

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

BERNARD E. DUPUIS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: August 18, 2010

Copyright 2016 ASDT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	
Drafted into U.S. Army 1945-1947	
U.S. Air Force 1947-1954	
University of Maryland-Military Base program	
USAID	1962
Phnom Penh, Cambodia	1962
Education Program Assistant	
Leopoldville, Congo	1964
AID African Bureau, Washington, DC	1965
Georgetown, Guyana	1967
Assistant Program Officer	
Quito, Ecuador	1970-1974
Indonesia Desk Officer	1974-1976
Haiti	1976-1978
Managua, Nicaragua	1978-1979
Program Officer	
Retirement	1981
El Salvador	1989
WAE, Senior Advisor to Mission Director	

INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Dupuis.]

Q: This is a Foreign Affairs Oral History program interview with Bernard Dupuis and it is being conducted by telephone. Bernard, tells us when and where were you born?

DUPUIS: I was born in April 1927 in Berlin, New Hampshire.

Q: Please tell me something about your father's side, where did the Dupuis come from?

DUPUIS: He came from Willimantic, Connecticut. But in the longer historical run, my family came from France, in 1750, or thereabouts. At that time they came to Canada and eventually migrated to New England to work in the mills. Dad was a millwright in the paper industry. In the famous, then, Brown Company in Berlin, New Hampshire.

Q: And how much schooling did he have?

DUPUIS: Oh, I don't know. Probably not much, really. He could sign his name, but he was not educated. Probably two or three years, I suppose.

Q: And now, on your mother's side, where did they come from?

DUPUIS: Well, she came from Canada, from the province of Saint-Hyacinthe. They married in 1911 in Berlin, New Hampshire, which is where they met, obviously and then they had nine children which was fashionable in those days.

In those days, they were staunch Roman Catholic, so there was probably nothing like the pill and things like that, which they probably would not have followed, I don't know.

So, anyway, I grew up in sort of a very conservative family, Roman Catholic and a very conservative state, Republican and a very Democratic city. There were a lot of laborers there. There were people there from Italy, there was a Norwegian village, a Little Italy and the first settlers were from Germany, from whence came the name Berlin and there were people from Canada, of course.

It was a conglomerate of people, immigrants, as we have now, except they were from different European origins.

Q: Just to finish up with your mother, I assume that she didn't have much more education than your father?

DUPUIS: For some reason, she did. She had probably up to the eighth grade, anyway, which was not bad for then. This was before high school became fashionable and people had to have high school degrees; now it's a college degree.

Q: You were beginning to describe what it was like being a kid in Berlin.

DUPUIS: Well, looking back at that, now that I'm 83, really it was wonderful. I was born there in 1927 and had a wonderful boyhood, really. We weren't very rich, but we didn't know that.

We didn't even have radio until much later in my life and we were happy. We'd just get on our bicycles, go to school. We were chaperoned all the time. And it turns out we were very well taken care of, frankly. I'd recommend it highly to most people. It was very nice, the old swimming hole, all the old clichés, Americanism, well, we had it and we spoke French at home, of course.

Q: Did you speak French in school and at home?

DUPUIS: The school was bilingual. We had half day in French and half day in English, which I didn't think was strange, then. Now, of course, I would object to that, I suppose.

Q: But how was the school? I'm still talking to people who came out of two-room schoolhouses and all.

DUPUIS: These were larger schools. These were parish schools and my first school had all the grades up to the eighth grade. It was a new building in 1927, very fashionable and still is, in fact, one of the better looking buildings in Berlin, New Hampshire.

Q: Now, this was a Catholic school, I assume.

DUPUIS: Yes.

Q: Who ran it? Were they monks?

DUPUIS: No, they were nuns, under the tutelage, of course, of the parish priest. We had nuns who were from Canada. I remember learning my Canadian history, along with some guy named George Washington. So we did a dual curriculum.

And we sang *O Canada*, but I remember when I was drafted in 1945, I ended up in Fort Knox, Kentucky and someone said, "Are you American? Your name isn't American."

Well, I was insulted. For the first time, I realized I came from a sort of separate ethnic group. I didn't know that before.

Q: I know in parts of New England the French Canadians are sort of off to one side and looked down upon. Did you get that feeling in Berlin, or not?

DUPUIS: If I did, I never realized it. They weren't very politically active, you're right, 'cause the Acadians historically would not give any allegiance to the British, when the

British were there, the Canadians later, nor to the Americans, when they wound up in New Orleans they wouldn't sign any pledge of allegiance to the United States.

We used to say in French "*tete dur*," "hard headed" Acadians. We weren't Acadians, necessarily, although I don't know. But, right, they were considered different and in many ways they deserved it.

On the other hand, they ran all the industries in New England for a long time. They were the doers. It's an interesting question, but since I've grown up, since I was 18, I realize that in fact they were.

There was an article in the local paper, the Berlin Reporter that said the main reason that the people in Berlin are not getting their just dues politically is their low level of education.

But that's changing quite rapidly. My great niece is about to get her PhD from the University of Maine.

So, yeah, they were looked down upon and I think in some respects it was probably justified, but all immigrants go through that.

Q: How strong a grip did the Catholic Church, particularly the parish priest and the nuns, have on your life?

DUPUIS: They dominated. They taught us character. We went to confession every month during the *grandes vacances*, summer vacation and I confessed so many sins that the priest once said, "Well, Mr. Dupuis, don't tell me about grave sins any more. You've committed them all and you're only six years old. Just tell us about venal sins," the small things.

So, yeah, they had a very strong grip, but as I look back now, being an old man, I think it was very, very good, in terms of fashioning character and allegiance to you family and to your church, of course and to your country, it was very patriotic.

Q: Well, was it more Canadian-oriented, or more U.S.-oriented?

DUPUIS: My father was probably more Canadian-oriented. I remember we read a paper from Quebec called Le Soleil. But I was a child then.

We had a downtown and we had all kinds of shops. Many of them were run by Jewish people. None of them were run by French Canadians, as I recall. Some were, of course.

They were the laborers and the people who ran the mills. There was a joke about what kind of animal runs the mills in New Hampshire and Maine; they were French frogs. So it wasn't complimentary, but it was accepted.

Q: As a kid, were you sort of turned loose in the town?

DUPUIS: We were allowed to run around, but it was a very small, about 25,000, then. Now it's down to ten thousand, believe it or not. We had access to the whole town, although we realized we were a particular ethnic group, but I didn't know the term "ethnic." The French Canadians sort of kept to themselves, but so did the Italians and the Norwegians. Everybody skated, we all played ice hockey and we blended in. But the dominant ethnic group there was French Canadians.

Q: Particularly with your father not having much formal education, did you get a chance to read at home a lot, nor not?

DUPUIS: I read devotedly. I read all the books, I think, in the local library. Then, of course, if you went to school, I remember my mother telling me when I was in high school, Catholic high school, of course, "I'm glad I didn't take you out of school. I'm so glad you were sort of stubborn enough to stay in school."

Because then people were forced to quit school because they needed the money. Education wasn't really viewed as a valuable tool, I think.

Q: Do you remember any particular type of book or books particularly important to you in early years?

DUPUIS: Oh, yeah, I liked history books. I liked history very much. I remember reading about George Washington. I remember having arguments with my friends when World War Two was beginning, saying, "Well, if they had George Washington there, we'd really chase Rommel and Rundstedt right out of Germany." Of course they laughed, 'cause George Washington was my hero. I felt very strongly about that.

I read [Leo Tolstoy's] War and Peace, didn't understand it. I read [Alexandre Dumas'] The Three Musketeers. I read [Alexandre Dumas'] The Count of Monte Cristo several times. I'm rereading it now. I read [Mikhail Sholokhov's] And Quiet Flows the Don.

This was a small library we had, built though this philanthropist. It was a Carnegie library, on Main Street and I was always there. I just loved to read. I don't know how I came about it.

My mother was very, very intelligent. We lived in a matriarchy, there was no question. She ran the whole ship, she ran everything, in fact and she was very good.

Q: Mothers really were often, for one thing, they were probably better educated than the fathers, in that the fathers had to get to work pretty early in life and the mothers often were able to get a few more years of education in.

DUPUIS: Yeah, I think so. I know so little about my mother's early arrival in my hometown that it's embarrassing, but they didn't tell us anything. She came there when she was probably eleven or twelve. They were married in 1911. She was around twenty.

Q: Where did your family fit politically? One always thinks of the election of 1936, "as Maine goes, so goes New Hampshire."

DUPUIS: Well, my family, they were all Democrats, living in what was considered a Republican town and a Republican state, in fact. My view now is they never got the goodies other cities got.

They may have been looked down upon as an ethnic group. I'm not sure that's true, because some other towns, like Lewiston, Maine, had a lot of people of French Canadian extraction and they've done very well. So has Portland, Maine, in fact. So I don't think that necessarily holds.

My view now is we stayed in our little group, probably too much. I remember when I first left my hometown, I was 18 and of course I knew everything then. It was the only time in my life when I knew everything.

Q: Yes, that's a common thing. The certitude was wonderful. I wonder was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie...

DUPUIS: Yeah, I knew about the poem Evangeline and also about Alfred, Lord Tennyson's Enoch Arden. Matter of fact, a friend of mine, recently went to Nova Scotia and he found a monument dedicated to the Dupuis family, right in the middle of town. They were agriculturalist when they first came from France.

I visited the church there two or three years ago, the church there in that little village. There aren't any Dupuis' left in that village, in fact. But you go in the church, which is sagging, of course, in the middle, it's only used for special things now, but there's a contemporary painting of Joan of Arc. It sits there staring at you and it's certainly Joan of Arc.

Q: Did you consider yourself and your family, particularly yourself, as a New Englander?

DUPUIS: Oh, yes, we all did, with a little French thrown in, of course, but we were New Englanders, sure. When Kennedy became president, well everybody voted for Kennedy in Berlin, as far as I can tell. I wasn't there, of course.

Q: Were you a Red Sox fan?

DUPUIS: Yes, I still wear my Red Sox hat.

Q: You didn't have much choice.

DUPUIS: That's right. It's like being Catholic, or Republican.

Q: What was the school like you went to? How was the discipline there?

DUPUIS: Oh, tremendous. We'd get rapped on the fingers frequently. But you know, thinking about that, I never said "Thank you" to those nuns. They were really devoted to the individual and of course they were going to save your soul, whether you liked it or not.

The discipline was iron clad, but we didn't know the difference, in a way. We went and we sat in our little seats and we answered questions, in French and in English and frankly I wish we had more of that now.

Discipline was very strong. You didn't talk back to the teachers. Some teachers were sadists, I think, but most of them were very nice and very devoted to the students, for no money at all.

Q: Any particular subjects appeal to you?

DUPUIS: History and English.

Q: What sort of history were you being taught?

DUPUIS: American history and French history, too, because these nuns were from Canada. In the thirties, our hero became Franklin Roosevelt, of course, he was everything, because he was the poor man's president, even then and Hoover was a lost cause, because of the Depression. I was born sort of into it and my family struggled through it.

I didn't know I was poor. We had three square meals a day, we had church, we played hockey; we had friends; we had family. It was a small town and it had everything you needed. I didn't have much perspective about the outside world, frankly.

Q: For me, the one big thing I had, I don't know, maybe it's because I was in California, were the movies. I think I saw every movie that came out, practically.

DUPUIS: I was raised on John Wayne, Gene Autry. Remember Tim McCoy and Bob Steele?

Q: Bob Steele and Lash Larue. For the uninitiated, these are the cowboy stars of the era.

DUPUIS: We could go on forever about this.

Q: I assume the classes were coed?

