COLES: The interview went well enough that the office director, Mr. Cashin, followed up to make sure I was given fair consideration. In those days in USAID personnel people didn't make hiring decisions, it was people in policy and program areas that made the decision. I think he followed my situation and application to ensure that I was hired. I knew that because I was assigned to his office after I was hired.

*Q: Well, how did you run across USAID as an option, I mean your knowledge of a place to apply?*

COLES: Let us say that in the earlier part of my life, in latter part of high school and early part of college, I was also interested in the State Department because of foreign affairs. I didn't know that much about USAID. My trip to Africa helped me to have some contact with the "human needs" out there so my interest in development became much more serious and in graduate school I studied development economics. If I looked for places to work in the U.S. government, it was USAID where I should be and the fact that I couldn't get even an interview was very disappointing. I don't know if I told you the story earlier that when I was in college and tried to get an internship with the State Department I was denied that opportunity because I had traveled when I was studying in Europe in Russia and to then what was Czechoslovakia, and had been to that World Youth Festival in Helsinki, Finland. It was the Pentagon that gave me my first opportunity to get a security clearance in the U.S. government not the State Department. I think the fact that the State Department had turned me down for a job that was a non-sensitive job turned me away from the State Department and really pushed me more into the other areas of the federal government.

*Q: What you know as you were getting ready in the first place with AID, was the interview more or less it or was there an exam or what?*

COLES: There was a civil service exam not the Foreign Service exam. There was an interview process, a panel of Foreign Service officers interviewed you and then I was selected for what they called a junior officer program, which is sort of like the fast track program for young professionals coming in to the agency.

*Q: How did the oral exam go?*

COLES: I thought it went very well, it was a very fair exam and I did well enough to pass.

*Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were put to you?*



COLES: No not at this point in time.

*Q: You came in when?*

COLES: I came into USAID in July of 1966.

*Q: Okay. And then was there a training course?*

COLES: Yes. We were brought together as junior officer trainees. There was a group for Latin America, another group for Asia and a group for Africa. There were seven of us in the group for Africa, I was the only African American in the group and in the other groups I don't remember any African Americans in that whole group of trainees so I was probably one of not more than two or three but I was probably the only one that was in that entering class. We went through a whole training process of learning about the agency and how it worked, personnel, history of the agency. We learned about how the agency operates, its policy and procedures. They then sent us to a special course in Boston University in African studies. I used that opportunity to get married and have a honeymoon on Martha's Vineyard while I was studying at Boston University.

*Q: Where did you meet your wife?*

COLES: At Princeton.

*Q: At Princeton?*

COLES: Yes. She was Swedish.

*Q: Now, was she an American citizen?*

COLES: No, she was a Swedish citizen at that time.

*Q: Swedes were very strongly opposed to Vietnam and all that at the time; did she carry this particularly with her?*

COLES: No, I mean sure she was a Swede in terms of the liberalism and the racial situation in the States and the Vietnam war which she was actively opposed to, but that didn't enter into our relationship. I was very much a liberal myself in how I viewed the world so we were not that far apart. You will recall that I talked about the restricted contact with whites while I was at Princeton, except for women who were foreign women living there, and they had a different attitude relating to blacks as opposed to the American women who were in the Princeton area.

*Q: How long were you in Boston University?*

COLES: Only for a month.

*Q: How did you find it?*

COLES: I loved it, it was great, they had all the great African scholars there and there was an excellent African Studies Department. I enjoyed it very much. I spent my honeymoon on Martha's Vineyard while I was there for about a week that was all I could afford at that time.

*Q: I got a master's degree at BU in history, of course that was in 1954 to 1955.*

So your first job was with Mr. Cashin was it?

COLES: Yes, Richard Cashin who was the Director of the Office of Central African affairs in the African Bureau. The man who was called up to set up the interview for me that resulted in my being hired in USAID was the man who finally assigned me to his office.

*Q: I would think you would be ideally suited for this mainly because of the language because this is sort of throwing you into the French speaking pot you might say.*

COLES: Yes, I was fluent in French. I had studied in Switzerland and I did very well. I was fluent in French. My first assignment was on the Burundi-Rwanda Desk as a junior desk officer, working under two senior and well known USAID officers. One was David Shear and I think you may know that name he has a very distinguished career in USAID, and another person who was Steve Lord who was Winston Lord's brother and then there was another guy who was nearby, Princeton Lyman. This was a very powerful group working under Mr. Cashin. I was there for about six months until my draft board denied my occupational deferment and so I volunteered and went into the Vietnam Bureau.

*Q: Let's talk about Rwanda-Burundi and this would be 1966. What was going on there, I mean what was going on there on the ground and what were we doing AID wise?*

COLES: We weren't doing a lot. We were mainly involved in agriculture and we were doing some policy work with the Central Bank of Burundi but most of the programs were in agriculture, a little bit of family planning, that's what we were doing, very small programs. We were feeling our way. The big country of interest at that time, which I wasn't given much opportunity to work on was the Congo.

*Q: Yeah, the Congo was the big thing. Well in Rwanda-Burundi, were you –*

COLES: There was also this conflict that occurred between the Tutsis and Hutus.

*Q: Yeah I hate to say which conflict, but this seemed to be a perpetually running sore wasn't it?*

COLES: Yes, even in those days in the 1960s there had been problems between the Hutus and Tutsis and so that conflict was always in the background. There was also the civil war going on in the Congo and I got some exposure to that.

*Q: Kasa-Vubu.*

COLES: Kasa-Vubu and that whole group of people.

*Q: Oh yes, Tshombe.*

COLES: Tshombe.

*Q: These were names that were household names at one point.*

COLES: Right. Lumumba had been assassinated at that point in time and it was just a whole thing about the Tshombe regime and trying to, you know, move that ahead and relations with the Belgians and so forth, so it was an interesting period. I mean, the Congo was not a safe place to work; it was a dangerous place to work.

*Q: No, we had people picked up in Stanleyville whom I've interviewed, Mike I can't think of his name right now, our consul I think in Stanleyville, it was taken over by the Simbas I think.*

COLES: There was a lot of conflict, a lot of war. I was sort of amazed to think that my draft board didn't think that the Congo situation was dangerous enough for me to be assigned there. I was going to be assigned there as a junior officer to the Congo even though I worked on the desk of Burundi-Rwanda affairs, mainly writing memorandums and preparing Congressional Presentation materials. Those kinds of things, sort of learning journeymen type of jobs. My first assignment was going to be to the Congo, I was being assigned to the Congo as junior officer program economist. When my draft board denied me an occupational deferment I had no choice at that point but to volunteer for the Vietnam Bureau. My office director again was instrumental in making sure that I got transferred to Vietnam so that I could work in the Bureau and be assigned there.

*Q: Okay. What training did you get? This would be 1967 at this time?*

COLES: It would have been in the fall of 1966.

*Q: Okay. Did you go to the Vietnam training course?*

COLES: Yes I did.

*Q: In the garage of the Arlington Towers?*

COLES: Yes I was there in Arlington Towers, I went to the Police Academy over in Georgetown and I went to the USAID orientation program that was also right behind the World Bank. During that period of time we had special training program on Vietnam. In the program there, we were given some language training in Vietnamese but I didn't go to Hawaii. I didn't do that but I was given special courses in procedures and in what was happening there in Vietnam, I was taught how to fire a weapon. I was taught survival techniques and these kinds of things here in the United States. In fact they took us to the police academy in Georgetown to teach us how to shoot a weapon. We learned a lot about how to survive in Vietnam. I was not very hopeful that I would make it out of there alive. Interesting enough it showed me that the Princeton contact became important for

again there was another person who was studying at Princeton who was assigned to Vietnam and so he adopted me and became my patron and took me to Vietnam and made sure I got a good assignment. A man by the name of John Ulinski, does that name mean anything to you?

*Q: No, not really.*

COLES: John Ulinski was a senior person in USAID, a very legendary figure. And there was another person who was his friend, head of all the technical divisions in Vietnam, and so this man loved to work with young people. His name was Robert Culberson. Robert Culberson was the Associate Director of the Local Development in Vietnam which meant he had all the technical programs, agriculture, education, health, youth, land reform. All these divisions were under him. He took two young people to work with him, one by the name of Robert Taft III and me to be his special assistants. Robert Taft eventually became the governor of Ohio and he's a descendant of the former President.

*Q: Oh I see, oh yes. You went to Vietnam and you were there from when to when?*

COLES: I was there from 1967 to 1969.

*Q: So when you arrived in 1967, what was the situation in Vietnam?*

COLES: In 1967 the war was in full blast. There were troops everywhere and initially I was assigned to work on health programs and did some work on youth and agriculture. I had an opportunity to travel all over the country with the military and with the CIA. There was always fierce fighting near Saigon itself you could be on the roof of a hotel, and we all lived in hotels in those days, and see bombing strikes in rural areas around Saigon. You could hear bombs every night, B-52s going off, you could hear gunfire very often in the city of Saigon and in 1967 you had your first Tet offensive, 1968 was the second Tet offensive.

*Q: So you arrived before?*

COLES: I arrived before the Tet offensive and I was there for the first offensive and the second offensive.

*Q: Were you stationed, I mean Saigon was your home office you might say?*

COLES: Right. I was based in Saigon but I traveled extensively out into rural areas to look at projects and programs.

*Q: Was the Corps program in operation at that time?*

COLES: Yes, it was very active under the leadership of Ambassador Colby.

*Q: Yeah. Now did you have a specialty, was it health did you say?*

COLES: I worked on health programs, education programs, youth and agriculture

programs and then the other person worked on other programs under his specialty. Culberson had about eight technical programs, public administration, everything you could think of under his supervision.

*Q: What was your initial impression of the operation? You were the new boy on the block but sometimes you know, you gain an impression there before you sort of get immersed into the whole thing I mean, did you feel that what we were doing we were doing it well and was it well run?*

COLES: I landed in Saigon on a commercial plane coming from Thailand. When I got there I found a huge structure of USAID and the American Embassy. I think at one time in Vietnam there were over 12,000 civilian employees. Here I was a young man, first assignment overseas, being assigned to a war zone and frightened. One, because fear of being assassinated by the Viet Cong and two, because I learned that I looked like an Algerian or a North African Moroccan. In the French Colonial period those people who were in the forefront of the fighting in Vietnam were the North Africans. There was a fear that the friendlies would kill me as a part of the retribution from the experience they had from these North Africans. So if I wasn't killed by the Viet Cong, I was going to be killed by the South Vietnamese because they are going to take me for a North African. At that time there was a restaurant on the Saigon River that was bombed and many American civilians were killed.

*Q: Yeah, Yumsat.*

COLES: Yumsat, that was blown up.

*Q: Two teller mines or something were set off, everybody went running out, very bad. Were you - ?*

COLES: I was there at that time and that was a frightening experience that led me to the conclusion that if I get out of here it will be a miracle because there were a lot of people dying. You know in terms of traveling out of Saigon to go on AIR American flight to go to Go Kong, to go to the Delta or visit some other place, you'd see the body bags of military personnel just lined up on the runway, these black plastic bags of dead bodies. It was a very fearful experience, but there was also a sense from my perspective that we were not winning of the war, that the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese were in control of extensive areas and that it required a lot of American presence on the ground to establish security. Even though we would bomb areas, we were the civilians who would go in to reconstruct the hospitals or houses and things of this nature. It was always a recurring process and there was no end to the process. You would destroy on one hand, rebuild, destroy, rebuild and it wasn't taking us very far. It led me to have a lot of doubt as to whether we could win the war. There was no doubt in my mind that this was going to be a difficult war at the least.

*Q: What were you seeing when you know, you say you got out to villages and all, what were you seeing out there? This was before the Tet offensive.*

COLES: Right. What you were seeing were villages that appeared to be safe and quiet in

the daytime but were turned into Viet Cong villages very often in the night. So from my point of view there was no safe or secure area; that in the daytime it was generally alright to travel but the night belong to the Viet Cong. So one bunkered down, one lived in a fortified military compound; one lived in a civilian compound that was fortified with guards and guns. There was always fighting going on at night, there's always flares, you saw combat all around you, everywhere, there was not quietness, there was always fighting going on, there was always troop movement, there were always soldiers on patrol and very often I would see armed soldiers, as we would be traveling somewhere, on the roads with guns looking for Viet Cong. I didn't think it was a very safe or secure environment at all.

*Q: What were you getting from, I imagine you were talking to the AID officers in the field, what were you getting from them, initially I mean?*

COLES: An idea that this was not going to be a war that you could win. That this was going to be a tough struggle at the least but the U.S. government was committed to a winning strategy and we were there to do the best we could, but it didn't look like it was going to come off. Most of us looked upon this as service that had to be done but we wanted to get out of there as quickly as we could.

*Q: Where were you in January 1967, when the Tet offensive, where were you at the time when it started?*

COLES: I was in Cho Lon believe it or not and that's where it started.

*Q: Yeah, Cho Lon being the sort of the Chinese part where the PX was located.*

COLES: Yes. But it also had nice restaurants and nice places to go and since this was the Tet season, I was out in Cho Lon eating in a restaurant and we heard all kinds of fireworks going off and so forth and so that's what we thought it was. The next morning very early I was due to visit my family that was living in Bangkok, so I got on one of the first planes going out of Saigon to Bangkok the day they invaded Saigon. But the invasion had already started the night before in Cho Lon but I didn't realize it and most people didn't realize it so they let the plane get off the ground. I landed safely in Bangkok only to find out that the Tet offensive had started in Saigon. I thought I was going to put my legs up and begin to enjoy being in Bangkok while all this fighting was going on. Well it didn't take but 24 hours, they sent me a message saying we're sending a special aircraft to pick you and other State and USAID people up and to bring you back to Saigon and they did that on a military aircraft.

*Q: Your family was staying in Bangkok?*

COLES: Bangkok.

*Q: Family at that point was one, your wife wasn't it?*

COLES: My wife and a daughter who was born in Bangkok.

*Q: Oh. So they brought you back?*

COLES: They brought me back.

*Q: What was Saigon like when you landed at Tan San Nhat?*

COLES: It was like a military fortress, with troops and guns everywhere. They put us on a bus when we landed at the Saigon Airport, Tan San Nhat, and they put us under military escort to bring us back into Saigon to the office. They didn't take us to our homes because the fighting was still going on. There were no safe areas, so they took us to the office under military escort, machine guns and all. I went in to the office and didn't know whether I could go home or not. Eventually I went there and we all had guards and so forth and found out that the house hadn't been overrun, it was still there.

*Q: Where were you living?*

COLES: I was living in Hong Cap Tu near Nguyen Hue. It was right near the Special Forces office in Saigon. You know where that is?

*Q: I'm trying to think.*

COLES: You know where the Korean Officer's Mess was in Saigon?

*Q: Yes.*

COLES: I lived right near there.

