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PHILIP-MICHAEL GARY

*Interviewed by: Carol Peasley
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is January 9th, 2017; this is Carol Peasley and this is interview number one with Philip-Michael Gary. Thank you Phil for joining us for this.

GARY: Looking forward to it.

Childhood, Education, and Early Professional Background

Q: Why don't we start – if you could talk a bit about where you were born, your family background, early childhood, particularly if there were any things in your childhood that really directed you towards this kind of career in the Foreign Service or international development.

GARY: I'd be hard pressed to say there was anything in my early childhood that led me in this direction. I was born in 1943, in Washington, DC (District of Columbia). I was

born in a part of Washington that I discovered recently was called Capitol Hill extended. That's a term that I really had to chuckle when I heard, because I remember growing up as a kid, the Capitol seemed a very, very long ways away. But I went to elementary school, junior high, and high school all in Washington.

My parents were unusual in the sense that they were both college graduates. My mother was a mathematician; my father was an economist. What was truly extraordinary about my family was my father's parents were both college graduates. My grandfather actually studied agronomy at the University of South Carolina, as I understand it before it was segregated. My grandmother went to a girl's school in North Carolina. So education was always something that was extremely important in the house.

Q: Were your parents teaching or did they work for the government?

GARY: They worked for the government. My father was actually the first African-American economist to work for the Department of Labor. He left there and joined AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) and worked as an economist for the labor movement. My mother initially was going to start teaching but ended up in government service. She had some really interesting jobs during her life. She was the administrative officer for Walter Heller at the Council of Economic Advisers, which was one of her more exciting jobs. I think it was exciting, because we almost never saw her! (Laughter) She later went to work for OEO (Office of Economic Opportunity) and retired from OEO. They were very much activists. Both of them belonged to ADA, Americans for Democratic Action. They had an office on Connecticut Avenue; I sometimes got to go to some of their events. I remember they were both very good friends with Bob Nathan who I knew as a kid; he was just Bob Nathan. It wasn't until much later when I was an adult back in Washington that I knew Bob Nathan was really "Bob Nathan."

So I look back and I was exposed by my parents to any number of things that were wholly unique. Most of them I think were pretty positive. One of the things I look back on now as an adult – my parents were both scholars, and both had done very well. I was not. I was inclined to less intellectual pursuits. So there was often a fair amount of tension in terms of my academics. I think it would be fair to say that I was in university before I started to be serious about academics. One of the reasons for that is I really did get a gift from my mother in terms of mathematics, and so it was always easier for me than for most people, so I tended to just get by. I didn't have to work real hard.

One of the real turning points that shaped me, and I didn't know it at the time – when I was growing up in Washington, it was still a segregated city. So, it wasn't really until I was in junior high school that I started being in integrated schools. My parents moved from Capitol Hill extended up to Shepherd Park, just north of Walter Reed, when I was in 10th grade. I went to Coolidge High School. In my 10th grade class, there were 400-plus kids and maybe 15 black kids. In the 11th grade there were 400 and perhaps five black kids. In 12th grade, I think there was one black kid. Coolidge, it was an interesting place.

They were different kinds of teachers. If you'd asked me, "Did anybody really make me feel uncomfortable," I would have said "No." I still would say no.

What I realized, though, was that my ability to get by without studying turned out to be a real handicap because many of my teachers just left me alone. It wasn't until I got to university and I remember as a freshman (I had always gotten As in math) and I was taking a calculus course. We had three tests and I remember that very clearly; they all weighed the same. I knew I was in trouble because on my first test, out of 100 I got three. This seemed to pose a problem to me; without being good at math I could see this was going to be an issue. So I talked to the professor, because I thought the test was relatively straightforward and I had done okay. It turned out that what I had done was, I had gotten most of the answers right but I had gotten all the proofs wrong. I really didn't know how to do proofs. Part of my learning curve then was realizing there were several things like that that had happened in high school that I had been exposed to things, but really never pushed or required to understand what I was doing.

Q: Teachers didn't have expectations from you?

GARY: That was a defining moment for me. The University of Cincinnati where I went to school was a unique challenge. I initially majored in architecture and also in political science. Again, it was really not understanding how seriously one had to take the notion of academics and career. However, being a dilettante in both areas turned out to serve me well, so if I had to take a point that probably started me towards the Foreign Service at least from an intellectual point of view that would have been it.

I think the other thing that's really important as I look back, (because I think it had a big impact on how effective or ineffective I was at times in the Foreign Service...) when I was in college, and this was the time of black student unions, I was active in the black student union at the University of Cincinnati. There were the usual confrontations and issues.

Q: This was?

GARY: Early and mid-'60s. And one of the things that I ended up taking away from that time was what I could only describe as a kind of schizophrenia; I really was deeply engrossed in what we called then the Black Power movement. At the same time, I was in the academic side of the university and the contradictions between those two worlds kept growing and growing. Bridging those contradictions and trying to keep a foot in very different worlds was something that really served me very well in later life within the Foreign Service.

Q: What were the demographics of the University of Cincinnati at that time? Were there many black students there?

GARY: Not many. At that time the University of Cincinnati was pretty unique. First of all, it was on the quarter system so depending on if you were in a professional school,

you would be at the university for two quarters and then have two quarters of what they called academically related work. It was also a municipal school; when I went there it was still owned by the city. It was one of the few municipal universities left, even though it obviously had a close connection with the state. So it had minority students, many of whom were part-time students from the city. That formed sort of one class of students. Then you had students in the professional schools who were there alternating quarters. Then you had students who were there full-time; you went three quarters and were off summer quarter. As I look back to my dormitory, I think most of the students who were students of color who were there full time were athletes. The University of Cincinnati, part of the lure for me was the basketball team. But unlike many schools, it really gave you the opportunity to be a student as well as an athlete. One of the things they did which was fairly unique was they had something called university college, which was like a junior college within the college. So if you weren't inclined to particularly advance academically but you wanted to be an athlete, you could be in the internal college and take courses that hopefully at some point would give you some skill set. It was a pretty unique place.

I think in fairness the thing that probably prepared me most for the Foreign Service... As I said, I grew up in Washington; my father had an office in Washington and New York so I was between those places quite a bit. But very much an East Coast kind of person; I thought of Cincinnati as the hinterland and came back to Washington every opportunity I got. When I finished the University of Cincinnati, I went to work for the district government, for their planning department. We were doing work redoing Southwest, the area which is now the Watergate. I worked for a city administrator, great guy, Julian Dugas. I was having a great time; I spent a couple years there. I got a call from a student whom I had known at the University of Cincinnati who was at the University of Kansas. One of my political science professors had also moved there. The University of Kansas had started a search for an assistant chancellor, and they asked if I wanted to come interview. I thought, "This is funny." So having never been to Kansas, I said, "Of course." I went and interviewed. They had a number of really qualified academic people who wanted the job; on the student side because the students were having input to this, they had a number of people who were completely unacceptable to the university. So they ended up with me! As a compromise. I thought that was kind of interesting.

Several things again became immediately clear to me after I arrived. I don't know if you ever read the book by Tom Wolfe, Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers? I didn't completely realize I'd be the flak catcher. But that was the case. I was the interface between students and the administration.

Q: By this time it's late 1960s?

GARY: We're now in '72.

Q: When students were very obstreperous.

GARY: Active! Energetic! So that was a shock. But what was the real shock – I had been in the summer before working with a friend on a project in New York City. I'd flown to my interview in Kansas and flown right back the next day and I'd really seen very little of it. We did all this by phone. So I got in my little Volkswagen in New York City and I drove to Lawrence, Kansas.

Well, interesting parts of the country. What I remember most were two incidents in my first couple of days. I went in to open my bank account. I had occasion to go back the next day and the person in the bank said, "Oh hi, Mr. Gary. How are you?" I became immediately paranoid. I grew up in Washington and New York – you live by your neighbors for 20 years and they don't know your name!

But what really jolted me was I was in a grocery store – I think it was a Kroger's – and I'm in line and there's a guy behind me with a cart. And he reaches in the cart and I hear this clump as he puts something on the counter. I look on the counter and he's got a shotgun, and shells. I had just left New York; people show up with shotguns you don't generally want to stand around. The notion that everybody had guns – they had guns in their pick-up trucks. You could go in the 7-Eleven and buy ammunition. I had never seen such a thing. People asked, "Which country gave you the greatest culture shock?", and I'd go with "Kansas!" (Laughter) I think Kansas prepared me for any place else in the Foreign Service!

So I stayed there for four years and I did enjoy it. I left Kansas and went to Virginia Tech and worked in the college of architecture there, in the urban design part of it.

Q: Was that an administrator position as well?

GARY: No, that was a faculty position. I really had gotten interested both as an undergrad and during my time at Kansas in New Towns. The concept was one of how could you use physical design to get people to live more harmoniously? I'd been reading about these new towns that had been built, primarily in England but throughout Europe, and that their goal was a physical design that caused people to interact in ways consistent with harmonious living over a lifespan. So I'd been interested in that. I came to Virginia Tech; I got to work on Reston a little bit. My time at Virginia Tech was one of exploration in terms of peopling. I was in a small town, Blacksburg in Virginia, and I was going between Blacksburg and Washington and meeting people with different views on design and politics. I'm not sure how it happened; the International Visitors Service asked someone to escort some Malaysian planners around. They asked if I would do it and of course it was a fun thing to do; you get to go around the country with these guys and show them things. Great time. I ended up when I was in Washington meeting some people who were in development and interested in urbanization. I kind of kept in touch with them; as luck would have it, for my sabbatical year I went to HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) to work in the New Communities Administration, and I ran into one of these same people.

Q: This would have been...

GARY: In 1978, '79. Carter was still president; we were headed from Carter to Reagan. One of the guys I had been in touch with was a guy named John Colby, and John worked in a place (John had been at the University of Cincinnati in the architecture school there, so I knew him slightly, then I met him when I was doing the Malaysia work) called the Office of Housing. We met for lunch a couple of times and he said, "You might be interested in talking to this guy who runs it; I mentioned you and he said he would love to talk to you."

Recruitment by USAID Office of Housing – Hiring in 1981

Q: This is the Office of Housing in USAID? (United States Agency for International Development)

GARY: USAID. For me, the Office of Housing – I figured this was something like student housing, so why do I want to meet this person? But as most people familiar with AID (USAID) know, that was Peter Kim. I went and met Peter and we had a really good conversation. Peter said, "Would you be interested in possibly coming here to work? You'd have to work your way up." I'm a university professor on sabbatical, and I'm thinking "Who is this guy? 'Work my way up?'"

I have to say in all honesty I wasn't sure how well we were going to get along, so I asked my university if they would extend my sabbatical for a year in case I wanted to come back; they said, "oh sure." I went to work at the office with Peter.

Q: This was 1979?

GARY: This was 1979, 1980. I think we started working together while I was still at HUD. I think I was formally assigned to the agency in '81.

Q: So initially it was through HUD?

GARY: I was still at HUD, and had agreed with Peter. They had a number of consultant organizations they were using and I was consulting with them, or at least sharing ideas with them. But that was my entrée, working my way into the system.

Q: When you went into the Office of Housing, was – during that period many people went into AID through the International Development Intern program. Peter Kim ran his own personnel hiring – did he have his own recruitment or use agency recruitment? At some point the Office of Human Resources processed you when you were a normal AID employee, but I'm just wondering if he was relying upon the agency to recruit or if he himself was actively doing recruitment?

GARY: Peter did most of the recruiting. The Office of Housing had several unique structures to it, which of course when I joined, I didn't know because I didn't know the agency. Most of the agency was housed at that point down in Main State. The Office of

Housing was up on Connecticut Avenue, a place called Universal North. It was on a couple of floors of the Universal North building. It was a pretty self-contained program because it used something called loan guarantees in order to finance housing in developing countries. The office got a one percent fee from all the loans it originated, so in many ways it was economically self-sufficient. The money went into a U.S. government account, but it was identified as being from the Office of Housing. There was a sense within the office that this was then almost a stand-alone operation, and that the interaction with the rest of AID was more of an interaction with an agency than being a part of an agency.

Anybody listening to this will sort of laugh; it's like watching a movie where you know what's going to come next! Because of course then people in the Office of Housing as they start working their way through the agency realize that they are but a small cog in the agency. So there was a grand awakening; but it was a unique operation. Peter's view in terms of hiring – again, he hired me as what they call mid-career, because I had a reasonable amount of experience. Peter's view was you needed people, one with the passion, but two with a lot of technical expertise preferably in both housing and finance, but certainly strongly in one. And he wanted people who had been engaged in a commercial way in those fields, but also people who had a philosophy about why they were doing it. He was really looking for what I think most of us in AID later would identify as that committed AID officer who could clearly do something else and probably make a lot more money doing it, but for a myriad of reasons were driven to be engaged in these kinds of activities.

I remember one of my early conversations with Peter because Peter was interested in developing a broader range of minorities within the Office of Housing. We talked, and Peter was saying, "We should think about going to this or that place," and laid out what the agency's requirements were to come in. You had to have a masters degree or a Ph.D. and X number of years, and either a language or a demonstrated ability to learn a language. I said, "Peter, you're asking in this case for an African-American with that kind of resume to come in at an entry level and make something like \$30,000. These are people who can command \$150,000; do you know how few people of color there are that fit that bill?" He said, "I assume not many, but those are the ones I want!" (Laughter) But that was Peter's philosophy; "I want those folks who could go off and do other things but really are inclined to make a genuine societal contribution."

Q: He would try to suss that out during the interview process?

GARY: Yes. So that particular description does not seem self-serving, let me share another moment of truth. One of the reasons – and I think I knew it clearly then; certainly looking back – I mentioned earlier I had tried to keep a foot in both the academic and the Black Power movement world, which later I would broadly describe as the Civil Rights movement. That continued to be a real conflict; as a university administrator there were demands from black students, black communities, to take certain positions and do certain things that had I been a student or when I was a student, I might have argued for the same thing. But as an administrator I was looking at it from both sides and saying, "I'm not

sure.” From the end of high school until I guess the time I entered AID, there was constantly a battle raging within the Black Power movement and between the movement and the government. It was fatiguing. I think one of my initial reasons for joining the Foreign Service was escapism. I saw a chance to leave. I think if I did not recognize that, it would taint what I just said about some of the other folks who came. It also put me in an intellectual place where I was both part of something as an agency to be in another place, but also a spectator of being in another place. That allowed me, because I obviously did not have a deep background in development, to be a better observer than I would have been otherwise.

Q: That makes good sense. So you joined AID in 1981? Did you stay in Washington for a while?

GARY: Yeah, Peter required everyone to stay in Washington for at least a year. So I spent my first year in Washington, then I went to Sri Lanka

Q: Maybe we can just say a word about the Housing Investment Guarantee Program so someone reading this would understand it a little better; then we'll move on to your work in Sri Lanka.

GARY: Okay. The Housing Investment Guarantee Program had as its goal to provide low-income housing in developing countries. It did that – it got a certain amount of authority from the Treasury for credit guarantees. You would then make the full faith and credit of the U.S. government guarantee to an on-lender. The idea was that you would get private sector lenders to lend to developing countries. One of the things virtually every developing country needed was hard currency, so of course the country would want to borrow dollars. Because it was at a guaranteed rate, these countries were getting U.S. dollars at just above LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate), which was something they would have no opportunity to do otherwise. The quid pro quo for that was the country had to develop a low-income housing scheme. The low-income housing scheme was done of course in local currency, so the government agreed to make an equivalent amount of local currency available for internal low-income housing programs. Then they got to borrow the dollars.

Q: Was the guarantee to a U.S. financial institution?

GARY: Always to a U.S. financial institution.

Q: Then they lend on to a local institution?

GARY: Exactly. Morgan Stanley, Paine Webber, the kinds of institutions you would know. What the U.S. government did was issue a guarantee to an institution saying essentially if the country doesn't repay you, we will. I don't believe the guarantee was ever called. Part of the reason is because it was such a good deal for those countries that it was in the country's interest to make sure it made the payments because that then gave the country a higher credit score, if you will, than they otherwise could have gotten;

which then might allow them to do future borrowing on their own. It worked out really well for both development in terms of getting countries to do low-income housing, but also in terms of balance of payments and issues for countries that would otherwise not have been able to use U.S. dollars for other investments, because they couldn't have afforded it.

Q: Were these programs everywhere in the world? Or in selected countries? Was it in ones with more sophisticated financial institutions? Or more global than that?