DUPUIS: Yeah, male and female. I had my heart set on a lovely little girl there, who ignored me of course and then turns out she was a second cousin, anyway. That's the way life goes.

I was lousy in math. Two and two always came out to be five, somehow. I was okay in social studies, civics, current events.

Religion, I didn't like it at all. Whenever the priest came in to visit the class, I backed off. I just didn't like severity of the priest. I had no reason to be afraid of them. I just sort of never really took to it, although I was raised as a traditional Catholic.

Q: There was no set idea you might become a priest?

DUPUIS: Oh, yes. I know through instinct that my mother had hoped that one of her boys, she had four, would become a priest or the girls become nuns, or something, which was happening then quite often. But not me and none of my brothers did.

I was the only one in the family who became truly educated. If you want to ask me why, I don't know.

Q: You went to high school where, still in Berlin?

DUPUIS: Yeah, it was a brand new high school, forged by a very strong priest, who lived on what we considered the "French" side. We lived on the other side of the Androscoggin River, which divided the town and wasn't as French.

He pushed it and he got the building from the county and he established the high school, which was very good. Other than that, you had the public high school, which we considered populated by "black" Protestants.

Q: For somebody reading this, when you say black Protestants, you means these were unmitigated Protestants, but not ethnically black.

DUPUIS: Exactly. We had no African-Americans there. We never saw a black person. Well, a couple of guys came in, riding the rods from Canada and I remember one day my mother invited a black person, named Jimmy, I remember the name, good looking man and he came in and he had dinner with us and then he left and went back on the trains.

So when I got to Louisville, Kentucky, I went in a public rest room and I couldn't figure out what they meant, really, by "colored," "colored" rest rooms, "white" rest rooms. And I just went in either one, I was just as happy. I didn't know the difference. I'd never seen so many black people before. I'd never left New Hampshire, either and there were no black people in New Hampshire, I think.

Q: When you say “riding the rails,” during the Depression, there were many, particularly men, who were looking for work, or moving and getting on freight trains and all like that.

DUPUIS: I’d seen some of those men, in my little hometown of Berlin, New Hampshire. “Riding the rods,” I think it was called.

Q: Well, also, somewhat later, I found and you probably did, too, particularly in the military and even in college, I could go just anywhere hitch hiking, with my thumb and it wasn’t considered dangerous, it was an efficient way to go from place to place.

DUPUIS: In fact my brother, who was the oldest, he used to do that. Once he went to another town in New Hampshire to listen to a new band run by some guy named Glen Miller and he went down thumbing his way down. And one day he came home late, it was after eleven o’clock and my mother let him know that was not acceptable.

And I wasn’t allowed to do that. By the time I got old enough, it wasn’t fashionable anymore, so I didn’t do it.

Q: In high school, did you focus on any particular courses?

DUPUIS: I liked to study about people. I liked history a lot, geography somewhat. I took a class in physics once. I didn’t flunk, but I came close to it. It did nothing for me. So, yeah, I took business administration, I took shorthand, even, typewriting, of course and book keeping.

But I liked English; I liked French literature a lot. I grew up bilingual. In fact, that’s how I got into the Foreign Service.

Q: I’m going to come back to that, but let’s stick to high school now. Did you find yourself absorbed in World War II, the maps and what was happening?

DUPUIS: In high school? Oh, yeah. In fact, I was delivering papers in 1941 on Main Street, I would sell something called the Boston Daily Record. On December 7, 1941, there was a big headline saying “Pearl Harbor Is Bombed.” I didn’t know where Pearl Harbor was, I didn’t know anything about it. I just knew that Hawaii was where the girls danced the hula.

We had these trading cards which you got with gum. In addition to baseball players, they also had ones depicting historical events. I remember reading one day about the sinking of the Polish ship *Pilsudski*, I still remember the name, that had been torpedoed by the Germans in 1939. [Ed: as Wikipedia article about the Polish shipping company notes: After the outbreak of WWII, the *Pilsudski*, together with most other passenger ships and their crews, went under British command. She was converted into a military transport craft, which called at the English Port of Newcastle, from where she made her last

voyage on 25 November, 1939. It went down a few hours later, most probably on a mine field. Ten died.]

That made a big impression on me at the time, don't ask me why. This was terrible, this submarine had blown this ship out of the water, a lot of people were killed. So I remember retaining that in my mind.

We had a shortwave radio, finally and we followed events about the war. So, we followed pretty closely. My brother went into the service in 1943 or 1944 and he saw combat. I did not. So, yes, we did follow pretty closely.

Q: For our generation, too, it was the most wonderful geography lesson, because we learned where Tarawa was and El Alamein and all these places, in both the Pacific and the European theaters.

DUPUIS: One of my heroes was General Marshall, George Marshall, I read all of his books and I give talks on General Marshall now. It was tremendously engrossing.

Q: While you were in high school, did you get involved in extracurricular things?.

DUPUIS: There weren't many. Extracurricular were sports: ice hockey. We had one of the best high school hockey teams in New England. In fact, don't get me started on that, we won the New England championship one year, we beat a team from Boston.

That was our extracurricular stuff. Other than that, I wasn't aware of any, or I didn't participate in any and there weren't any. It was all about church.

Q: Well, as you were getting up towards being a senior, you seem to have been taking courses, book keeping and shorthand, which seemed to be pointed towards a clerical career.

DUPUIS: Could be. I didn't recognize it as such. The choices were limited. The girls took home economics. It was still in that era.

Q: At some point, did you realize that you really wanted to go to college?

DUPUIS: Yes, through my books. I realized there were other worlds, other languages besides the languages I spoke in Berlin. It certainly pushed me beyond the boundaries I knew, although I couldn't define them, I didn't know how. So I was looking outward a bit, yeah.

Q: Then, you graduated in, what, 1945? The draft was still on, but Germany surrendered about the time you graduated., I assume you still thought that you would go into the military.

DUPUIS: Oh, yeah. I didn't volunteer, but I knew that. In fact, all the senior class was choosing which branch of the service they'd join. But I didn't do that, for some reason.

So, I knew I would be drafted and in fact I was in July 1945, I was drafted into the army and off I went.

Q: Where'd they send you?

DUPUIS: I was assigned to armored infantry training and we were being trained for the invasion of Japan, I knew that much. One day I was in the chow line and someone said, "Hey, they dropped the A-bomb on Japan" and we all said, "Hurray!" We had no idea what the A-bomb was, but we thought that would get us out of invading Japan.

I hated the Japanese, of course, as I did the Germans. I remember at Fort Devens and Fort Knox, Kentucky, where I did my training, we had German prisoners. They served the meals and they ate before the black soldiers did, by the way, I recall seeing that, didn't pay much attention to it. That was obviously outrageous.

Q: How long did you stay at Fort Knox?

DUPUIS: Oh, I was there 16 weeks basic training and then they found out I could type, so I was sent back to Fort Devens to type out all the discharges. The veterans were coming from Germany, the war was ending in Japan and I typed out all the discharges. I typed out my brother's discharge, a lot of guys from my hometown and the surrounding area.

And one day I was working in Personnel, as a clerk typist, I was very important and I was cutting out applications for the major in charge about OCS, officer candidate school and I kept looking at the qualifications and I said, "Gee, I can do that."

So I signed off on an application and I promptly forgot about it, 'cause I was going to get out, the war was practically over. So the next thing I know I'm pulled forward to the OCS selection board, much to my amazement.

I did lousy, I don't know why they picked me. Anyway, eventually I realized they picked me as an officer candidate for the air force and off I went to Lackland Air Force Base in Texas and I became a ninety-day wonder.

Q: When were you at Lackland?

DUPUIS: My class was 1946J.

Q: I'm a graduate of Lackland, as an enlisted man. I did that in 1950.

DUPUIS: You went a different route to work.

Q: I had the Korean War. I missed your war and got the Korean War.

DUPUIS: Were you a late bloomer?

Q: No, I graduated from college and the next thing I knew I was an enlisted man for four years in the air force.

DUPUIS: You have to watch what dotted lines you sign on!

Q: Yes, absolutely. You were going into OCS, but you were not a college graduate?

DUPUIS: No, I was not. Well, they give you all these general classification tests and I kept getting good scores, or I wouldn't have been accepted. I didn't have much maturity, in terms of knowing what was going on around me, although I was a good team player. I said, "Yes, sir" and so, I went to church on Sunday. So I was pliable, I guess. They said I was officer material, which pleased me no end, of course. So off I went.

Q: You were too young to get a commission, weren't you?

DUPUIS: Well, I got my commission, I was 19 and I was one of the youngest officers in the air force at the time, I was told and I had no reason not to believe it. I was not a ninety-day wonder, I was a 120-day wonder, they extended the course, so we would know a little bit more.

I specialized in administration; it wasn't in any combat, operational role. But I did get my commission.

Eventually, in fact, I got out of the military nine years later because I felt a great need for more education. Some of the ROTC graduates that came in, they knew a lot of things that I didn't know. On the other hand, I knew a lot of things they didn't know.

So I resigned my commission and came over to the University of Maryland and earned some actual college credits.

Q: Where were you stationed while you were an officer?

DUPUIS: After being commissioned I was right there at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, which was, by the way, the oldest military airfield still operating in the military.

Q: That's also where Lindbergh got his certification.

DUPUIS: Probably.

Q: I remember, I went from Lackland to Brooks, too. I was in what was at that time called the Security Service. I went to language school and basically we were listening to

Soviet broadcasts, aircraft communications, we were trained in Russian. But I know Brooks well.

DUPUIS: Anyway, that's where I went for 120 days and then I was stationed there. I was in the adjutant's office at Lackland for two years. Then from there I was sent over to occupation duty in Germany.

Q: Where did you serve in Germany?

DUPUIS: At Munich, 86th Fighter Bomber Wing. Well, in fact, I was in on the airlift for about two months, enough for me to say I was, until they found out where I should go.

Q: This was 1948?

DEPUIS: Exactly. I was just commissioned one year.

Q: What was your impression of Germany at the time?

DUPUIS: Well, I liked Europe. I disliked Germans, 'cause I was raised to dislike Germans. Wartime, you have to hate somebody. And you're taught to hate, as they say.

But the people were very nice. It was very orderly. But I recall that every German in Munich that I knew had a little briefcase they carried. I don't what the hell they had in them, they always had them.

I also recall that they had a lot of DPs, displaced persons. They were all over Europe, under the UN.

The 86th Fighter Bomber Wing was commanded, by the way, by [Ed: Lt Colonel Claire Chennault] Colonel Chennault, the son of General Chennault, of Flying Tigers fame. We had a lot of aces in that unit. The guards were Polish. When you were the Officer of the Day, you had to be very careful not to get shot, because you show up there three o'clock in the morning, you better speak Polish or German, which I didn't, or you had to know the password. And they were all DPs who were taken into this security service for the military bases.

So it was a fascinating time. I didn't know anything. I learned quickly, but I was surprised, now that I look back, why I didn't learn more about German culture and why didn't I learn German, but I didn't. We were the conquerors, I guess, what we said went and I agreed with that.

Q: You were stationed right in Munich?

DUPUIS: No, a little village called Neubiberg, which was right off the autobahn to Salzburg. It used to be one of the bases for a Luftwaffe unit equipped with Focke-Wulf 190s and named for Goering, the title was still printed on the walls. We had permanent

barracks, very nice barracks, permanent rooms, not wooden barracks, like we had in the States.

Q: Did you get to enjoy beer fests and all?

DUPUIS: Yeah, there was a Munich beer fest of course every year, the Oktoberfest. But I didn't drink then. The standard joke was, "It's Bernie DuPuis' birthday again. He doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, he doesn't chase girls. So what do we do?"