*Q: That's a good place to be. The Korean troops take care, they don't mess around.*

COLES: I was one block from the Korean Officer's Mess and one block from the U.S. Special Forces headquarters in Saigon, which made me pretty secure but there was still fighting going on. They had buses that would come by and pick us up, and most of them were armed escorted buses, to go to work. And then I remember one of the first tasks they sent me was to go out to Tan San Nhat airport where there was heavy fighting going on to bring back a group of IVS volunteers who were stuck out at the airport.

*Q: That's the International Volunteer Service.*

COLES: Yes. Who were stuck out at the airport, and there was a fire going on at the time I arrived there and we got them out under fire and brought them back into the office in Saigon. I thought that was the time I was going to get killed because it was a fire and I didn't have any weapons.

*Q: Where was the USAID office? I know where the embassy was.*

COLES: The USAID office was not too far from the presidential palace on one of the main streets near the presidential palace.

*Q: Near the cathedral?*

COLES: Not too far. I was trying to remember, the cathedral was right down the main drag downtown with all the hotels and so forth were down there. We were about I would say probably 10 blocks off one of the main streets.

*Q: What were you doing while you know the fighting was going on? I take it you weren't going out making field trips and all that at the time.*

COLES: Not traveling outside of Saigon but we were trying to locate people to make sure that they were safe, where were the areas of risks, what was happening to our projects in the field, trying to secure personnel to make sure they were not in danger. Doing those sorts of things and trying to track what was happening, to track the fighting and what areas were secure or not secure. There was a lot of activity, a lot of meetings going on. We went to work every day under military escort and in vans.

*Q: What was the feeling about within your group about how the Tet offensive was going?*

COLES: Well I think most people felt that this was it, that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were taking over. I mean, you would see them and hear about them in rural areas but never with the audacity of coming into Saigon, which was very heavily fortified with American military all over the place. You had the Pentagon East as we called it out at Tan Son Nhat, you had all these government offices and all these soldiers and military operations and the idea that they could overrun Saigon it was unbelievable, unheard of at that time. It didn't last a long time but the fierceness and boldness of when they were in Saigon I think scared a lot of people. It led people to believe that Saigon was vulnerable which we had believed that it was not vulnerable. People fortified the places they were living. They put sandbags in their bedrooms and fortified their houses. They armed themselves and made sure that rifles were nearby. At that time my house got hit with a 122 mm rocket and thought I was dead then.

*Q: What happened?*

COLES: The rocket landed in my backyard and broke out all my windows and ruffled things, I thought that I was gone. I mean, the noise of that one rocket landed in my backyard and one landed in the front yard. From that point on I thought that this was not going to work. There was always the danger of random rocket fire, 122 mm rockets landing in Saigon and being randomly impacted by rocket fire.

*Q: Yeah, you could listen to the radio and they would say rockets fell in the third district or the seventh district, report it like a weather report you know, and if you were in the first district and they landed in the third district well that's tough for the third district, but you, you kind of you know - at least I got quite blithe about this it's just - but if they landed in my district, I got quite upset.*

COLES: So you were there yourself?

*Q: Not there, a little later, I came in 1969 to 1970.*



COLES: But things were still rough then.

*Q: Things were going on but the feeling was the Viet Cong, and it proved to be true, was basically decimated and then it wasn't until much - it then became a battle of the North Vietnamese regular troops.*

COLES: Right, well they were infiltrating even at that time down to the south but I mean I was – you asked me where I lived in Saigon. I lived right across from the guest house, the visiting heads of state guest house in Vietnam. So I was on a line of sight from the chief of state guest house to the presidential palace and then on the other side of the presidential palace was the USAID office. So it was like a straight shot if someone was shooting a rocket trying to hit them. I was in the line of fire in terms of rockets coming into Saigon.

*Q: Did the USAID office sustain many casualties?*

COLES: From what I remember those who were assigned to rural areas, especially in the Corps program, had a lot of casualties. And what I learned later was that on a per capita basis there were more civilian deaths than there were military in Vietnam, meaning those deaths from State Department, USAID and the CIA on a per capita basis were larger than the military casualties. I would say that the largest deaths in the history of USAID were sustained in Vietnam and if you went to USAID headquarters in Washington you would see at least 20 officers or more who lost their lives in Vietnam.

*Q: We lost some officers I know up in Hue for example, taken prisoner and then executed.*

COLES: There were a lot of Americans, some were killed in this bombing, some were killed with mines while traveling on rural roads, but I would say there were at least 20 or more USAID people who were killed in Vietnam and that's pretty heavy when you think in terms of numbers. In fact you talk about Hue, I went into Hue. I was one of the first civilians to go into Hue to do a damage assessment after the Viet Cong had overrun Hue. The US was bombing the Citadel to try to get the Viet Cong out of the Citadel so I went in and did a damage assessment to see how much damage had been done.

*Q: Yeah that was a sort of a copy of the Forbidden City which was the Citadel then.*

COLES: Yes. But I went in there and I was surprised that with all that bombing there was not much damage.

*Q: No, no. I went through a year later and it was a nice tourist spot.*

COLES: Yes, it was beautiful. But you know it sounded like all hell had broken loose, especially with all the bombing and everything, but they had all these bunkers and these encasements and so forth. The Citadel survived very well to our surprise.

*Q: Very much so. Did you continue, you were there until 1969, did you continue to work out of the Saigon and going out into the field?*

COLES: Well, I stayed there for one year in this office of Local Development which led me to take several field trips. There was not one area I did not go to in Vietnam. I went from Hue all the way down to Go Cong which is right in the Delta. All those areas that I would go to on field trips and look at projects with my boss, but sometimes on my own to do reconnaissance work to see what problems were being encountered. This job gave me some real responsibility at a very early age.

*Q: Well this of course is the thing and I am sure it is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan now, where they really pass the responsibility down to the junior officers not like in regular offices where it is very hierarchical.*

COLES: Well I can say this, that I had responsibility for some real programs in Vietnam. The health budget alone was something like \$400 Million annually and education was probably another \$300M and this was in the 1960s when those dollars would mean billions of dollars these days. So here I was around 26 or 27 years old working with colonels in the military and medical doctors who were very highly educated, arguing with them over budgetary priorities for their programs. So for me it was a real training ground, training me to be able to make tough decisions and judgments, to improve my writing skills, to get information condensed to one page memorandum for decision making purposes. Working on the staff of a senior AID person was a great learning experience. It was a great training experience for me.

*Q: But also you were accomplishing something too.*

COLES: Yes. It was a very interesting experience without a doubt.

*Q: Let's talk about post-Tet Vietnam and your programs there, we were talking about the medical program and all, I mean did you find it a clearer field with the Viet Cong kind wiped out?*

COLES: Well I think that the Viet Cong suffered heavy losses during the Tet offensive. There's no doubt about it, but I also think they taught us, the Americans, a lesson that they had the capability of striking very deep into Vietnam and even capturing the capital city for a period of time. I think that left a sense of fear among many of us that this can happen again. It was just a matter of time before they came back in force. I found ourselves trying to expand our programs on this concept of winning the hearts and minds of the people, but I don't think it had any real impact or resulted in any real change of strategy that I could see. I don't remember us doing something different than we had done before, it was doing more of it and trying to reach out to more people. I think it, in terms of people who were there, felt that this is a losing cause and in the long run this was not going to be a viable situation.

*Q: Okay. You left there in 1969 was it?*

COLES: 1969. I left in 1969 and I must say that was one of the happiest moments in my life.

*Q: The wheels up.*

COLES: The wheels up, because I really believed in the two years that I was there I was going to get killed and the fact that I was able to leave Vietnam alive made me a happy man. I was offered two assignments when I left Vietnam. This was a period when people who were in my age group were being separated from USAID. As a result of the Vietnam War, they were trying to reduce the number of people in the USAID Foreign Service, so young people were very vulnerable.

*Q: How old were you then?*

COLES: This was in 1969 so I would have been 27 years old. And somehow or another I think the people in Washington sort of looked out for me. They wanted to keep me in the Agency. So to my surprise I got offered two of the choicest assignments an USAID officer could get: Morocco and Tunisia. When I got back to Washington I found out that the director of North African Affairs at USAID turned out to be an African American and he was the one who sort of made sure I was offered a good assignment in the region he had control over. I began to understand a little bit more why I was given this opportunity; because an assignment in USAID Morocco and Tunisia were coveted posts.

*Q: Oh absolutely. Both of them, they don't loom high on one's idea of hardship posts.*

COLES: No they don't, and still today they are coveted posts. So I went back to Washington on leave and was really enthusiastic about going to Morocco. It was really a very difficult choice for me but I finally decided Morocco offered more variety and a more interesting place to go so I chose Morocco. I was assigned to Morocco as an assistant program officer to work at the USAID mission there.

*Q: Were you married at the time?*

COLES: Yes I was married. When I was in Vietnam my wife was in Thailand and so I went back and forth there once a month. My wife came with me to Morocco and it was such a delightful assignment. I was very, very happy for my family and myself. And we had a child while I was in Vietnam so the child was with us also.

*Q: Where in Morocco, was it Rabat or what?*

COLES: Yes we were based in Rabat. We lived in a very charming area of Rabat called Souissi, which is a very nice residential area. We had a lovely home out in a foreign enclave area but there were Moroccans living there also. We were engaged in agriculture programs, conservation programs, and irrigation programs. We were engaged in finance programs there, we were into commodity import programs, and it was an amazing program.

*Q: Talk a bit about the AID in Morocco relationship at that time? This was still 1969 was it?*

COLES: It was 1969. I was there from 1969 to 1972. Morocco was looked at that day and

time as a moderate Arab country and one that had a close and lasting and long term relationship with the United States. In fact I think if we go back historically the consulate in Tangier was one of the first Foreign Service posts in Africa and the other one was on the island of Gorée in Senegal, the two outposts of Foreign Service assignments in contact with Africa. The Moroccans looked upon the United States as friends and we looked upon them as one that we wanted to cultivate a relationship.

While I was there also I was appointed to be on the Bilateral Fulbright Commission and one of the tasks we were talking about at that time was building a university in North Africa and that was going to be called the American university of Tangier. That was a major project with which we were going to use access currency that was available at that time to build an American university in North Africa. That was another thing I was involved in while I was there. I would say the relations between Morocco and the United States and USAID were very positive. Interesting enough the first director I worked for in Morocco was Jewish, Phil Birnbaum, and that will give you some idea of the receptivity of the people to all cultures and all ethnic groups.

*Q: I would think there would be a problem with the French in Morocco because the French of course had been not a colonial power, but at least it had been a protectorate of France, I'm not sure what the title was, but the French had troops there since the 1830s anyway.*

COLES: Well, I think if you look at all of North Africa especially Algeria, Algeria was considered to be a province of France. Morocco and Tunisia were colonies of France but never had the protected status that Algeria had but there were obviously very close relationships between France and Morocco as between United States and Morocco. I think the Moroccans were also looking for the opportunity to diversify their relationships. Because if one looked from a historical point of view, the French influence was so heavy and vast in Morocco that the Moroccans welcomed the opportunity to have another major power to be able to diffuse the stranglehold France had on the country. The fact that there was another option and another alternative and the Americans provided that alternative to Moroccans. I think the Moroccans cherished the development of that relationship.

I also remember that when I was there one of the Arab-Israeli early wars broke out. It was interesting enough that we had a lot of Moroccan-Jews working for us in the USAID mission and during this conflict these employees took leave and left Morocco to fight on the side of Israel and came back into the country. I think that's sort of an amazing feat that Moroccans were very open minded to the large population of Jews in Morocco especially in the northern part of Morocco. They didn't create problems for these Jews in terms of their going to Israel and coming back. I thought that was such a moderate view of an Arab country that took a moderate stance, that it didn't penalize its Jewish population for the stance they took in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

*Q: What piece of the action did you have?*

COLES: I started off as an assistant program officer so I was working on the development of new programs and evaluating programs in agriculture or in natural resource management and banking and finance. We also had some programs with the

agriculture university, Hassan II University. For me it was quite a different experience than I had in Vietnam. It gave me an opportunity to develop and participate in the design of new programs to get exposure to a more regular program. We were in Vietnam and very actively involved in pacification programs and trying to win the hearts and minds of the people. Morocco to me represented a real development program where we were trying to help improve the Moroccan economy and the income of people living in rural areas. We worked in very isolated areas in the western part of Morocco, a place called Oujda, which is right near the Algerian border. We were working on irrigation projects. We were working in range management projects in the far south of Morocco. We had projects pretty much throughout the country and they were projects that were very well received by the Moroccan government. During the time I was in Morocco I was promoted from assistant program officer to deputy program officer.

*Q: How did you find sort of the meshing of the Moroccans with your program? Because again I come back to the long, very long, century old at least or century and a half relationship of the French in Morocco and I always thought that so many cultural people and all would have wanted to absorb many of the French methods of their culture, which are fine I mean, so it wasn't as though they were being introduced to a western style of agriculture all of a sudden.*

COLES: Well, I think you have to look at Moroccan agriculture and what they were growing. And one of the things they were growing was wheat and France is not known for its growing of wheat. So Americans have the technology and the know-how and we were working on new varieties of wheat and corn, so we had the technology. I think that gave us the cutting edge for working with Moroccans; Moroccans were great wheat and corn growers at that time.

*Q: Well couscous is wheat.*

COLES: Right, it's made out of wheat so they were very much interested in the technology we could give them especially improved and new varieties so we had plant breeders working with us. The French from an agricultural point of view were not in competition with us because they couldn't compete with us because we were helping them to do things they didn't have the competence to do.

*Q: You were involved in banking weren't you?*

COLES: We were dealing with the development bank but not the commercial banks. The time I was there I remember only one American bank being in Morocco at that time and that is the CitiBank, they had offices in Casablanca and Rabat. We didn't get too actively involved in the banking sector; what we were trying to do is to give funds that could be reloaned by the Moroccan development bank and get the Moroccan government more involved in the development lending.

*Q: Did you get involved in the politics of the area, were you finding, obviously it was a kingdom and there were those in Morocco who were opposed to the king and all, did this raise any problems for you all?*

COLES: Very interesting when I was in Morocco there was a lot of dissatisfaction with the king at the time, who was Hassan II, and he was not a very popular king. In fact at the time or close to the end of the time I was there, there were two attempts to assassinate him.

*Q: Was this the birthday party or the airplane shoot down?*

COLES: This was the airplane shoot down. In fact he was coming from France and then two fighter pilots went up and tried to attack his plane and almost shot him down. There was another time when I was there that when he was at his palace in Skhirat and they attacked the palace and tried to assassinate him again. There were two assassination attempts during this period.

*Q: That was the birthday party.*

COLES: That was the birthday party. I was there for both, and he escaped both of them.

*Q: I'm told though that he particularly in the airplane one, he became suspicious of the Americans.*

COLES: That we were involved?

*Q: Yeah, somehow, and I was wondering if you –*

COLES: I never felt the repercussions from that in terms of our relations with the Moroccans. We had a very close relationship, but it didn't come back to me. The ambassador at that time was a very dynamic Arabist who was very well thought of, Richard Parker.