GARY: We had the office that was set up in regions; there was the Asia region, the Near East region, East African and West African regions, Latin America. Each region had programs. The nature of the program would shift a great deal depending on the region. For instance when I joined (and it was just phasing out) there was a program with South Korea. The South Koreans needed the money and we would have said from a development perspective needed to be prodded into doing more for low income, but they didn't need the technical assistance for putting together the institutions. Conversely there were other countries that both needed to develop the ability to produce low-income housing, but also needed institutional assistance. That's where our work with the agency came in. The one percent that the office generated in terms of funds, needed to be converted into technical assistance funds. That was problematic within the legislation, so what was happening is that one percent was being put into the general development fund and bureaus were agreeing to give the Office of Housing X amount of money for technical assistance.

Q: But the one percent funded the regional offices and helped...?

GARY: In theory could have funded everything. But you couldn't spend it directly so it came through the agency. But ostensibly, it paid for everybody.

Q: Then on top of that were the additional funds missions put in for technical assistance.

GARY: Exactly. So in some countries you'd have a housing program and a very robust technical assistance program (with the Urban Institute for instance) helping set up housing banks, co-ops – wow, it's been so long. A number of institutions helped with cooperative housing foundations, and they would help countries set up housing co-ops. So the program shifted depending on the country and the level of technical assistance, but it was world-wide.

Assignment to Sri Lanka Office of Asia Regional Housing and Urban Development Office (RHUDO), 1982-83

Q: So you then went off to Sri Lanka. Was that the regional office for Asia then?

GARY: No, the regional office for Asia was in Bangkok. Al Votaw directed the regional office. I went to Sri Lanka and Al was my director in Bangkok. Sri Lanka – again I must

have led a charmed life. I had a mission director named Sarah Jane Littlefield, who helped me understand how to say “Yes, ma’am.”

Q: Always a good thing to know!

GARY: You know, you learn these things! Some of us come to it a little later than others! I also had the good fortune – the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Premadasa also happened to be the minister of housing, because that was his passion. So I had responsibility for the program that the Prime Minister considered his passion, so I probably enjoyed a position in the mission that otherwise I might not have been privy to. The other thing that was particularly wonderful was that working with the Prime Minister, I didn’t in my first tour have the frustration that a lot of housing officers had, because in many countries you were getting countries to set up low-income housing schemes when they really would have preferred to be setting up middle-income housing schemes. The Minister of Housing was often some place at the end of the pecking order so you were constantly trying to get people to do things they might not want to do. While in my case I was constantly being asked to do more and working with the Prime Minister, you also didn’t run into a lot of obstacles within the government. So my first experience was not only positive, it gave me some blinders as to what could really be accomplished!

Q: Were you dealing directly with the prime minister himself?

GARY: I was. He and his senior assistant was a fellow named Susulsiri Wadanar. I remember Susul very well; he had gone to Oxford and was one deeply committed developmentalist. He was also very steeped in philosophy. The drawback to that was any meeting with Susul was a five hour meeting. But you had access to both Susul and the prime minister.

Q: Did that create any issues within the mission and/or with the embassy itself?

GARY: Yes and no. Within the mission, for me, it wasn’t problematic. Again, this was my first post. While I didn’t know agency politics, it was very clear to me that Sarah Jane ran the mission. So I was constantly in touch with her, coordinating everything, asking “Can we do this? Should we do this?” I don’t think she ever felt I was off the reservation.

There was a huge project called the Mahaweli Valley Project; it was the mission’s big project. A number of the senior officers in that project who didn’t have the kind of access I had, did not appreciate it. Again, as you know, you get into any developing country, you only have so much attention you’re going to get from on high. So the presumption is if you’re getting all this attention, somebody isn’t. So there were those kinds of issues within the mission. But I have to say pretty much everybody was pushing forward. Again, a unique circumstance; this is just at the time you start to have the outbreak of violence around the Tamil-Sinhalese problem. So there was a lot of tension at that level and things people were starting to focus on.

Q: Was that a factor in housing?

GARY: Actually, it wasn't, at least not initially. Within the embassy there was a DCM (deputy chief of mission) named Herb Hagerty. Herb was one of the funnier guys I'd ever met. I didn't know until later he'd been a naval intelligence officer, and he had a wonderful background. Herb and I worked constantly together, and so Herb was always engaged with what I was doing and with the prime minister. Again, the political officer may not have been so happy about it, but the leadership in the embassy was okay with it.

Q: They were appreciative that this gave them access and entrée to the prime minister's office.

GARY: So it was a fairly unique situation. I left in '83, I was there a little over year.

Q: Covering only Sri Lanka?

GARY: Only Sri Lanka.

Q: So the Asia office in Bangkok covered the rest of the region?

GARY: Exactly. I left in '83 to go and be head of the RHUDO (Regional Housing and Urban Development Office for Asia) in Bangkok.

Assignment as Director of the Asia RHUDO in Bangkok, 1983-85

Q: Something I know about because we were in Bangkok together; I believe you were still posted in Sri Lanka when Al Votaw had gone to Beirut and was killed in the embassy bombing within a few days of his arrival. I think some of the things you did were really in the very best spirit of USAID and the Foreign Service. Maybe you could tell us about what you did from Sri Lanka?

GARY: Wow. That brings back memories. I'll speak directly to Al, but I think I'd be remiss if I didn't remind that Tom Blacka also died in that attack.

Q: Absolutely.

GARY: Two of our Bangkok people. I was scheduled to come to Thailand a little bit earlier but we had the first major outbreak of violence in Colombo between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and Sarah Jane asked if I could stay on a little bit to help put together our local response to the violence. So I had agreed to do so, so there was a gap between Al leaving and my getting there. As you said, Al went to Beirut and his family was still in Thailand. When he was killed, his wife Este and his daughters – at that time one of his daughters was there and the other was in India – it sounds pejorative to say, but they obviously took it very hard. It was especially difficult for Este because Este was a Holocaust survivor and Este was a personality. She had her edges. Al's death really was doubly devastating after all she had been through and put her in a really bad place. Events were moving very quickly, so I came to Bangkok and went to see Este and we talked.

Obviously I had known her because I was one of Al's guys and so Este had gotten to know me.

As events moved forward, Este was asked to come to Washington with her daughters for the services and to meet different people within the government. Este asked – it surprised me – she asked, “Will you come with me?” I had no official capacity to do that. It just seemed like the thing to do. So I bought myself a ticket and went with Este and her daughters to Washington to attend the services. There was one particularly – I have to say “funny” – moment in the whole thing; all the families were taken into a vestibule in the Washington National Cathedral before the service. The then-vice president George Bush and the head of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) came in personally to greet all the family members. I had been standing very close to Este, because Este was still I think more than shaken. So as Bush and the CIA director walk down the line shaking hands, they get to me. He sort of looks at me and I said, “I’m just escorting them.” He sort of nods. (Laughter) I had to chuckle to myself, I guess he wondered “Who the hell are you?” I stayed for a while with Este. That was as you say was the right thing to do.

Q: And you did it without thinking what the cost to you would be and you took the initiative to do the right thing as opposed to waiting for USAID or the government to think of the right thing itself.

GARY: Thanks, Carol. Again part of it – in fairness I was part of AID and the U.S. government so hopefully it reflected on AID in the way I should have.

Q: I think it was a great example of taking the initiative to do the right thing at a very tragic time. But shortly thereafter you did come to post and ran the Asia regional office for housing. You were covering multiple countries?

GARY: We covered every place from Korea to Pakistan. It was a fairly eclectic collection of countries. I think it was one of my fondest times in AID. I was in Bangkok for five years. As you know, I grew in large measure under your tutelage, helping me understand how AID worked! Bob Halligan was the mission director, and you were the deputy. Again, I live a kind of charmed life and anybody who was in AID would recognize that having the opportunity to work for the two of you was fun. It was hard work but you guys' leadership made it fun, and that was something I think I learned in my time during AID; that when you get into leadership positions, there's enough hard stuff going on so one of the things that's no-where in writing in your job description is you've got to make things fun. You have to help give people an opportunity to laugh. If you don't do that, you're going to pay the price. The work is just too hard.

Q: Obviously you were managing a complex arrangement between the housing office which did operate quite autonomously and the authorities within the AID mission, and that was always a complex relationship that worked in some missions better than others.

GARY: I had a staff of one direct hire, and four contract hires in Bangkok.

Q: Were they all Americans?

GARY: They were all Americans. For each country program – in Sri Lanka there was one direct hire who replaced me. In the other programs – Indonesia, India being the two largest ones – we had contract hires working on the program providing technical assistance. Again, they're names people would know. We had Bill Fuller as the mission director in Indonesia, and Bill was an urbanist. Bill had worked with the Ford Foundation on urban programs, so again I had a mission director who was both knowledgeable and supportive. And India had Owen Silke; Owen was very much of a – not urbanist in the classic sense, but in the sense of recognizing that with that kind of population and development you had to have centers of development and you couldn't do traditional small-scale programs in a country like India.

I had great mission directors; John Blackman was in Pakistan at the time. We never really could get that program up and running; we did some technical assistance but we weren't able to start a housing program in Pakistan. We did strangely enough start an urban development program in Nepal, in Katmandu. That program primarily developed the traffic system in Katmandu. We had the residual program in Thailand and the one we had, which was really closing out, in Korea. There was a very small technical assistance program in the Philippines. One of the reasons we opted not to do a housing program in the Philippines was because it was really more of a middle-income country. Even though we had an AID mission there, one of the difficult things with the housing program in the statutes and the way we were set up, we were required to serve the poorest of the poor. Within housing schemes, that requires some fairly sophisticated swaps in terms of making sure that these are really the folks that get housing. We learned, as an office, that in some circumstances, if there was too much of an absence of middle income housing stock, the economic pressure to force low income residents out was too strong; not unlike what happens in a lot of US cities.

One of the things my dad always said to me was, "Remember. Poor people can't afford to be stupid." If the price is right, that have to sell and move.

So those were the kinds of things we were engaged in in Asia. Other parts of the world had different pressures, but those were the pressures for me that were most prevalent.

Q: So the fact that middle class housing would be a key determinate in whether or not it would make sense...

GARY: Especially with such large populations.

Q: I know they did home improvement lending in some parts of the world; was that part of it?

GARY: We did home improvement lending. In Sri Lanka we did something called sites and services, where we would provide housing sites, the basic slab and services, and people had to build their own homes. Again, that requires you to be at a certain stage of

development; that doesn't work so well in more developed countries. The home improvement loan scheme does. The complication there and the reason we had to have a lot more technical assistance for home improvement schemes than we did for housing schemes was, to have a home improvement scheme meant you already had a home. Well, if you loan people money and their mortgages or however they're paying that isn't regularized, then how are you going to make sure they're going to pay back the home improvement loan, and what happens if they don't? So those kinds of assistance reached the next level of sophistication. You had to have people who could help governments set up processes and agencies to ensure that titles got regularized and recorded in ways that allowed you to give a person a home improvement loan.

Q: So you dealt with a wide array of policy issues, from land tenure to financial assistance, all of it.

GARY: It was across the board. Now, having said that I want to mention this because I do think USAID in terms of things that have happened certainly doesn't get the credit it deserves. But in terms of the housing program, there have been some under-the-radar successes that are worth noting. Where we are today in 2017, India is obviously an economic power. In 1983-84, we went into India and worked with a group of guys who wanted to set up a low-income housing scheme. We set up a scheme with them; it was called HDFC, Housing Development Financing Corporation of India. We did a series of loans to them and a series of currency swaps, which were really important because India was not particularly interested in hearing from the U.S. or anybody else what they ought to do. But they were strapped for dollars so a scheme that gave them large numbers – and I think we ended up loaning them about \$100 million over three or four programs – the dollars for rupee exchanges for low-income housing approach was attractive. We worked closely with HDFC, who had a group of very talented guys running it. HDFC is today the largest (or second- or third-largest) company in India.

Q: Is it a parastatal?

GARY: It was a parastatal. HDFC itself is a parastatal – a billion dollar parastatal. But it's spun off leasing companies, overseas investment companies – as noted, it is one of the biggest companies in India. And AID helped create that amazing success.

Q: Did you have to create the entity itself?

GARY: It existed, but we helped to build it. I need to note that the principal officer in this enterprise was Viviann Pettersson. For one year, she spent about 70% of her time in India and worked with HDFC and Owen Silke, the mission director, to get HDFC into the entity it was to become. Originally, HDFCI was a spin-off from an Indian entity, IDCI, the International Development Corporation of India. It had substance, but what gave it depth and breadth was when we started providing it the loan guarantees. We made available quite a bit of technical assistance, but not technical assistance in the way we often did, in which we have someone come in and work with institutions in more “here's how” kinds of things; but technical assistance in giving them the opportunity to access

information and resources and skill sets that augmented their own talents. We had the good, common sense to let them do the driving.

Q: They would get the technical assistance they wanted?

GARY: For instance, we had both Robert Nathan and the Urban Institute making available to them consulting expertise on global financial issues. So they would reach in to get expertise, which they were then using for their re-investment. It wasn't the kind where we'd be saying, "You have to set up this kind of structure, this organization," et cetera. No; these were guys who knew what they didn't know and what they needed to succeed.

Q: Were these contacts you had in the Bangkok office which they could tap in to and you manage it so you could respond quickly; you didn't have to go through Washington-based?

GARY: We had – again, you probably don't remember this, but you and Bob made that possible because you had the contracting officer in the Bangkok mission. That was one of the problems of being a regional office; you are dependent on every country mission for administrative support. That tended to be a very mixed bag. You and Bob gave us the opportunity to have an IQC, an indefinite quantity contract, in place that allowed us to write task orders so we didn't have that whole contracting process with each country mission. We couldn't have done it otherwise.

Q: And you didn't have to rely on someone in Washington doing it for you, which is obviously ...

GARY: No. There were times when we'd contact the Office of Housing for something that was unique. But Peter expected the regional offices to function on their own entities, within the policy guidelines. That was one of the exceptional management accomplishments of Peter's. He provided the guidelines and the resources, as well as any particular support you might require, but you were expected manage for excellence in your own cost center.

Q: You or any housing officer was working closely with government, but also with the private sector in almost all of these programs as well. And then also trying to manage relations with AID missions and probably other donors as well. Were the World Bank or the IFC (International Finance Corporation) active in these spaces?

GARY: The World Bank was interested. The World Bank came into Sri Lanka after we'd gotten that program well established, and did the same thing with HDFC. Which is fine, but the World Bank – and again this is one of those things people in the development community know but doesn't always ring outside of it – because the World Bank was Washington-centric, they were not frequently on the cutting edge. While they might have been on the cutting edge in terms of ideas and tools, but because they didn't have field offices, where local germination and actions are taking place – they wouldn't be engaged

until it bubbled up. The conduit from that local field action starting to percolate, to it getting to the World Bank and other global agencies, more often than not was AID. Because we had those field officers out in health, population, housing, education, etc. So you felt what was happening; you were at the edge as the edge of ideas and innovations. One of the great frustrations I felt, and I know that other USAID felt, was that State Department time was always now...”what can I get for this investment now...or certainly before my tour is up.” Development professionals know that it is a process, constant caring, building and shaping, at the physical level (how many years to develop drought resistant rice); at the institutional level (how long to codify legal codes, establish administrative and management systems that evolve away from “big man” oligarchical situations...that ultimately pave the way from democratic institution and sustainable, equitable economic systems); and human development (identifying and educating the next generation of leaders who will have strong ties to the west and our values) I really never was able to conceal my feeling for State officers who viewed AID development funds as their “walking around, pocket money”. I deeply believe that subjugating USAID under State Department short changed/changes the American people and damages countries that, if properly developed, would be of direct and enormous benefit to the US and our national interest.

Q: In many ways, AID was an incubator almost.

GARY: Clearly...in many fields...like the work you and the mission were undertaking in AIDS prevention. We seeded and World Bank and major development funds could take to the next level.

Q: So you were in Bangkok for five years?

GARY: Five years. They dragged me out kicking and screaming! (Laughter)

Q: Would you say the India program that you described was the one that you would be most proud of?

GARY: For representing the kind of good work that AID was doing, I’d say the India program was the one I would probably hang a star on. I think it is unrivaled in development history in terms of something that is at the heart of a country that is expanding the way India is expanding. On a personal level, probably I’d be more inclined towards Sri Lanka because in Sri Lanka, there really was not a great depth of talent in that sector on the government side. As I said, the prime minister was interested; his assistant was good, but then it got thin. The work there that actually got very low income people into housing and meeting some of those folks – it was for me very personal. I actually knew who some of the people were. You’d go to villages and see how it was going. It was called the 100,000 Houses Program, which seems mammoth.

Q: It probably varied by country as to the type of housing, but in Sri Lanka you referred to villages. So these were individual free-standing houses?