When I was in the military, I'd still say my three Hail Marys when I went to bed in the barracks. And I have no regrets about that, by the way.

Q: Well, did you find yourself getting to know the Catholic chaplains and that sort of thing?

DUPUIS: Yeah, I knew the Catholic chaplain at the base there and he was a very fine fellow, he was a bird colonel [Ed: American slang for full colonel rank, represented by an eagle insignia on the shoulder]. He was very well loved there.

I remember once we went to Lourdes, the Catholic shrine, with a group. I was very nice and we flew up and we flew back.

Whenever we had maneuvers in France with the wing, I was always sent in the first wave, 'cause I spoke French, which was very nice. I did that quite often. But my French wasn't at the level of what FSI calls an educated French person. I had spoken French until I was 18 and then no more.

Q: Were you taking any college classes? The University of Maryland was doing things.

DUPUIS: Yes. That's where I started, in fact. I started going to classes at McGraw Kaserne, which was in Munich, which was an army installation. Yeah, I took several classes and that's what got me started in this wonderful system that was the University of Maryland University College, it wasn't called that then. Yeah, I did.

Q: Was this sort of your future plan, to get a degree?

DUPUIS: Oh, yes, definitely. I realized it all along, but after I took the classes in Germany, I was stationed at Rome, New York, with the army air depot and I took some courses then at Syracuse University in Utica, just to stay current on my studies. I was just trending towards getting my degree, yes, indeed.

Q: You weren't married at this time?

DUPUIS: No, I was not, thank God. I was too young then.

Q: Did the military career interest you, or not?

DUPUIS: Yes, it did. They sent me to the Air War College, the Squadron Officers course and I did very well. But I wasn't getting promoted the way I thought I should.

I was in the service two years as an enlisted man and almost seven years total in the military and I was just a senior first lieutenant and I realized then that I had something lacking in my educational makeup, which is probably the reason I got out.

They promoted me to captain, as soon as I got out, I was made a captain in the reserves. If the promotion had come earlier, I might have stayed in. But I'm glad I didn't, because in the air force you have to be a flying officer to really move up, assuming I had the capacity.

Q: Well, the air force of course had quite a problem at the time, because they had so many people who had been promoted without really college education because they were good pilots, but then what do you do with them after the war?

They were still having this problem when I came in. Although I was an enlisted man with a college education, you could see around you a lot of officers who really weren't what you'd call prime officer material.

DUPUIS: You're right. I know a lot of guys in my barracks, in fact, when I was in Rome, New York, some were captains, some were majors and they were being selected out of the service.

And here I was, Bernie DuPuis, all of twenty and I made a mental note of that. I didn't really know why, but they were just getting new blood.

Q: The military was beginning to go through a real racial integration. Did you see much in your field?

DUPUIS: Yes, now that you mention it, I remember we had at the 86th Fighter Bomber Wing at Neubiberg we had a lot of fighter pilots who were black.

When the air force was established as a separate service, I had to get rid of my green uniform and get my blue uniform, which made me look like a bus driver, I thought. One day, we were in Switzerland on leave and this very senior captain, who was a friend of mine, we were in the lobby of a hotel and this woman came by and gave him her keys. She thought he was a bellhop. He was infuriated. I thought it was funny, because he was a bit pompous and I was just happy go lucky, it didn't bother me. I never liked that uniform, by the way. I liked my old olive drab and 25 mission crushed cap.

Q: I remember, the whole time I was in, people would say, "Hey, bus driver!"

DUPUIS: Became almost an epithet right away.

Q: It was, yeah.

DUPUIS: I understand the uniform was patterned after the Royal Air Force. It's a nice enough uniform, but a lot of bus drivers wore something similar. I think you could never beat that olive drab and khaki [World War Two U.S. Army] uniform and the "pink" pants [which were part of the officer uniform of the period and were not really pink, by the way, although they appeared to be in certain lighting conditions]. Imagine being in the military and wearing pink pants, but that's the way it was.

Q: Well, it worked. When did you get discharged from the military?

DUPUIS: In 1954.

Q: Did you get caught up in the Korean War at all?

DUPUIS: No. I was just coming out of Germany, in fact, in 1950 and the main way in which the Korean War affected me is I was on the United States Air Force Europe tennis team which was supposed to come to the States to play, in play offs. Tough life, right? Then the transportation of course was taken away from us because of the Korean War and that's my main association with the Korean War. But, technically speaking, I was in the military during the Korean War, yeah.

Q: Well, then, in 1954 you're getting discharged. What were your plans?

DUPUIS: Go to college, directly. That's why I got discharged.

Q: You had a significant G.I. Bill entitlement.

DUPUIS: That was the old G.I. Bill, which I used fully, except for buying a house through the G.I. Bill, I didn't do that. Yeah, I resigned my commission and I went to the University of Maryland in College Park for a couple and got my B.A. in 1956 and then I stayed on and got my master's in 1957, also, in political science, really.

Q: Okay, let's talk about the University of Maryland at the time. How was it? There had been a period when the University of Maryland, quite frankly, I don't think was even accredited.

DUPUIS: You're right.

Q: It was sort of a disgrace and then

DUPUIS: Yeah, it had a great football team. My view has always been that whether you go to Harvard or Maryland or Virginia, you can get a good education if you apply yourself.

But, looking back, some of my professors were not very good, frankly, although some were quite good. When I was there, we talked about it not being accredited by the Southern Accreditation Association, because we had a library which was deficient.

Of course they corrected that right away and they built a huge library named after the vice president for student affairs and then they built a library named for the governor, who provided a lot of money for that.

So, yes, it was not accredited at one time and I ran into that frequently afterwards, historically, it's true. Actually, I didn't feel it. I had some great teachers, I thought.

Q: Were you a different breed of cat that many of the undergraduates you were attending with? You were quite a bit older.

DUPUIS: Yes, I was, that's true. There were a couple of my contemporaries who were veterans and we would sort of hang around together. But you're right, I didn't fit in. I was 26, I was rather mature and I'd been in the military, I'd been an officer. So I'd been around, to use the term and they had not.

But the University of Maryland had a lot of ex-military retreads going through the system who had also gotten out of the military to finish their college career which they started at various places overseas and so there was a lot of these guys around.

But I was the president of the French Language Club, I belonged to the Flying Club, which flew out of College Park. But you're right, there were a lot of retreads and I agree with you entirely, it wasn't highly rated then and it should not have been, really. But personally, I didn't feel this.

Q: Of course, obviously, they had some very strong departments there. What was your field?

DUPUIS: I got my master's in government and politics and then I had a minor in history.

Q: Did you have much a feel for the Soviet Union and what was happening there?

DUPUIS: Oh, yeah, very much so, because it was very much in the news all the time. What was it, John Foster Dulles' "agonizing reappraisal," all those terms. We didn't love the Soviet Union.

I'm jumping ahead a bit, but after my master's, I taught for the University of Maryland, because they needed teachers overseas, places such as Thule and Sondrestrom, Greenland; Goose Bay, Labrador, but also Bermuda, I was associated with the University of Maryland system for two years, 1960 to 1962.

And when the top administrator for that part of the University of Maryland quit, they asked me if I wanted to replace him. I said, "Yeah," I had a young wife and kids.

So I quit teaching, which I hated to do, because I was just learning and became the director of the fantastic North Atlantic Division, which had, as I said, programs in Thule, Sondrestrom, Harmon Air Force Base, Pepperell Air Force Base and then we had two wonderful places, we had the Azores and then we had Bermuda.

So the dean said, "Well, we'll send you there to thaw you out." Worse than OCS, believe me, 'cause they threw you out there, they had to, in a way and you had to start teaching right away and we taught 16-week courses in eight weeks. We had to double up, you had to really learn fast. But after a couple of course it became more natural and I had the best audience in the world.

If I'd say something about Chiang Kai-shek [Ed: President of the Republic of China, by 1950s on Taiwan.], one guy in my class said, "Prof," I wasn't a prof, that's what they called me, "I was a pilot for Chiang Kai-shek and Stillwell in Burma." Well, where you going to get that kind of information anywhere else? Impossible.

So because I had the best students, I thought, for history courses, they did well, I thought I did well. The highlight of my life, really. Wore me out, but it was the highlight of my life.

Q: In all this time, did you have any real knowledge or contact with the Foreign Service or AID or American diplomatic missions?

DUPUIS: Yes and no. I knew about the Foreign Service, I knew about the State Department. I took courses on it. I took courses on diplomacy. I read some of the books by the major diplomats of the time. My professor was an authority on the use of power and he was also an authority on bibliography. That was way back when, of course.

Yeah, I was very interested in the whole Cold War, before it was called that, in fact.

Q: Did you consider at any particular point maybe moving into the government?

DUPUIS: Yeah, it was always in the back of my mind. When I got my master's, I took all the entrance tests, the test for the CIA, I took the test for the civil service, I took the Foreign Service test, which I failed the first time, then the next time I took it I did okay, my French came in more handily. I didn't do too well on it, but I did pass and then I didn't follow up on it.

One day I was at the University of Maryland and I had applied for some agency called ICA, International Cooperation Administration, or something like that.

And I went off on one of my trips to the North Pole, where I was teaching classes, where Strategic Air Command bases were. And one day I came back and my secretary came in, she said, "Mr. Dupuis, you had a call from the White House."

“Oh,” I said, “They want my advice on foreign policy. Well, tell Kennedy I’ll call right back” and I paid no attention to it. But they did call and left a number. So I called back to this professor from Harvard and he said, “We need French speakers to go to Cambodia.”

I said, “I’m your man.” I was trying to make more money. I had kids and I was thirtyish and I wanted to move on. It was a nice opportunity for me and I got a chance to do something I like.

Q: This is in what year?

DUPUIS: 1962.

Q: Had you gotten politically engaged at all with the new Kennedy Administration?

DUPUIS: I didn’t like Kennedy, in a way. He was a very handsome, debonair playboy, very intelligent, but I just didn’t take to him. I liked Nixon. Don’t ask me why. He had experience, he had been a vice president. So I figured why not go with somebody who had experience. Kennedy didn’t have any.

And then I was sort of a staunch Republican. I didn’t like all the weird people who kept coming, we still have them now, with “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” So I was conservative. I’ve always been conservative.

Q: Do you remember the class number of your class when you entered AID, by any chance?

DUPUIS: It was an intern class. This was with AID and not with State. I went through that, but not through the regular Foreign Service junior officer course.

Q: How many people were in your intern class?

DUPUIS: I don’t know, maybe 35, 40 people. I don’t remember the details. A lot of the classes were at the Foreign Service Institute, which was in Rosslyn.

We had speakers come in, talk to us and then we had the AID people and State people come in and told us what was what and we were able to ask questions. I saw a lot of slides of people overseas and saw a couple of films of actual USAID and embassy activity. I remember seeing one on USAID Cambodia, which, oddly enough, would be my first post. At the time I didn’t know that.

The mission director talked to us and so on and we learned about what they do and so on. We had a lot of books to read about different cultural viewpoints of the world, different cultures.

Q: Did you have, at that time, or did AID have, an idea of what you were going to be doing and where you were going to be doing it?

DUPUIS: Well, yeah, in a way I did. AID hired me because I could speak French, that was the main thing and that's how I snuck in, I guess. And I think my assignment was already picked. This was in Cambodia, as an education analyst for the AID mission there in Phnom Penh, that's what I understood.

Then what happened, of course, not untypical for AID, as I found out, was that the amount of money they were supposed to get from Congress, they didn't get and so by the time I quit my job at the University of Maryland and then they didn't put me on the payroll, AID dragged me on for a couple months.

It was pretty hairy for a while, but they just didn't have their fiscal year disbursement as they should have. Anyway, eventually I was picked up. It was very educational.