*Q: Dick Parker was the founding president of this organization, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.*

COLES: I would say that out of all the Ambassadors that I have served under in Morocco that Dick Parker was the best and he was so well respected in Morocco and so knowledgeable of the Arab world and Islam that he was a very popular Ambassador and had very good relations with Moroccans at all levels. He was not the type of person who did not let them know if they were doing something he did not think was appropriate. Very outspoken, very articulate and very bright and with that quality of Ambassador I think he did an excellent job of promoting our relations with Morocco at that time because he was one of the few Americans who were very fluent in Arabic and he could communicate with them quite easily.

*Q: Well as a matter of fact I interviewed him for our program and he talks about one time when he was ambassador to Algeria and Boumédiène, his cabinet were mostly people who had been educated in France and so their common language was French and he castigated his cabinet in front of Parker and said how come the American ambassador speaks better Arabic than we do. (laughter)*

COLES: Yes, he was very good and I think that had a lot to do in terms of keeping U.S.-Moroccan relations on keel because he was just so well respected and so well thought of not only by his staff but by Moroccans also. The French may have been somewhat suspicious of us undermining their relationship with a long ally and so forth but I think they had a respect for us. We didn't set out as one of our foreign policy intentions to try to upset or unseat the French in Morocco. We just wanted good relations with Morocco and we were willing to live with the French. We weren't trying to take them out of their position and I think they came to the realization that we were not trying to do that so we got along well with them also.

*Q: Were you in a, I mean, as one sat around saying, let's be careful if we do this or that, that we don't upset the French; was this sort of one of the givens in our planning?*

COLES: Not that I would remember, not in Morocco. I think we wanted to maintain good relations with the French that were there but they were so much more involved in Morocco in terms of their commercial interest, their banking interest and their financial interest that both programs we had there really weren't making that much of a dent that would cause that much of a problem I would think from their point of view. Yes, we might have been sort of like a prick in the skin but it was not like we were inflicting great pain on them or making them upset at that point because our program was still quite small. When you think about what was happening in Morocco at that time we were probably somewhere around \$60 to \$80 Million and the French were pouring in substantially more than we were. I don't think they were that concerned about us or we were concerned about them.

We had a naval base there in Kenitra and we wanted to maintain the presence of that naval base, and that naval base also gave us the possibility of landing aircraft if we needed to land aircraft in North Africa. Morocco had strategic significance for us and the French didn't try to close down Kenitra at that point in time, but it was there and had been there for a long period of time I think they had gotten used to it and accepted it.

*Q: Did you get involved in the border conflict between Algeria and Morocco?*

COLES: We didn't get involved in the border conflict. We had projects up in that area which was in Oujda, which were irrigation projects. That could have been somewhat controversial in terms of border claims and those kinds of things because we weren't that far from the Algeria border, but I was never in the position where I was afraid to travel to that area nor was I ever prohibited from going to that area and that would give me some sense of indication that they didn't look upon that as being very sensitive. If it had been a problem we would have been restricted in terms of going up there, and neither the Moroccan government nor the U.S. government prevented me from doing that.

*Q: How stood things with sort of the Western Sahara, had the green march taken place and all that?*

COLES: Well, there was the problem with the Spanish Sahara, and I believe it was more of a problem.

*Q: This was the Polisario.*

COLES: Yes, the Polisario. This was a source of problems between Algeria and Morocco. Also at that point in time there was fighting going on in the south. There was concern about that fighting. There was some discussion of the legitimacy of Moroccan claim over Spanish Sahara, but it was still not of the magnitude that was of great concern. One of the interesting things, to give you an idea, is that the conflict had not reached a level of intensity. One of the senior officers in the embassy drove his car from Morocco to Dakar across the desert at that time and he was not attacked when he did that but he did die of sun exposure.

*Q: This is Russell?*

COLES: Yes. And you know, I would never in my wildest dreams ever think that I would want to do that, but he tried it. His wife survived but he died.

*Q: That would be Russell, yeah. I knew him very vaguely. He was in Saudi Arabia when I was in Dhahran.*

COLES: Yes. A good officer, very bright, but it was a very tragic situation. The fact that someone could drive across the Spanish Sahara at the time there was a conflict going on and not be attacked by bandits or by Polisario rebels says a lot.

*Q: Yeah.*

COLES: What he did was he just lost his way in terms of lack of navigational aids and that was his problem he just didn't have enough stuff with him to carry him across the desert.

*Q: Yeah. Did how did you find sort of the support staff or make of the Moroccan support staff?*

COLES: Interesting enough, what I saw in the whole U.S. mission. We hired a number of French people, we had a lot of what I called Jewish Moroccans working for the American Embassy but very few Arabic speaking Moroccans, and we were trying to get more Moroccans to work for us. There were a heavy dose in the U.S. Embassy and in the American Embassy of third country nationals, even some Europeans, working for us and that was sort of interesting because normally that should not have been the case, especially in a country as developed as Morocco. Either the Moroccans were not interested in working for us or our recruitment was slanted in that direction.

*Q: Well I know I certainly saw that in Saudi Arabia where this is a major problem. I think it was lack of interest on the part of the nationals.*

COLES: Yeah. I mean, I think the Moroccans could find good jobs in the commercial sector because Morocco had a large commercial sector. American wages were not necessarily competitive but it was interesting to see that we even had Swedish nationals, we had a lot of French people working for us. Even in the USAID mission I remember



that most of the substantive jobs involved French nationals working for Americans.

*Q: Well you did this until when?*

COLES: I was in Morocco until 1972. At that time my first wife and I separated. I was in Morocco as a married man for two years and for the last year or so I was there I was a bachelor. I traveled a lot in that last year just to get a lot of exposure to the culture and I loved it, it is such a beautiful country.

*Q: It really is.*

COLES: Yeah. I used to go skiing in the high Atlas Mountains on the weekends. It was just a wonderful place in that regard but most people don't realize that Morocco had one of the longest ski seasons than any country in the world going from about November to about April or May.

*Q: Did you run across in your moving around, sort of the expatriate community? I mean, I heard you know, about the people who lived in Tangier, the Europeans, sort of what used to be called the remittance people. In other words, these were people whose family were paying them something to stay away, and often with a lot of money but not much ambition. Did you run across any?*

COLES: Especially in Tangier. We had two offices there, the regional office of the Auditor General and there was always an American consulate in Tangier. There were also a large number of expatriate Americans living in Tangier. The heiress to the Woolworth fortune was one of those people who was very active in the American community. She was in a wheel chair at the time, but one who was very generous to the Marine Corps and she always sponsored the Marine Corps ball and she was very active in terms of giving to the American Embassy. You had some jazz artists like Randy Weston who has the jazz club in London, was playing jazz in Tangier and then there are all kinds of writers and intellectuals who had homes there. Yes, I met some of these people from time to time in my work there, and I used to love to go to up into Mehdia and this is where most of the Americans lived, and so there were a large number of wealthy Americans, both African Americans and non-African Americans who were living there.

In Rabat and Casablanca there was a very large French community, very international. Americans often were looked on as being in the American ghetto. There were a group of us who tried to get out of the ghetto and so we would go skiing with the French, we would go skiing with other Europeans and do things that normally Americans would not do in terms of parties and so forth and so it became very international for us. Part of this was because one of the people on the USAID staff was a French American and he encouraged that relationship. The French were not all that friendly toward Americans; they were not open to us and accepting to us while we were living there. We partied among ourselves, socialized among ourselves, and they socialized among themselves and very rarely did the twain meet. Even though we had French employees in our mission, very rarely did they invite us to their homes and there was hardly any interaction between the Moroccan employees and American employees in the social sense.

*Q: By the time you left what was your impression of our efforts in Morocco or USAID's efforts?*

COLES: Well I thought we had one of the better USAID programs in Africa, in Morocco and we had a very bright staff, a very dynamic staff. The USAID mission in Morocco had received a lot of praise from Washington over the quality of our work and we had good mission directors. The second one to replace Phil Birnbaum was Don Brown who was one of the top USAID people who had every worked at USAID. His brother was the former Ambassador Brown who was head of Central Africa in the State Department. I think he had a couple of ambassadorships, Dean Brown was his name. So I worked under Dean Brown's brother in Morocco. You had two of the top USAID mission directors following each other so it was a very good and dynamic program.

*Q: You left there when?*

COLES: 1972.

*Q: Then where?*

COLES: Well, at that point I was a deputy program officer so another one of these offers out of the clear blue sky came before my tour in Morocco was over, because I was supposed to stay for four years. I was quite prepared to stay there for four years. I was enjoying myself. The reason I wanted to stay was because it was really a wonderful environment to work in. I enjoyed it. They offered me a career advancement to be a program officer in of all places Liberia. In 1972 I was transferred from Rabat to Monrovia on a direct transfer.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

COLES: I was in Liberia from 1972 to 1973 about 18 months.

*Q: That must have been in a way, it might be a good career move, but for comfort and enjoyment I think it would be a downhill transfer.*

COLES: Well, I would say this, it was quite a shock to me to go from a very highly developed country like Morocco to a country like Liberia which was very poor and had not progressed that far even though the American USAID program had been there a very long time. I was really surprised. I had been in other francophone speaking areas and when I saw the conditions of Monrovia and the rest of Liberia compared to other parts of Africa that I'd seen I was really somewhat in shock. Let us say that Liberia was one of the shortest tours of my career and the 18 months was really out of a sense of frustration of what I could do and achieve in that country. I must say that I really enjoyed my work in Liberia, the living environment and social environment was something else, but it was a challenging assignment and very productive one for me because it gave me real responsibility at a very early age in Liberia.

At that point in my life, 1972, I'd just turned 30 and this was considered to be in a very senior position in USAID. I was the fourth ranking person in the USAID mission in

Liberia and we had a very large program. In Liberia I was working under the leadership of Mr. William C. Wild. Mr. Wild was one of the oldest USAID mission directors in its history. He was a man who went all the way back to the Marshall Plan. A man with a high school education who had risen all the way to the top to that level of responsibility, very interesting management style, very strong manager, a very committed person. But he was not a visionary in terms of taking the USAID program where he wanted to go so he was very dependent on his staff. We also had Elmer Moore as deputy director who was an agriculture economist and Tom Stuman who were the financial person and myself; so the four of us were very important in terms of shaping that program. We were working in education, health and agriculture. We had about a \$40 Million program a year and so it was quite an interesting program. We did construction of farm-to-market roads. We opened up the country. There was not a part of Liberia that I did not travel to during that period of time. Interesting enough, my counterpart at that time was the current president of Liberia Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. She was assistant minister of finance at the time I was program officer so I used to work with her very closely.

*Q: I have the impression that from comments I've heard that Monrovia wasn't much in the way of a city but once you moved out of it you were really in what I suppose was called the bush, I mean it really it was really very primitive.*

COLES: Well let's say I wouldn't use the word primitive but I would say it was very under developed. Whenever you were in the bush you were without a doubt in a heavy African forested area. You had rubber plantations, the second largest rubber plantations in the world after Malaysia. Then when you didn't have the rubber plantations, you had heavy, heavy African forest with very tall trees and very large foliage, but it was very under developed. Even the streets in Monrovia were not paved, none of the road going up country except for about 50 miles going up to Tubman Farm were paved in Liberia. Everything else was laterite. When the rainy season occurred you were really on washboard roads and trying to maneuver and get around in the country, which is very difficult, and that's still pretty much the situation today some 30 years later. Even though they've improved their roads, they've widened them but most of them are still laterite roads.

*Q: What was the government when you were there?*

COLES: At the time I was there it was the Tolbert government. William R. Tolbert was the president, his brother was the minister of finance and the Tolberts were very much in control of the country and the American-Liberian government was in full force. There were people who were mostly American trained, American educated, they all had American names, there were very few people of indigenous origins in positions of responsibility. The Liberians will argue that point in time that the indigenous Liberians and the American Liberians over a period of years had become one, so it was very difficult for people to distinguish who was who. Obviously there was some of that but there was still a lot of animosity in terms of the tribal Liberians, the ethnic Liberians who were still not a part of the political and economic system. I would say that the government was doing a lot to open the country, to introduce new and improved varieties of rice. They were also trying to build up the health infrastructure of the country, but a lot needed to be done. There was also wide spread corruption and that was something that

was very difficult to control. Liberia had been an old friend one of the closest friends of the US going all the way back for hundreds of years. American slaves had settled there. There was a close relationship and one I thought we took for granted. We really didn't do as much as we could have done to try to help to really build the country and improve the quality of life of the people.

*Q: What sort of programs were you involved in?*

COLES: We were involved in all the programs in Liberia but one of the biggest programs we had there was the health program. Most people will recall that one of the greatest white elephant aid projects in the history of the United States on the African continent happened in Liberia, and that was the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital that was constructed in the wrong place, too large and it was just a fiasco project. It was a 500 bed hospital built on the sea and you never build a 500 bed hospital on the sea especially in the tropics because the windows wouldn't work, the medical equipment wouldn't work, there were all kinds of salt problems, and there weren't Liberians who were trained to run the hospital. One of my responsibilities, and where I spent a great deal of time, was trying to make the John F. Kennedy Hospital functional. The Liberians used to refer to this hospital as "Just for Killing", because if you went there you would probably be killed rather than helped. This was a hospital that had been built, that had been promised to them, I think at the time of probably the Johnson Administration. Here we had this huge white elephant, so how do we make it work? We entered into a contract with the Indian Health Service and brought them in. The Indian Health Service we thought was used to living under tough conditions and working in rural areas, so we brought them in to help us run the hospital and to manage it. We had almost a 20 person team from the Indian Health Service working with us in Liberia to get this hospital going. We got it going and I think that was one of the greatest achievements that I felt I had achieved there. The second was to build a number of farm-to-market roads to help open up the country.

*Q: What is a farm-to-market road?*

COLES: This is I would say it would be a tertiary road, you think about a primary road as a major road, a secondary road would be a rural road that was probably a laterite road and then this tertiary road would be the basics of a trail that you are really opening up, a very heavily, densely forested area, very costly and very difficult to do but we did it and we opened up new areas of the country. Now those roads we built originally have become secondary roads to Liberian primary roads, but originally they were sort of tertiary roads which were a very rough road in the beginning just to get the country opened up.

*Q: Was there concern at the time about sort of the elite, was it American Liberian group and their lack of connect to the indigenous population?*

COLES: Well, I think most Americans would have attacked the American Liberians for really not doing more to bring tribal Liberians more into Liberian life. The Liberians will argue that those distinctions that most foreigners would imagine were less than they were, but they recognized they had a problems and it was an obvious problem and this why we were trying to do more to open the country up in rural areas and getting involved with health and education programs, building rural school houses and those kinds of things to

improve the quality of life for rural Liberians. It is just that they were so far behind from where they should have been. I think in the long run that led to the Doe coup that eventually overthrew the government, because there was just so much bad feeling on the part of indigenous Liberians about what their situation was. As an American I found it very frustrating, I was not happy to see how some people in Liberian society lived so well and others lived so poorly and there was great discrepancy between the wealthy minority in Monrovia and the people living in the countryside.