GARY: Some were free standing. Most of them were close to the sites and services.

Q: But they weren't like apartment blocks?

GARY: Oh, no.

Q: Was that ever done anywhere?

GARY: I'm not aware that we ever did that. The mandate was that you had to be serving the poorest of the poor. They had to be below the 50th percentile. In Sri Lanka you're talking about somebody who can maybe repay \$10 a month. What kind of housing scheme can you build – and again, we're now talking about mortgages and housing appreciation in these countries for the first time in history, but still at that level, you have to be talking about something pretty basic. That was one of the really challenging– when we get to the end of this I'd like to tell you about working with Haiti and reconstruction, because after all those years, I came back to some of the same problems. People in America frequently just had no concept of poverty in developing countries. I think of all the times you would have folks in the States, usually well intended, who'd show up with housing designs that are “the magic bullet; if you just did this, you'd be OK.” And you're trying to convince some of these folks, “Yeah, we could build ONE of these for the money we have to serve a major population.” You really do have to be at a scale that does not require I.M. Pei or Frank Gehry! This is was often really hard to get across.

Q: This isn't the kind of stuff you learned in architecture school in Kansas?!

GARY: No, it isn't! I think though that the critical piece there was you weren't engaged so much in physical design as you were in conceptual design, and getting the countries to understand – or sharing with them an understanding of asking what conceptually can you do to house low-income people? That was a difficult piece if not the most difficult piece of it. Of course you want to house lower income citizens. The question is how? Moving from a physical design “How?” to a conceptual design “How?” is what allows you to get governments to think of those creative ways and what it acceptable. If you embrace it conceptually, you can then start to see a trail of progress. If you let people start to think of physical units, it's there and then and that's it. That shift into conceptual thinking is really important; I got out of it so thank you for putting me back!

Q: So you stayed five years in Bangkok. So, 1988? Where did they drag you to?

GARY: That was when I left the Office of Housing.

Q: Was that hard? In the sense that the Office of Housing resented that many of its good officers were being grabbed to take other jobs within the agency?

GARY: Let me put it this way: yes. (Laughter) It was a difficult decision at one level; at another level it wasn't. For me, part of the development piece was both being heavily

engaged, but also being an observer. In the process of being an observer, I got to see a lot more of the agency once I was out of Washington. Seeing the agency as a whole and starting to think more about development as a whole as opposed to urban development or housing – but seeing that as an integral part of developing a whole society became more and more fascinating to me. I then had the opportunity to go forward.

Q: But let me ask – were you given in Thailand the opportunity from your platform in this semi-autonomous regional housing office to be able to participate in some of the USAID Thailand mission’s broader development issues? Or were you just observing from the outside? Or were there opportunities to integrate at least at some level?

GARY: Everybody who hears or reads this and who knows you and Bob knows the answer to that question!

Q: I don’t know the answer actually!

GARY: Not only was I given the opportunity to participate within the mission – to come to program reviews, to come to project reviews – I was expected to. I was expected to read it and have intelligent comments. Again, I was sincere earlier when I said I was lucky. I was in a mission that not only encouraged but required that.

Q: And that was not always the case.

GARY: No. And again, personalities – there were certainly people from the office who didn’t want to. “I’ve got my little piece of the world; I don’t want anything else.” I was exposed to something very different.

Q: Then really the next logical step was to move out of housing into broader development issues.

GARY: I had two opportunities presented. One, there was a fellow named Tim Bork, and Tim had just taken over the new South Africa mission. Ed Perkins was the ambassador. I was asked to come down and talk to them; Tim wanted me to be the deputy mission director. I talked to Tim and Ambassador Perkins. It was still at a time when South Africa was pretty iffy proposition.

Q: Still apartheid!

GARY: And again, that part of it certainly would be something I would be willing to deal with; it wasn’t something that would scare me off. But I had only recently been married. My wife’s not African-American. We talked about it and I talked to the ambassador and Tim and they said, “Well, we think we can get your wife a position in the mission in Malawi or Namibia.” “Let me think about this.”

For very personal and selfish reasons, I decided, “I don’t think so.” But the other offer I had was to be the deputy director of the Middle East office in the ME (Middle East)

bureau. My other interest in terms of development is the Middle East. Again, I had known Bill Fuller when he was the mission director in Indonesia; by now he was the deputy assistant administrator in that bureau. So it seemed like a good opportunity; so I went to the Middle East office.

Assignment as Deputy Director, AID/W, Office of Middle Eastern Affairs, 1988 - 91

Q: Who was the office director then?

GARY: Jerry Kamens

Q: That covered the Middle East; was Egypt part of it?

GARY: Yes. And Julia Chang-Bloch was the assistant administrator. If you get the impression that I'm constantly working for very strong women, you're right! Very strong!

Q: I won't ask about your wife! (laughter)

GARY: The Middle East office clearly introduced me to a different kind of politic. In fact, I would think it was my first job that was at least as political as it was developmental. Clearly when you're working in a regional office like Bangkok, and you're meeting with prime ministers and ministers, you certainly have to have some skills. But that's different than when a lot of your job becomes much more political. The interaction with the State Department, within the offices in the bureau, in terms of funds allocations – that gets to be a different kind of animal.

Q: You were managing differences of opinion.

GARY: Very.

Q: Did you have special responsibilities within the office? The office covered the entire Middle East; I assume much of the office's energy was spent on Egypt and West Bank/Gaza? Were there other countries that were particularly problematic during that period? How much time did you spend on which kinds of issues? Were you immersed in all of them, or did you focus on certain things?

GARY: I mentioned that when I first took the job at Kansas, that I realized I had become the Tom Wolfe character, Mau-Mau and the flak catchers. The Middle East office was round two. After I got there I discovered that part of the job of deputy director was, you were the USAID/government officer in charge for Israel. You were responsible for the mechanics of the annual transfer and oversight of that program. In the two or three minutes a day I had left for other things, I did engage in the region.

Q: Most of it was on Israel?

GARY: Most was on the Israel program.

Q: How much did we give during that period?

GARY: I think it was \$3 billion then; The single most amount of time I spent had to do with water issues between Jordan and Israel. When I came into the office, Jordan had been lobbying for some time to build a dam. As you know, the Jordanian water supply is very ...

Q: Skimpy!

GARY: Yes. Jordan had gotten agreement from the World Bank to build a dam. The agreement was they could build a dam. The other side of the dam was in Syria, so they'd gotten agreement from the Syrians that they could build the dam. The agreement called for a 100 meter high dam. Plans were going forward.

Q: Was this on the Jordan River?

GARY: No, the Yarmouk. What happened is that while the Bank had agreed to fund it, they were doing their due diligence. Israel is a down-stream riparian, so the Israelis were insisting that if this dam was going to be built that they be guaranteed a certain amount of water. One of my first tasks was to go out to the region and try and broker the technical pieces of this deal. Rocky Suddarth was the ambassador in Jordan at the time and Tom Pickering was ambassador in Israel. I met with both of them. One of the things that became clear was that we needed to do technical studies to ascertain how we'd manage the flows. We went to Harza Engineering in Chicago and asked them to do the water table studies. They did a 30-year water table study, and they found out that 65% of the water in the river came in five years. The rest of the time it was basically going to trickle. The only way conceivably to capture enough water to guarantee the Israelis the amount that they wanted was to build a 125 meter dam.

I think the Syrians had already figured this out, because when we approached them they said, "Absolutely not. It can't be more than 100 meters." So suddenly you have a rock and a hard place.

Q: This was a World Bank funded activity and they hadn't done all of this analysis beforehand?

GARY: It appeared not. My memory is that the Jordanians had submitted the plans and worked through with Bank technical staff the engineering and funding. The down stream riparian agreements were out but I don't think the Israeli position was tabled yet... I'll confess some of the timing is lost to the fog of memory. If the Israelis had not demanded a guaranteed amount, but rather an annual percent of the flow, there would not have been an issue.

Q: Interesting.

GARY: Yes it is unusual. Again, I think part of the out-of-sequencing was they had done a general agreement with Jordan to do this. They hadn't committed the money because the water table and other studies hadn't been done. I suspect that we did it earlier because the Israelis started grouching about it. Once we found that, we shared it with Ambassador Suddarth and the Jordanians, and it was a stalemate. At one point I remember the Jordanians saying, "We're just going to go ahead and build it anyway." I also remember someone pointing out that an artillery shell would end the project.

It never got built.

Q: I continue to read about water schemes for Jordan. Are they still talking about this same dam?

GARY: I have to say I'm not sure. There are a couple of things that have happened. One of the other countries I spent some time in in the region was Lebanon, which of course was having its own set of problems. That's why I said this was far more a political position than a development one. There was this security zone between Israel and Lebanon that Israel had declared. When I looked at – and now I'm getting off into opinion – when we did those studies, my view about a two-state solution going forward became really negative. One of the things I realized that the buffer zone with Lebanon – why here? Why not there? – was just north of the Litani River, which is a very fast-flowing river out of Lebanon. What Israel was doing was taking water from the Litani and running it over Lake Tiberius and down the national carrier. So, at the time, this was a major source of water for them. When we did the water table studies, we looked at water usage. Not surprisingly, per capita Israel uses much more water than the Palestinians. The aquifers that serve Tel Aviv are under the West Bank. Once I realized that, I said "I find it hard to imagine the Israelis would be willing to cede this." Water – and there's stuff that's been written about water wars – given that this is a water deficit region and given the hostilities between the various actors, I don't see how this is going to work.

Now, I'm told I have reason to be more optimistic these days – again going back to the '80s – desalinization apparently has really progressed. So there are now other water options available to Israel and some of the other countries that weren't available back then. But at that time, "I couldn't see this working out to everyone's satisfaction." But that's how I spent my time.

Q: Obviously these were political issues that you were working closely with the State Department on?

GARY: Yes.

Q: With desk officers?

GARY: Desk officers in Middle East affairs. That was a particularly good office.

Q: Was it a good working relationship?

GARY: It was. It was a particularly good working relationship I think because most of the rub between State and AID over projects is over who should control them, all the normal issues. In that region, at least the part I had to deal with mostly, a lot of the programs came out of security assistance funds. A lot of the programs were predetermined and in most cases weren't your classic development programs. In all cases they were programs that had been germinated and matured from the top of the administration down. By the time you were at the agency level, these decisions were made. So you didn't have to squabble over "should we do X or Y?"; this is what you were going to do.

Q: It wasn't proposing and having to argue for it, because it was mostly determined?

GARY: There would be occasion nuances, but generally speaking, no.

Q: What you were doing was agreed upon.

GARY: And again you're talking about Lebanon, Israel. The Egypt program was different but even there the size and importance of it within the U.S. government – and much of it was predetermined by the treaty with Israel. So you didn't have the big issue problems you might have had with that much money in some other place. Jordan program was again the art of the doable. The agreement on what the Jordan program would look like wasn't hard; the implementation was what was hard. But that doesn't cause you any angst.

Q: This is the late '80s, so end of Reagan and then the George H.W. Bush administration?

GARY: Yes.

Q: That Middle East policy continued on more or less the same course. Part of it was managing the large transfer every year. Did you deal with the Israel embassy here, or with AIPAC (American-Israel Public Affairs Committee)?

GARY: I never dealt with AIPAC.

Q: If there weren't issues I guess you wouldn't have had to.

GARY: If they had issues, they'd call Pennsylvania Avenue! (Laughter) They didn't call me! Mine was more mechanical, but you'd get into – it was making sure the letter of the mechanical was being followed. For instance, there were grain shipments and the shipments had to go out on American bottoms. When you were doing the agreements you might find that somehow or another they were scheduled on other bottoms; "No, we can't do that." That kind of detail stuff but no great policy issues. But I went fairly often to the Israeli embassy just to talk.

Q: I didn't realize we were doing food aid as well?

GARY: Oh yeah. As part of that agreement, they got quite a bit of grain.

Q: Was the cash transfer a check once a year?

GARY: Check, food, and military assistance of course.

Q: Then the USAID program that was operating – was it called West Bank and Gaza program?

GARY: Right.

Q: But the Israeli embassy had nothing to do with that?

GARY: No. That was run through the ConGen (consulate general) in Jerusalem. We had an AID officer in Jerusalem and one in Gaza.

Q: The AID mission was in the embassy in Tel Aviv?

GARY: Exactly.

Q: I'm sure that had its challenges.

GARY: It had its challenges because the ConGen as you know doesn't report to the embassy; it reports directly to Washington. So there was tension between the embassy and the ConGen. When you have problems at that level, then these AID officers...

Q: Get caught in the middle?

GARY: Get caught in the middle. And they get caught in the middle not so much from the embassy but unfortunately from us. What ends up happening is the embassy is saying to the AID mission director, X, Y, and Z. The AID mission director is the one giving direction to the AID officers in Gaza and the West Bank; the ConGen who sometimes had other ideas (from the Embassy) reports to Washington, the AID officers report to the AID mission in Tel Aviv. You get this strange dynamic. At one level they're semi-independent; at another level they're part of the mission.

Q: So Washington would try to be a buffer and help work out these issues?

GARY: We tried. With the ConGen particularly in Jerusalem; in Jerusalem they had Save the Children, they had a number of NGOs (non-governmental organization). The NGOs were, of course, very active in terms of children's issues and human rights.

Q: Were these all American NGOs?

GARY: Yes. And the NGOs, of course, infuriated the Israelis, and that would lead to tension between the embassy, the ConGen, and Washington. Finally as I recall I think it was Save the Children... it was a very fluid arrangement because from our point of view as AID officers, there were very specific programs. There were feeding programs and I think a couple of educational programs that were sending kids off. AID officers were trying to do development. The relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelis was obviously an international state/Washington relationship. Because that relationship was fluid and back-and-forth, at any given point of time it could be okay for the AID officer to be working with Save the Children, or it might not be so good to be out front when they're complaining about X, Y, and Z on that day. It was not the kind of thing where the way we would normally look at how things are being managed; it was out of a very different context. That's why the job of the Middle East office was much more political because you weren't so much overseeing the AID activity, you were overseeing the timing and interaction of the activities.

Q: Probably a lot of times making sure everybody knew where everybody was.

GARY: Where everybody was supposed to be.

Q: Did you ever get called by the Israeli embassy with complaints about the program?

GARY: I never got called; I certainly heard about it. As I mentioned, I made it a point to have lunch about once every month with the DCM at the Israeli embassy. We got on okay.

Q: They'd let you know if they were...

GARY: We got on well enough – I went to his house for dinner a couple of times. The relationship was such that I would know if there was something really problematic that was going to involve AID. The majority of the time it wasn't going to come down to an AID involvement. The thing that was interesting, the thing they discussed and complained about most to me was the UN (United Nations). They're passing this resolution, they're saying this, and they're saying that. Really, I was surprised the visceral dislike at that time.

Q: We saw this a couple of weeks ago, didn't we?

GARY: Yes, we did. At that time, the visceral dislike for the UN and its programs surprised me. Again, I came out of a different area; I had no clue how strongly they felt about this.

Q: I recall when I went to Jerusalem in the mid-'90s; I was meeting up with Warren Christopher who was making his first trip to Africa, but had to go to Israel to do some troubleshooting beforehand. The Africa contingent, we flew separately to Tel Aviv then Jerusalem to meet him. We met with April Glaspie who at that point was an ambassador

detailed to the UN operation in the West Bank/Gaza. That UN operation was there in the late '80s when you were in that office; was there an American ambassadorial level person assigned to them? I was surprised; I think more recently there was a former AID officer who was detailed to that, UNREF (???)

GARY: UNRA... I have to tell you I don't remember who was there then. Part of the reason is April is one of the people who was in the Middle East office. I think April was in the same Arabic class I was in. My next contact with April was when she was ambassador in Iraq.

Q: I was just curious. There were a lot of high-level Americans, I guess my point was, who were involved with this program, either with the consulate in Jerusalem or the embassy or people in Washington, and even within the UN operation.

GARY: Yes, like Dennis Ross was engaged and Toni Verstandig.

Q: A lot of actors.

GARY: A lot; I'm forgetting some of the people who are still engaged in it.

Q: Anything else from the Middle East office you'd like to highlight?

GARY: I will save my Middle East conversations for my first posting in the Middle East, which is also my favorite post.

Q: So you stayed in the Office of Middle East Affairs for how long?

GARY: I stayed there I think – I left in '91. About three years.

Q: Where did you go?

Assignment to as Deputy Director to USAID/Yemen, 1991 - 92

GARY: I went to Yemen.

Q: Yemen! Was that before you went to Indonesia?

GARY: Yep.