That was always happening in AID. You expand a program and the money is programmed years ahead and then when the time comes someone puts a hold on it.

And Congress micromanaged a lot of it. That didn't bother me initially, 'cause I didn't know the drill, but later on you realize that Congress has tremendous powers and they should have, of course.

Q: Were you getting ready to go to Cambodia?

DUPUIS: Well, yeah, I was ready to go, wherever they sent me. It was supposed to be Cambodia and I did go to Cambodia, after a long delay.

Q: What did you do in between?

DUPUIS: Oh, well, I twiddled my thumbs, frankly. I was sort of disappointed. I didn't have much money accumulated. It was a bit difficult for a while. I wasn't in any financial straits, but it was not very conducive to build your morale.

Q: But your first assignment was to Cambodia?

DUPUIS: Yes, it was.

Q: When did you go out there?

DUPUIS: I think it was in July 1963 {Ed: the State Department Biographic Register logs that Dupuis was assigned to Cambodia in October 1962}. As a matter of fact, I recall being there and someone telling me they were sorry that President Kennedy had been shot. I didn't know that.

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

DUPUIS: You mean politically?

Q: Yes.

DUPUIS: Well, I wasn't clued in enough to really get hold of it, initially. But what happened, in fact, it was very tenuous vis-à-vis the Chinese, because of the war in Vietnam, I think, because I'd been there for 13 months and then Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who ran the place, still does, I guess, decided to kick out AID and that's what happened. [Ed: approximately November 1963.]

I'd been there, just getting settled down, my household goods had come in and then we had this political lightning bolt and he just ordered USAID out of Cambodia.

I recall going to the early meetings about the termination of AID and I took copious notes and then we would translate my notes and I would compose a lot of outgoing cables back to Washington.

What Cambodia wanted was of course AID out as a political statement I guess but they wanted the aid package, of course, which is nothing new and of course we were not about to do that.

The ambassador, as I recall, was Ambassador Sprouse, a very gentlemanly ambassador. [Ed: Ambassador Philip Sprouse arrived at post in August 1962 and departed in March 1964.] Anyway, we went to several meetings. I recall distinctly that the same evening I went to the movies and there I was in the newsreel, about foreign aid being terminated in Cambodia. It was my first time in a newsreel and my last, by the way.

Q: Let's talk about the time you were working in Cambodia. What were you doing?

DUPUIS: Well, Cambodia was among the stable, good posts for AID, I learned later. They had a family planning and health division, big agriculture division, they had also public administration. So each one of these specialties had an officer in charge and we did projects in four areas.

I was in the education area. We were building schools, then, that was before bricks and mortar projects were stopped, later on, building buildings or building roads, which we called capital assistance, bricks and mortar.

So we were busily building schools in the countryside to raise the education level and that's what we did. My function was to analyze the programs. That took me quite a while, to analyze dollars and cents for AID projects.

For instance, we had people coming in and doing textbooks. The Cambodians didn't have any textbooks. So the textbooks were done and being translated into French. They had to be sensitive to the ancient Khmer language and culture and so on.

And it was pretty heady stuff, to begin with. We had guys who went around teaching English all over the country and that didn't seem to cause any trouble.

And one of my functions, looking back, each morning I had to read the paper, which was written in French, for the staff and translate directly, which was very interesting. People couldn't, they didn't speak French and they couldn't read French, so we were at the mercy of everybody, I guess. So I did a lot of that, which was my function.

Q: Did you get involved in the choice of where a school should be located?

DEPUIS: No, I wasn't at that level. That was done by the division chief. He had been the head of all the schools in Hawaii for years and then he had switched to the UN and then finally he had switched to AID. He was very knowledgeable, but he locked horns frequently with the program office, 'cause he didn't do dollars and cents the way they wanted it.

But that's part of the AID package, there's always somebody who has a better way to do it, or objects. It's like being in Congress, I guess. You can never get anything straight through.

This was my first experience in foreign aid and it was all mysterious and pretty heady for a while.

Q: Looking back on it, I realize this was over your head, but deciding where schools should go and all, you think they knew what they were doing, or was this personality?

DUPUIS: You always have a mission plan. It's not run helter skelter. Unfortunately, people get in the way, for political reasons. Each mission, they have a Country Assistance Program, we call it the CAP and that spells out each fiscal year the goal of the mission and the embassy, the ambassador's views, Washington's views and we put it into a package, in which we had separate, specific projects for each function, for family planning, for agriculture, we had a lot of agronomists and we had people whistled in on short term contracts to discuss agricultural problems in Cambodia, we had an economic officer, who frequently belonged to the embassy and *vice versa*.

So this was not done helter skelter. What was happening is of course frequently we could not draw down the money allocated to us, because of pipeline problems. We had to get all of our goods from the States. You couldn't buy French stuff, or whatever, 'cause that's the way Congress authorized it. And I agree with that.

But frequently, by the time we identified a position to build something and got a body on board, it was about two years, really. And two years is a long time between inception and conception, as it were.

So things dragged out, but that's the way it was, all the time. Then when you got your project lined up, then the local political situation was likely to be very difficult, although

it was as I recall pretty stable in Cambodia, because Sihanouk, the crown prince, was also president.

But he resigned as president, as a political gesture. But that didn't change the fact that he was in fact Prince Norodom Sihanouk. And so he did a very clever thing.

So he ran the whole country, not that he didn't have any opposition, he did, a lot, but I can't fill in on the specifics. We were in Vietnam, right next door to Cambodia and the Chinese didn't like that, so I think they put pressure on Sihanouk to get rid of U.S. aid.

And of course the Russians were there, too. So everywhere we went, there was a Russian embassy and a big U.S. embassy and in francophone countries of course there was a very busy French embassy.

If they'd come in with a project, then we'd counter it, or we had one and they'd counter it and so these developing countries learned to take advantage of that pretty quickly, in my view, it's just that they'd raise the ante sometimes, sort of like a poker game.

I remember once we had an AID project, in education, in fact and we went and talked to the education minister and he said, "Look, give me the money and let me spend it, because I know the country, I know everybody here. Besides, I might take a lot of heat from the Russians, who are here, also."

But the fact is we couldn't do that. AID has always, we had a comptroller and then they controlled the money, which is good and bad, I guess. So it has to be organized so the money couldn't be siphoned off on this or that and that was done anyway, I understand.

Q: How about conditions on the ground? Did you feel under threat? It wasn't Beirut, or anything like that?

DUPUIS: Did we feel under threat? No. We knew the Russians were there, but I never personally encountered any hostility that I can recall, that I was aware of it. Some terrorist threat came later in my career, as the terror threat separately developed.

For instance, later on, when I was in Ecuador, this Ambassador Mein had been assassinated and that introduced, as I recall, for me, anyway, the whole notion of assassination as being the terrorist threat, as we later learned to call it. [Ed: Ambassador John Gordon Mein was killed in Guatemala on August 28, 1968.]

But I didn't see any of that in Cambodia. And I have to point out that was my first post, so it was pretty heady stuff and I didn't read the politics very well and I wasn't very high up there, you know.

Q: Yeah, of course. Did you get to travel around quite a bit?

DUPUIS: Yeah, I was able to travel pretty freely. We went obviously to Angkor Wat, that famous 15th century citadel of Cambodia. That was in the city of Siem Riep.

I recall, now that I think of it, that our local employees were Vietnamese and we noticed and they told us that they weren't very well liked in Cambodia. We'd ask why and they'd say, "There's an age-old animosity between the two countries," which was true, historically and so that apparently was still present in 1963.

But that didn't seem to affect us when we traveled. So I was never personally under any threat and I gradually became aware of the politics, initially I wasn't. By the time I learned that there were in fact politics, which I should have known, I left.

Q: You left probably in the summer of 1964? [Ed: the State Department Biographic Register lists Mr. Dupuis as arriving at his next post in January 1964]

DUPUIS: Yeah.

Q: What did they do with you?

DUPUIS: Well, a lot of guys got RIFed, a reduction in force [Ed: generally the result of congressional budget cuts], and I couldn't figure out why that didn't happen to me, but then I realized that as a military veteran I had a military preference. I guess that saved my neck. A lot of the guys who were RIFed had PhDs in their field and were very competent.

So I ended up in, of all places, Hong Kong, at a nice hotel there that I thought was very costly until they could reassign people, a lot of wasted time, although I enjoyed most of it.

Anyway, I ended up in the Congo, Leopoldville, at not a very good time. In other words, from the frying pan to the fire, I suppose.

Q: This is, of course, Indochina and the Congo, during the Sixties, this is where, you might say, the action was.

DUPUIS: That's right. Looking back, I was right in the middle of it, of course. I read later on about Cambodia, where a school in a little provincial town called Kampong Kantua, the head of it, during the Pol Pot regime, he had been beheaded. I learned that a lot of the Cambodians that we trained in what we called participant training, they came to the States to get master's or other degrees, a lot of these were considered intellectuals and they were harried out of the kingdom, as it were.

I wasn't there then, Pol Pot was much later, but the thing that I take from that is that this was a society, we were told, that was very docile, they have centuries of culture, but once they get angry, it spills over really fast and that's what I conclude, a lot of people we trained and we knew, in fact, had just been killed, an amazing thing to think about.

Q: A horrible period. Well, all right, you went to the Congo in 1964? How long were you there?

DUPUIS: Well, it was chaos, really, but it was controlled by the UN. There was no really stable government there, 'cause the initial leader there

Q: Lumumba.

DUPUIS: Had been assassinated some time before and the president elect was Kasavubu. Later on, I came to have a lot of sympathy for leaders in countries like that, because there were no institutions set up, they had no hierarchy, they went from a tribal society to the 20th century in one leap.

And the Belgians had not trained them at all. When I got to the Congo I learned of a study that had just been completed which concluded that there were only 15 high school graduates in all of the Congo, that's it. The local people had been held down to where they had no control over anything.

And you could see the heavy footprint of Belgian colonialism, frankly. But they had great roads.

Q: At that time. Now the roads have gone.

DUPUIS: They did that very well and they had a very good university, Louvain University in the Congo, where my second daughter was born, by the way.

They were tribal, let's face it. Kasavubu came by to see the ambassador, McMurtrie Godley was the ambassador there and I know he sort of pulled in the embassy's back door, for consultations, I guess. [Ed: Ambassador Godley served from March 1964 to October 1966.]

When we were there they had the so-called Stanleyville Massacre [Ed November 24, 1964]. One of our guys, Michael Hoyt, the economic officer, he was sent to Stanleyville to replace the consul, who was going on leave or whatever and he ended up in jail.

And Dr. Carlson, a missionary, was assassinated. I remember very well he was on the cover of *Time* magazine about that time.

But Michael finally escaped over the wall and I'm told he had been forced to eat the American flag by some of these rebels. They were called Simbas and the Simbas, as I understand it, were told that they were lions, that bullets would not kill them.

I didn't see any, by the way, the capital city was fairly safe, but you can imagine a French speaking city being run by English speaking Nigerian soldiers. So it was a bit, not chaotic. It was hard to find food in supermarkets, you had to go into 15 places to get one meal.

Then I understood why we had helpers, or servants, because we resisted that initially. You couldn't operate without it. So, anyway, we finally did the colonial thing and got a cook and a nanny and so on.

But it was a very interesting place.

Q: Okay, you were there from when to when?

DUPUIS: I was there for about a year. Apparently, I didn't get along with some people. I never knew who it was.

I remember one day, I got a call from the DCM at the embassy, Robert Blake. He wanted to know about something in education and I told him and I reported that up to the front office, to the mission director and he said, "Listen, you don't talk to that guy."