*Q: How did you feel about being there? You know this was about the time Roots came out and all, did you feel a kinship or did you feel you know, I got Irish and Scottish roots but I never felt very attracted to I mean they were nice but I mean, I didn't want to go back. Did you get any feel over there?*

COLES: Well, this was the second time that I had put my feet on the Sub-Saharan part of Africa; the first time was when I was a Crossroad Africa volunteer in Senegal and Mali. At that point in time in my life and I still felt that way when I was in Liberia, I felt somewhat of a strong identification with Africa because that was "the continental of my race's origins", but at the same time I knew I was not an African, I was an American. I felt very much as an American when I was in Liberia and that did not change. I didn't have any strong identification with the Liberians. I didn't have any strong identification with the American Liberians. Even the American Liberians were quite different than the Americans, they had their own culture and their culture was different from my culture. I had a good personable relationship with a number of Liberians and partied with them and socialized with them at every level, but I was not one of them and never felt that I was one of them.

*Q: Was there any movement at that time of African-Americans or whatever the term was, Blacks, anyway Americans of African origin coming back to Africa to seek out their roots or a discontent with the political situation and social situation in America and said "well the hell with you and I'm going back to Africa" type?*

COLES: Well, there were a few Americans in Liberia who had left the United States and gone to live in Liberia. Some of them had been veterans who had served in the armed forces at the time the United States had an air force base at Roberts Airport and so some of the people who had been assigned to that base remained in Liberia and some became Liberian citizens, but their numbers were not large, their numbers were quite small. These people I used to see there also, some were successful businessmen, some had integrated themselves well enough into the system. They became members of the Liberian government, and other people were in private sector running insurance companies. These people had generally married Liberians and stayed and raised their families in Liberia, but the numbers were quite small.

*Q: What projects were you successful on, we already talked about the hospital and trying to patch that together, what was working and what was not working?*

COLES: Well, I thought that one of the best projects we had in Liberia were the construction of rural schools and we had put up schools throughout the city of Monrovia and it was called the Monrovia Consolidated School System, to establish a school system

like a city school system and then a rural complex of school buildings throughout the country; so that to me that was very successful. Second area of success was building of health clinics and health posts throughout the country. We began to open up the country and to build health posts where they had not existed and to improve the quality of health. The third thing I think was very important was the agriculture program. We were bringing in these new miracle varieties of rice and adapting them to Liberian environment. I thought those projects went very well and were very well received. The fourth area that I felt we had some success is opening up farm-to-market roads, beginning to open up the country to bring goods out of the rural areas that people who didn't have access to getting to major urban centers, to provide that opportunity with farm-to-market roads where farm products and produce could be brought out of the rural areas, especially fruit and oranges and lemons.

*Q: Much of Liberia had been impenetrable for some time.*

COLES: Oh yes. There were not that many roads and so to get out and to travel and to open up the country with these new roads I felt were very, very good for people. They were not easy to construct because you were in a very densely forested area so it took a lot of effort to build a road in Liberia and it was expensive.

*Q: Well then you again left there when?*

COLES: I left Liberia in 1972 this time to go back in Washington. I got married in Liberia. I met a professor at the University of Liberia who was of British and Indian origin. We got married. I decided it was time to leave Liberia. I'd become somewhat frustrated with what I was able to achieve in some ways and I wanted to go and have some different experiences. I decided well I'll try something different. I was assigned back to Washington to be the officer in charge of India, Nepal and Sri Lanka in the office of South Asian Affairs, which was a real change for me.

Q: Oh yes. Well, what was what sort of programs or this was – we were still running this huge counterpart deficit or whatever you want to call it, stockpile of money within –

COLES: \$2 Billion worth.

*Q: And in those days a billion was a billion.*

COLES: A real billion.

*Q: Yeah a real billion.*

COLES: And we had the equivalent of \$2 Billion of rupees under our control. One of the things I worked on when I was on the India, Nepal and Sri Lanka desk was the famous Indian rupee give back by Ambassador Monahan, to the Indians, where we wrote the largest check than was ever written in the world for \$2 Billion equivalent in rupees to give back to the Indian government.

*Q: So what were the terms of the give back?*

COLES: There were no real terms that I can remember. The question was one of keeping some of those rupees that were left. We didn't give them all back. Some were to be used for the aid program in Nepal and in neighboring countries. We maintained the right to keep some of those rupees to help carry out our USAID program in Nepal. The second thing was we wanted to make sure our projects, especially in agriculture education remained and were kept vibrant and some of those funds and resources would be kept to make sure those institutions were kept up to a certain standard. In general it was pretty much an unrestricted give away that took a long time to get through the system, but we finally did with a lot of negotiation with Treasury, OMB, State Department and USAID working on this problem, because it was not easy to give away that amount of money. It was through the force of Ambassador Monahan that this huge gift was able to be achieved. I think if they had someone as Ambassador who was less politically connected than he was this huge give away probably would not have been done.

*Q: What else were we doing, were we phasing out our program in India?*

COLES: Well, we still had PL40 assistance going there, we had resources. Another thing we were trying to do was to build John McCormick hospital with some of our access rupee resources and that was one of the big projects I worked on at that time. Basically what we were doing was programming the residual rupees we owned. We had very little in terms of commodities coming in except some assistance in what we called the commodity import program where we imported American products to help build up Indian industry at that time. We were also involved in some family planning activities in India, but this was about the extent of what we were doing.

*Q: India was fairly difficult to work with wasn't it? I mean the government was not that friendly toward the American system?*

COLES: Well at the time when I was there that was true because you always had this problem of Pakistan versus India and our relationship between the two countries, which would be the strongest relationship U.S.-Pakistan relations or U.S.-India relations? So that whole drama of one playing off each other was very much involved. What we did to one had to be done to the other. I thought in the Monahan era at least, we had very good relations with India because Monahan had a lot of political power. Some of the most interesting cables I had ever seen in my life were those drafted personally by Monahan himself, very strong cables, very vivid cables where he would draw examples of snakes and all kinds of things. You could tell when Ambassador Monahan was personally involved in a cable's drafting because it would be a dramatic cable. In Washington we came to the point where we called them "Monograms", Ambassador Monahan. They were long, very provocative and very pushy in terms of getting his perspective across. I found this to be very exciting to see what power an Ambassador could have if he really exercises that power and Monahan exercised that power. He pretty much drove that relationship as a relationship that was very strong between the U.S. and India. At that time, I think a lot of that had to do with the force of his personality.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Indian Embassy when you were in Washington?*

COLES: Yes. The Indian Embassy was quite large. They had a very good ambassador at that time, I've forgotten his name but he had a lot of power and he was very close to Senator Percy of Illinois and had a lot of receptions, dinners and a lot of parties. I got invited to a lot of them, but he was a very powerful guy. The Indian residence is right there off Rock Creek Park, a beautiful residence, I mean it was a great location so this guy did a lot of entertainment and did a lot to cultivate Congress especially Senator Percy. He was really one of the favorite people to be invited to the ambassador's residence.

*Q: Who was your counterpart in State?*

COLES: Peter Lande, do you know that name?

*Q: No.*

COLES: He is a Foreign Service officer who was sort of like the economic person in the Asia Bureau at that time. He was also my counterpart at the India desk on the state side, really a first class officer.

*Q: How about Nepal, what was going on in Nepal?*

COLES: Nepal was quite a program and quite an area to work on. In the South Asian area we had an office director who had worked on South Asia for over 20 years, his name was C. Herbert Rees and he was really a South Asia expert. In Nepal we were involved in a number of programs. One was the improvement of the agricultural education in Terai. We had resource conservation programs in Terai to preserve the habitat. We were also building a Western Hill Road to open up the western part of Nepal. We were constructing suspension bridges across the country to open it up. We were also involved in high altitude agriculture, with new forms of high altitude maize, corn and wheat, and brought in all these scientists from CYMMYT and so forth to bring in new varieties of corn and wheat that would grow at high elevations of 9,000 to 10,000 feet, which was quite unique. We had regional development projects also being carried out in Nepal. So we had quite a large agenda and a lot of that was dealing with the training of manpower and that one thing I forgot to mention in Liberia. We spent a lot of money training Liberians in the United States, some of them came back and some of them didn't. But training programs in Nepal were quite large and we had these excess rupees from India that we could send Nepalese not only to the United States but to India for training.

*Q: You had Nepal, India; you had Pakistan?*

COLES: Sri Lanka.

*Q: Sri Lanka.*

COLES: I called them the sin countries.

*Q: Oh yeah. Sri Lanka, what was going on?*



COLES: Sri Lanka, we had an agricultural program there, we had resource conservation programs in terms of forestry areas but the program was mainly agriculturally oriented. We also had done some things in tourism and promotion of tourism in Sri Lanka. We also had this Tamil conflict going on at that point in time where we were trying to do was promote a better relationship between ourselves and Sri Lanka and India in terms of peace in the area. There was also the whole question of the military base that was being established at that point, Diego Garcia, and since Sri Lanka was one of the sort of taking off places to get to Diego Garcia, I think that was sort of the strategic interest of what we had in Sri Lanka, and in making sure that we had a good relationship with the Sri Lankans.

*Q: How did you like Washington? How did USAID work with the State Department?*

COLES: Well, I thought we worked very well together. In Washington at that time the State Department had good people on its South Asia desk and USAID had good quality people on its desk. I thought we worked very well as a team and the conclusion of the Indian rupee agreement I think was the culmination of that effort.

*Q: That was a major one.*

COLES: That was a major achievement. It would never have been done if it hadn't been for the good cooperation between the State Department people dealing with excess currencies in the State Department and USAID working together to make it happen. It was a team effort and it worked very well.

*Q: Well then you left there, Washington in 1975?*

COLES: I left Washington in 1976.

*Q: 1976, for where?*

COLES: To go to Nepal as the Assistant Director of the USAID Mission there.

*Q: So you were going to try out those suspension bridges?*

COLES: Yes. Well you know we had a fabulous mission director in Nepal, someone I had come to admire a great deal. When I was the desk officer for Nepal this man had been in Nepal for at least seven or eight years and he was a South Asia expert. His name was Carter Ide and he is now deceased, he died fairly recently, but he was a guy loved by the Nepalese. The King's son had been sent to the United States to study at Harvard and we had Johns Hopkins medical school out there, we had all these scientists out there doing agriculture and everything else we were doing, it was just a very invigorating environment. Then we had a new mission director, his name was Charles Grader who had been a former mission director in Afghanistan and he was one of the USAID's youngest mission directors. I had been the desk officer for Nepal, India and Sri Lanka, and he chose me to be his assistant director. This was in 1976, which meant I was 34 years old and being given the opportunity to be the number two person in a very large USAID mission. Our USAID mission in Nepal was located in one of the Rana palaces and it was

quite large with maybe some 200 employees.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

COLES: 1976 to 1979.

*Q: What was the government like in Nepal at that time?*

COLES: Well I thought it was an excellent government. We had a king that was really loved and I think the king at that time Mahindra was loved and respected by the Nepalese people. There were no problems at all with the king. We had a very competent group of professionals running the government, who were well educated. In the United States and France, people in the health ministry, people in the planning ministry were all very bright guys. I really enjoyed working with. I found them a pleasure to work with them. I found them highly motivated and very achievement oriented, and we were working under very difficult conditions.

*Q: Was there any contact with the Peace Corps from your perspective?*

COLES: We worked very closely with the Peace Corps especially in terms of identification of some of our projects. We used Peace Corps volunteers for some of our agricultural projects. We used Peace Corps volunteers in terms of oversight on some of our suspension bridge projects, so there was a very close relationship between the Peace Corps and USAID in Nepal. In fact, a lot of the people we had in the USAID mission were former Peace Corps volunteers in Nepal and they spoke the language so it was sort of rare to see people who were fluent in Nepali and had a great understanding of the culture. We had anthropologists and sociologists working on the staff. Americans who had studied in Nepal and made sure whatever we did in Nepal was very culturally sensitive.

*Q: I've talked to people who were in the Peace Corps in Nepal who would talk about taking off and having to hike for two days before they'd get to a village.*

COLES: Oh yeah. Nepal was in some places was very heavily populated and in some places it was very sparsely populated. We were working on a major rural development project in a place called the Rapti Zone of Nepal, which is in the middle of nowhere. There were no roads to get there so the only way for us to get there was to be dropped by plane or helicopter at a certain site. We would spend a week working on program design and talking to people about what they felt they wanted to have done, what they needed and what their aspirations were, and then at the end of the week the helicopter would come and pick us up at another fixed point to take us out. I mean, that's the kind of environment we worked in.

Another place that we were building something is this road that I talked about, the Western Hill Road. The only way you could get there was by airplane, and once you got there, we were building this road all the way up to the Himalayan mountains and the mountain habitat was so unstable that we had to experiment with new technology with gabions to try and hold the mountain back from tearing up the road again after we built it.

It took us several years to build this road so it was a fascinating experience.

*Q: Were the Chinese monkeying around at on the borders at that time?*

COLES: We used to drive up to the Chinese border. You could do that in Nepal. We could see the soldiers on the other side of the river, there was a river separating Nepal and China. Didn't see them that much in terms of activity, they were in Nepal but they didn't socialize with us and we didn't socialize with them. Never the twain shall meet. When you went to a social function where they were at, they avoided us and we avoided them. I think both of us had the requirement we had to report on each other and to avoid doing that we just kept away from each other.

*Q: How did you find the social life there, you and your wife?*

COLES: We had a wonderful time. My wife was teaching at the Lincoln School there.

*Q: What was her subject?*

COLES: She was teaching elementary school at that time, but she is a science teacher. She was teaching the fourth grade, so she had a job. My daughter was enrolled in a school and had good friends there, both American and people who were working in the USAID mission. We used to do a lot of trekking into the mountains. We had an active social life with the Nepalese and used to give a lot of parties at our home. We were much known for our parties that people would come to. They were probably some of the best parties I have ever given with Nepalese coming to those parties, so we were really working with our counterparts and with people we knew in academia and then when we gave a party it was a dancing party, Nepalese loved to dance so they would come to these parties. We would have them on the roof of my house and so the music would go all over the valley so it was really quite something. But we didn't get arrested and we didn't do anything bad there. We had a lot of fun in Nepal and the Nepalese and Americans got along very well, even much better than other places I was assigned which is amazing given their culture is so closed in some ways but so open in so many other ways.

*Q: Who was our ambassador when you were there?*

COLES: Marquita Maytag.

*Q: Will you talk about, I mean I've heard stories about her; do you have any Maytag stories?*

COLES: Well, there were a lot of Marquita Maytag stories that one could tell. She was one of the US Ambassadors to Nepal. There were two ambassadors, and she's the one I remember most vividly. My own reaction to her is that she was a person who loved Nepalese culture. Some would say that she not only loved the culture but she loved the Nepalese.