Q: So in 1991, you went to Yemen. There was a North and South Yemen?

GARY: There was North Yemen and South Yemen; I went there just as they became one.

Q: So you went to which city?

GARY: Sana'a.

Q: Which had been?

GARY: The capital of North Yemen. Before I went to Yemen, I went to six months of Arabic language training. It's just enough to get you in trouble; the normal program is two years.

Q: Where did you do this?

GARY: At FSI (Foreign Service Institute). Again, there's a number of reasons why this turned out to be my favorite post. As you know, we often have languages we work on and develop for our post. But if you stay in the capital city – certainly for every post in Asia anyway – English is just fine.

Q: Was there an existing AID office there in Yemen?

GARY: Yes.

Q: So there had been a Yemen office for North Yemen.

GARY: Yep. Ken Sherpa was the mission director. Initially I went to be his deputy. As I said, I had visited countries in Africa, Central and South America, and in the capital city you can survive with English. I got off the plane at Sana'a airport and there isn't even an English sign in the airport. None; de nada. I discovered very quickly that except for one hotel downtown, people didn't speak English. If I didn't really start to bone up on this, I was going to be in really deep trouble. So that was my first "Okay." The second one was Ken had a family member, his wife, who got sick just as I was arriving...

Q: You went out as the deputy mission director.

GARY: About a week after I got there, Ken left. Then, Saddam goes into Kuwait. The region becomes tense. The word is that the people who are there can stay, but nobody can come back. So Ken can't come back. Here I am! I came prepared to be the deputy; my grasp of this Yemen is, shall we say, limited?. I'm struggling with the language, and all of a sudden I'm the acting mission director.

Q: And how big is the post?

GARY: As I recall, we had 16 direct hires and about 30 local hires; and the program was \$25 million.

I need to back up and tell you about Yemen. Aside from the fact that you don't have people who speak English, the North and South had just come together. They're trying to form a cohesive government. So what they decided to do is make the president from the North, the vice president from the South. The ministries they divide in half; half of the ministers from the North, half from the South. Then the deputies are reversed. They're trying to put all this together.

There's a lot of trouble on the northern border, which is not really a border, with Saudi. It turns out that the Saudis are still being disruptive. During the North-South period, the Saudis were funding South Yemen. But these are the godless Communists, right? Well, the Saudis, being fairly Machiavellian, viewed the North Yemenis as a threat, especially with this undefined border. And of course, as I look back historically, this whole area, before 1922 and Sykes-Picot was Yemen! The Saudis were concerned about North Yemen so they'd fund the south to keep the pot boiling. There's a lot of hostility between the North Yemenis and the Saudis, and periodically the Saudis would push a bunch of Yemeni workers back. It's just kept bubbling. So Saddam goes in; the Arab League calls a meeting in Cairo. Now, the Egyptians and the Yemenis also have a somewhat torturous history, the Egyptians having been the colonial power in Yemen.

Yemen really didn't get electricity in the country until 1965; very basic. The average life expectancy in Yemen was 38 years for women, 42 for men. Women had on average 8.8 live births. The infant mortality rate was 113 per 1000. The maternal mortality rate was 108 per 1000. That's Yemen.

The Arab League calls a meeting in Cairo; "What are we going to do about Kuwait?" Yemen, to its great misfortune, had the Arab seat on the UN Security Council. So they get to Cairo and Saleh, the president says "He's bad" (the ambassador's telling us all of this of course). When the Yemeni President gets to the meeting, the Egyptians and the Saudis tell him in essence, "Sit down and be quiet; we'll tell you what we want you to do." Of course, he's immediately offended; I don't know exactly what he told them but I can imagine. So he immediately returns to Yemen.

Now that whole regional relationship/Arab League is frozen. The ambassador, our ambassador to Yemen who I will allow to remain nameless, is starting to get calls from the seventh floor at the State Department. This is Jim Baker and Margaret Tutwiler. "We want the Yemenis to vote a certain way in the Security Council." Career ambassador. The Yemenis, as this is being presented to them are looking as if to say, "Are you people from outer space?" The Arabian Peninsula, a major way economies works is by moving bag money. Countries like Yemen survive off of bag money; countries gave them money – "we'll support you, you support us money." The biggest source of Yemeni bag money was Kuwait. Second largest source was Iraq. And now, for all practical purposes, Kuwait no longer exists! We want them to vote in the UN for the use of force against Iraq. So the Yemenis say, "Well you know, there's this concept called enlightened self-interest". (my translation) The Yemenis go back to the Iran-Iraq War, when Secretary Kissinger, during the Iran-Iraq War encourages the Yemenis to fight with the Iraqis.

Now, North Yemen has a little oil; not very much oil at all. Hunt Oil, out of Texas, takes it out of the ground for them and takes it to Texas, because it's a high grade crude. In South Yemen, they have some refineries. But they're not set up to refine high grade crude; they're set up to refine lower grade crude, which comes from Iraq. So all the oil they're refining is Iraqi oil, which we want them to stop refining. (Laughter) You're starting to get the picture!

Q: It's a tough pitch to make!

GARY: It was. Then to add insult to injury, what the Yemenis are saying is, "We care about the Saudis, we care about the Iraqis, we care about the people here on the peninsula that we deal with." To the average Yemeni, the United States is a non-entity; it's just not something you deal with/not a reality in their daily existence. This is a country that's still back in the 1800s. So we said, "Ambassador, you've got to explain this to Baker."

I'll never forget, the ambassador said, "Let me see if I understand the advice you're giving me. You want me to tell Jim Baker that I'm in a country that doesn't think the U.S. government is significant?"

I probably wouldn't use exactly those words! But that's kind of where you are! (Laughter) I'll fast forward. The Yemenis keep saying, "We're going to abstain. We're not going to vote for the use of force, but we won't vote against you. We'll abstain." The Yemeni government – this'll give you some idea of how much they really wanted to please us. I went in and we talked about redesigning the program a bit. We sent in the program to Carol Edelman and Ron Roskens that literally dropped their jaw because the Yemenis signed off on it. We had a program that was an all-women's program; every bit of the \$22 million, every part of the program was designed for women.

Q: When was this submitted vis-à-vis the first Gulf War? After? When you first got there before they abstained in the UN vote?

GARY: They started abstaining right away. This is right after Saddam had gone in, that whole period where they're trying to figure out what's going to happen.

Q: You were presenting a new strategy in Washington?

GARY: I'd gotten the Yemenis to agree. The point was the Yemenis were anxious to curry favor and knew this would be biting a big bullet.

Q: Okay, good, so they may not be able to vote for the war but could at least support women!

GARY: You take what you can get! So we sent this in and Carol Edelman called me and said, "Is this for real?" I said, "This is the deal!"

I didn't go in to defend it yet. Thanksgiving – I'll never forget this. Baker decides to come out with Margaret Tutwiler. They go to meet Saleh. The ambassador – Arabist – and DCM – Arabist – and me (not), we go along and we're in the back of this meeting. It's sort of like a football game. People are running around. This is very much not sit down in chairs. Baker comes out with his own team. This is a bit arcane. I tell you when I went to high school, in my class there were about 15 black students. One of the members

of Baker's team, an ambassador – a woman – was one of those students. I couldn't believe it when I saw her.

Anyway, they come out and they're talking. We're listening to this back and forth between Baker's people and Saleh. At one point it seemed to me clear that what was said by Saleh was "No." And it seemed to me what was translated was "Maybe." Nobody else said anything. At this point, what comes to mind is a Dobie Brothers song... What a fool believes... great line that says "the wise man has the power to reason away, but the fool believes what he sees" Fool that I was, it seemed to me that this wasn't going to end well. So, Baker and Tutwiler go back. Baker again asks the ambassador, "Give them \$10 million in food aid." Something trivial. "See if you can make sure we seal this deal." They get to the UN for the vote and they push the Yemenis, and the Yemenis vote "No."

Q: They voted no? They didn't abstain?

GARY: No. And Baker thinks he's been stabbed in the back. He thinks he had a deal with them to maybe go along. So Baker turns to Al-Iryani, the foreign minister – and I can say this because they have this all on tape, on the record – he turns to him and says, "That's the most expensive vote you'll ever make." The next couple of days, they cut the program from \$22 million to \$3 million in humanitarian programs. Everybody was told to leave. That's when I went to the war college. They pulled me out.

Q: Wow. How long were you there then?

GARY: A year and a half, maybe. That was the end of the Yemen mission as a robust program. Again, personal opinion – I think when we lost USIA (United States Information Agency) (the USIA Director was Duncan McGunnis, a brilliant and creative presence and a talented Arabist) and we lost those linguists and that presence, I think that really has cost the U.S. in terms of its ability at the margins to move events and influence people. I think Yemen was another case of that. I think if we could have kept the AID mission and the program, at the margins we would have been able to keep Yemen more on the reservation. Again, at the margins; obviously we're not military organizations, but I do believe absolutely what I said before about the World Bank and AID folks on the ground being right there. I think we would have understood a lot sooner what was taking place all around Yemen. When we were there, we were going all around the country. Vivian was going into the women's quarters and they would talk very candidly. We had the Khat chews where everybody would be very open. It was eclectic, multi-class kind of function and we were at those. I think if we had been able to maintain that kind of presence – the embassy was in Sana'a. When I was there, once you got outside the city limits of Sana'a, cars didn't have license plates; the government had control of Sana'a and the rest of the country was out there. It was warlords. But you could go. You could interact. I think if we had been able to maintain that presence, personally I believe we would have had a different result than the one we have now.

Q: You must have had a very good Yemeni staff to help you with being able to do this outreach?

GARY: Outstanding. Outstanding. Again, I learned so much there. The reason it's my favorite post is first, you really had to learn the language. Arabic's culturally based. So I learned things about other cultures – I thought I was fairly savvy, and I realized how little I really understood about a lot of those cultures I'd been in before. I just learned so much. What a staff, one of the lead staff who really helped me, his name was Abdul Hamid. We're talking one day, Viviann, Abdul and me. He made the comment that he was Yemeni citizen, but he really wasn't Yemeni.

We said, "Where are you from Abu?"

And he said, "Persia."

I said, "How long has your family been in Yemen?"

He said, "Oh, about a thousand years." (Laughter)

Again, there were those things you learned from him and the other Yemeni staff in terms of how you related to other people. I'm pretty Western; If I'm unhappy about something you've done to me, I'll usually get over it and we'll go forward. It doesn't work that way in Arab culture. In the West, our time is strictly horizontal. In Arab culture, it's also vertical. What happened 300 years ago in your family is today, too. So when you're talking to someone about events, time markers can be hard to identify. One case I remember; we were trying to get a couple of groups to work together, villages. There was a lot of animus, and we found out it was from something that happened in the 1700s. Now you can say, "That's silly." But it's very real. If you don't understand the language, as I had not in many other places, it doesn't open that window for you; What saves you is that you have FSNs (Foreign Service nationals) who are fluent not only bilingual, but often trilingual, as well as bicultural! They can translate culture for you. Wow. I could have been from the moon, given what I knew. The FSNs, they were magical amazing people. I'm still in touch with some of them.

Q: What happened when they closed down the program and you had to leave? What happened with the FSNs?

GARY: There was a small core staff that stayed and the embassy oversaw it. The senior FSN ended up in Arlington, Virginia.

Q: We got them back. Fascinating story.

GARY: But that's why I loved Yemen.

Q: I can understand why.

Q: This is January 19th, 2017 and this is Carol Peasley with Philip-Michael Gary. In our last session we got you through Yemen. If we could start off anew; what happened after you left Yemen? Was that an evacuation?

GARY: No, not actually. We had drawn down some months earlier. My leaving Yemen was the result of Secretary Baker being disenchanted with the Yemenis because of their vote in the Security Council on the use of force. The secretary decided that he would withdraw everybody from AID. At that point, there were only four Americans still in Yemen, including the Ambassador.

After Yemen, because it was not a planned move, my initial thought was that I would come back to the Middle East bureau and take it from there. I actually got offered the job as the director in Tunisia which I thought I had accepted, but unbeknownst to me I had also been nominated for the war college. Personnel decided I should go to the National War College. It would not have been my choice, but in retrospect it was excellent; it was a really good decision.

Assignment to the National War College as Student, 1991-1992

I don't think of myself as arrogant but I think having come out of a university experience and having worked in different milieus, I tended to believe that if I could really get you to understand what I was saying I could get you to agree or get you very close to agreeing. One of the first things I learned at the war college was I was surrounded by people who understood me perfectly and didn't agree at all! So that was an interesting way to start.

One of the things I really did come to appreciate, which informed a lot of the work I did later was the military – certainly the officer corps – was very different from the stereotype I think most of us would have held. I found them reflective and particularly interested in behavioral patterns of people. And also very much dedicated to mission over personal perspectives and views. I found that we had a lot more in common than I would have thought. For instance, when we think of the military we think of it as a war fighting force. Yet the officer corps as is probably more war-averse than any other group in society. If you thought about it, that would make sense because obviously these people are the ones who would be participating, and they've seen what happens as a result.

It became very comfortable having a dialogue about how do we make societies better for their own sake, for our sake? Learning the language and the current philosophies, strategies, strengths and weaknesses that were there was wonderful. It was a wonderful experience, a nine-month interesting experience. It took me back to my graduate school days. One of the things I remember about it, it was a just unbelievable amount of reading that they wanted you to do. Something on the order of 1500 pages a week. I was struggling through something and one of the colonels came over and said, "You know, it's only a lot of reading if you do it." (Laughter) It really was a great experience.

Q: Did you go on an international trip? Was there travel?

GARY: There was. I went to Eastern Europe, and was in Hungary and Romania. That too was quite insightful. We were obviously hosted by the Hungarian and Romanian military, who do have a slightly different approach. It is much more of a job than it is a profession. Certainly the officer corps in one of those countries struck me as elite and very much separate from the society.

Q: War college, then you were figuring out what you were doing next?

Assignment as Deputy Director, USAID/Indonesia, 1993 – 1994

GARY: Had to figure that out. I ended up going to be the deputy director in Indonesia. Again, I was very fortunate. It is a country of some 17,000 islands. I had little background in appreciating the Javanese culture, so that required a lot of catching up because it impacted development in a very fundamental way. We spend rightfully a lot of time ensuring that we keep corruption or anything that works like corruption out of our programs. In Javanese culture, there is this notion that it is your duty to try and acquire enough wealth for seven generations. So often there are inherent conflicts when you're dealing with heads of agencies who see it as not only normal but obligatory to try and channel resources in ways that we would find unacceptable. It's easy enough getting to the point of seeing that and addressing it. It's much harder when if you do real development to understand it culturally and try and put in place what I would describe as catalytic reactions and conversations that start to try and shift how culturally the people you are working with appreciate the need not to act in self-interested ways. I found that was fascinating.

Q: Things specifically you could do to address that?

GARY: Yeah. One of the things we ended up doing in a lot of the programs is, with the Ministry of Planning, sitting and talking about our long-term goals, talking about who it is we want to really benefit; we want the country to benefit, and we certainly are concerned about the country's lower income citizens. We want to address Indonesia's ability to be a strong economy and a regional player. We ended up having very long dialogues about the ways in which our limited economic interventions could do that. So we needed to talk about economic intervention as opposed to program. Once you got folks bought into the long-term strategy and clearly the leadership of the government saw it as a strategy in their interest, it was much easier not to get into the day to day "We're going to build this, we're going to invest in that, and therefore." Because we had a strategic dialogue, it also allowed us to have parallel dialogues. You had a developmental- practical dialogue going at the sub-ministry level. And then at the ministry, government planning level you had a second dialogue going on. You always had to ensure that most of the players were bought into a set of objectives that let you march a fairly narrow line.

Q: In many ways talking about – everybody now uses the term "host country ownership;" you all were working hard to assure that.

GARY: Self-interested ownership as opposed to physical.

Q: Who was the mission director?

GARY: Fritz Whedon.

Q: How large was the mission?

GARY: It was about 25 Americans, close to 50 Foreign Service nationals. The program was around \$30 million. It was in agriculture – we had a couple of water projects. We still had some residual educational projects going. Housing projects, and within the Ministry of Agriculture a number of programs that addressed the issues of land ownership and land use, and working back through that with the Ministry of Planning, banking regulation, clarity of laws. It was a fairly eclectic program.

Q: Going back for a moment – when did you arrive in Indonesia?

GARY: In 1992.

Q: So towards the end of the first Bush administration.