And I was stunned. Why should I not talk to the DCM of the embassy? Well, there were differences of view about what should be done there and I think that reflected the terribly fragile political situation.

And I recall at some point all the embassies evacuated their people, except the American embassy and I found out, because I had a friend in the Canadian embassy with whom I practiced my French and he said that their embassy was leaving and I reported that up of course and the American embassy apparently did not know this, I just reported what I had heard and it turned out that we were the only embassy that was staying, which I think was remarkably good politics, but we thought it would be a bit tricky.

I had an apartment right on the Congo River, right in the area where the government offices were and we didn't know what was going to happen, in fact, it was a bit tense and then we saw these blue airplanes, AT-6's, which I recognized, flying down the Congo and we understood that they were UN airplanes, flown by Cuban pilots, if you can figure that out.

Well, anyway, I remember listening to the public information officer, right in the chancery at the embassy, he was saying, as the airplanes went overhead, "There are no American airplanes in the Congo."

That's why I guess they're UN airplanes. One of these inconsistent, unreal things that you faced over there.

Q: Well, what were you doing there?

DUPUIS: Well, I was in education. I was the deputy education officer. And my job was the same as usual, try to have schools, books, trained teachers and so on. There I was not a general interpreter, I was strictly education. We had projects to teach French, we had projects for people to do textbooks.

It's usually a problem, in those schools, that the schools don't have any floors, they don't have any books, they don't have any lesson plans, no mimeograph machines. So we would do the Uncle Sam thing and bring all that stuff in, sort of establish a lifeline, whereby the equipment would be taken care of, very mundane, but very essential: textbooks, teacher training. We sent people to the States to get their master's degrees at various universities. So we did the whole thing.

Q: Well, it must have been very difficult, because, as you said before, when the Belgians left in 1960 or so there were only a handful of college graduates. Where did the teachers come from?

DUPUIS: Well, that was the whole point. There was no foundation for this country to become an independent country. In other words, the Belgians had not trained them and matter of fact had repressed them, I think, from learning to run their own country.

One of my local employees, Jesse Nkoba, a very well educated guy, he was a minister of his church and he could never get anything done and he would tell us all of these stories, how things were unraveling and money stolen. In fact, he couldn't even get any tires for his car, because apparently we weren't paying him enough. So the first great thing I did in AID on my own is I bought him four tires for his car.

And we had a secretary there, an American but of Belgian origin and she just treated people in AID, as far as I could see, as a colonialist, she wouldn't even talk to them and she would always dress down poor Jesse, who was really a very good guy. So the mentality was still there, that this was a colony and never shall they rise, I guess.

Q: What caused the embassies to evacuate?

DUPUIS: Well, it was the Simba revolution of the tribes. Because you had two things going in the Congo, trying to set it up as a country emerging from colonialism. My boss said he recalled seeing a native chief in full regalia, in the area where I lived, in the heart of the government quarter with feathers and the spears and he claimed that he recalls having heard this fellow say, "I like this freedom" and he had brought a big basket in which he wanted to put freedom and take it home to the tribe. That was the understanding. That's probably overstated, but that's what I was told.

We were there when Tshombe, the strongman of Katanga, came back from a meeting with Paul-Henri Spaak, the prime minister of Belgium and he came back to the Congo with a reparations check and he made a grandiose entrance back into Leopoldville and we were watching when his convoy drove by our apartment house, we were on the seventh floor and we could see the government administration building and we could see many of the central government offices and as he came by, my wife said, I wasn't there, my three-year-old daughter had a toy gun and she was leaning out the window saying, "Bang, bang, bang."

Well that was the wrong time to say that, obviously and my wife said that all these guards turned to look where that came from, the noise and they realized it was this little girl, but it was a very scary moment, because these guys could be pretty trigger happy.

So that's the political climate in which we worked, although it didn't affect me directly, really. Although they had all these road blocks and all these militiamen sprang up to demand payment to go from A to B, which were of course unofficial and illegal, but we kept paying, because my apartment was right in the government quarter, so we had to go through several checkpoints.

It got very interesting, because I lost a lot of bottles of liquor that way. I'd pay them off with a bottle of liquor, while my wife sat in the car with our two kids.

Q: Did you feel that you were getting anywhere, in your projects?

DUPUIS: No, not really. Not enough. Again, I wasn't there long enough to know, but my project, when I was there, was to sort of establish some kind of printing press, where we could print books in French and I had to go to the Belgian embassy and they knew how and I was negotiating on employing printers to print textbooks when, again, I was ushered out, because I didn't get along with some guy, as I understand it, in the front office.

I really don't know. All I know is that for the first few years I just kept moving, which wasn't bad. I wanted to see the world.

Q: Did you sense you were involved in office politics and you were on the wrong side?

DUPUIS: No. I've always felt that if you're going to be associated with any organization in a developing country, it's good to be associated with the American embassy. I felt quite secure.

But sometime things happen I suppose you couldn't quite control and that was the danger that presented itself when the American embassy decided to stay put and not evacuate its people, because I was told, all the other embassies had done so. And apparently our mission director didn't know, so when I told him that, it was news to him. But we stayed anyway.

Anyway, they showed a film about the Kennedy Administration, Years of Lightning/Day of Drums, it was very popular and they showed this and I recall being there and trying to explain, in French, the American electoral college process to Prime Minister Adoula and to President Kasavubu, which is interesting, because the electoral college is so confusing, even in English, you should try it in French sometime.

Anyway, these people were ready to learn, I suppose, but the political situation was so unstable that no matter what you started, us, or local people, it would get upended by some rebellion or something.

Tshombe, he was the big man. They called him “the white man” over there, the locals, because anybody who had power in that country, who had money, was called *un blanc*, a white man.

I remember going to a presentation at Louvain University and we were invited, embassy people and they introduced Tshombe to the faculty and *vice versa* and I was there, but I never met Tshombe personally.

Q: So you were removed from this school project and transferred from the Congo in about 1965, yes?

DUPUIS: Let me backtrack here a minute to the Congo. When I was in the Congo, that’s when Winston Churchill died [January 24, 1965] and they had memorial service, it was in the cathedral, in fact. This was an Anglican service. They didn’t have enough British officers to read all the lessons, so the Americans had to step in and read some of the lessons, the ambassador did and the AID director did.

My take on it was, what a comedown for the mighty British empire, after all these years, their hero dies and there are not enough people at the British embassy to send him off in appropriate style. That’s the way it goes.

Yeah, right, I left in 1965, 1966. [Ed: According to the State Department Biographic Registry Mr. Dupuis transferred out in the summer of 1965.]

Q: You went to Washington?

DUPUIS: Yeah, [Ed: in July 1965] I ended up in a part of AID [AA/AFR] that dealt with West Africa: Togo, Sierra Leone, Dahomey, the former French colonies, because we wanted to maintain some American presence in that area. We weren’t trying to replace the French, we just wanted to give these people an opportunity, as I look at it now, to see what we had to offer.

We were doing a lot of little projects, like well drilling, training in the States, latest things in agriculture from the U.S. standpoint in all these countries, to provide an alternative to the French connection.

And I was an assistant area operations officer, in short I was desk officer for Dahomey, which became Benin, eventually. And all we did was make sure that, whatever projects we had, we had the spare parts and the technicians to come in to do their job and give these people another view besides the French view, which is all they’d ever had.

In Dahomey, apparently there was an overthrow of the government every December. The current president was Christophe Soglo and he owned the building where the embassy. And one day I was there and who comes in but President Soglo. He wanted to see the

ambassador. We all had lunch. And what Soglo wanted was to raise the rent. The ambassador certainly resisted. Such was life there. I spent a month there.

Every December, we had to write a position paper, because the head of government had changed. It was almost like clockwork. I was there two years and I wrote several position papers about the change in the head of government in Dahomey.

In fact, my last one, I wrote in advance, I just filled in the names when it happened. Soglo would be ousted and then reassert himself the year after. I assume it was all prearranged, but it doesn't make for much progress

Q: Did you feel you were becoming, or want to be, an African specialist in AID? Was there a possibility in becoming a specialist in a region?

DUPUIS: I wanted to become a program officer. In AID, the program officer is next in line to the mission director, tries to understand all the project in the mission and that seemed to be the route to promotion, instead of being a technician, because I didn't have my PhD in education, I had a master's in political science, so I was more inclined in that area. By that time I was more interested in moving up from being a desk officer, in my mind, anyway.

Q: So how did things develop in Washington, with respect to your career?

DUPUIS: After three transfers with my family, I was getting a bit weary of packing. So there we were, in USAID Africa Bureau. It was very interesting, to say the least.

In fact, I was in the Ivory Coast, on my way to Dahomey, to replace the area operations officer, who was on leave and I remember reading a headline, "In Accra, They All Like Nkrumah," the leader and he would be there forever and the next day he was overthrown. So that's how firm these regimes were over there.

Q: You went out to the Ivory Coast for a while?

DUPUIS: No, I'd go out periodically to Dahomey to replace the area operations officer assigned there. I worked with Ambassador Clinton Knox, a black guy, very nice, very well educated, very sophisticated.

Q: What were we doing?

DUPUIS: Well, we were maintaining a U.S. presence in West Africa. All these countries had just gained independence not too long before. We had a saying, as things crumbled there periodically, WAWA, "West Africa wins again."

The French were very, very suspicious. They wanted to maintain their presence. I don't blame them. We wanted to maintain ours.

The French had just granted independence to their former colonies about that period time and they weren't accustomed to not having colonies, I guess and the French government of course was very wobbly.

So there we were out there, sort of trying to maintain little education projects. Mainly our projects were digging wells, providing textbooks, training people in the States, for instance electrical technicians or whatever, which they didn't have, there was no way to train them over there. Matter of fact, some of them came over to be trained in use of heavy equipment, to build roads, which the French apparently managed to avoid.

There was some resistance to the American presence, there always was, no matter where you are.

Every now and then I had to go out to the countries I was responsible for to replace the resident AID officer stationed in Dahomey. Whenever he went on leave I went in to sort of help the ambassador. These were small posts.

That's what I did for two years, presenting alternatives to the French connection for these countries, who were just trying to find out who they were.

Q: How did you find working there? Was it easy to get projects going and carry them out in these countries?

DUPUIS: No, it wasn't in fact. But it never is, really, because no matter how you put your assistance package together it would sort of run into problems due to various factions in the country who were trying to organize politically.

The Cold War was on and the Russians were there with their embassy. We'd come up with an assistance package, they'd come up with a package.

And then overall of course the French embassy was, they'd been there a long time and they knew how to get around. I spoke French, so I was able to get around and do things.

Dahomey is a small country which is on ocean and nobody goes to the beach because you don't have time. We did our little projects, such as training people in the States, especially vocational training, welding, heavy machinery, road building equipment, all these things that countries need to build up, to have some kind of infrastructure from which they could make the leap into development and that's what we did. We had medical teams come in and so on.

A busy little outpost, really. Sometimes I felt like Gunga Din, in an outpost somewhere, away from the civilization we know, but that's foreign aid work.

Q: In the two years you were dealing with it, did you feel that these projects were making any progress, or not?

DUPUIS: Oh, that's hard to call, in a way. I think they filled a void which had to be filled. Whether they made progress or not, like, for instance, if we send trainees to the States to learn how to weld or learn how to do books, we felt we contributed.

And the problem with AID is that we try to measure too quickly. We think we'll have a measureable impact very soon. I don't think it works that way. At least, I haven't found it works that way.

So you have to wait. But my response would be that we were very useful and I'm glad we spent our taxpayers' money to do that. Geopolitically speaking, if you're going to be a world power, you've got to project your power somehow.