*Q: Yeah.*

COLES: She had quite a social life there. What I found was an Ambassador looking for a way to inject herself into Nepalese culture and USAID gave her that mechanism to do that. I found a lot of her people who were working under her at that time and a lot of them I knew as personal friends were really disloyal to her and disrespected her as an Ambassador. They didn't have any respect for her. I didn't approach it that way. I said she is the American Ambassador; she deserves to be treated as any other Ambassador so I always put her up front. She signed all the agreements, she did everything that an Ambassador does, and she spent a lot of time on the road traveling with me and I saw nothing inappropriate in terms of her behavior on any of the trips I took her on. I took her all over the country and let her be the Ambassador, cut the ribbons, go out and talk to the people. She loved that. We had a good relationship and she was very positive toward USAID. Anything I wanted to have done I could get because we treated her well.

*Q: Well, I think one of the things when one looks at this sort of this thing in present day terms when we're really working more towards gender equality we've had plenty of political male ambassadors who spent most of their time in a horizontal position with young ladies of the country and here is a woman ambassador who is you might say replicating this and vice-versa or whatever you want to say, but so what, I mean what's good for the goose is good for the gander and so she's gained a sort of name for herself because of this which is really you know, is based on sort of the male prejudices I think.*

COLES: Well, you know she was not an intellectual; she was quite a sociable person and a person who got along well with the Nepalese. They liked her because they knew she loved their culture. I did more traveling and got more exposure to Nepalese culture because of her desire to get out and see the country and a lot of people in the embassy didn't get out and see the country in the way that she saw the country. I think she did a lot more traveling and got a lot more exposure to Nepalese culture and every aspect of it, than most Ambassadors I've ever seen. There was not one area of the country that she did not go into.

*Q: Good for her.*

COLES: Yeah.

*Q: You talk about when you were in Morocco about the French. What about the Indians, were they a problem for you or not? How did they like the Americans messing around in Nepal?*

COLES: Well, I don't feel they felt we were a threat. The Indians were so powerful and had so much of an influence and were in such a position of longevity in Nepal that the Americans really didn't matter. What they were concerned about was how we used their currency and when we used it in Nepal and how much we used, that seemed to be one of the major areas of concern they had and how much we had kept for Nepal. As long as that money was used in India to train the Nepalese I don't think they generally had a problem. The Indian Ambassador liked being a Raj as far as I could see. I mean he was held in such high esteem that the Americans were just the lesser power compared to the Indians in the Nepalese environment. I think the Nepalese sort of looked upon us as helping in the balancing act to make forays to the Indians when the Indians got out of

control but in general the Indians were a very powerful influence in Nepal and there was no doubt about that.

*Q: Well by the time you left there, how did you feel the Nepalese, how were things going, were they headed in the right direction or sort of in a stasis?*

COLES: I think they were doing a lot to open up the country, they were building roads, they were using new agriculture technology, they were building schools, so there was a lot being done and as I said to you earlier there was no indication of the large dissatisfaction that occurred much later with the red army. I would not have imagined that Nepal would have deteriorated to the situation it had deteriorated now. I think a lot of that had to do with King's brother who took over after the young king took over from his father. I think things really began to go downhill. The young king's uncle who took over was a disaster and no one liked him, even when he was a prince in Nepal he was known as the playboy prince and never did anything positive and when he came to power he just drove the country into the ground. I think that just exacerbated the situation. I think when I was there the Government was functioning, there was hope of a democracy really moving, there was some question as to how much authority that the king should have but no one was challenging the king because they loved him and I think he was genuinely loved at that point in time. The son came up and I think he was loved, probably never had the authority the father had. The uncle to the king, who took over after the young king was assassinated, was a disaster and I think he's the one who really exacerbated the situation.

*Q: Well again where then, you left when?*

COLES: I left Nepal in 1979 headed to another mountain kingdom, this time in Africa, called Swaziland as the new USAID mission director, as the first mission director to Swaziland and to run the regional office for Lesotho, Malawi and Botswana.

*Q: You were in Swaziland from when to when?*

COLES: 1979 to 1982.

*Q: Alright, let's talk about Swaziland. It's not a well known place; can you talk about what it was and what was going on in 1979 when you got there?*

COLES: Well, I just thought it was very interesting to be transferred from one mountain kingdom to another. Nepal was a relatively poor country and Swaziland a relatively rich country with one of the highest per capita incomes in Africa, with a population at that time probably somewhere around 700,000 to 800,000 people. It had one of the highest per capita incomes in the whole continent of Africa of around \$3,000, and the question is why were we there? The answer to that question is the State Department and Chester Crocker's idea of peaceful coexistence with the South African government, i.e. we were there to help the neighboring countries around South Africa but not to create major problems in the South African government. While apartheid was there in South Africa we wanted to have peaceful coexistence with South Africa. You know, we would help neighboring countries but we were not doing anything to unseat the apartheid regime next

door. We were in dialog with them.

What were we doing in Swaziland? We were doing irrigation projects, we were doing agriculture projects, the development of new technology in what we called alley cropping, for we would bring in trees and different crops, some trees were be used to fertilize the soil and others would be used for protection purposes. We were developing new varieties of maize there. We were very heavily involved in population family planning programs. We were also involved in employment generation projects and curriculum and education reform projects and reforming the educational system. We had a very innovative program going on in Swaziland and we were also doing some conservation work in terms of trying to preserve the soils especially in the hill areas of Swaziland.

*Q: What was bringing \$3,000 per capita?*

COLES: Well, Swaziland had a lot of things going for it. One, it had one of the largest man made forests in the world. I think it was probably the third or fourth largest man made forest in the world. These were pine trees that were grown on plantations to be used and sold for timber for the mines in South Africa. The whole eastern portion of Swaziland had major sugar estates with large Land roll investments in irrigated sugar. You had a lot of renewable agriculture that was very strong in Swaziland. Swaziland also had a lot of mineral resources and so those mineral resources were also very important. Swaziland is still very rich in diamonds but those diamonds have not been exploited because the king who was the king at that time said we don't need the diamonds, they had more than enough going for them, they left the diamonds in the ground and they say that the diamond minds in Swaziland could be even more than in South Africa if they ever exploited those diamonds. Those diamonds are still in the ground today.

*Q: Well of course too there is the thing about diamonds that the more you produce the lower the price. So conservation is a good policy.*

COLES: At that time we had a very wise king, Sobhuza, and so I was there in the Sobhuza era. We did a lot of talking with him, we did a lot of engagement with him about South Africa. There were a lot of ANC people who were transient in Swaziland.

*Q: ANC being African National Congress, people who were in exile.*

COLES: Right. It was just a wonderful environment. This was the first time at the tender age of 37 that I ran my first USAID mission, probably one of the youngest mission directors at that point in time. I was given that opportunity and feel very proud of that and we did everything very well. It was a young mission, a dynamic mission.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

COLES: Ambassador Richard Matheron was the Ambassador when I got there.

*Q: Did we have a real purpose of being there or was this being there to show our support as opposed to really trying to do something?*

COLES: We had a serious USAID program going there. We had real resources; we were putting in something like \$20 Million a year, so it was one of the highest per capita USAID programs of any country in Africa at that time. I really thought the United States was in southern Africa, especially in the countries around South Africa, to demonstrate support that we wanted to make them much stronger to be able to cope with their South African neighbor and less dependent on their South African neighbor. I think we did some good things there. The only thing that happened after the death of Sobhuza is they chose a king that was not as wise as his father. What has happened since I was there is a very rapid population growth rate which we were not able to stem and dramatic increases in HIV Aids that the country has not been able to contain. That has decimated the educated population of Swaziland and really had a very bad impact. We didn't try to overthrow the apartheid regime next door but we did try to strengthen the neighboring countries so that they became less dependent on South Africa. That dependence is questionable. How much you can lessen dependence on South Africa because their money and everything else and all the trade is dependent on South Africa. They were surrounded by South Africa, but I think it gave the Swazis, the Lesothans, and the Botswanans the sense there was some other powers here that were willing to help them and not leave them alone at the mercy of South Africa. One of our greatest projects, and I really enjoyed this project, was that we brought in the Army Corps of Engineers to help them negotiate water resources with the South Africans who were always trying to take over all the water. We gave the Swazis the Army Corps of Engineers as consultants in their negotiations with the South Africans over their water rights. For me that was the greatest thing that ever happened because the Swazis felt they had some people who were on their side negotiating with the powerful South Africans, so the South Africans could not screw the Swazis on international law of anything of that nature because we had a strong team in there to help them to preserve their water rights in the southern African area and that was an important achievement.

*Q: Oh yes.*

COLES: Water was a big issue in those days and South Africans had all of these irrigated lands and so forth on the border of Swaziland so the Swazis were really getting messed over in terms of their water rights. We helped to preserve their water rights in their negotiations with the South Africans.

*Q: What were the South Africans doing in Swaziland?*

COLES: I didn't see too many of the South Africans. Every once in a while you would see Pik Botha who would come on a visit to talk with the Swazi King.

*Q: The foreign minister.*

COLES: Yeah, of South Africa. We would, to go anywhere, we had to go through South Africa and that was an unpleasant thing. We would not get our passports stamped by South Africa because if we had we would have been rejected in other African countries but some border guards would try and stamp our passports and we had to be very vigilant to make sure they didn't do that. They were generally very nasty, not very open to us,

very uneducated Afrikaans people who were just there as policeman and border guards that were not very friendly or hospitable.

Some of my friends who had left South Africa, and the reason they had left South Africa and settled in Swaziland they became white Swazis. You had a large European population in Swaziland and they were basically people who were south Africans who couldn't stand living there who came to Swaziland and developed land and started raising a family in an integrated environment. I met some of those people and they were very helpful to me.

*Q: Was it a positive society?*

COLES: Oh I loved Swaziland, it was a wonderful country, very friendly, very open, very receptive, I could meet with ministers at any level all the way up to the king and the ambassador very often took me along as sort of his DCM to be the note taker in any conversations he had with his majesty King Sobhuza The Second. I really got a lot of exposure at that point in time, much more than a normal USAID mission director would have because the Ambassador and I had a very close personal and professional relationship.

*Q: Did we have a good size Peace Corps there?*

COLES: It was a very large Peace Corps and the Peace Corps Director and I were very close. There were two Peace Corps directors there in my time and both of them were very close friends and we worked very closely together.

*Q: I would imagine that it would be a place too that would attract interesting people to the area to work on the AID program.*

COLES: We had some very interesting projects. We had Penn State University working there in Agriculture. We had the Army Corps of Engineers, we had CYMMYT in terms of wheat and corn and we had the potato people from Peru. We had all kinds of people, we had University of California working on education. We had a good team put together. Penn State had done a wonderful job in terms of the agricultural research we conducted there. They put together a very good first class team. We got involved in the wildlife preservation and conservation education there, where we had a good program going with the game reserves in Swaziland. It was a very good, balanced program, it was very enjoyable.

*Q: From the point of view of the Swazis what were you getting in how they viewed our policy towards South Africa, this was during the time of constructive engagement wasn't it?*

COLES: Right, it was a constructive engagement under Chester Crocker.

*Q: I was just talking to him this morning, I've been interviewing him.*

COLES: Yes. They did not have any love for Chester Crocker's policies and they felt the



Americans were generally hypocritical in the position they'd taken in constructive engagement. They did not have any ringing endorsements on constructive engagement and thought we were shoring up the apartheid government.

*Q: Yeah.*

COLES: Even though Chester Crocker believed very strongly in constructive engagement, that was the way to go, most of the governments in that part of the world thought that we were just buying time for the South Africans.

*Q: Anyway, it all came out fairly well.*

COLES: In the final analysis it did. But was that a result of constructive engagement or a process of an evolution of what happened in South Africa? I mean I would never have believed there would have been a peaceful evolution to majority rule in South Africa. I thought it was going to be a bloodbath.

*Q: I thought it was going to be the night of the long knives.*

COLES: Yes, and it still may be that, it's not over yet, because this whole question of distribution of wealth remains an important issue in South Africa.

*Q: Well anyway when where did you go after Swaziland?*

COLES: After Swaziland I went to the Senior Seminar.

*Q: Okay, this was when?*

COLES: 1982 to 1983, I was in the 25<sup>th</sup> class of the Senior Seminar.

*Q: Okay, I was in the 17<sup>th</sup>.*

*Julius, one last question before we leave Swaziland, have you had a chance to go back and see what you had brought and what happened?*

COLES: I have been back to Swaziland probably about three or four years ago. I have seen dramatic changes taking place in the landscape there. One, when I was stationed there was not an aids issue or question and Swaziland has now become one of the countries with one of the largest rates of prevalence of HIV aids in Africa and that would have been unheard of I think in Sobhuza's time. Then there's another problem in terms of the population growth rate, it's been very high. While we're trying to have some impact on that I don't think we were very successful in that regard. I think what we brought there in terms of changing their educational system I think had a very positive impact.

*Q: So then you went to Senegal?*

COLES: From Swaziland I headed to the Senior Seminar.

*Q: You did that from when to when?*

COLES: 1982 to 1983.

*Q: How did you find that?*

COLES: It was one of the best experiences I had in my life. I thought it was very enriching. I got to know some Foreign Service people. I also got to know some people at CIA, FBI, and the military. I had not had that much career contact with a lot of people outside the State Department and USAID so I found it to be a very good learning experience. I also got the opportunity to reacquaint myself with the United States and to visit military facilities, visit urban areas like Chicago, where I had never spent any time, and looking at problems in these areas. We traveled widely and extensively, but it was all a learning experience. I often reflect back on that experience even today in my current job because I learned so much and I feel that it was one of the best experiences I ever had in my career in the Foreign Service.

*Q: I realize it covered a wide variety, but can you think of any particular areas that you look at or trips or something or places that particularly stick in your mind?*

COLES: I would say there are probably three or four things that stick in my mind. One was to get a chance to look at our military services and their state of weaponry and their training facilities. We visited the submarine facility in Seattle that was state of art, and learned about new technologies in the military. I learned about the military's thinking in the geopolitical world we were living I found that to be fascinating. I had a very good relationship with all of our military classmates and I learned so much from them. The knowledge that I learned from that experience has served me well. Whereas most NGOs are very anti-military. I learned that the military was a group that we can deal with and operate within a very positive manner and I didn't look at it being a negative. I looked at it being a positive. I think they were receptive to it all and that's what I found to be very fascinating. The second thing was that I really gained an appreciation for the functions and role of the Coast Guard, which I knew nothing about. We visited a Coast Guard facility so I got an understanding of their role and mission and gained an appreciation for what they do and that was very helpful to me and is still very helpful today.

The third thing that I got from the seminar was to learn about American farming. I had never spent any time on an American farm, and we visited dairy farms in Wisconsin. We went on wheat farms and talked to farmers and lived with them and actually milked cows early in the morning. I found a group of farmers who were very intelligent businessmen, reading the Wall Street Journal. I mean, this was fascinating to me, that these guys living out on a dairy farm were very intelligent and very knowledgeable people who were interested in the world and that was something that gave me a very different impression of farming than I'd had before.