GARY: Towards the end, yes. One of the things that was pretty unique I think about the Indonesia program – Indonesia had had a series of very political ambassadors. Wolfowitz had been there. There was very much of a political program and a development program. When I went, Bob Barry became ambassador – we got there about the same time. He was career. He was very much interested in development, but was also interested in private sector development. One of the first conversations I had – and I said “I had” because Fritz ended up having to be in Washington for some time at the beginning of out tenure; unusually both of us were coming at the same time. He was still in Washington for the first couple of months, I was acting. My conversations with Ambassador Barry were interesting. He had very specific ideas about how funds should be spent, especially in terms of the private sector. He was not initially inclined to understand procurement, program commitments, sectoral funding... So our conversation did not start off as warmly as I would have liked. But he very quickly embraced the notion that as an AID mission, we were anxious to do things in terms of the private sector that would be exactly in the vein he was interested in. I remember him saying, “If we have shared objectives, we can work this out.” He was amazingly supportive once he was convinced that our private sector program not only shared his objectives, but would often depend very much on him as ambassador opening doors. Because we were an agency transitioning, the notion of private sector development was relatively new and not areas some of us were comfortable with. So that relationship was one that I would love to have seen modeled – ambassadors and AID directors who end up with at least some portion of the portfolio having the same mandate, and each of us doing what we can do. That was a positive experience.

Q: Very interesting. So he arrived around the same time as well. Interesting to have that much change at once.

GARY: It was. Circumstances with the number of senior officers having to leave at the same time, it was very unusual. In many ways though it made for a really good working environment because none of the leadership team was committed to an ongoing position. You could look at everything afresh and look at what we want to do.

Q: So you were acting for several months. Was it then Fritz arrived?

GARY: Fritz arrived and we immediately had a division of labor that I think worked really well. One of the things I had become really interested in – which quite honestly, I had not been interested in before – was internal management. I had this notion of “we need flatter management; we need to get rid of some of these stovepipes and hierarchy.” Fritz generally agreed. The best part of it was you had a lot of young officers, in the environment, private sector, people in sectors that were relatively young within AID, who thrived on it and really enjoyed the opportunity to be able to speak across the table. The more senior officers – the heads of the agriculture and education offices whose whole careers had partly been based on getting to be the office director – they didn’t think that was such a brilliant idea.

Q: This was in part because these newer areas were within those office directors’ areas?

GARY: Exactly. The structure wasn’t changing as fast as the external demands on the agency to get involved in other areas were changing. Quite honestly, an office director who had been in AID for 20 years wasn’t going to suddenly become a private sector officer, or an environmental officer. You were asking people to manage things that their technical expertise didn’t prepare them to manage and because as you know we do very little internal management training, they weren’t getting the kind of training that would have said “Here’s how you handle these young whippersnappers.” So we really weren’t getting the best out of people; we had them boxed in too much.

Q: So you wanted to empower the young environmental officer and younger private sector officer?

GARY: Exactly. One of the things I thought was important – controllers serve a very unique function as you know within AID. But if you’re going to suddenly be thrust into the private sector and are going to do private sector programming, and you aren’t going to give them a lot more staff to do this... Often there is in the controller’s office a talent with numbers. I found that some of the controllers and deputy controllers had backgrounds in finance, which translated fairly well to some of the things we were trying to do in the financial sectors; these controllers could speak the language of a lot of the people in the institutions we were interested in engaging. Historically, controllers aren’t involved deeply with active programs. So that was one of the things I really wanted to do. Fritz was supportive, and I think we did. We made some real inroads. But one of the things we got back from it as an agency – I’m not sure how we kept the knowledge – the

controllers were often looking at institutions and how they were set up financially, and could say “Here are some vulnerabilities” that as officers we wouldn’t see. They could say, “You really need for this institution to make these kinds of financial changes in order to be credible and transparent and to keep you out of jail.” I found that controllers who were interested in engaging on the program side, especially the private sector programs, were invaluable. It was something different; we hadn’t had such rich reasons to engage comptrollers in program management in the past.

Q: That’s very interesting. I know that the re-engineering began, but this sounds like it preceded that, so it sounds like you were already doing these things that AID was later trying to promote from Washington, that teamwork across the mission.

GARY: Earlier, but not much earlier. I think it was one of those ideas that was bubbling up to people like you and me, who ran missions. It was apparent that given what we were being asked to do, we would have to find a different way to do it. Now, the re-engineering process – some people were in love with it; some people were not. While I was a supporter of re-engineering, I thought the Washington centric nature of it caused it to develop a life of its own, which I believed was a major downside. Yet, the reality was, we clearly had to address the demand to find a different way to do business. We were in yet another cycle that the work USAID was doing was more and more relevant not only to our strategic global needs as a country, but was also generating useful ideas and partnerships with cities in the US and other domestic entities. And, paradoxically, our resources, capital and human, were shirking; and yet another banging on the “do more with less” drum. Our budgets – if they weren’t shrinking, they were being pigeonholed and earmarked. In many, if not most missions, 15% maximum of our budget was flexible; the rest was earmarked. With that sort of pressure and those sorts of needs, it became clear that you really had to do something differently. I know that there were lots of other people in different missions trying lots of different things and thinking, “How can we turn this around?”

Q: There was an election in November ’92, so shortly after you arrived. Then the Clinton administration came in; Brian Atwood became the administrator in ’93 and there began to be – did you begin to see changes programmatically in what you were doing? Was your program pretty well set? Or did you see changes with the change in administration?

GARY: The Indonesia program was a fairly developed and sophisticated program, so it was not really subject to a lot of immediate change. In all honesty, in my time there I saw very little change. Where I saw some change was with the environment. We had an extraordinary environment officer, a fellow by the name of Jerry Bisson. One of the political issues that ended up being on the table was Freeport Mining, which was out in Irian Jaya. There were constantly questions on the techniques, the environmental impact of the mining operation and its relationship with the central government as opposed to the local government. My impressions; in earlier administrations, that was sort of a hands-off problem. It was far too political and delicate. With Brian’s coming and the shift towards more international focus on the impact of environmental issues, the mission was encouraged to engage in addressing the accuracy of the concerns, trying to mitigate

anything that could be at a local, developmental level. I think that kind of shift benefited everybody. You were always fortunate if, and when, you get engaged in those sorts of things, you have the right actors. You have to be true to your own values. You also have to not be a bull in a china shop. With Jerry, with the ambassador we had people who were deeply committed to do things the right way, but at the same time being highly sensitive to Indonesian politics. I do think there were some issues; many of them were improved and I think that was one of the things that the Atwood administration brought with it – the willingness to engage on sensitive issues and having the confidence in the AID missions, certainly in the larger countries, to have the in-house skills to be able to engage and not have everything go south.

Q: You started by talking how large Indonesia is, with 17,000 islands. Was your program throughout the country, or was it geographically focused at all?

GARY: Most of it was on Java, but we did have programs throughout the country. I remember the one program we had in Irian Jaya, an agricultural program. Irian Jaya is the far east of Indonesia; it's the island that they share with Papua New Guinea. We were having a set of problems with some of the agricultural work being done, so I went out there. First of all, I was shocked at how far it was! The FSN I went with was Moluccan. We got there to the capital city which seemed to take forever. Then we got into a car and drove for about five hours. Then we got into what looked like dugout canoes and went another four or five hours. We end up at this village. The Moluccan FSN is doing all the translating of course. I'm watching this interaction and I'm thinking, "We promised to send somebody out from AID to talk about some of the concerns, and here I am, so we've done what we said we would do, but these people don't look happy." They're arguing and I don't have a clue where I am. Finally I hear this back and forth and I hear the chief of the village saying to this Moluccan guy in a fairly harsh voice, "Men dia inti puti. Diya inti puti." All I could do was laugh; what "diya anti puti" means is "But he's not white!" So obviously, I wasn't somebody of any great importance! (Laughter) I thought, "Oh man, I'm in the middle of the jungle." (Laughter) "And I'm not white!"

But we got past that. It was fascinating because again, things get locked in. One of the important lessons of development that all of us in development understand – but often I think is not deeply appreciated outside – is the notion of catalysts and putting catalysts into place and seeing what happens in five or 10 or 15 years. After we got over the initial interaction, I ended up feeling and having interactions with some of the very older people in the village, which was really quite different. What I came to understand is where we were – they took me to a place that was a concrete knoll, I didn't know what it was. It was one of the places that MacArthur had put in – storage tanks for fuel when they were going back to the Philippines. They had gang-pressed a lot of the local young men to do this, and that history and trying to understand with the locals how I fit into that history was fascinating. I was thinking "We're talking the '40s." But that interaction very much shaped in a remote area the perception of those folks, over a very long time.

It's a great development lesson. Everything you do makes a difference. Everything you do will make a difference. So you want to always try to do the things you think will have

a positive catalytic affect. You can't ever guarantee it but you have to know every interaction you have will have a down the road affect.

Q: That should probably be told to everyone before they go out. You mentioned a Moluccan FSN. Indonesia's a very diverse country. Out of curiosity, with the FSN staff in USAID, did it reflect the diversity of the country? Was that an issue at all? I know that in retrospect, some missions when they began to look at the composition of their staff, they realized they had issues which they were unaware of.

GARY: We had – the answer is “Yes” to both questions. Yes, a diverse staff, but yes there were issues. I wasn't aware of the delicacy of the issues. Most of the staff were Javanese, and the Javanese are the dominant culture. But we did have staff from throughout Indonesia. What I really now can appreciate is most of the FSN administrative staff were Javanese. Many of the program staff were representative of other parts of the country. They were recruited or they got involved initially because they had backgrounds in that part of the country. For instance, the Moluccan staff member – we had had a project in the Moluccas. We started an environmental project in the Moluccas. He was absolutely indispensable to that. We had one staff member from Banda Aceh, in the far west of the country. Looking back, that diversity on the staff without my really thinking about it, made our work possible. We would not have been able to do the work without it because the staff had been together long enough that they provided a knowledge-base that flowed in the mission. You didn't have to specifically ask the questions; the programs and interactions were set up in such a way that you were educated without realizing sometimes that you were being educated.

This is a good place for me to mention some of our behaviors which I believe leads to our cultural blind spots, and even to bigoted behavior. I've talked about the indispensability of the FSN staff. Many of them speak multiply languages and are highly skilled in the subject areas. Most of them understand the nuances of local issues to a much greater depth than the American staff. Even with our full understanding of this reality, most of us (both or either by choice or requirement) lived in expatriate communities that could be seen as neocolonialist. Clearly there were security and other concerns, but I found that officers who managed to live in more local environments, not only had more effective programs, but had much richer experiences.

We also had (I think by law, but maybe by administrative decree) a rule that FSN could not supervise US National staff. I saw occasions in which young IDIs (International Development Interns) were supervising FSNs with 10, 20, even 30years of experience. And, many of those IDIs failed to see the hubris in such an arrangement and embraced their supervisory roles.

Q: I know that Indonesia is predominantly Muslim. Is it all Muslim?

GARY: No. It's predominantly Muslim; it's the world's largest Muslim country. But there is a Christian and a Hindu minority; Bali is Hindu. There is the Christian part of the

country, and there were very clear issues with that area holding its own elections and having its own local control.

Q: That wasn't Timor?

GARY: Timor.

Q: Then Timor did split off and become its own country. I didn't realize that was the Christian part.

GARY: I was trying to think of the bishop's name. We went to Timor and that was very Christian. And as I said, Bali is Hindu. But overall, Indonesia is predominantly Muslim.

Q: You talked about the environmental program and agricultural work. Were you also doing family planning?

GARY: A very large family planning program.

Q: Was that a success?

GARY: It was. By the time I arrived, it was at a maintenance stage; it was a successful program, and had a very close relationship with the ministries. So I had very little interaction with it. You tend to deal with the things that are problematic. Now, I guess to make more sense, I was only in Indonesia for a year and a half. Perhaps one of the reasons I'm so fond of Bob Barry, he was extremely generous in the work we were doing and wrote a piece to AID, which I suspect was a large measure of why I got promoted. Once I was promoted, I was offered the mission director job in either Nepal or Sri Lanka.

Q: So this would have been early '94?

GARY: Early '94.

Q: So which of those two delightful assignments did you decide to take? Or were you told what you were going to do?

GARY: Actually, I had a choice. Because my very first post was Sri Lanka, I've seen officers go back to early posts and be extremely successful. But I've seen officers go back to early posts and try to re-live what was. I really wasn't sure which it would be with me, so I decided therefore to take Nepal. Bad choice, but I went to Nepal.

Q: So in '94 you're off to Kathmandu?

GARY: Kathmandu.

Assignment as Mission Director, USAID/Nepal, 1994-1995

Q: Okay. You've now gone off to Kathmandu; it's early 1994. Had the mission been without a mission director? Was there an interesting transition?

GARY: The mission had not been without a director. Kelly Kammerer had been mission director. But one of the problems was Kelly had been the agency GC (general counsel) and was constantly being asked to come back to Washington to work on this or that problem. So for all practical purposes, Kelly was doing two or three full-time jobs.

Q: He came back and was a special advisor to the administrator, Brian Atwood.

GARY: Exactly. So that opened up a vacancy. Histories are important; we learn from our successes. Someone once said we learn more from our failures. Nepal was really unusual. When I look back at it, I walked into a highly unusual situation. The deputy mission director was completely at war with the staff. It was not possible for me to tell how much of it was due to the deputy mission director, who was not a warm and fuzzy person, and how much was due to the staff which was fairly senior and had very defined ideas about what they wanted to do. I remember something Peter Kimm, my first boss, said to me: "It's almost always true that the truth falls some place near the middle." So one of the things I decided I would try to do is rehabilitate the deputy mission director, and at the same time try and continue with the program we had, and try to revitalize some of the areas where we had not been as successful as we might have been.

The Kathmandu Valley is obviously well known to the world. You go there, climb Everest, et cetera. One of the issues that struck me, and I had never seen it in such stark geographical terms – all of the development agencies were in Kathmandu, in the Kathmandu Valley, which of course is where the government and the ministries were located. But that was not where any of the programs were located. I certainly couldn't immediately see what was going on with the programs; it took a lot of effort to get to program sites and to get a feel for how things were going. That was the first oddity for me.

The second was the agency environment; aside from re-engineering, this was a time in which the agency's embrace of democracy programs was in full bloom. If you want, we can talk about that later, but I have and had mixed views about programs called "democracy programs." Nonetheless, we were going to start a new democracy program.

Q: In Nepal, which at that point was a monarchy.

GARY: Which was a monarchy. So that was on the table as something we were going to deal with. We were also being encouraged to expand the private sector program in Nepal. We had a private sector officer who had been hired mid-career and believed that every country ought to have a stock exchange. There had been plans afoot to start a stock exchange in Nepal. The World Bank was entertaining a Nepali request for a dam project, to produce electrical power. And we were getting a new ambassador.

Where to start?

The first project, within the first month or so that I was there was the dam project. As you know, the World Bank when they have major projects, ask USAID directors to comment. I looked at it and I had my program officer look at it. I had a good program officer for about two weeks, and then the program officer was called back to Washington to work on the re-engineering. So, I was my own program officer. We looked at this. The dam project would cost about one year of Nepal's total GDP (gross domestic product) and didn't make a lot of economic sense to me, but could conceivably be argued for on the grounds that Nepal might sell some of the power it produced; which was the case the Nepalis were making, they were going to sell power to India. So had that been the case, I would conceivably have seen it as a justifiable project. But the problem was, the two Indian states that border on Nepal – one was a Communist state that the Indian government itself was kind of hands-off with; they didn't have the resources to buy the power. The other was a state that had its own power source. Where India needed the power was in the south, but there were no national power grid in India, so there was no way to get Nepali power to India. It was clearly a no-go. So I wrote that and –

Q: This was the days when the U.S. executive director's office would ask the AID directors and other agencies to give comments on World Bank projects so the U.S. executive director would know how to vote at the Bank?

GARY: Exactly.

Q: So you wrote a critical?

GARY: I wrote a critical. It's a cable; I sent it back through the bureau. It got stopped by the ambassador to Nepal, who said "I don't agree."

I explained, and she said, "I still want this to go forward."

So I explained again, "Economically, this is what this looks like. If I'm wrong, that's fine."

We didn't agree. The ambassador 'asked' in very strong terms that I change this. I said, "Ambassador, you don't understand. There's economic analysis here. I simply am not in a position nor would I want to put my name on something that I know is untrue economically."

We still couldn't come to an accommodation so perhaps unwisely I told the ambassador, "You should feel free to sign your name to it and send it in."

That was not a happy moment.

Q: You were asking the ambassador to sign a cable that had been changed?

GARY: If she wanted to change it, then she should sign it. That really did not go down well. So about three weeks in, the ambassador and I were not on great terms. And then came the democracy program. This is all within about a month. The mission had already designed a democracy program. It was unusual I suspect – I use that term too often but I think everything in development is unusual. What we were doing was setting up local institutions and working on the concept of participation.