So that's what we did, I guess. That's what I thought I did and I think the projects were useful. They had a lot of old equipment which we handed over to them, from way back when, old jeeps. They had no transport.

The problem always was that these people had no system to keep vehicles repaired. You'd send them a tractor and they didn't have any system set up to repair it, to provide gas for it. It's always, "We're working on it."

Well, you have to put money aside to pay for spare parts, which had to be bought in the States. Our programs used all Caterpillar or John Deer equipment or whatever. But it's very difficult to get them to establish the backup systems that make you a country: how to maintain what you have, equipment and so on, that's how a country is run.

That was a constant battle. They wouldn't get the parts, the parts would take a long time coming in and we had what we had long pipelines: we put in money for two year periods and three or four years later there was still money in the pipeline, in other words they still had several thousand dollars floating around which should not have been floating around.

The basic document was a project agreement. We agreed, the United States, with Dahomey and it was signed by their president or their ministers and then the ambassador or someone in Washington to provide tractors to be used for whatever. And then you would have to negotiate with the people providing the tractors and then get them there and get parts and so on.

Same thing with training, you train the people and you'd have an agreement with the government that people coming back who were by then *bona fide* teachers would be given a promotion, I suppose and moved into a prearranged position.

Well, frequently, that didn't happen, because the government had changed, it had a new minister who was not in on the initial deal and so you did a lot of wheel spinning. But we do that in the States, too. So it was that nature of problem that sort of took up my time.

Q: Were these countries relatively stable during this period that you were dealing with them?

DUPUIS: No, mine wasn't, Dahomey wasn't stable. The first December I was there, the older guys told me, the government will change, probably. The former president, who was in Paris, will now come back and become president again and the president who's there now will depart.

And I didn't believe them, but it was sort of true. Each December there was a sort of overthrow of the government. But it wouldn't change anything in the country; just change the people who were running the country. I don't think it affected the populace, much.

Q: Did you feel that the money invested was sort of going into real project], or was it going into private bank accounts?

DUPUIS: Well, you know, that's always the question. Some of it, of course, was lost. But we could count, if we ordered several D-14 Caterpillar tractors, well, we could count when those came in. But sometimes, you ordered them and you were gone before the tractors arrived.

When you trained people, you send five, six students to Ohio State or technical school, to train how to become typewriter repairmen, pretty mundane, but that's what these countries did not have and when they came back they were trained.

The only problem was, they were frequently not given positions that we had agreed upon they went. It's fairly costly. But, still, what they don't have is trained people. The colonial powers were keenly aware that if they had trained people, there would be no need for the colonial powers.

So I think the U.S. position was train people and bring them back and hope they use them, because we never threatened to cut aid over such issues. Well, we don't work that way.

Because I think aid is supposed to provide economic sustenance to a country. Yeah, I think there are many negatives, but you have success stories: Taiwan was a success, Korea was, Turkey. Not entirely due to us, of course, but we had something to do with it.

In other words, you have to feel that you're accomplishing something. Otherwise, it's ridiculous.

Of course each administration would change the tenor of AID. In the Sixties, Seventies, you had the Alliance for Progress. This was a new impetus to rescue Latin America.

For a while there our foreign aid was like one tenth of one per cent of our gross national product and the political payoff, I think, of that investment paid big dividends.

And some money went into somebody's pocket. The problem there was if you had all these clauses in the project agreement, which we did, well, then if you inquired too

closely about the money, where is it going specifically, well then you could be accused of being an imperialist power undermining the domestic stability of the country. It's sort of a balancing act which is sometimes very difficult.

In Guyana I did some of the same things. I was the assistant program officer, I rose to great rank there, but there, the politics always intrude.

Q: I've heard many stories, the French looked upon us as poachers and we were really not interested in replacing them.

DUPUIS: There's an American fallacy, I think, which I've come to recognize more and more. We were the most powerful country in the world then, as we still are and, as someone once said, just the fact that we could invade Iraq, get there physically, move your troops there, is awesome and we don't seem to understand our latent power potential just scares people out of their wits.

As the German Chancellor said once at the UN, "It's absurd that anyone could think that Germany would invade anyway, because we can't even get there," wherever "there" is, whereas the Americans can get wherever they want.

We seem oblivious to that, that we have such immense power that people respect it, but they're afraid of it, too.

Q: Where did you go when you left Washington?

DUPUIS: I went to Georgetown, Guyana, which had just become independent, by the way. I arrived in October 1967 and stayed there two years, which was a very nice change for me. I was the assistant program officer.

You remember Cheddi Jagan? Well, he was the leader of the Loyal Opposition and Forbes Burnham was the prime minister when I got there.

Politics there was divided, not equally, between the East Indians and the blacks and never the twain should meet.

There had a communist, socialist government and you had Cheddi Jagan, a dentist, versus the socialist government of Forbes Burnham and these people were always at each others' throat. The politics was based on racial animosities: the East Indians versus Africans. When I was there, the person in power was Prime Minister Forbes Burnham, a very eloquent socialist.

And Cheddi Jagan lived two houses down from mine. Every time we drove by, my little girl would wave to Dr. Jagan. And he had of course an American wife, Janet Jagan, a real communist, as I understand it. He had been prime minister previously. He talked a lot, but his government wasn't successful.

We had the standard projects, we had education projects, cattle projects, bringing in cattle that could survive in very wet climates and very low lying lands, they came from Texas, somewhere. They didn't have any textbooks, so we brought in professors to do textbooks. Family planning, all the same ritual, the same programs, we had before.

Always the politics are changed a little bit and the politics are never stable, always the same thing. I remember when I first got there, our post had just been raised to the status of an embassy, from a consulate and the consul, Delmar Carlson, became the ambassador on the spot and I remember when I first got there, the ambassador liked to have big Christmas parties and smaller Fourth of July parties.

Anyway, I had only been there several days and I was talking to some fellow and in the course of the discussion I said, "By the way, what do you do?"

He said, "Well, I'm the Governor General of Guyana." I felt I was a character in a Gilbert and Sullivan musical. It was sort of funny, in a way.

The funny thing is, he became the first president of Guyana and paid a visit to London. Well, I was listening to the BBC that day and heard that as Sir David Rose was leaving one of the clubs in Westminster, some scaffolding that had been put there fell on his car and killed him. It was sort of dramatic. So I called the DCM and he didn't believe me.

Each year Sir David had a big ceremony to meet all the new members of the diplomatic corps. So I went there as a new officer with my wife. We were announced in alphabetical order; the ambassador was behind me, which was a bit unusual. My wife and I walked down this big long rug and we shook his hand. I thought I was in an MGM movie.

But the country never got off the ground, really, because they kept always fighting.

Q: How did, say, the cattle project and all, how did these projects work out?

DUPUIS: Well, it's always the same story, projects are approved for two years. You start them up and you hope they'll catch on, you hope they'll have enough critical mass to have some multiplier effect.

I wouldn't be surprised if they weren't still going. But, the unfortunate part is, I don't know. So I would say they were successful, but I can't give you any details, I just don't know, I wasn't there long enough for the projects to begin to yield results.

Q: Well, while you were there, was there real concern about Cheddi Jagan and how he might sign up with Castro, or something like that?

DUPUIS: Oh, yeah, the fight there between Jagan and Burnham was very real and it was felt at the embassy all the time, because the election of Burnham had been very close.

So what the effect was for foreign aid was we had a very tentative economic situation. They couldn't pay their bills, all the ministers changed jobs. They were always short of money and we were always ready, I hate to use the word handout, we were always ready to help, although we were advised not to contribute to the treasury directly. We wouldn't provide money directly to their treasury, because then we'd lost control of how the money would be used.

Those were called Economic Security Funds, but we didn't have too much of that in Guyana. But on the other hand, I was neither the mission director nor the ambassador, I was just one of the Indians taking care of the loans, so I don't know.

But that's my entire experience, over 25 years, the question always comes up and I raised it, too, were we successful and my view depends on what the criteria is. If you want to maintain some presence and I think we should, I think once the United States doesn't maintain a presence somebody else will and it's not costing us all that much, really. I think it's very worthwhile.

Q: Later, Jonestown happened there. [Ed: On November 18, 1978, in what became known as the "Jonestown Massacre," more than 900 members of an American cult called the Peoples Temple died in a mass suicide-murder under the direction of their leader Jim Jones.]

DUPUIS: When that happened, I'd been gone for about five or six months. That's somewhere there in the west of Guyana, which was called the Rupununi Savannah and there was always some conflict between Venezuela and Guyana at the border. All Guyana's borders are disputed, all the time.

Jonestown, I learned about it just as you did, in the newspaper. But personally I can see where Prime Minister Burnham would have liked to have an American presence there, close to Venezuela, to sort of utilize the land, but this guy was a nut, apparently and he utilized it wrongly, I suppose. You may know more about it than I do, in fact.

Q: I've talked to people who had to deal with cleaning up the mess, once it happened. Where did you go after that? This would be 1970-ish, yes?

DUPUIS: I went from there to, for me and AID, a glorious post. I went to Quito, Ecuador. Now that was a large country established hundreds of years ago, but in some ways it was not very well organized.

And I was there from [July] 1970 to 1974. I was there for two [two-year] tours, the first time it ever happened to me in AID, which was very nice, my daughter finished high school while I was there and so on.

They had oil, by the time we were there, they had discovered oil and that put pressure on the embassy and AID to not give them foreign aid. They have oil, so let them do their own thing.

Well, that was an issue all the time, still is, as I understand foreign aid now is back in. At the time I was there they were sort of winding down foreign aid to Ecuador. We were making the argument that this is not the time to quit, now's the time to guide the oil money into productive projects. We had the standard projects: health, population and family planning, agriculture and training, we did a lot of training all the time.

But at the time we were there the United States had this argument with Quito about tuna boats. I was there when some of these ships were captured by the Ecuadorian government and it caused quite a broo-ha-ha, because, as I understand it, the ships they used to capture the tuna boats were destroyers that had been loaned to them by the U.S. Navy, or something like that.

Anyway, so they captured the tuna boats and these guys didn't like it very much, so it became very political. I remember the ambassador, Ambassador Brewster, and the political officer was John Negrofonte. [Ed: Career Ambassador Robert Brewster presented his credentials on October 1, 1973 and left post April 8, 1976. Political Counselor John Negrofonte arrived at post in August 1973.]

So what happened was the United States set up a team to go to Guayaquil to offload the tuna. As I understand it, someone had to keep track of how many pounds of tuna fish were being unloaded from these ships, which were marvelous things, they had their own freezers.

And these guys, we said, we felt, were the last American cowboys, they went around the countryside throwing meat packages to dogs, so the people couldn't have them. We tried to explain that you can't do that, you're really upsetting negotiations to resolve the seizure of their ships, but my impression is they didn't care.

Anyway, one day John asked me over to the embassy. My mission was to carry a bottle of Scotch down to Guayaquil on a trip I had scheduled, for these guys who were out there negotiating the whole thing. So it had its element of fun, but it was a political problem which festered all the time. It was a question of recognition of offshore economic zones and it just lingered. I still don't think it's been solved.

Personally, for me, for AID, after the Congo, Cambodia, Guyana, this was a pretty plush post, except for the altitude, which made me sick.

Q: It's a beautiful country, isn't it?

DUPUIS: Yes, it is, very wild. All kinds of volcanoes. And you have earthquakes, a lot. People were always panicked by earthquakes. And I was, too.

In 1970-1974 I think the idea of terrorism against U.S. citizens or officials became full blown. Things were pretty tender in Ecuador. Then we heard that there was a terrorism

incident going on in Quito. I remember the ambassador called us in and said, “What we were talking about has occurred.”