The fourth thing I think I gained was getting some exposure to racial attitudes in Chicago. I think all of us were shocked. They split us up and put us in police cars and we rode around Chicago with police officers. The police officers in the car I was in were of Italian origins. When we came back and we had a discussion about our experiences. The racial

attitudes of the police officers in Chicago were very racist. I witnessed my first arrest in Chicago and saw the technology of computers being used to run license plates checks and what they could do, because we did that on one car with a hit. We arrested the person, a very young African American woman.

The fifth thing that really impressed me about the seminar was that I was in charge of one of the learning sessions on America's social situation and the civil rights movement. We went to go to Atlanta to look at the Civil Rights Movement. I was a little surprised at the lack of knowledge of my classmates about race relations in the south and their lack of understanding of civil rights issues. The shock I saw in them in terms of how well African Americans lived in Atlanta compared to other cities in the country. They were really shocked. I thought that was an interesting experience. I thought they learned and profited a great deal from seeing that because I had taken them on a tour of Atlanta that if they had been on their own they never would have seen for themselves in terms of how well African Americans have done based on being a very separate and segregated society. The interaction of my classmates to that I thought was very interesting.

I think the last thing I really appreciated was the opportunity to write a paper, to give some thought to it. You know I had not written a major paper like that since I was in graduate school. I chose the topic of Trade and the North South Dialog and the Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy. I really enjoyed reading about trade because I had not devoted enough attention to the impact of trade on development so that was all very interesting to me. I felt I gained a great deal from that experience.

I think the last and final thing is the camaraderie that I developed with my classmates. This was in the 25th class. I still have contact with them today. I still see them, we still have contact, I still feel close to them and that never would have happened without being in the seminar.

*Q: Where did you go afterwards?*

COLES: After the senior seminar I remained in Washington for six years running USAID's Office of Central and Coastal West Africa. I had all the countries from Guinea-Bissau to the Congo except for the Sahel, everything along the coast. I had 18 countries that I was in charge of in Washington.

*Q: Did that include Namibia?*

COLES: No, Namibia is in southern Africa. I had West and Central all the way to the Congo.

*Q: I see, got you. Alright, well, what were you up to? You did this from when to when?*

COLES: This is from 1983 to 1989. Very interesting experience, some of the more interesting experiences for me was trying to open up an AID program in Guinea-Bissau, a very poor country. We were also dealing with the Congo, which has always remained an area of political instability, but I got a chance to interact with Mobutu on several occasions. I also interacted with Equatorial Guinea as a place, a country. I gained an

appreciation for Ghana in terms of its problems and what it was going through in the early 1980s. It was a fascinating job that I loved a great deal.

*Q: In the first place, you'd been basically in the field until then.*

COLES: Right.

*Q: And you know, there are field mice and country mice, and you'd been a field mouse; what was your impression of the home office? These were mostly people who mainly stayed in Washington and I am sure there had never been any great love lost between the folks back home and yourself, this is true of any organization, so when all of a sudden you are back among this alien group, how did you feel, how did you evaluate them?*

COLES: Well, if we look in the USAID context, I think there were people especially on the Civil Service side, who had not had any real exposure to field problems and operations. I think that my assignment helped them to understand and gain a better appreciation for the field needs and what the field thought processes were. I felt that there was a need to have more open communication between Washington and the field and encouraged that rather than thinking from a Washington dictating philosophy or actions, as well as getting the field more involved in the dialog. That's what I thought it was all about, rather than telling the field what Washington wanted them to do, is listening to what they wanted to do and try to help them to achieve their programmatic goals. I enjoyed the job very much.

I also enjoyed the interaction between the State and USAID even though I had known the State officer for a long time. He used to be a former USAID officer and he had a different perspective. He had become more State than State people in a way. Ed Perkins was my counterpart in the State Department at that time. One of the more interesting things that happened in that period, it would be interesting to hear Ed's views of that, and that was during the Rollins era when the CIA was uncovered and exposed in an African country for I think the first time in U.S. history. I was on my way to Paris to attend as a representative of the U.S. government for a Paris IBRD Consultative group meeting on Ghana. I was told not to attend the meeting and I had not been briefed on this before I left Washington. This was going on, and yet there was no dialog, there was no sense of trust, that I was a senior USAID official and they felt they could not share that information with me. It was only when I got to Paris that I found out there was a problem going on between Ghana and the United States. They eventually let me attend the conference, but I thought there was a gap in the dialog and communication process. I never forgot that because I'd known Ed, going all the way back to his beginning of his career in USAID in Thailand and the fact that he wasn't able to share this information with me was very much of a disappointment.

*Q: Yeah. Well sometimes you know where you stand is where you sit and some people take that a little too seriously. Well, let's go by issue first and then we'll go by country. What was the major issue, what were the major issues you had to deal with in this swath of African countries?*

COLES: During the 1980s, I was looking at the whole area of political instability in

Africa. That was a very major issue, especially in Ghana which has had several military coups. We had Guinea-Bissau which is another problem area, then you had instability in the Congo and the implications of that for stability in the region, and then you had coups that occurred in Equatorial Guinea. I would say that political instability and regional stabilization were major issues of that period of time. The second issue was trying to work with the World Bank and IMF on structural adjustment programs. Structural adjustment programs were very unpopular on the African continent but something the Bank felt was needed. The whole question of getting countries to respond to these structural adjustment programs were another major issue at the time. The third issue dealt with Liberia and U.S. relations.

*Q: This is the Samuel Doe period?*

COLES: This is the Samuel Doe period. I spent a lot of time working on installing a group of American operational experts being placed in the Liberian government to help run the government and to try to cut back on corruption. I accompanied Peter McPherson in negotiations with President Doe and his minister of finance Alvin Jones to make that happen. We were successful in negotiations but in the final analysis the Liberians did not respect their counterparts and ran circles around our advisors and did not give them the roles we would hope that they would have.

*Q: Well then, was AIDS up at this point during the 1980s?*

COLES: It was the first time that I'd even heard of AIDS was at the beginning of this period. I had just come back from a field trip to Zaire, had gone and visited Mama Yemo hospital but while I was there was no discussion of HIV AIDS and the pandemic that Africa was going to confront. It was only when I went to a State Department briefing from a medical doctor who had just returned from Zaire and who had conducted some analysis of this. He gave a detailed briefing on the pandemic that was to follow in HIV AIDS. It was at the beginning stages of the pandemic on the African continent. The guy ended up running the World Health Organization AIDS Program, becoming the top AIDS person in the world, who was later killed in a plane crash, was the person who provided that lecture. I have never forgotten that briefing in my life. What I heard from this briefing was just absolutely shocking. There was no discussion on the African continent at all at that time, anything about AIDS.

*Q: With unstable governments, from your perspective, what do you do about them?*

COLES: Well at that time we were just trying to do the best we could with the resources we had to promote economic development. That's what we were doing and we were trying to also build up the manpower and train manpower by sending people to the United States for training abroad. The third thing is trying to work with other countries through a collaborative relationship, either through the United Nations, roundtable discussions or with the World Bank, bringing donors together to work together to try to have an impact in these countries. I think in the case of Ghana when you look back over the past 30 years or more that Ghana has turned out to be a success story. It could have been the worse situation in Africa, but they were very successful because they swallowed the bitter pill of structural adjustment and had good leadership that changed the whole

course of their development.

*Q: I was thinking of something else. What about the problem of corruption? I mean, I used to hear these jokes about somebody would go to an AID project in Malaysia or something and they'd say oh yeah, see that, and the head of it would say I only got 10% of that you know it's going into my profits, go to Africa and the point man said I got 100%, in other words, that the corruption was very bad in Africa, I mean the rake off. And I would think particularly the countries you were dealing with would be quite bad there.*

COLES: Well let's say that looking at Mobutu was known to be a highly corrupt individual. Sergeant Doe was very highly corrupt. Guinea is another example of severe corruption and dictatorship. Togo is another case of a dictatorship and the sucking off the wealth of the country. While you had a number of countries in Africa, Oblong in Equatorial Guinea is a classical example of being very corrupt. With U.S. government funds, if there was a drain, I didn't see it because there were so many controls in terms of that and 90-95% of the money was spent on U.S. procurement and U.S. contractors. If those contractors gave kick backs to the foreign government I didn't see it or hear about it. If I did hear about it, it would go to IG. When they talk about the siphoning off of USAID funds it is very difficult to do that when you are spending most of the money in the United States. Where I think they were siphoning off were large projects, commercial projects and those kinds of projects, but not necessarily USAID projects per se.

*Q: Did you feel that this was sort of an USAID battleground with the Soviet Union at that time?*

COLES: Well, interesting enough that I saw very little Soviet activity dealing with USAID. The activity I did see were the Chinese coming into Africa along with the Taiwanese who were already there, carrying out development projects and building these large stadiums, friendship stadiums. I think that the Chinese appeared to have posed a greater threat than the Russians from that point of view. Even though I had been exposed to Russia in Africa, but they were not that active from my perspective. Even if they had been sources of instability in the Congo and other places, they did not leave a wide trademark and their activities were less noticeable, but the Chinese were becoming very active even in those days.

*Q: Did we feel either in competition with or cooperation with the French, because much of that area was Francophone.*

COLES: Just to add a note on the Russians. I think the Russian activity was much more in the 1960s and 1970s than it was in the 1980s. There in the 1960s and 1970s you had a clear line of Russian operations, but somehow or another –

*Q: They were running out of steam.*

COLES: They were running out of steam in the 1980s and 1990s.

The French sort of looked at the Americans, from my perspective, as people who were

not knowledgeable of the continent. They looked upon themselves as having had a long relationship with Africa, understood Africa much better than we had, and that the Americans were the new guys on the block, who were there to muddy the waters and to make it more difficult for them to have a relationship with their former colonies. I saw a lot of antagonism toward us from the French. There were some cases of true friendship, but in most cases they did not take us seriously. We did have an impact and that impact did worry them because we did send a lot of the intelligentsia and the elite abroad to study and you can see the impact of that today. That in the earlier days of my being in Africa no one spoke English, no one went to American universities it was all the French universities, now it is completely opposite. The elite who had studied in France and University of Paris and all these other great schools in France have sent all their kids to the United States for training. It's quite a different situation today, but in that period, the 1980s and 1990s, it was still a struggle with the French.

*Q: Were any countries of particular note problem wise to you?*

COLES: With the French?

*Q: Well, I mean, no, with our AID program, any particular countries that were difficult running AID programs?*

COLES: Well, obviously Liberia was one of the most difficult countries that I have had to run a USAID program in. We had a group of officials who were probably the poorest trained people in the government at any time prior to that in Liberian history. You had a head of state who was a sergeant and who only had probably 6 to 9 years of education and to work with the ministers a lot of them were very corrupt and did not have the interest of their country at heart. I found it to be a very difficult environment to operate in. When the Doe government was overthrown I was not surprised because it did not do very much to help the people in the rural country side. Liberia was really a problem country and in terms of USAID relationship.

Another one that was not much of a problem but a difficult environment to operation in was Guinea-Bissau. We had a USAID representative who lived there very meagerly, in very simple housing without the basics, but who eventually had some psychological problems and had to be medically evacuated, so I did not find that an easy environment to work in. I liked and enjoyed working with the government. I thought that the people in the government were a very interesting group of people who really wanted to do something for the country.

*Q: Well this is just before oil was found wasn't it?*

COLES: Yes, it was before oil was found there and before they became the international drug transit point for most of West Africa, but there was a serious time. Another country, Ghana was a problem child because it didn't have a good government in those days. It was just coming out of a bad case of inflation, political instability and the infrastructure was shot. Ghana in 1983 was a basket case. I enjoyed the Ghanaians and working with them but it was not an easy situation because a lot had to be done and a lot of rebuilding had to take place.

Guinea was also a very difficult country to work in. We had a military coup and it had just occurred at that point in time. The head of state that recently died has ruled the country from that point 1983 all the way to the present and hasn't done very much to distribute wealth in the country either. I think Guinea was another major problem. The Congo has always remained a difficult problem and even in those days was a difficult problem.

*Q: What was going on in the Congo when you were there?*

COLES: During this period of time? What was going on was a question of transition after Mobutu, the question of building up the infrastructure outside of Kinshasa, the question of getting more development projects in the western part of the Congo compared to putting things in the Kinshasa area and getting them more involved. I think just opening up the country was the major issue and getting them to take the bitter pill of some of the structural adjustment policies they need to follow but they were unwilling to do so.

*Q: Was it possible or was it just too big to develop a highway system?*

COLES: Just too big, too costly and the basic transportation in the Congo was either by air or river and not by road. Roads were in dismal condition and very poor and it was just difficult to get around so most people went by river by boats or by air.

*Q: Would it be possible to put a railroad through?*

COLES: Yes at a very high cost because of the dense forest areas and rivers that had to be crossed, but it could be done. That may be in the long term something to do, but I see in terms of putting roads in there it's going to be a costly process.

*Q: One thinks about places like that where if they should only develop the equivalent of lighter than air you know, cost effective essentially small balloons, I mean not balloons but dirigibles or something like that.*

Well then, did you settle into Washington too much or were you itching to head out?

COLES: Well, my family didn't want to go out at that point. My daughter was in high school and my wife really wanted to have a stable environment for our daughter because we'd moved around so much. I stayed in Washington much longer from a professional point of view than I should have. But I stayed around as long as I thought I could stay around until I got the assignment that I wanted, which was Senegal. I was at one time being considered to go on an assignment in Paris but that never materialized, that was going toward the end of my career. But I was offered an assignment that I really wanted which was to go back to Senegal as mission director. I've always cherished that assignment and so when that assignment became available I did go back overseas and the family stayed here in the United States and I went there alone.

*Q: You were in Senegal from when to when?*



COLES: 1989 to 1994, five years.

*Q: How did that work out? In the first place, family wise, that must have been difficult?*

COLES: That was difficult, very difficult. At that point in time, my wife and I separated from each other and were even contemplating getting a divorce so I was living the whole five years pretty much on my own.

*Q: What was the government in Senegal in 1989 to 1994?*

COLES: From my perspective I thought that President Abdou Diouf was a great leader of Senegal. He was a wise man and a visionary. He had a government that was very competent and very easy to work with. There were a lot of Senegalese that felt he'd remained in power too long. They wanted a change but from an USAID perspective he and his government was a government that you could work with to get things done. I enjoyed the ministries I worked with: Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Labor and Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning. I developed very close relationships with people at high levels in the government.

*Q: Well I would have thought that these ministers and their staff would all be oriented toward the French, weren't they?*

COLES: Yes.

*Q: Or had things changed?*

COLES: They were very French oriented, spoke very little English but were receptive to working with us because we were doing great and innovative projects.