I got called into the ambassador's office. The ambassador wanted to use the funds to send parliamentarians to Washington. My argument was, "Nepali parliamentarians are all upper cast (brahmins) . Most of them are all but appointed. Having them go to visit the US Congress will serve very little purpose."

Again, the ambassador disagreed. I pointed out that Nepal was a Hindu kingdom, and that in this Hindu kingdom the concept of all people being equal is non-existent, and that lower-caste people if they had a vote would be told how to vote because there's no history of participation. So what we were trying to do was set up institutions that start to be catalysts to teach participation, accountability, transparency. Those are the precursors to democracy.

The ambassador and I disagreed. By now, my time at the mission has not been fun. The Ambassador had clearly decided she should be able to manage the AID program to meet her objectives... that was a concept I saw more often in junior State officers who seem to think of the AID budget as their "walking around money".

Q: So what happened?

GARY: We kept the goal of building institutions; we kept the program as it was. One of the things – a major problem – was getting the ambassador to understand that once you have a program, you can't just take the money and do something else. It doesn't work that way. So it was really a non-starter.

Back to the mission. One of the things that I looked at in terms of this internal turmoil was that at one level, the deputy director was overly concerned with structure and process. On the other hand, the office directors had – part of it had to do with the fact that they had been empowered to run their own shows and largely bypass the deputy by Kelly, mainly because he had (rightly so) great faith in them and was away a great deal. The office directors were interacting directly with the ministries. The deputy was more concerned with "How do I rein in this process."

I said, "We can work on that now that I understand what it is." But when I gave my program review, one of the things that I believed (still believe) is that when you look at a country like Nepal – at that point we had been there 40 years – it was amazing how much money had spent for the limited results we had gotten. I said "we" and I mean the development community: the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), the British, the GTZ (German Technical Cooperation Agency) – everybody was in

Kathmandu. We were spending a great deal of resources, but my analysis was we could have been doing a lot better.

My assessment of what would have been a lot better focused on the belief we didn't have enough hands-on with the projects. There's too much disconnect with both us, and the ministries in Kathmandu, with the projects down in the Terai or projects out in the Mustang. That's where we need to be. So I picked up on the agency's re-engineering and said, "I'm going to re-engineer the mission. We had two main project areas; one down in the Mustang and the other in the Terai. I'm going to reassign mission staff to the Mustang and to the Terai so that we aren't sitting here in Kathmandu."

Now, for those of you who can't see Carol, she's smiling because she knows how that came out. (Laughter) Let me say that most of the folks who were being considered to be moved were not overly thrilled at the prospect. So that caused some friction.

In my first mission, where I'm really the director, and I'm really not having a good time! Linda Morris was my DAA (deputy assistant administrator), and I got in touch with her and said, "This is not going well." Linda shared with me some of the history of the ambassador. I think this is important; I talked about Bob Barry; how he was a seasoned ambassador and how much he had appreciated what a development program was, and could accomplish. My ambassador in Nepal had been in the State Department for about 20 years and had one overseas tour, a six-month tour in Ottawa. So the developing world was not her forte.

The notion that you had to have a long-term plan; that you had to be committed to it, and that the most critical things would happen over a very long period of time (not on our watches) – the sort of things staff who have worked in developing countries understand intrinsically. They understand the issues with bureaucracy. They understand for instance what does and does not exist – not only what doesn't exist structurally, but what doesn't exist intellectually in terms of how you do things. I think it takes both; obviously AID folks know how important those distinctions are and working inside of such paradigms is what USAID development professional spend their careers doing.

But successful development interventions also takes an embassy leadership that understands how developing countries function for all the program objectives to come together and to have a management framework that makes decisions that are critical to both developmental and political objectives. In candor, I think too often the political mandate that's passed to the ambassador to interact with country X, if it's a developing country – especially if it's an ambassador without background in the region – ends up asking the ambassador to interact at a level and in a way that the institutions of many of those countries are not set up to accommodate. I think that's one of the reasons that so many ambassadors in developing countries want to access and do work through AID missions.

The issue then gets to be, when do you start trying to use development resources for political purposes? That's a really fine line. I think that the line was much less blurred when we were talking about educational projects, even though there were some issues

there about who got educated. But education projects, agriculture, health, population interventions, were clearly developmental, building block programs. However, when you begin to get involved in things like private sector and democracy, those lines between development and political programs can get blurred pretty quickly. That interaction – this was the ‘90s, the forefront of those interactions – were almost destined to be problematic.

We (AID) and the ambassador couldn’t get on the same page. There were two things that led to the final...

Q: Let me go back to the strategy. As I recall, you did do a new strategy. Is that correct?

GARY: Yes.

Q: And you ended with a focus on women and girls?

GARY: That was in Yemen.

Q: Oh okay, I thought you were following that route in Nepal as well.

GARY: We were using it in some of the education and participation, but it wasn’t a women-only strategy. We did have a WID (women in development) program, but

Q: But not a women-only focus. I was going to say, knowing a bit about that ambassador, she would have liked that.

GARY: (Laughter) As I said, I called Linda and said, “Help!” We talked about it. I had said, “Maybe you should take me out and put somebody else in.”

Linda said, “No. You really need to try; this is institutional.” Okay.

So we tried. Then a couple things happened. One, the dam project came up again. Dennis Brennan was the AID director in India. By that point I had concluded that my arguing this issue wasn’t going to win the day. So I asked Dennis to come up and meet with the ambassador; they had met before.

Q: Dennis Brennan was the AID director?

GARY: Yes, the AID director in India. So he came and talked with the ambassador. He explained that from the India perspective, there wasn’t any chance that they would buy power from Nepal. After the meeting, he came into my office, put his hand on my shoulder and said... “Good luck.”

Q: Let me go back to the dam project; did it ever get approved by the World Bank?

GARY: I don’t believe so.

Q: I think there were also environmental concerns.

GARY: There were many environmental concerns.

Q: So you proved to be correct on that, just to make the point.

GARY: Just to make the point. One of the things I am glad I did, in some measure because I am not completely a political person, per se – but in the argument with the ambassador about democracy programs, I wrote a paper which I sent in to Linda. It made the basic argument that in Nepal (and presumptively in countries like Nepal), if we didn't engage in grass-root building of institutions and of people that we could nurture through those institutions, that we were going to potentially allow situations in which there would be alienation between people seen getting the benefits of resources and institutions, and our democracy goals and people at the bottom. In that paper I raised the ambassador because...

Q: This was a think piece?

GARY: It was a think piece. But it basically argued that the approach of having ambassadors being heavily engaged in democracy – well the argument was, having people as clearly political and ideologically invested, as well as highly visible engaged in democracy was going to ensure that you weren't going to get classic grass roots driven democracy.

Q: A think piece with thoughts about the role of the embassy as well.

GARY: Not the role of the embassy – the role of the ambassador. The ambassador, especially in a small country, is the most visible person in the country. I don't think any of us believed that top-down democracy works. If you take a highly visible actor interacting, say with a king, arguing that they're going to set up an institution – to my way of thinking that is dead on arrival. That's what I wrote. And I wrote that I thought if, looking at the monarchy and the question of Tibetan refugees, and the issue with China versus India, and the games they play with each other and with Nepal being squeezed in the middle, that Nepal was going to have a major social problem if this didn't get addressed. I mention that because that is one place where I'd like to say, "I told you so." Because less than 10 years later there was a Maoist revolution.

But again, I think any AID person, and most seasoned political officers would have been able to make that assessment. Again, many embassy officers serve in region; certainly AID officers do. That gives these officers the ability to see institutional movement; you can see trends. You can literally walk around and feel when communities are vibrant or when there's tension. Those folks with acquired insights in a region are simply invaluable and should be ones you always listen to, even if you might not always agree– and I do remember a conversation with the DCM who very much agreed with me; wisely though he kept his mouth shut! I think Nepal was an extraordinarily important lesson for the agency and all of us in the agency, in terms of being asked to do something most of us were not trained to do. That is, build democracy programs. We live in a democratic

society but that doesn't necessarily translate into us being able to build programs. That I think was one of the things we did not initially do as well as we should have. I think initially we may have caused as much harm as good.

I'll step aside here and talk about something that's completely different. I happened, for reasons I don't remember, to be in Washington when there was a great debate about the democracy program in Uganda. Museveni had just come to power. AID was suggesting – Jennifer Windsor was the head of the office and was interacting directly and was saying, “You need to have a multi-party system. You have to get away from the strongman.”

Museveni's argument was, “We come out of a history of Milton Obote and Idi Amin. Winner take all; losers die.” He argued, “The only basis for political party here would be tribe. If you have tribes, nobody's prepared to lose. If I set up political parties, I am just organizing a civil war.” That was his pushback. So the agreement that was reached was that Museveni for X period of time could have a one-party democracy, but there had to be democratic procedures and transparency within the single-party system. My sense is (because I wasn't dealing specifically with that) was that worked for a period of time. Obviously, since he's still there it didn't really work. But I make that point to say that clearly, what we were saying made sense. Equally clearly, what he was saying made sense in that context. We did not have the body of experience or skills to be able to come up with an answer that would have said, “Okay we understand that.” We didn't have experience on working on detribalization issues. We didn't have experience in working on what – again I'll jump back to the war college, things I learned about care that was available for traumatized groups – we didn't have the experience to care for people who had been traumatized by Obote and Amin in a way that they would be more able to participate outside of their very narrow, protected groups. We didn't have the skill sets. As far as I know, nobody did at that time.

I think lessons learned were that we needed and still need to develop a range of skills that allow us to be in many ways – we used to say generalists, but that's really not where I'm trying to go. In the areas we're in, we have to have a multiplicity of skills that we historically have not. I think we have to have psychological training in terms of dealing more and more with traumatized groups – in terms of Food for Peace, OFDA (Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance), we've dealt with traumatized groups for a long time in giving food aid and emergency assistance. But if you look at where we've come – the things we were doing 25 years ago pale compared to the needs people have in today's crisis areas.

Q: In the transition to something else.

GARY: We need to do that. I guess my point is, there are very different roles for State Department and AID. We know, as developmentalists, it's all about the long-term process of getting from point A to point Z over a concerted period of time. The critical decision about “Is this in our national interest? Is this in their national interest?” we settled when we presented our program and project designs, back on day one. (And that the embassy and Ambassador at that time signed off on). We make/made the decision

that this is in their interest and ours. Then we really have to have the vision and fortitude to keep walking that line as opposed to constantly being subject to a political pressure or need that changes it that is driven by some “flavor of the moment” idea. Make the political decision up front; we can’t make it every day. You just can’t do development that way. I understand very clearly that we have agencies with different demands and priorities and mandates. I think we are not well served in terms of helping countries develop, especially now, when we get away from our longer views and mandates. For instance, when we as AID officers look at one of the refugee crisis; there are many things you can do today or next week, but almost always that crisis was decades in the making. You’re not going to stop that crisis until you change the conditions of that crisis. And that’s going to be decades in the making, and that’s not going to be something that lends itself to “Let’s do this today.” Of course, I know there are times when political realities demand a change of direction...but those times aren’t every time someone new arrives at a post and has a new idea or agenda.

Now, I’m preaching to the choir; sorry!

Q: Those are all important points. They come up frequently, in the innate difference that always promotes dialogue between USAID and State, the long-term and short-term and being responsive and flexible at the same time you’re committed to a long-term path. It’s a frequent topic of discussion.

GARY: One of the things – I talked to a group of retired ambassadors fairly often down in Durham. What’s interesting is, all the retired ambassadors agree! (Laughter) One of the things that happened at the war college, I developed some very long-term friendships. I found that especially if I’m looking at where we’ve come in the last 20 years and things we’ve been asked to address, many issues are very closely related to many of the things DOD (department of Defense) is doing and that they do make very good partners in many ways.

Q: So you did your think piece and sent it to Washington; the ambassador was not happy with that. Let me go back to one other thing that you’d mentioned about re-engineering the mission and proposing a decentralization of some staff to the two main areas where USAID was working. Obviously, staff was resistant to the idea of moving out of Kathmandu. Did you get as far as proposing that kind of structural change to Washington? I’m wondering what even on a conceptual level the thoughts of Washington and management on the concept of decentralization. I think in fact ironically today it has happened in a number of countries. So I’m curious about what Washington thought. Or did it get that far? Did you realize no-one was going to do it and therefore never got into that dialogue with Washington?

GARY: I’m a pretty middle-of-the-road kind of person. I try not to do wild things. So always along the way I kept Washington (through Linda) informed of my thinking. I was very much encouraged to expand it by Larry Byrnes. I had one phone call from Phyllis Dichter who was heading up the process, saying “Great idea.” One of the reasons I think they were so interested in it – I mentioned my program officer was taken almost

immediately to work on re-engineering- he was Phyllis' assistant. So they had a pretty clear understanding of why I wanted to do it and whether it would make sense.

Q: So they were supportive then?

GARY: They were supportive. I never spoke directly to Brian about it, but I think all the way up to Brian they were supportive. One of the things that came up immediately was do you need different staff? Do you need more staff? Can you make do with less staff? As, always, the staffing issues would come up. One of the things I really felt we needed that we didn't have was a general development officer (GDO). I would like to have had two general development officers. Again, Nepal was not a very efficient state so you never were quite sure when you were going to have to get involved in some area just to make the rest of the project work. Therefore, I wanted a couple of good GDOs to be able to respond quickly especially since we were going to put people out in these places and ask them to make day-to-day decisions. It's just not the kind of place where you can centralize decision-making. One of the positions I suggested we really DID NOT need in Nepal at that time was somebody trying to set up a stock exchange.

Needless to say, the private sector officer and the ambassador disagreed. So we went back and forth. The ambassador got Robin Raphael who was the assistant secretary to come out. We had dinner and Robin asked me, "Why do you think this is a good idea?"

We went back and forth about it. It was interesting; Robin said "It seems to me it's six of one and half-a-dozen of the other." Robin left and I learned about listening between the lines. I heard six of one, half-a-dozen of the other as "if that's what you want to do, fine." But what she meant was, "We're not going to do this." (Laughter)

There was a slight miscommunication. Robin went back and as I understand it, made a lot of fuss up on the seventh floor. It was deemed that it just wasn't worth the fight – and it would have been a fight. I think obviously if the ambassador had been for it that would have been one thing. It would still have been a fight because I do believe that some of the – and again, I don't think I was as thoughtful as I should have been – but some of the officers would have been in open revolt because they had kids in the American School in Kathmandu. They didn't want to be in the Terai. I was up on a high horse, "We're trying to do this for Nepal, not for your kids." Well, we can say that kind of thing but we all are doing a certain amount of it so we can live our lives, too. It was too much to do with a mission that was already fractured. And so it didn't work well.

My last day, which was almost a year to the day from the time I got there, the ambassador – I'll think about how much of this I really should say. The ambassador had a Fourth of July party. The traditional Fourth of July party is nice. Everybody comes to the embassy and it's a big to-do. However, this ambassador's idea was a sit-down to which she would invite the heads mostly of Nepali ministries and the royal family; it was fairly small.

Q: So it wasn't a reception?

GARY: It was a sit-down for about 50 people. Obviously as heads of agencies, we had to be there. The ambassador said, "This is Americana, we're celebrating America, and we're going to play American music." She had set the tables with old wild west kind of table cloths. She even wore a cowgirl kind of an outfit. One of the things she played was music, that to my taste reflected a region and a time in our history that I didn't embrace. I remember quietly leaving. I think that was the final straw. The Ambassador decided I should go. Margaret Carpenter, came out and met with the Ambassador. Afterwards she told me that she had demanded that I be removed...I guess I was PNG'ed. The next morning I held a staff meeting to share the news. About an hour later, the ambassador asked me to come to her office. She said that she had heard that I had told my staff she had had me removed. She said that she never asked for that to happen. I told her that my AA had told me about her request. She said that wasn't true and, I paraphrase now, asked me who I believed.

So that was the way my Nepal time ended. Low point of my career.

Q: I can imagine it was very traumatic, for you and everyone.

GARY: But as I said, I look back at that and while we often say "I wouldn't have done anything differently", in this case, I would have done things differently. I would have been much more sophisticated in my interactions. But the reason that I am delighted for the experience is it reminded me again that as development officers, there's always a lot of humility that we have to have. I think we practice it much more in the countries we're working in than we sometimes do with each other. We're very respectful of the country officials, host country actors, host country citizens. We're respectful of the importance and the role development can play in making all of these better societies.