Well, it wasn't quite that. What had happened was that there was an argument between the army and the air force and the army had kidnapped the chief of staff of the air force. So this created a lot of political confusion, but it wasn't a genuine episode of terrorism.

So the point is that, at that point, a general took over, but he was fairly effective. Political parties were very, very active and they didn't always play fair, but there wasn't much that could be done about that.

Anyway, he came in after a dictatorship that had held power for four, five, six years, led by a *caudillo* whose name I can't remember right now, a great orator and then he turned over control to a military governor. And so the military took over and we kept on with our projects, we had no particular problems due to the political changes.

But we always had a hard time getting government input into our projects. Our project agreements always called for a U.S. contribution, a local contribution and then the government usually contributed by providing the labor needed to build a school, for instance, which was sometimes a problem, because their builders weren't very good. Again, that's why you have people who get paid to resolve some of these things.

So that's way it went. When I got to my next country, it was the same thing. It's always the same issues, really.

Q: Did you find the corruption bad there?

DUPUIS: Yeah, sure. *La mordida*.

Q: “The bite,” yeah.

DUPUIS: Everybody pays everybody to cooperate. Of course, we have it, too. It's much more sophisticated, of course. But yeah, in our terms, there was a lot of corruption, everywhere. We always operated in a climate of corruption, yeah. Somebody gets paid to do something that should have been done for free.

Q: Well then, were there any particular projects that you felt were particularly well focused there?

DUPUIS: Well, we had some, building schools, that went well, 'cause you could see the school being built, they erected it and you could see it, whereas you couldn't see anything before. And we trained teachers and the teachers went to the States, or we brought teachers over to teach the teachers and then that went quite well and that was sort of manageable.

I remember a project, Latin American Scholarships, and we would send students for math degrees. And I remember sitting on the board to see if applicants were qualified. Sometimes we didn't have enough applicants to fill the spots, because they weren't qualified. They had to speak English and some went, you thought that they could, but they couldn't and you've wasted your time. The embassy and USAID each contributed to these scholarships. That worked pretty well. You could see people get on the airplane to go.

Q: When did you leave?

DUPUIS: Oh, I left there in the 1974 summer cycle.

Q: Where did you go after that?

DUPUIS: After that, I went to Washington. I became the desk officer for Indonesia and that was very interesting, because I had not been a desk officer for a large country. At the time I was there, 1975, I think it was, Indonesia had oil, too and of course at the time had 135 million people. I think it was the fifth largest country in the world and they had one of the largest AID programs.

Suharto was in charge of the government and they had oil and they had scandals with their big oil company, Pertamina. They had constant internal problems. One of Suharto's right hand men was someone named B.J. Habibie.

Q: Yes, he later became...

DUPUIS: Yeah, president, right. He had been trained as an aerospace engineer and worked at Messerschmitt in Germany. He was always agitating and correctly so, I suppose, to get more money. He wanted to build aircraft factories.

I remember once he came with the governor of Jakarta to Washington to argue for that and to my amazement one day I got a call from the assistant administrator. He said, "Habibie is here. He's coming down for a meeting with you in an hour," something like that.

I was astounded. These guys shouldn't be coming down to the desk level. They should be received at the assistant secretary/administrator. I've always felt personally they just dumped it on me because they didn't want to talk to him.

Anyway, I'm downstairs and in comes Mr. Habibie, who spoke excellent English, accompanied by a huge staff. I didn't have a staff. I had me, my secretary and an assistant desk officer.

Anyway, we sat down and the first thing I focused on is, he just wanted capital development money to build an aircraft factory in Indonesia. Well, I explained to him, being somewhat unprepared, that AID was no longer doing capital development, bricks

and mortar. We were no longer building schools, we were no longer building roads, generally speaking.

And he seemed to accept that, but he made an entire presentation. I reported it back upstairs, but this guy was seeing the wrong guy at the wrong time. I don't know what happened to the governor of Jakarta, thank God, because I would have to tell him the same thing. So I can tell everybody I met with some guy who later became the president of Indonesia.

And the other thing I remember, this was during the Carter Administration and they were trying to promote women, which I'm all for, but while I was there all the promotions went to women. I was passed over, because understandably then women were getting the positions.

Q: This is during the Carter Administration, wasn't it?

DUPUIS: Yeah, it was the Carter Administration. When I got there, it was the Ford Administration and then the Carter Administration came in. We did all kinds of position papers for the new administration. Anyway, there was a big shift in AID thinking about promotions and things that personally affected me.

The point is Indonesia was very active and their officers in Washington actively befriended the desk officer and the State desk officer and we were invited to the embassy, to the chancery there and we invited them to our houses, so it was a full court press, as it were.

In fact I recall, now that I'm talking, at some point in my tour NASA was going to launch an communications satellite in Indonesia, which would have been the first Asian satellite in history and sure enough, NASA people came to the desk and I showed them how we do our paperwork, how you do a project agreement and so on and it was very interesting and was sort of a highlight of my two year tour there.

And eventually the Indonesian embassy invited all the officers who'd worked on this in State and AID to come down to the launching of this satellite, which was call Palaba I and sure enough, we went down to Florida, to Cocoa Beach, they put us up, they had a big evening séance after that and I watched my first satellite being launched. [Ed: The first Palaba satellite was launched at 7:31 P.M. July 8, 1976, Florida time on a U.S. rocket from the Kennedy Space Center.]

Q: What kind of satellite was it?

DUPUIS: It was a communications satellite and I remember our guys in capital development carefully going over the figures, because the argument was, why launch a satellite, just put up some towers. And the response was, yeah, but the satellite will cost much less, once it's launched and they will be able to rent out the satellite's spare capacity to other countries. So it was in fact a big move, not only for Indonesia, but for

Asia, which had no satellites at the time that I know of. So I worked on that and that was sort of gratifying.

And then at the time Indonesia, of course, was under a dictatorship and there was a lot of interest in moving people forcefully, in a way, from Jakarta and Jogjakarta to some of these other islands and they would give them, it was like a Western land grant, they would give you money, give you a grubstake, these people would be given technical assistance, they were given housing and so on.

Q: They were trying to develop, was it West Irian or something, the Indonesian part of New Guinea?

DUPUIS: Yeah, I think that's what it was.

Q: My understanding is that they put a lot of people there, but then there really wasn't much to keep them going and

DUPUIS: But that's the enduring problem of course of AID projects: you're under pressure to do something and you have to project four years ahead and sometimes within the four years things have changed immensely.

At that time Timor was in play, too, because it was politically active. In fact, history proves that later on, the government just stepped in and sort of crushed the rebellion in Timor.

Yeah, there was a lot of expansion in Indonesia at the time, because they had oil and the oil had brought in a lot of corruption and so and they had a dictatorial government, under General Suharto. [Ed: General Suharto became the second President of Indonesia in March 1967.] They called his wife, "Mrs. Ten Per Cent."

Indonesia is one of those countries that had the potential to take-off economically. A lot of these other countries that I was in, like Haiti, Dahomey, they can't take off. They don't have the geopolitical substance to do it.

But Indonesia had the potential I would imagine, because they had the land mass and they had trained people, compared to Haiti or Guyana; there's no comparison.

Q: You were pretty senior in AID by this time, weren't you?

DUPUIS: Well, I was a big, fat FSR-4. An FSR-4 is now equivalent to a GS-15.

Q: How did you avoid getting sent to Vietnam?

DUPUIS: Oh, well, I recall I was sitting in the Congo in 1964 and I spoke good French and I got a cable ordering me to go to Vietnam. Well, I rejected that. I'd just been evacuated from Cambodia when the mission closed, I was sitting in the Congo, which

was in a state of upheaval and I just flatly said, “Pick somebody else, because I’ve just had two difficult assignments. I have a family.” Anyway, I remember my boss said, “Hey, I wish I’d sent a cable like that.” Anyway, I wasn’t sent to Vietnam. I didn’t miss it, by the way, but I was not.

Q: Well, then, after your dealing with Indonesia, what did you do?

DUPUIS: Well, then I went to Haiti. I just hadn’t had enough punishment. Everybody knows about Haiti, now, but it’s always been that way.

That was the first place where I had a culture shock. I’d never had a culture shock in my previous assignments. I’m been told about, when I was first in AID, I might have a culture shock.

I didn’t know what it was, but I did when I went to Haiti. It has nothing to do with the Haitians being black, because I’d experienced that before in other countries. But it just didn’t fit right.

Anyway, Baby Doc Duvalier was the local dictator, been there for years, replaced his father and as you drove by the presidential palace, there was a big sign in front saying, “*Jean-Claude Duvalier, President á vie,*” president for life. So it didn’t give you much other political choice. It was decided that he would be president for life.

At that time of course the famous Tonton Macoutes were called the “*Milice de volontaire de la Sécurité Nationale,*” voluntary police reservists. It was thuggery as usual, but I guess they wore gloves, I don’t know.

Matter of fact, I was so disappointed at that time that I recommended in my second year, I remember writing to the mission director saying I don’t think we should give further aid to Haiti, we never know what our multiplier affects are and they sort of repel us, they didn’t care.

When I came back from home leave, I reported in and I found out I’d been transferred to Nicaragua. So, Haiti, I was there for two years. The current director of the Peace Corps, Aaron Williams, he was one of my colleagues in Haiti.

Haiti had something called the office of development planning, they couldn’t plan anything. My view was you can plan anything if you want, but if you don’t consider the political situation, you’re planning for nothing. So I recommended that we not give aid to Haiti, just food, which was necessary, but cut out aid and that didn’t go over very well.

We had regular projects there, but what happened in Haiti was that the government was so bad that the topsoil, it’s a very hilly country and the topsoil was always running downhill when it rained and disappeared. I would just look out my balcony and could see rocks coming down this very hilly street and they would lose the topsoil. I was told by

agronomists it takes at least a hundred years, roughly, to create enough topsoil to grow anything.

So what was happening was that people kept cutting the tree cover in order to make charcoal (for cooking fuel). Anytime you planted trees, they'd chop them down before they matured. They didn't have any trees, so when it rained the topsoil would erode away.

It was the most corrupt government I've met, I guess. The moment we tried to pin down where the money went, we were accused of being imperialistic and dictating domestic policy. And that's way it goes with AID, as far as I can tell.

We wanted to grow trees and an agronomist had heard of something called the ipil-ipil tree, which would grow in six months. Then the problem was do we do this with the government, which we were required to do by law, or do we find some way to involve the private sector, namely churches, which were motivated, to plant these trees.

And then of course I left, but the ipil-ipil tree, that's how far AID was driven to accommodate Haiti, which meant we want this more than they do and it's still the case. The earthquake, of course that's not Haiti's fault, but they're going to have a hard time getting that place off the ground. The government will not really brook interference in the long run. I've written an article for my local paper, because I thought I was qualified, entitled "Haiti, Always a Disaster." I don't think anything will ever improve Haiti unless you make a clean sweep.

Now you know that Baby Doc was pushed out of there some time ago. The United States finally said, "Okay, that's it! Out you go!" and they gave him a plane ticket to Paris. He took all of his ill-gotten gains, I guess. [Ed: Duvalier and his wife departed Haiti in February 1986 in a U.S. Air Force aircraft.]

But, anyway, at least they got rid of him, but then you had all these comical governments that came in and all these people do is sack the populace, that's what they do. You've have to be able to change the people in power. So it's going to continue as it has for two hundred years.

And from there I went to Nicaragua.

Q: This was from when to when?

DUPUIS: 1978-1979. There, the USAID mission had been cut back so drastically that there was only a mission director, a program officer (myself) and a comptroller and then we had a number of local staff to operate things. Well, that didn't make for a happy situation.