*Q: Well, can you give a feel for it? It would seem that Senegal would be one of the most French places.*

COLES: It is. There were two countries in West Africa that I considered to be more French than the French in certain ways, one was Senegal and the other was the Ivory Coast. Then there was also I think a sort of a competition between the two of them as to who could be more French at that time. The five years that I was there I probably did not have as close a relationship at the ministerial level in other countries as I had in Senegal. They gave me complete access. Anytime I wanted to see them, I could see them. We got things done because of those relationships. We did a lot of innovative things there in terms of natural resources management, agriculture, regional integrated development, reforestation, the development of the Senegal River Basin. We were involved in HIV aids programs. Senegal today has one of the smallest prevalence rates of HIV aids in Africa, and it all goes back to this period. They credit the USAID program with all the things we did to make innovative programs for aids. We had the Islamic religious leaders going to Morocco to be enlightened by the Imans there about how they approached the problem. We just did a lot of great things there I just felt it was just wonderful. We did some things in population family planning. They were not opposed to that, and giving the conservative environment you would expect to be there, it was amazing what we were

able to accomplish in those five years.

*Q: With this family planning, you were doing this during whose administration was this?*

COLES: Bush one.

*Q: Bush one. Well you know, the republicans generally have this strong anti-birth control bias or not, did you run into that?*

COLES: Not at that point in time. It had not taken complete control as it did in the Bush two, meaning the son, then you really felt the difference. But under the father, Bush 41, I didn't get that as strong. We were operating pretty well in terms of population family planning. There were not the restrictions that emerged in Bush 43.

*Q: Well, was Senegal, did it have a significant cadre of skilled workers you were able to get or were you training skilled workers?*

COLES: We were training agriculturists, we were training people in agriculture policy, we were training people in reforestation, we were training people in fisheries, we were training people in the Ministry of Finance and Planning. We did a lot of training and it was a very good training. We had excellent health programs there. The relationships that we developed with those ministers, some of those people are still my friends. I just returned Friday from a trip to Senegal and I saw at least two of those people that I'd known closely and got a telephone call from a third, and those were ministers I worked with while I was in Senegal and these ministers are no longer in power but they are still very powerful people in Senegalese society and they are still friends today. When we look back at what we accomplished in that period of time, I can say that we accomplished a lot.

*Q: What fields were we concentrating in?*

COLES: Increasing agriculture production.

*Q: What types of agriculture?*

COLES: We were engaged in improving rice production, we were engaged in improved millet production, we had a crop assistance program. There was row cropping and tree cropping and mixed in were alleys to do fertilization from nitrogen from trees. We were working with one of the foremost institutes in this new technology, organic agriculture, and we had done a lot of things in that. We had a very active and very extensive HIV AIDS program, and we had a very extensive family planning program in Senegal. Beyond that we were also engaged in resource conservation and were dealing with the Senegal River Basin and those kinds of programs. We were actively engaged in a policy dialog with the Senegalese on the structural adjustment program. We had a program portfolio of some \$200 Million in Senegal, which is quite a lot of money to work with.

*Q: Well then, was the Peace Corps working in there?*

COLES: The Peace Corps was there. They were involved in rural agricultural development most of the time and some of it was rural health, community health, in the north and so forth. There must have been 150 volunteers there at that point in time. It was a popular Peace Corps assignment.

*Q: How did the Peace Corps and AID get along, or did they go their own way or cooperate or what?*

COLES: From my perspective in Senegal it worked very well. The Peace Corps director and I became very close friends personally and professionally. We worked together and we would try to look for opportunities where Peace Corps volunteers could be assigned to the USAID program. The former Peace Corps volunteer named Peace Corps director at that time was Francis Hammond and today he works for me as our country representative in Africare in Zaire, which lets you know that I had a great deal of respect for him as an individual. We were fishing buddies when we were living in Senegal, we did a lot of things together. It was a good relationship; in some other countries that could have been a problem, but not in Senegal.

*Q: Was Qaddafi messing around in the area at all?*

COLES: Qaddafi was messing around in the area but somewhat distant. He was more in Burkina Faso and the Sahelian countries. There was some talk of him in Togo, some talk of his involvement in Benin, some talk of his involvement in Niger, but there was no Qaddafi involvement in Senegal at that time that I was aware of and there was some discussion of even some parts of Mali.

*Q: Where did the Senegalese elite go? I assume they headed to Paris?*

COLES: They did.

*Q: So hard to fight that.*

COLES: They loved Paris, they still love Paris. I've helped a lot of their children get into American universities. There was one minister who was the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Interior while I was there, every one of his kids has been educated in the United States. He believed in French education and went to the elite schools in France including INSA. All of his kids were educated in the states because he came to believe that the educational system that the Americans were offering was much higher quality than they were getting in France.

*Q: Yes I can because I talked to not too long ago Jerry Bremer who went to Sciences Po and he's talked about you know, the professor would descend on an elevator into the podium, give a lecture from dusty old notes, no questions, ascend back to his office and leave the students there. And one gets the feeling that they get some, obviously the best and the brightest because that's where they've to go and if they are, who learn to parrot what the professor wants and then go on and do their things, but there's not much give and take And the American system, of course, is based a lot on discussion and interchange.*

COLES: The Senegalese were receptive to us and I think they looked at us as offering an alternative to France and giving them someone who was another ally that they could turn to try and put pressure on France. They liked us and they treated us well. While I was there we had three American Ambassadors and each one of them had high access as much as they wanted. Three Ambassadors in five years, that's a lot of Ambassadors.

Q: How did you work with the ambassadors? Any problems?

COLES: With two of them it was wonderful, with one it was very difficult.

Q: Who was that?

COLES: He was Ambassador Mark Johnson. He was a Career Foreign Service officer, first Ambassadorial assignment, came from South Dakota and his mentality was I am the president's representative and I will tell you what to do, and that's the way he ran the mission. He put restrictions on what I could do with the government. I said to him, fine I'll do whatever you want me to do. You have now become the principal contact with the ministers and I'll just sit back and see how well you do. He couldn't get the appointments and so he came around to the point where he says, you do what you were doing and I'll follow your lead and then we began to have a real relationship. But to give you some idea of how crazy the individual was, we called up the air attaché plane from Abidjan to take us on a trip to the northern part of Senegal. It was raining and a lot of the airstrips there were muddy and so forth and he told the pilot, if I tell you to land, you are going to land because I am the president's representative. I pulled the pilot aside and said, if you don't think the conditions are right for us to land, don't land and I will stick with you all the way to the end and make sure this bastard never does this again. I called him little Hirohito.

Q: Well these things happen.

COLES: Yes. Another one was Ambassador George Moose. George Moose and I had an excellent relationship. There was none of that kind of thing. Then there was a woman who was assigned there but only for one year, she was very bright, very sharp and really quite distinct. Her name was Ambassador Katherine Shirley. Her husband was an Ambassador also. After one year being there he made sure she came back and she did, she left her Ambassadorial assignment.

Q: Was the Sahel acting up and did that affect your area?

COLES: Yes. That's why we were engaged in reforestation projects and water projects, that was another area I didn't talk about. We did a lot of water wells in the northern part of Senegal, working with one of the American universities to have windmills. We used windmills to power the wells and that was a very good project, very well received. The other was a lot of reforestation projects we did. A part of that philosophy was trying to stop the encroachment of the desert and moving further south in Senegal, so we did a lot of tree plantings. That was very well received.

Q: Well tell me, looking at tree plantings and planning, is the Sahel expansion is that reversible?

COLES: I just came from there and I say the answer is no, not in this point of time. Unless we develop another type of technology or plant more trees than we've done so far because it doesn't look like it is stopping the encroachment of the desert and it is moving further and further south and I don't think we've been successful in blocking this movement. We have to do more.

Q: What kicked off this? Because a lot of that land was quite arable, I mean we're talking about way back in ancient times.

COLES: Well, you know on this trip, I saw wheat growing in the desert on very arid soils, so it still can be done. But you know, we have to really begin to push the wheat and rice growing in soils I would not have believed it was possible to do. But it is possible. The technology is there. I was told stories; we worked in the Timbuktu region of Mali, so based upon the profitability of agriculture now, people are returning back from overseas to work in agriculture to make money because they can make money. That shows what can happen, but we just don't have the resources to be able to spread that technology in as many areas as necessary.

*Q: Well did you find water wells which end up by attracting camels and cattle, you know I've heard it said well these are all fine but they end up by destroying all the crops around because of the milling of the animals.*

COLES: On this recent trip I just made the wells I saw were covered, they were cemented and there were others where I saw where animals were giving a sort of separate trough. You know, they would benefit from the water but they couldn't get access to the wells, the kind of wells I've seen we were doing.

*Q: Well you left Senegal when?*

COLES: I left Senegal in 1994.

*Q: How did you find Senegalese society by the way?*

COLES: I loved it, I loved socializing with the Senegalese, and I loved being with the Senegalese. It was just a wonderful experience. I just couldn't say enough about the experience, it was very positive. Good friendships and those friendships are still there 20 years later and there aren't too many countries you can do that. How many Foreign Service people go and live in a country and still have friends of that depth and magnitude? It's powerful.

*Q: Well then in 1994 then where?*

COLES: 1994 was when I came out of Senegal.

*Q: What's the situation?*

COLES: Well at that time my tour in Senegal was coming to an end and I went back to Washington and I expressed a strong preference to be assigned to the OECD in Paris in the DAC and it looks like they were willing to give me that assignment but only to send me there for one year. I had heard from others that Howard University was looking for a director of their International Affairs program. Someone suggested I should go over and get interviewed and I did go over after I had my discussion with the senior people at USAID about what their plans were for me. At the same time the Clinton Administration was trying to downsize the bureaucracy and senior staff so he would make a commitment to assign me to Paris only for one year. After talking to Howard University, they offered me the job on the spot to be the director of their International Affairs Center. I came back to USAID and told them I was going to resign and I went back to Senegal to put my things together and I officially retired overseas. I got back and went to work for Howard University in the summer of 1994.

*Q: Okay, you were at Howard from when to when?*

COLES: I was at Howard University from 1994 to 1997.

*Q: Okay, and you got involved in very interesting projects. Please go into some detail of what this was about.*

COLES: Well, one of the things Howard wanted to do was to establish a vibrant center of internal affairs. Ambassador Horace Dawson was serving as the interim director but had been involved with the school of communications and apparently they were looking for something else and so they gave me the opportunity. At that time that I was hired, the president of Howard University was leaving to go to Texas and to retire from Howard University, Dr. Jenifer. The vice president for academic affairs or the person who is in charge of academic affairs, Dr. Joyce Ladner, became the interim president of Howard University and in the final analysis she made the final decision and I reported to her directly, I only spent a little time with Dr. Jenifer but spent most of my time with the Provost Joyce Ladner who became the Acting President. They hired me with a salary that was equivalent to what I was then making in the Foreign Service. They gave me a temporary office in the School of Nursing and they showed me that the building I would be given was the old bakery on the Howard University campus. In fact it was the oven where the bread was actually baked. This facility had no roof, it had no windows, it had not been occupied in about 10 or 15 years, was rat infested, it was in terrible condition, and most people on the campus just laughed. You gave this guy who is academically nonqualified this building that's a disaster on the campus and let's see what happens. They said they had no money except for this grant from the foundation in Minnesota which was the cereal company, Kellogg Company.

The Kellogg Foundation had given Howard \$3 Million and so I went to the people at the Kellogg Foundation and appealed to them. I had talked with the School of Architecture and they told me it would cost approximately \$500,000 to renovate this building to bring it up to some kind of standard that the university could use it as a facility. Based upon that estimate I went back to Kellogg and asked them to lend me the money, and give me time enough to raise some money, but I needed a facility to really make this thing go.

They gave me the \$500,000. With that \$500,000 we formed a committee with the Dean of the Business School and the Dean of the School of Architecture. We decided to sit down and plan what we wanted to do with this building. I took some examples from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, the State Department, and worked with a young woman architect from a local architectural firm in Washington to design a new structure out of this old structure. We went about doing this on a project called Design and Build. We had a conceptual approach of what we wanted to do, but the detailed drawings were done as they were working on one side of the building we would do the drawings on the other side, so we would design and build the building as we went along. The building was designed and completed in 90 days and it was completely furnished. What was the urgency of this?

Well, Howard had invited Nelson Mandela to come to Howard University after he was free to give a major speech at the university and part of what we wanted him to do was inaugurate the Ralph J. Bunche Center for International affairs, but at that time it had not been named. Although there were other Foreign Service officers like Ambassador Rudy Aggrey who was very heavily involved in Africa and was heading up the publications at Howard University. Rudy's idea to me was that the center should be named after Bunche, because Bunche had spent a part of his life setting up the political science department at Howard University and there was not an African American university that had building named after Ralph Bunche. We got the university to agree that this building be named the Ralph Bunche Center and it would be inaugurated by Mandela. Mandela did come to Howard University, but Mandela's Minister of Foreign Affairs said this building was not enough for Mandela to inaugurate and that the minister himself said he would inaugurate the building but Mandela could not inaugurate it. I went back to the president of the university at that time and said we need more than the Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa to inaugurate this building. We said no to the South African Foreign Minister and that the building would not be inaugurated during Mandela's visit. We went about to get UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to come and inaugurate the building. In the final analysis Boutros-Ghali agreed to come and inaugurate the building.

We had a cast of thousands, people from the U.N., police, everything, the campus was closed down, and they inaugurated the building and I was given the role to say a few words, but the Howard president took over the whole ceremony and just froze me out. It was amazing. You will not see a picture of me in the inauguration ceremony because they moved me inside, or put me inside and wouldn't let me be a part of it. It got so bad how they treated me that some of the people who had seen what I had done wrote a letter to the Board of Trustees complaining about my treatment at the time of the inauguration. Interesting enough, somebody who had not had any role at all to the building or doing anything, got more of the limelight than I did, this was the former Ambassador to Malaysia.

*Q: Oh yeah, I've interviewed him.*

COLES: This is the guy who is the former Ambassador who was married to the princess in Malaysia, what's his name? He's been around a long time, he's still around, and he's still alive today.

*Q: Sure, sure, I've interviewed him.*

COLES: He sort of stole the show and, you know, the stage and everything. He's that kind of person. It goes to show you the politics of the university. The interesting part of this is that this professor who I had known wrote a letter to Colin Powell who was on the Board of Trustees, complaining about the treatment that I had received and that got into a whole lot of play at that time by the university. They tried to make amends and so forth but by that time I was just so fed up with Howard and I wanted to leave Howard.