I think sometimes we become almost missionaries. We sometimes, I think are less accepting and forgiving of other American actors who have different roles and agendas. I think that really the best development officers are those who are able to absorb the needs, goals, aspirations, realities of a whole swath of people, not just the people we are ostensibly serving.

Q: You have to have sensitivity to the entire environment you're working in, not just the beneficiary side.

GARY: Exactly. I didn't know how charmed a life I had had. I had worked for extraordinary mission directors and ambassadors. I had worked for people who in their very being brought you to them; you never really had true conflicts. You had differences of opinion, which was great. And you often had tug of wars over how to do things, but that was great because you were arguing about the best way to do this, how to get to 'go'. I didn't realize how charmed a life I had led. Then having an opportunity where we don't agree on the objectives necessarily (short-term and long-term) and we're not working together – now what do you do? I learned a lot from that. I think that's something I would share with any development or State officer.

Q: Almost anyone - having to manage that kind of conflict is difficult.

So you then left Nepal and came back to Washington. What position?

Assignment as Director, AID/ANE/Middle East Office in Washington, 1995-1997

GARY: I was the director of the Middle East office. That took me back to an earlier time. I spent most of my time there trying to manage the conflict between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and Gaza. We had AID officers by that point in Gaza –

Q: In Gaza?

GARY: In Gaza and Jerusalem. We had Karen Turner in Gaza and Harry Bernholz was in Jerusalem.

Q: Was the AID mission itself in Tel Aviv?

GARY: They were in Tel Aviv. You had the same dynamic within AID as within State; people who were AID officers answered through the mission but really answered back to the bureau, as well as a running conflict between the ConGen in Jerusalem and the embassy in Tel Aviv. Sounds really current, actually!

Q: So you spent a lot of time trying to manage more conflict.

GARY: More conflict! I spent some time in Jordan, but even the Jordan issues were pretty much related to the Palestinians. Terry Brown was the AA (assistant administrator) and so we had a situation in which I was able to really spend most of my time on the Israeli-Palestinian issues. We had desk officers who were very good, very senior.

Q: At what point – did it happen during your tenure that the USAID officers physically in Jerusalem and West Bank left? They're no longer there; everyone is now in Tel Aviv. Did that change take place during your tenure?

GARY: It took place towards the end of it. Again, Phillip Wilcox was the ConGen (consul-general) in Jerusalem. He was very much ensuring that the Jerusalem agenda if you will, the Palestinian agenda was on the table. He worked with NGOs; I remember Save the Children was there. Again, the program was very small but meeting with folks, talking about the situation on the ground and local needs – the visibility was large. This was a little less conflict with Karen, I think Karen had more programmatic things they were trying to do in the Gaza Strip just because it was so traumatic. The pressures from the embassy on the AID director to not have Harry and/or Karen do certain things was really in conflict with the entities on the ground– it wasn't workable.

Q: So they were being asked by the ConGen to do things and the ambassador in Tel Aviv to whom the AID director reported... that was a real nightmare.

GARY: Oh, it was. With people less able than Harry and Karen, it would not have worked at all. They walked the fence for quite a while and did an excellent job of it. But finally, the pressure came through the embassy back to Washington to get these AID officers out of there.

Q: That took place towards the end of your time. How long were you the director of the Office of Middle East?

GARY: Almost two years, a year and a half. Then I got a job I really liked.

Q: What job was that?

GARY: I got to go to the Africa bureau.

Q: Ahah! The office director for East Africa.

Assignment as Director, AID/AFR/East Africa Office in Washington, 1997-2000

GARY: That's right. That's when we got to work together. When I look back at that job, people would say "After working in the Middle East, going to East Africa you must have really enjoyed having a chance to catch your breath."

I said, "Yeah, let's see. We had the two embassy bombings. We had the Rwandan genocide. We had Operation Lifeline Sudan. We had the Eritrean-Ethiopian war. Oh yeah, it was a lark!" (Laughter) We had the Horn of Africa Initiative. Of course, you had your hands full with South Africa. It was a busy time.

In terms of all my Washington assignments, the Office of Housing was my first and I'll always think of it as my home in the agency. Once I left the Office of Housing, my time in East Africa was far and away the best. One reason was because in almost all cases, I think it was emblematic of the dedication and emotions that has helped make USAID a, if not the, pre-immanent development agency. I had chosen at the beginning of my career not to serve in the Africa bureau. So I hadn't. I think...

Q: You made that choice in part because ...

GARY: I don't know if I said earlier. When I first came into the Office of Housing, when I came into AID, when assignment time came up I had been working with Malaysians on a development program. What I knew was Asia and Middle East. When assignment time came up, I was going to be assigned to Liberia. I said to Peter, "What am I going to do there? It's not that I don't want to go to Africa. But in the short time I've been here, it seems like every African-American is sent to Africa. I really don't think that's what I want to do." So I didn't.

It's good and bad. After having come to the Africa bureau, if I knew back then what I later learned, I would have gone in a heartbeat. I do believe that in terms of volume that

the officers I met in Africa bureau were the most dedicated officers in AID. I didn't meet anybody in the entire time I dealt with it who was there simply because they had been assigned. Everybody wanted to be doing what they were doing. And that certainly was not the case across the agency. These were the most dedicated folks I had worked with. So that was great.

I had matured enough in the agency by that time to be able to deal with the political challenges of the Sudans and Somalias and the embassies. I knew some of the ambassadors, and we were on first-name basis. I had been in the agency long enough that I had developed a good relationship with the Office of Security. Of course, there was so much was happening with the embassies in Kenya and Dar Es Salaam after the bombings. There were real security concerns, so I was meeting with security folks and going up to the Hill with them to try to get money to provide the necessary security upgrades. It was just rewarding work. Again, all I have said about development being a long-term process – this was a case where it was both short-term and long-term. The things you did short-term were going to make a difference long-term but unusually, almost everything you did short-term you were going to see the results of pretty quickly. Rebuilding the embassies, rebuilding the morale of staff, getting folks back where they needed to be. In Rwanda, trying to work there to help government actually stand up and have the support it needed. Everything was both gratifying and developmental. That was magical.

Q: Why don't we take a couple of the big items and talk in more detail about them. You already mentioned Rwanda; I'm trying to think – the genocide had already taken place. When did you come into the Africa bureau?

GARY: End of '95, something like that.

Q: At that point, we were in the process of rebuilding the USAID mission? I know for a while we ran it out of Burundi; was that the case when you came, or had we abandoned that plan and were re-establishing USAID Rwanda?

GARY: When I came, the actual genocide had happened but the war to recapture Rwanda led by Paul Kagame was still in progress. It was at a time when we were just thinking about re-establishing the USAID Rwanda mission. One of the first things you sent me out on was to go and talk to Paul Kagame about it. The current AID administrator was actually there for that meeting. She was an advisor I think at the time.

Q: Was that Gayle Smith? Was she still on contract with the chief of staff?

GARY: Yes, exactly.

Q: So she was a USAID contractor with deep relationships in Ethiopia and Rwanda?

GARY: Exactly. We went out and talked to Kagame about what is it we could do? That was the first notion that we really could build an AID mission back in Kigali. One of the

big concerns and, I don't think it's ever gotten that much publicity, one of the reasons he wanted the AID mission was because he really did not want NGOs. He had become wholly disenchanted with the NGO community. One reason he had become disenchanted with them is that during the genocide and after it, when Kagame was still head of the Tutsi armies trying to re-establish control, he didn't have much infrastructure. They didn't have vehicles, communications equipment, etc. And the NGO community was, according to Kagame very well equipped. He asked the NGO community to give him their equipment, and they wouldn't. That one thing completely soured him on the NGOs. He felt they were doing their own thing. So he was very anxious to have an AID mission. Now, I don't recall if he'd had experience with AID missions.

Q: As I recall, I think there was still a USAID office but we were running it out of – Myron Golden was the mission director in Burundi. He was covering both Burundi and Rwanda, but resident in Burundi and traveling back and forth by rode. But I think we still had at least our small office in Kigali. It was in a house or something like that. Then we split it back apart when you were out, trying to figure out how we should split it.

GARY: Like I said, he wanted it and that was it. The head of the country makes life a lot simpler.

Q: I should mention, we're going to be doing an oral history with one of the FSNs from Rwanda, Bonaventure Niyibizi who became a cabinet minister in the Kagame government.

GARY: I would not be surprised. Again, and I'll beat the same drum about the catalytic things you can do – for whatever set of reasons, Kagame believed in USAID and the development process. I can very well imagine him pulling people out of USAID into his coterie. Initially – I've long lost track – the development process that Kagame was trying to put in place could have been one of our programs. I mean, if we'd done a program review and said, "This is the way you should do it," it would have been real close.

Q: Also during this period, I believe AID was establishing a mission in Eritrea. I don't know if that had been established before you arrived?

GARY: You had set it up from Washington then I arrived there and spoke to them. That again was a particularly challenging mission because as you recall, the president was one of those folks who took the position– "Don't tell me what to do; I'm not interested in NGOs. I'd like AID, but..." What I recall most about that was their preoccupation with Ethiopia. The Eritrea mission really had to be extraordinarily sensitive. Of course, you had a lot of people who were Ethiopian or Eritrean, back and forth, in terms of how it built its programs so it didn't raise the ire of Ethiopians in Eritrea, or Eritreans seeing things benefiting Ethiopia. It was a really delicate piece of work. But again, one of the great successes of that mission – given the president's stated views of not wanting NGOs in the country – was being able to get specific groups to come in for specific tasks. I believe that the long-term benefit of that was a lot of softening of this "I don't want

NGOs” attitude as opposed to “I want people who are going to focus on X, Y, and Z.” I think effecting that shift in attitude was one of the mission’s great legacies.

Q: Another big ticket item you had to deal with was the bombings of the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which obviously the effects took place over multiple years. Both the immediate reaction and then later on steps for recovery. Could you walk us through from what happened immediately after the bombing and what it was like for you to as the office director for East Africa?

GARY: Sure. I’ll start with Kenya. I had just been to Kenya. As I recall I was going to Europe, it may have been a holiday, when the bombing occurred. I basically just turned around and went back from Europe to Kenya. It was pretty fresh. My first reaction was I was totally surprised at the level of devastation. There was a section of the embassy that was near a business street and buildings were collapsed. It was very easy to see that lots of people had perished in that. The military had gotten in extraordinarily quickly; there were temporary barriers everywhere.

Q: How soon after the bombing were you there?

GARY: Days. My next memory was meeting with the AID staff. I met with the ambassador first because she had been in her office and had been – not badly injured, but clearly shaken.

Q: Where were they, when you met with the ambassador?

GARY: She was in a secure building near the embassy.

Q: I know they ended up reconfiguring the USAID office for the embassy to share. I was wondering how quickly that was.

GARY: At this point we hadn’t gotten there. When I met with the AID officers, it was really kind of surreal. There were two groups. One group that was deeply traumatized by it and clearly needed to emotionally retreat. There was another group that was business as usual. The FSN staff was particularly traumatized. Many of them had lost relatives and close colleagues.

Q: To go back, the AID office – there were two AID offices. The regional AID office and the bilateral one.

GARY: Three – REDSO (Regional Development Office), RHUDO (Regional Housing Office), and the bilateral.

Q: Several of the senior AID officers were in the building at the time of the bombing. So there were some senior staff because the country team meeting had just taken place.

GARY: And there were some injuries.

Q: And the death of one AID officer, or of his wife.

GARY: I remembered it as the officer but that may not be the case. What I was really taken aback by was the way in which the bombing had taken place. What happened was that the bomber brought the truck up to the back of the embassy. He threw a small grenade into the courtyard. The grenade exploding brought people to the windows. Then the bomb went off. There were lots of people who suffered severe cuts because of that tactic.

The sinisterness of it. If you can get your head around it, this wasn't "just somebody making a political statement"; this was really somebody trying to hurt you, trying to mangle people. I think that especially to the local staff, such evil was unimaginable to them. These were their countrymen presumably trying to do harm to them.

Q: You mentioned that you met with the different AID staff. When you went, were you by yourself?

GARY: I was by myself. I remember talking to you on the phone about it; what I did was sort of sit shop and not taking a director type role, but just being a voice of calm and support. And at the same time I was communicating back to the bureau to arrange for the people who really needed to leave more immediately.

I didn't do anything special but be there. That's what was needed at the time.

Q: Right; it was important symbolically to be there.

GARY: As you think about it, what more could one have done in that moment? Probably nothing..just be there.

Q: Then you came back to Washington, then began a lot of planning about what to do, both immediately – thinking of the tasks of taking steps so that AID could help the embassies re-stand up. As I recall there were also programs to provide compensation for the Kenyans injured in the blast?

GARY: Exactly.

Q: Then there were other steps. Can you walk through any of that that you remember?

GARY: The piece that I was most focused on was the security piece. The compensation and security pieces were running pretty much in tandem. What we were trying to do, along with the embassy, was not only get people compensated, but to also put in place – this was within AID – what amounted to a relocation counseling operation. We had folks from OFDA were going out and working with the local staff, not only in terms of economic compensation but making sure that the workplace was being reestablished and they were getting the attention they needed.

Q: USAID at that point had a mental health professional on staff in Washington. Her name was Martha Reese or something. Did she go out?

GARY: She worked on it a lot from Washington; I believe she did go out there for some considerable period of time. We also had folks the personnel office and management..I believe Jerry Jordan went out and actually focused on talking both to the FSNs and the USAID staff about their onward assignments; were they going to be able to remain in the job; what was the structure going to look like. I think it was also helpful for the process by having the embassy physically located in the AID mission; just getting the two structures in place so they could work and were not going to clash.

Q: Why don't we stop for right now and reconvene.

Q: It's January 18th and we are continuing in the afternoon with Philip-Michael Gary. Phil, as I recall we were talking about your time as office director for East Africa. We talked about a number of things. I know that you were quite active in issues related to Sudan, for South Sudan and managing the relationship with Sudan itself. I wonder if you could talk about things you were doing and interagency collaboration, and how USAID was involved in those deliberations?

GARY: First, when I came we had been working and deepened our working relationship with Operation Lifeline Sudan, which was largely a food-drop program. We worked with FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) out of Rome, helping to make food supplies available and to reprogram in some cases food supplies we had in reserve.

Q: Were these going to Sudan proper, or to South Sudan?

GARY: Basically South Sudan. For quite a while the embassy and AID mission in Nairobi had been doing the reporting on Sudan, and it was pretty clear that the humanitarian situation there was deteriorating. A lot of it had to do with the conflict with the regime in the north and the inhuman things they were doing to the south. We met John Garang, who was the leader of the South Sudanese forces on a couple of occasions. What the AID mission was doing was to try to identify what kind of support beyond food we could make available to South Sudan. The problem immediately was it wasn't an independent state, and you had a couple of major forces engaged. You had the Sudanese government out of Khartoum, but you also had what were little more than bandit forces of northern Sudanese who were raiding in the south. It was a pretty risky situation. We were working with some NGOs, trying hard to provide some emergency medical care. But the ability to have a stable AID intervention was completely limited by the war. That ended up in meetings at the NSC (National Security Council) on what do we need to do to move the ball forward to try to provide assistance to southern Sudan without being overly impacted by the warfare.

I went out, again with Gayle Smith, and we met with John Garang to talk about his willingness and ability to protect NGOs; what kinds of assistance would be most

immediately important. As you would imagine, food was first and then health. There was really no infrastructure to speak of. There were issues of natural resources, but not the kinds of issues that would allow you to think about programming it to take advantage of it. One of the things that I saw that I had to get my head around was all of us were interested – I say all of us, I mean the entire U.S. government infrastructure – in getting a stable situation in South Sudan. Our viewpoints though were different. For instance, for AID Sudan is in the Africa bureau. We looked at it as we would other interventions all over Africa; we had programs in Ethiopia, in Eritrea, we were dealing with issues in Somalia, we had a major program in Kenya and Uganda. Our view was you needed to not only develop a program in South Sudan, but also in concert with the kind of overarching regional approach that we were using for development in East Africa, and certainly on the Horn of Africa.

At the NSC meetings though, what became apparent was that Sudan was being looked at through a Middle East optic. That's a political optic that's just very different. So as opposed to a primacy on institutional development, you end up with more a focus on political development – how does this fit within the region? What sorts of domino effects come into play if X happens? It took us a while to all be able to get on the same page about what would make sense in terms of a South Sudan entity. From a development point of view it became very clear that the only real road to stabilizing South Sudan was having it as its own entity. Its issues with the north were not going to lend themselves to a program that was going to be run through Khartoum. So we were very much focused on how to stabilize and then regularize this place called South Sudan.