Of course the government there was run by Ortega, who had just overthrown Somoza [July 1979] and then of course the United States under Reagan [Ed: inaugurated January

1981] was trying to overthrow them by having these *contras* come in from Honduras to overthrow that government, which was concurrently trying to overthrow a lot of other governments, they were very active in El Salvador.

So it was a very hostile environment, but in career terms it was pretty good for me, because I ended up being mission director there most of the time, mission director of a lost battalion.

But we had all these projects left over from before. We don't just begin a project and close it. There are partners out there, people being trained and so on. And so I inherited that.

And it was very interesting. We had no ambassador when I got there. At some point Ambassador Quinton came in, a superb ambassador, I thought [Ed: Ambassador Quinton presented his credential in March 1982 and departed post May 1984. Previously Ambassador Pezzullo had been ambassador from July 1979 to August 1981]. And then of course AID started to draw down a lot of money we had invested for projects.

And the Ortega government didn't like that. Every time I was sent in at the direction of Washington to present a letter saying, "We are hereby withdrawing millions of dollars' worth of projects," it would end up in the newspaper. I would be in the headlines. It was a bit heady, I must admit, to wind up in the local paper as the bad guy.

They would say that "By withdrawing this you are withdrawing money that we have agreed upon and this is of course not productive for our relationship." Anyway, we did that.

Anyway, then we would withdraw more money. I delivered at least two such notifications, as I recall and on both occasions I ended up on the front page of the local papers as the bad guy.

In the meantime the *contras* were becoming active and when I left it was still happening. I was there two years. I retired from there in 1981.

I worked there, by the way, the position of the U.S. government was that we worked with the private sector. There was something called COSEP (*Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada en Nicaragua*), which was the Chamber of Commerce for Nicaragua and a cattlemen's association of Nicaragua. These weren't poor people.

I remember working with Enrique Bolaños, who later became the president of Nicaragua, which was considered quite a move for us. What happened is that at some point Ortega felt strong enough to have elections and he did and he lost and Enrique Bolaños became the president. [Ed: Enrique José Bolaños Geyer was the President of Nicaragua from 10 January 2002 to 10 January 2007.]

We had ordered some seed for COSEP to distribute in different provinces and cities and I remember 18-20 people came in and we made a big presentation and he accepted the seed. And then of course the government wouldn't license them to drive on the road.

Nicaragua was a cauldron of political activity.

Q: Here you're working on a aid program with private citizens, under a government, which we violently opposed.

DUPUIS: Well, that's an interesting question. A lot of this stuff was imposed on Nicaragua from Washington. I don't think it was the ambassador's idea. His job was to go around putting out fires, really.

Yeah, we were there and they understood it that we were opposing the government in power, there's no question about that and we were doing that by working with the so-called private sector, which is always the privilege of the U.S. embassy, you can talk to whoever you want. You're right, it was an awkward situation.

Q: Did you feel that the Ortega government, the Sandinistas, were making an honest effort to try to bring about better economic wellbeing, or were they milking the country, or what?

DUPUIS: I think both. Ortega was definitely a communist. Their movement was named for a very well-known historical figure, General Sandino, who had opposed a previous occupation of Nicaragua by the U.S. Marines, I guess in the thirties. So they became the Sandinistas and they were very anti-American.

Remember, now, they had just overthrown Somoza, who should have gone a long time previously. Guess who was the main supporter of Somoza? Us.

So there you are, a very delicate situation. I remember when I first arrived, the first day I stayed at something called the *Casa Grande*, which had been built by Somoza for the American ambassador, who reigned supreme then I guess, in the Forties.

There was a program playing on TV that night alleging that the American ambassador had plotted way back when to lure General Sandino to a meeting somewhere and then that's how they assassinated him. Who "they" is, I don't know. So there was plenty of bad blood there.

But the fact is we were a big power, the United States, deathly afraid of communism in Central America and trying to overthrow, really, a government with which we had diplomatic relations, to which we were still extending foreign aid.

I wasn't allowed to think about that. This stuff was not being discussed at my level. Eventually I ended up on the country team, when I became mission director, but the point

is that a lot of this stuff was going on unbeknownst to the embassy staff, frankly. That's the impression I had when I was there.

Q: Yeah, we had Ollie North doing his thing.

DUPUIS: I was back in the States by then. I personally didn't like the Sandinistas. They expropriated all of the best houses, they divided all of the goodies and they interfered in other countries. They were very active in El Salvador, which is where I went later on contract. And so I wasn't sorry to see them go.

And then of course the wife of a newspaper publisher who was assassinated by the *somocistas* during the civil war, she ran for president against Ortega. She won, of course and she was, I thought, not particularly effective.

It was peculiar, there were two major newspapers in Nicaragua at the time: one was *El Barricada*, the other one, I don't remember the name [*La Prensa* ?]. One was pro-Sandinista, the other one was sort of pro-American.

I remember one guy popped into my office, took my picture and I ended up on the front page the next day, quoted as saying what I hadn't said and in fact I had not said anything on the subject matter of the article.

They based it on something I had said several weeks before at a press conference, which I didn't ordinarily hold, about levels of aid. And so they would just take a picture of somebody, run it on the front page and that created a "fact."

So it was very heady stuff, I must admit, very politically intriguing.

I was there when the Pope came to visit [Ed: March 1983]. One of my senior local employees went to see the Pope. They went early and they got front row seats, in a big athletic arena. And then the Sandinistas came by, soldiers and said, "You've gotta move out." They were kicked out and replaced, the Sandinistas put in some people in all those front rows who could agitate against the Pope when he was saying mass and that's what happened, I remember seeing it, because they wanted the Pope to say something about the dead soldiers on their side, instead of just the other side.

The country was split between the Sandino government, the Ortega government and the Catholic Church, which was headed by Archbishop Obando y Bravo, who later became a cardinal. They were the main domestic opposition against the Sandinistas and so the Sandinista wanted the Pope to give his blessing to the Sandinista government and the Pope apparently resolutely disagreed. He was sort of shouted down. Anyway, he said mass and that was sort of a high point.

The question was whether the papal visit was government-to-government or as a pastor to his flock. It wasn't government-to-government, but the Sandinistas still were responsible for his protection.

And I remember the local personnel inside the AID mission said, “We won’t have any jobs as our assistance program was scaled back. What’s going to happen to us?”

Some, of course, were spies. I remember one in particular, we were transferring people to the embassy staff, they needed people, as we were losing ours. And one guy, they said, “No, we can’t accept him, because he’s a spy.” I didn’t know that.

Well, he was a spy because the Sandinista government was putting a lot of pressure on his family. I presume he had no choice. I never personally discussed that with him. All I know is what the embassy told me. And there were a lot of people placed in that situation, I’m sure, because it was a political cauldron.

Q: A very difficult time for people.

DUPUIS: I knew nothing could happen to me, but what convinced me to retire, one day we were at the embassy, then we learned there was a big demonstration coming to the embassy. The embassy was not the fortified building we have today. It was a big structure, but not very strong.

And these school kids came up to the gate and they would rattle the gate. My wife was working at the APO and my daughter was running the commissary and the ambassador’s guesthouse.

Well, I saw personally my wife having to leave through the back gate and my daughter running out the back gate, because we didn’t know what would happen with this crowd. Nothing did happen, but you get these school kids revved up and the embassy had no protection, that was my conclusion. There were Marines there, but they weren’t allowed to fire, obviously. So there we were and they were rattling the gates pretty hard.

I stayed of course. But when I saw my family having to leave by the back gate, it gave me a sort of impetus to quit.

And that’s how I saved the world.

Q: Well then, you say you retired from there?

DUPUIS: Yeah.

Q: And then you went back to El Salvador?

DUPUIS: I went to El Salvador in 1989. They were looking for people in the program office, because that country of course was in a revolutionary state and they couldn’t get families to go there and I don’t blame them. People were being blown up all over the place.

I know I sound heroic. Obviously, I wasn't blown up and I was pretty well protected. So in 1989 I had a six-month tour as senior advisor to the mission director.

What was nice in El Salvador was, they were in the middle of a civil war, which turned out, considering everything, not bad. The FMNLF (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) finally came to power via the ballot box, which is not a bad conclusion, as far as I'm concerned.

But it was very, very sticky at the embassy. The goal of the mission there was clear. It was political. There was no pretense of delivering economic aid. We were there, as far as I know, to support the fight against the communist guerilla front. A lot of the impetus from the leftist side came from Castro, so I was told.

I just advised people, as a sort of wise man, at that point. But it was nice to see that the embassy and AID had a clear political goal, supporting democratic institutions, such as they were. You had some guys that were ostensibly on our side who were pretty bad, who would just kill people. So it was very, very difficult.

I recall one day, one of the last putsches to overthrow the government I was sitting on my bed and a helicopter gunship flew by and fired off a salvo, not at the building I was in, somewhere next door, but the blast was so powerful that it knocked me off my bed, I fell off the bed.

You got up the next day, after that last putsch and there were bodies all over the place. I didn't see all of them myself. I saw some.

One day I was sitting in the USAID buildings and I heard a gunshot, you always heard gunshots and then we heard that the latest attorney general of El Salvador had just been assassinated in the street about two blocks from us. And we weren't allowed to go outside, although we did.

Now that I think of it, when I first arrived, I sat in the nice garden of my plush hotel and had breakfast and then when I finally checked in someone said, "I'm glad you enjoy it, because just two weeks ago the labor attaché had been blown up while staying in the same hotel. So I moved out of that hotel. I knew it wasn't safe and matter of fact I volunteered for the assignment, so I can't complain.

The ambassador, Ambassador Walker, he had big white Cadillac, in which he was driven from his home, under armed guard, of course, to the embassy, which was two-three blocks from the USAID building. [Ed: Career FSO William Walker presented his credentials as ambassador in August 1988 and departed post February 1992.]

And I remember one day, people came by in armored cars, picked us up and drove us to work. Anyway, my driver fell in behind the ambassador's car. And then we got to a stop sign and this pregnant lady was crossing the street, so the ambassador had to stop his car and his security detail had to get out and escort the lady across the street.

My driver stayed right behind the ambassador's car. I said, "That's the most dangerous car in town!" And then I realized, this is my view, that he was in a white Cadillac because it was evident the U.S. ambassador was in it. If they were going to blow him up, well, it would have been a major incident. That's the way I viewed it.

That's the way it was in El Salvador. The embassy was like an armed fort. They had a machine gun nest on top of the embassy, right on the roof. It was very difficult to get in. You were escorted in and escorted out. It was a terrible feeling. I wouldn't have wanted to work in the embassy building.

At night, when we left to go home, we were allowed to take an armored car with us, not for our safety, but they didn't want to leave all the vehicles in one motor pool, in case they got blown up. So I had to drive this big General Motors carryall through these narrow streets, with a stick shift I didn't really know how to drive and I took it to my house every night.

So it was a very interesting period of time. As I say, that's how I saved the world. But I wouldn't swap if for anything, frankly.

Q: Well, you really had some experiences and when you look at it, it's not as though AID didn't do anything. AID did a hell of a lot and you were involved in it.

DUPUIS: Exactly, as I look back now, I got involved in a lot of stuff. People have to get involved. You can't just talk about it. I wasn't trying to be a hero, I sure as heck wasn't.

But, yeah, I think I was involved in some stuff that was definitely worthwhile. For instance, I'm very happy to see stability return to El Salvador, really. They've had elections. They've been bloody, but look what happens elsewhere. And Honduras came out okay.

So I would say it's worthwhile, but don't hold your breath, it won't happen overnight.

Q: Anyway, I want to thank you very much.

DUPUIS: Listen, I want to thank you for listening to all this.

Q: Well, I've enjoyed it. Thank you, Bernie.

DUPUIS: My pleasure.

End of interview