*Q: Unfortunately, one comes across this academic politics is nasty as they get, the old saying, because the issues are so small but at the same time there is something very small minded and particularly if you don't belong to the club.*

COLES: Yes. I was considered to be an unqualified academic, they wouldn't even give me a title of instructor, I was not allowed to teach, I was considered to be unqualified, yet I had put together in the shortest period of time in the history of the university one of most important buildings on the campus and it was absolutely beautiful. Everybody wanted to have a building like the Bunche Center. It had set a standard of architecture for the University. I wanted students of Howard to have lectures in any language in the world. I set up a simultaneous interpretation facility using the same equipment you would find in the State Department, on a much smaller scale, but it became a mini conference center like in the State Department with simultaneous interpretation facilities. We had study carrels for students like we did at Princeton. You know where students, who were assigned to the Bunche Center as research assistants had their own study carrels, and they could come there to study, research offices for visiting professors which included Ambassador Skinner from Columbia University. He was one of the first ones we brought in and one of the top scholars from the West Indies to be there. We had a group of scholars present there for the students. We put together a small reference library of the best books in international affairs and asked the faculty in the departments for their recommendations of what should go into this library. I never got one recommendation from the faculty. I went to work with the Congressional Reference Service of the Library of Congress and they put together a bibliography for me, not the University, not the professors. We ordered the best collection of reading room materials to be housed in the Bunche Center, so you had this reference Center. We sent students to Egypt to study Arabic, we sent them to Spain to get qualified in Spanish, we sent them all over the world. Many of the students who came to the Bunche Center at that time are working in the foreign affairs field today so I feel a sense of achievement.

Because of the way I had been treated and the fact that my parents were also becoming quite aged and infirmed in Atlanta, I didn't want to put them in an old folk's home. Morehouse made the offer to bring me from Howard and to become the head of their international affairs center and to recreate what I had done at Howard at Morehouse. I was delighted to leave Howard and to come to Morehouse. I became the director of the center for international affairs at Morehouse.

*Q: And they gave you the title of director, you know that's a big deal in the academic world.*



COLES: I had that title at Howard, but in addition to being the director of the center at Morehouse, Morehouse made me a full professor, even though I didn't have a PhD because they said that I had the experience. I said given my experience I had at Howard, the people here who have worked all their lives and they are not full professors will become antagonized and I don't want to antagonize them. They said don't worry about that we won't have that. What we want you to do is do really what you did at Howard and we believe, given your wealth of experience, you don't have a PhD but you're in, you're a full professor, that's what you should have, so you are a full professor. At Morehouse I was a full professor, I was a professor of political science and director of the center for international affairs, and I could teach if I wanted to and if I didn't want to teach I didn't have to. I was there for a total of five years. I only taught my last year.

*Q: This would bring us to 2000.*

COLES: From 1997 to 2002. I lived with my parents for five years. My parents were ailing. My mother had Alzheimer's. My father suffered from diabetes and had both his legs removed. I worked at Morehouse in the daytime and took care of my parents at night. I did that for five years and kept both of them going as their caretaker. I had a lady to work with them in the daytime. I took care of them at night and on the weekends. So for five years I took care of two adults who were in their late 80s and early 90s.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the students first at Howard and then at Morehouse?*

COLES: Well, I always looked on a positive light that Howard had everything that was needed for a major university. I was disappointed. I brought in major lecturers on the topics of international affairs, I brought them from Columbia, I brought them from Harvard, I brought them from every institution I could. It was just like reading a who's who in international affairs. Sometimes I was so embarrassed that I would often say that I would have to go out and buy a student, pay them to come to a lecture. I could not get them by interest, I had to offer them extra credit or get professors to offer them extra credit. They had to be given something to come to a lecture, even the guy who wrote the book *The Africans*. I mean you know, the people, I just couldn't get anybody. I was embarrassed. I would tell students, go out find me somebody. on the streets and bring him in here. I thought that was a Howard phenomenon but when I got to Morehouse I saw some of the same thing. That it appears that students today do not have a thirst for learning that we had in the 1960s.

*Q: I'm seeing this on some panels I've been on you know, the people of foreign affairs trying to get this oral history program to be used and it's an uphill fight.*

COLES: There are good professors and there are students that are serious. Out of a student population of well over 10,000 at Howard, that I had seven students that were selected to be Ralph Bunche Fellows at Howard University and these Fellows were serious students. There is one now working on his PhD in oriental studies and Egyptology at University of Chicago, I sent students to Salamanca in Spain, I sent them to Beirut in Lebanon, I sent them all over the world to give them an advantage that other student's had. Those students were first class. But to get students who were serious about international affairs and topics of international affairs was a struggle. It did not come

easily. It did not come easily at Howard and it did not come easily at Morehouse.

*Q: And I am sure it is replicated at very good schools throughout the world.*

COLES: I just came back from a lecture at Santa Barbara and they have to do the same thing there. They have to give the students extra credit to get them into the lectures. They have to give them a way to improve their grade or it has to be some kind of a reward they just can't come to the lecture because it is an interesting subject and that's the way you attract students these days. When I was a student at Morehouse you came to a lecture. You had people hanging out of the windows and you couldn't find a seat because everyone was there and wanted to hear what was being said. This is entitlement attitude, not because it is African American, but because its entitlement that goes into the structure of American education today where teacher's are passing people on and giving them high grades. With my students at Morehouse, the first class I started out with 30 students, the second semester I ended up with seven, but that would give you some idea. I had people who really came to my class were those who were interested in studying because what I said to them in the beginning. What you get as a grade is what you earn. I am not going to give you anything. I had many ways of testing them and putting them through a rigorous academic program and those who were not interested in going through such a program did not enroll in my course, so I had a small class. I was happy because I had people who were serious.

Morehouse College treated me quite differently from Howard University. One of the ways is that I was a loyal son of the college. Two they didn't have the academic hang-ups that Howard had in terms of credentials and even if I would have gone to Morehouse and been quite happy to be the director of the center and not having an academic title, but it was the university that insisted I be given an academic title. The faculty was much more receptive to my having that title after I got there and started doing some things and showing what I could do, and working with the setting up of an intensive language program, with the Mellon Foundation, I was head of an international power institute at Morehouse to bring people into training programs in an area of electric power, and then I had a lecture series. I had a study abroad program. I had all of these programs under me which I enjoyed a great deal.

*Q: Did you get any feel, you'd been away and now you are back at Howard, I mean not Howard but Morehouse, the role of Morehouse and I assume Spelman was that they're one of a set aren't they, or not?*

COLES: They are brother and sister institutions.

*Q: I was wondering, do they attend the same courses and all that?*

COLES: They can attend the same courses.

*Q: But I mean, their role in Atlanta politics and state politics did you, were they a powerhouse in Georgia or not?*

COLES: No, they were not a powerhouse in Georgia. Very little that I saw in terms of the

institution playing that kind of role in Atlanta politics or state politics. They may have more of an influence in Atlanta because they were large employer institutions and they were respected by the Administration since the power structure in Atlanta at that time was basically African American so that was very positive from that point. The mayor and the chairman of the county government were Morehouse graduates, and the mayor at that time, for part of that time, was Shirley Franklin. We had some good people. There was a lot of respect for these institutions, but I didn't see them exercising any power. I would think, when I was at Morehouse as a student we had much more influence in terms of social change because we were demonstrating in the streets and that sort of thing, but that you don't see any more, that's not a part of what's going on.

*Q: How did you find Atlanta society? I mean was it a white society, a black society, professional, I mean if you are in the Foreign Service you are culturally aware, what was the culture there?*

COLES: I grew up in Atlanta and the Atlanta we talked about earlier was a segregated city and that part of my inspiration to get into the Foreign Service was to remove myself from that environment. Coming back to live in that environment I expected much more change than had occurred. Basically you still had two structures: a white social structure and a black social structure, and the two structures seldom met socially, they seldom met professionally. There were blacks beginning to live in white areas but their numbers were not large, but there was not a great socialization process between blacks and whites. This was from 1997 to 2002, I observed very little contact. I joined the Atlanta Rotary Club which is one of the elite power structures in Atlanta and it has all the college presidents. I saw very little socialization beyond the rotary meetings between whites and blacks. Whites socialized with whites, blacks socialized with blacks. The same thing happened for the past 40 to 50 years; almost never do they socialize together except for jovial events. It may be you are invited to a cocktail party once in a while, but you saw very little of that. It did happen but very infrequently.

One of the things that I had always wanted to do when I was a child in Atlanta was to enter the country club that I worked at through the front door rather than the kitchen door. I was the grass picker on the golf course and I was a pool porter walking around picking up cigarette butts. One of the people that we had hired to be a fund raiser at Morehouse was a white person who owned a fund raising firm and she happened to be a member of this country club. I said to her I've always wanted to go to the Cherokee Town and Country Club, that was its name, in the front door, because I always went through the back door of the kitchen to get into the Club. She took me there and I had lunch at the Cherokee Town and Country Club, walked in the front door and I felt like I'd finally achieved an objective in life in terms of Atlanta social life, to go to this private country club through the front door. (laughter)

*Q: Well as I mentioned my grandfather's contribution to Atlanta was to burn it down when he was with Sherman's Army.*

COLES: I've always cited Sherman as being done a great thing in history. (laughter) It needed to be done.

*Q: Well, in our family we understand these things; we're rather direct about this.  
(laughter)*

COLES: Atlanta had not changed that much in terms of integration. I was so disappointed because they also had as the motto "the city too busy to hate" but it was not too busy to socialize and to bring whites and blacks together in a real social setting.

*Q: Well, it's only replicating what I understand is happening in the schools and all where blacks stay with blacks and whites stay with whites, pretty much.*

COLES: It's still that way today.

*Q: Well, I'm told it is.*

COLES: I went to segregated schools all of my life. First time I went to school with whites and other races was in Geneva, Switzerland. I came back and my daughter got into Yale and they did some social engineering in her first year. They put a Jew, a person of Chinese origins and a black and a white together and they were roommates. After that first year they sort of split off into their own social networks. They tried to bring about this integration. I was impressed with that. Still at Yale the blacks socialized with the blacks and the whites socialized with the whites. You would have some cross fertilization, but not a whole lot.

*Q: Are you working on anything else now? What are you up to now?*

COLES: Now for the past seven years I have been serving as the president of Africare which is a private volunteer agency, working on the continent of Africa, and we are working in some 25 countries. We have had over 2,000 projects that we have done on the continent of Africa and we are providing some \$50 Million in economic assistance. It's a great job. It is one of the best jobs I have had in my career, running my own organization and reporting to a board and just getting things done and we've got a great staff so it's just been a wonderful opportunity for seven years.

*Q: How's it going?*

COLES: I feel it's going very well. When I first came to Africare I was on the board for five years. Even while I was at Howard and Morehouse I was on the Africare board. I never expected to be given the opportunity to head Africare because there was someone else chosen as the heir apparent. Apparently, that person had antagonized the staff so the president of Africare, C. Payne Lucas, came to me and said we'd like for you to be a candidate and I was delighted but didn't think I would get the job. When I was offered the job in 2002, I was willing to put my parents into an old folk's home, or home for the elderly, to take this job and I did that. In a way I am very glad because my parents lived another five to seven years beyond putting them into this convalescence center in Atlanta. I would have spent 12 years of my life with them as opposed to the five years I put with them. This time I was able to move on with my life and I think that was the right decision for me. When they offered me the job I was delighted to take it. At the time I took the job over, Africare had provided some \$350 Million of assistance to Africa over a 32 year

period. In the seven years that I've been there this year we will probably be close to \$1 Billion. We're now at the level of about \$800 Million approaching \$900 Million and I think we're going to reach \$900 Million this year. What I've been able to do in seven years is double the amount of economic assistance going into Africa as to what had been provided by Africare in 32 years.

*Q: What type of assistance are you mainly giving?*

COLES: We're working on HIV aids, food production, malaria, TB, vulnerable children impacted by HIV aids, microcredit, education and water and sanitation.

*Q: Other than that, my God, you are into all things that make a difference.*

COLES: Right. We have 1100 employees working in some 25 countries in Africa. We have an annual operating budget of about \$50 Million a year. We have a very distinguished board which I played a role in selecting. I feel very fortunate to have been given a significant role in continuing to help the people in Africa. I have just enjoyed it. I've announced to my board that I will be retiring at the end of this year. I will be in all probability be going back to Morehouse to spend the rest of my time. I think it is time now to bring on the younger generation of leaders. I have been there seven and by the time I leave it will be seven and one-half years. It is time for a change of leadership and let the next person take the organization to another level. I will move on to do something else.

*Q: Well, have you noticed a problem in a diminution in desire to aid Africa I mean, just young people who - countries or areas that give aid to Africa feeling exhausted by what they have been doing, or not?*

COLES: Yes I think there is what they call donor fatigue in some countries, in some parts of the world. I think given the problems and the magnitude of the problems in the African continent, and that is to say that you have donor fatigue is to give up on 800 million people. I don't think the world can do that. What gives me a great deal of satisfaction is to look at this past administration with all of its problems, with all of its negatives –

*Q: You're talking about George W. Bush?*

COLES: We're talking about George W. Bush's administration, that administration has done more for Africa than any other president in the history of our country.

*Q: That's what I understand.*

COLES: Economic aid to Africa had been quadrupled. There is a total of something less than \$50 Billion being spent on HIV aids, there are funds being devoted to malaria \$15 Million, the creation of the MCC providing billions and billions of dollars to the African continent and most of the beneficiaries of the MCC fund have been from Africa. Then you have the president's initiative put forth on HIV aids. Whatever the administration is judged and how it is judged should be judged fairly in terms of what it has done for Africa. I say that this administration has achieved a great deal. No other administration

that I have served under in USAID or any other area has done as much by Africa as has George W. Bush's Administration.

*Q: Do you have any idea or ever looked at it, as what is the wellspring of this particular type of aid within the administration? Is it the president himself or are there forces, or what?*

COLES: I've been told, and I don't know if this is true or not, but in the first Bush Administration, this is George W again but in his first term, that Colin Powell had a great of influence on him in terms of getting him involved in Africa, and told him early on that if he was going to leave behind a legacy that was going to be Africa and that he could have that legacy. Now I don't know if that's a true story or not, but I believe it.

*Q: Could well be. But the facts are, as you say, this Administration has done more for Africa than other administrations.*

COLES: I also believe that you had people in the National Security Council. You had Condoleezza Rice, I think she was probably less inclined to Africa than Colin Powell, but Colin Powell was very devoted to the continent of Africa. Then you had Jendayi Frazer who was brought in and she developed a close relationship with President Bush. President Bush developed an affinity for African leaders. I was invited to the White House under George W. Bush more than I have in my whole lifetime, I was invited to several meetings, I was invited to several ceremonies on the White House lawn and was even invited to have lunch in the presidential residential quarters with the president of Ghana, President Kufour. I have never heard of an African head of state being entertained in the private quarters of the White House. I saw it with my own eyes, which shows with certain leaders like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and president Kufour and Kikwete of Tanzania, he had an affinity. He also tried to develop that with the president of Kenya but it didn't develop in the long run. Those three leaders he liked and he enjoyed and had a great relationship with them and them with him. Now, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is not someone who you would think got along with President Bush but they had a great relationship and that relationship still carries on today. Kufour and Bush had a great relationship and Kikwete and George Bush had a great relationship, which says something about the man.

*Q: Oh, it does. Well I think on that very positive note it is probably a good place to stop.*

COLES: Yes.

*Q: And Julius, I want to thank you very much and I certainly enjoyed this.*

COLES: Thank you very much.

*End of interview*