Conversely on the political side of the equation, the notion of having a separate state was viewed through the optic of what it does to the Middle East? For instance, if we come straight out and support a South Sudan state, how many seconds will it be before the Palestinians say, "Hey, why not us?" So you had a completely different optic at play. It was a fascinating dynamic to see on the one hand, State Department who had the Middle East perspective; AID which had an African perspective. And then – AID had a chief of staff named Dick McCall who had spent a number of years and had become a senior aid on Capitol Hill before coming to work at AID. So he had pretty deep Congressional relations as well as some pretty well-formed opinions about how aid and diplomacy ought to be played out. He was heavily and emotionally engaged with Sudan.

Q: With South Sudan or Sudan?

GARY: South Sudan – and I say Sudan in the sense that it was South Sudan, but being a political person he had had a number of relationships with Sudan proper. So, there were three presumably identical but yet very different foci on how to make Sudan work. Ultimately – what happened, obviously there is a South Sudan. The approach that AID was advocating in terms of trying to build a society and Dick McCall's notion that you have to have a political entity won the day. I'm not sure that it was that clear a policy decision, but one of the realities – given the kind of barbarity that was taking place, especially at the border, and the killings and the refugee situation – you were really hard put not to accept the rationale of needing an ongoing, stable entity. Obviously, anybody

who is engaged in that is disappointed in how the South Sudanese have managed that entity. But it was an interesting time.

Q: During the period in the '90s when you were involved in all this, USAID was operating out of Kenya; they weren't on the ground at all?

GARY: No, we used the REDSO for that.

Q: Who was the office director at State for East Africa during that period? Was it David Shinn, or had David left?

GARY: David left. I can't remember his name. It was interesting. The person who was the office director had cut their teeth in the Middle East bureau.

Q: April Glaspie – didn't she come in?

GARY: April came in. She was magnificent. Prior to April there was an officer who had worked in the Middle East bureau and had some fairly deep connection with Ethiopia. He also brought on board a former ambassador to Eritrea

Q: Houdek, I believe.

GARY: Bob Houdek. Thank you so much. He was like many of our colleagues, an outsized personality. What he brought to the table was a very in-depth knowledge of the relationship between the regional actors. So, he knew the president of Ethiopia and Eritrea; he knew their relationship with John Garang. He knew Garang's relationships with the government in Khartoum. Part of what State had him trying to do was leverage little bits of change through each of these relationships. Some people might say "complicating Corn Flakes".

Q: Lots of interesting personalities working on the issues as well.

GARY: It's one of those things we unfortunately can never really put to paper, especially as we reflect on it and share 'how-to's with colleagues – the impact of personalities. We all know it; we all have personalities, we all try to take advantage of it. I think we really ought to spend more time trying to make sure that we don't have so many personalities that we end up pulling ourselves more inward than outward.

Q: Right because you end up spending all your time managing those different personalities.

GARY: Carol, you should have been at the State Department because you're a real diplomat! (Laughter)

Q: I got some white hair from trying to manage those! Anyway, I'm trying to think – there were obviously lots of important things happening in East Africa during that period.

Obviously you mentioned the Ethiopia-Eritrea War which happened quite late during your tenure. That must have started in '98 or '99.

GARY: Again, one of the things that really marked for me was the importance of regional competence. The folks we had working in Ethiopia, in Eritrea, those who worked on Kenya or on Uganda. Many of the officers I got to know had spent large portions of their careers in Africa, because they were deeply committed to it. While it was a border war, had it not been for a lot of those officers I think it could have been much worse. We were able, because of all our people on the ground – I don't want to overstate this, but I think there was a containment factor. We – 'we' as AID and State – were basically able to contain it to a border issue. Without having had people who were interacting, that could have easily spread to tribal; it could have spread among all these interconnected actors. But that didn't happen. So while war is always horrible, this is a case – AID is obviously not an agency that works on wars per se – where it mitigated what would have been a much greater war simply by its presence and being able to be sensitive to nuances.

Q: And engaged in dialogue with both parties. I recall that both Gayle Smith, who at that time had become the senior director in Africa and Susan Rice the assistant secretary were personally involved in discussions with Meles and Isaias. I believe they also brought in President Kagame from Rwanda, so there was a major effort by the U.S. to try to manage it and keep it expanding to something worse.

GARY: But again I'd like to reiterate: despite the fact that Gayle and others were interacting with Isaias and Meles and Kagame, their ability to do that – Gayle obviously knew those folks – was augmented and made possible by the fact that the people we had on the ground knew the staff people and the village people. So you weren't just talking to the head honchos; you really had a depth there. I want to tip my hat to all those AID and State officers who were ground truthing all this, all these wonderful ideas that were coming from on high.

Q: Got ya! An excellent point. Were there other significant things you recall from your time working on East Africa?

GARY: One of the things I remember specifically about Kenya, that it was an extraordinarily complicated program. One of the things that became a tremendous asset was when Johnny Carson went out (as ambassador). In Kenya – we had a regional office, we had a regional housing office. After the embassy bombing, not only did we have the space issue, but we had a shift in sense of presence. You still had the bombing on your mind; now terrorism is on the table. It would have been very easy for that mission to have lost sight and control of the things that were happening in Kenya at the same time, because all these other things just weren't front page. But the issues between the Luhya and the Kikuyu and all the political actors who were acting in this tension vacuum to build their own little empires – those things were not only impacting your ability to do health and agriculture programs. Up until that point, while the issue of tribalism was always there, it was relatively dormant. With the introduction of the tension of terrorism

and the wars next door and Somalia, very quietly you were starting to have these tribal things pull much more inward. That was – you suddenly really had to be sure your development program wasn't going to the Luhya or the Kikuyu or to whoever, but was something that was going to harmonize and build as opposed to divide. That was the everyday work of that Kenya mission. I thought that was a magnificent effort, not only because they were being pulled in so many directions but it was a major success story that was never going to get told. It was one of those “you don't see what you keep from happening” things.

Q: Did some of that notion of doing (concerning tribalism) that come out of the rhetoric of the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative crisis prevention? Was it more driven by the personalities on the ground who saw this as a concern and proactively decided to make adjustments in the program?

GARY: Bit of both. I think I'd go back to the example I used about democracy programs in Uganda, that there was a desperate need that we didn't have to put in place institutions and approaches that held people together rather than pushed them apart. In Kenya, again the tribalism had always been just below the surface. Opportunism is rife. One of the things the Kenya mission did – and many of the missions I was engaged with – they had an ongoing internal dialogue between the democracy office and the private sector officers. Both of those programs were obviously very much public sphere programs. Trying to constantly make sure that you're providing institutional guidance along with technical support be that training or visits, whatever, was absolutely critical in trying to hold the line.

To your question – when I said we had the problem in Uganda. They went from a couple of horrible dictators to what is now called a benevolent dictator. But that was a transitional period. Not only did you have the economic changes, you had a major issue with the health issues, especially with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). You had some catalysts that were cultural, economic, and political, that brought you to a change point. You were able to move from a military dictator to Museveni. In Kenya, the same things were happening. You were starting to talk about institutional democracy, institutional transparency. At the same time, in some ways we are quietly victims of our own success.

The economic institutions in Kenya, the economic and trade regimes, class development if you will, the emergence in the context of that society of a middle class – all of those were dynamic social and economic changes. So, in any process that reaches that point, you're going to get rent-seekers and power-brokers, the whole raft of actors that are going to try to take advantage of a shifting dynamic. I think in Kenya, it was a case of a society that was looking both backwards and forwards. As it looked backwards in terms of rapid change, the natural answer seemed to be tribalism; that history was the last major cultural history. So what do we do? We retreat to family; we retreat to group. On the other hand you have a large swath of Kenyan society that is middle class, and class issues are more important than tribal issues. I would offer that's not a lot different than here in the United States if you look at ethnic groups. There are certain spectrums that are very

much “I’m Salvadoran. I’m black. I’m Honduran,” et cetera. You have all the issues with that. At the same time you’ve got people moving to the middle class and saying, “These are my issues.” How that change manifests itself – I’m not going to compare Donald Trump to Museveni – how these issues manifest themselves, you can have strong populist actors who seem like they’re the answer, because we haven’t gotten the other answers yet. We’ve got rapidly changing institutions; how do we deal with this? How do we deal with income? With health? With relations?

The easiest answer is, “Let him do it,” and I think that’s what happened to Kenya. So the strong man in Kenya led to (I hope short-term) some negative issues. By the same token, and I don’t argue that Kagame is a model because he certainly has his issues, but he certainly is eminently sensitive to issues of tribalism. His experience sensitized him in a way that’s very different. While we have these problems of “Let’s look to a strong man,” it moves more to issues than to tribe. Those are the things that AID missions continue to be in my estimation the only places in the U.S. government who are uniquely placed on the ground to have their hands on those trends and to be able to input those trends, and over some substantial period of time affect them in positive ways. The irony is, the more positively they affect it, the less you’re going to hear about it.

Q: An interesting irony. Anything else on East Africa?

Assignment to Faculty Position at National War College, 2000-20003

GARY: My work in East Africa brought me in contact with lots of dynamic people and that ended up with my being offered the opportunity to go back and teach at the National Defense University. And I did. The first thing I discovered – which was fascinating because AID officers are usually asked to teach economics or occasionally what amounts to political science. I was asked to teach political science and economics. But in my second year there – I was there three years – I was asked to teach counterterrorism.

Now, you’ve listened to me and you know there is nothing specific that should have brought me to that point. But when I had been a student at the war college, I worked with Bard O’Neill, who is the guru of counterterrorism. The case study that we were using in trying to understand where Bard was trying to do analysis of terrorist organizations was the Sendero Luminoso in Peru. The Shining Path was what Bard described as an agrarian terrorist group. He argued that there were different types, and the first thing it was important to understand was what type of group you were dealing with? An environmental group? Agrarian? Political? Religious? He had seven or eight different types of groups that were very different by virtue of what their ultimate aims were. The second part of the thesis then dealing with the Sendero Luminoso is that they existed because of agricultural grievances. If you could identify those grievances and then start to address those grievances in that society – which in fact is what we, AID, had been doing in the agrarian sector – that you would take away one need. But also to the degree that the organization was not “working for the people” you would expose them and the people would not have as natural a reason to protect them. And it turned out to be true; that’s how they caught Guzman. So, from the time I was a student at NWC, this subject had

fascinated me. NDU wanted to create a course called Non-traditional Counter-terrorism. What they wanted to do in that course was to start to think about how do you counter terrorist groups in non-military ways? Military confrontations are always going to leave both sides unhappy. So the idea was, how do you leave one side happy? How do you then do identification and counter-terrorism planning through non-traditional means? Education, income regularization... That was the gist of the course.

To my mind, it had a small component of what's called psyops, psychological operations. It had a large component of hearts and minds – see if you can win the hearts and minds. It had a big hearts and minds component; the idea was if you can make your client base happier than the terrorists can make them afraid, then you have a chance of neutralizing some of the most egregious elements. So I was tasked to develop and teach it. Teach is really the wrong word; we were researching more than we were teaching. But that was a fascinating opportunity for me. I had a chance, as an instructor, to be with some very fine minds. A classmate when I was in the war college was Jim Stavridis who is now the dean of Fletcher School; he was the admiral who wrote the book, The Accidental Admiral. I had a chance to talk to Jim a month or two ago. We both look at that experience – obviously, he was on the military side; I was not – of providing us a window and a set of understandings that we otherwise would not have had. By teaching there and teaching especially political science and economics, being able to share a view that helps you see the world through others' eyes. I think that contribution and the feedback I got was one of the most important things in my learning career.

One thing that was really interesting. The second time I did the counter-terrorism course, I took a group of officers out to a mental hospital. There were eight officers in groups of twos, and they had selected inmates for them to meet with. The idea was that we wanted you to talk to people who were clearly not like you; that's the way we had billed it. The real goal was to get these officers – and these were very smart officers – to spend an hour or two talking to these people and suddenly realize that everybody we had selected was a hell of a lot smarter than they were, and completely out of their minds. They saw the world completely differently. The goal (and we tried to spread that through the class) was – the first rule of counter-terrorism but certainly any kind of social interaction is being able to suspend your judgment and see the world through another set of eyes. Not agreeing with it but simply seeing it. Because if you don't see it, you can't fix it. That to me was a contribution that was worth its weight in gold.

Q: I'm sure it was memorable for all the students who did it.

GARY: We had a really great time. In my farewell talk to them, I pointed out to them – you know, the war college is down in Fort McNair – that I was born less than a 10-minute drive from there and that the longest journey I had ever taken in my life was from where I was born to be teaching at that place. It really was; it was like wow. Talk about seeing the world through a variety of set of eyes. I couldn't imagine that little kid living in the central city of Washington – my worldview as opposed to the view I'm not espousing with these officers. It's really been a journey.

Q: That sounds like a great opportunity to sit back and assimilate a lot of what you've learned through very complex environments.

GARY: The relationship and similarities between much of the department of Defense – certainly not the war fighters, but the engineers and planners and medical staffs – are very similar in view and goals to a lot of what AID does. That period is when we started to build much closer ties with DOD on a number of issues.

Q: Do you recall the years you were at NDU faculty?

GARY: It would have been 2000-2003.

Q: So you were in the East Africa director's job until 2000. Then went on to three years at NDU?

GARY: Yes, three years.

Q: And then, you got to use your learning!

Retires (First Time) From USAID – 2003

GARY: I had an opportunity at that point to do one more tour. But didn't, it's time to step away. So I retired and moved to Europe. I'd been there about six months and I got a call from Alonzo Fulgham; he was just going out to Afghanistan. I wasn't sure what he was going to do, but he was going out to look at something and he asked me if I knew anything about Afghanistan. I said no, and we chatted briefly. Then I got a call from one of the guys, Cam Blake, who had been at the war college when I was there. He said...

Q: Was he USAID?

Consultancy – USAID/Afghanistan Assessment – 2004

GARY: No, Cam was Navy. He wanted to know if I knew anything about Afghanistan. I said no and somebody else was asking that. Alonzo called back and said, "I'd like for you to come out and help me. Would you come out and do an assessment for me?"

I said okay. The assessment was looking at the AID operation – they had an AID mission in Kabul, and they were trying to do programs around the country, and they were trying to coordinate the programs with the military, and they were trying to operationalize an AID program with an entity that didn't really have authority but had been set up by Ambassador Khalilzad. There was basically a lot of chaos.

Q: This was 2003?

GARY: No, 2004. So I went out and looked at it. "Here's what I see, here's the plan that I think you need to follow if you're going to try to get some cohesion within these

groups.” It wasn’t just cohesion; some of it was as simple as communications. Who did you communicate with? Who was your primary and secondary audience?

Q: When you say “you”...

GARY: AID programs; I was just looking at AID programs at that point.

Q: Was there an ambassador-level coordinator at that time?

GARY: No. Alonzo had just gone as the AID mission director. One of the issues was that when Ambassador Khalilzad was there, there was an AID mission there. When he went out – as you know, Ambassador Khalilzad was Afghani – he was known as the number one warlord. His goal was to put in place programs, policies and basically manage them himself. He chose to do that by setting up a parallel structure to AID. So you had an organization or a group of people that reported to Khalilzad; essentially each one of them mirrored some function in AID.

Q: Were those people ambassadorial level people?

GARY: No, those were people who were hired on contract. They weren’t embassy people; they were people who were brought in. So you had this odd entity of people, many of whom had very little or no experience in government or government bureaucracy, who were the Jim Dandy folks who were going to fix things.

Q: They were technical experts, sort of?

GARY: We’ll leave it at “yes.” The problem of course was that the only money to be spent on these activities are moneys that have been allocated to the AID mission for specific programs. What you had was a group of people constantly telling AID that AID ought to give them the money and let them do what they wanted to do. Of course, you can’t.

That was the first dysfunction. The second dysfunction was to the degree that security assistance and other funds were available to the ambassador that he could make available to these folks, you had competing programs. To say that it was chaotic would be kind. Part of what I was recommending was ways in which you could try and streamline this very awkward operation and make it as workable as possible – one of the things that happened which would make this change possible was that Ambassador Khalilzad left and Ambassador Ron Neumann came. Ambassador Neumann’s father had been the ambassador to Afghanistan, so he had a much better sense of the internal structure of the country at a functional level; as opposed to Ambassador Khalilzad who, while Afghani, was a captive of his high upper echelon background and life of privilege. I developed a proposal and gave it to the Mission Director and said, “These are the things you need to do.” And I went back to Europe.

USAID/Afghanistan “Chief of Staff” – Retired Annuitant – 2005-2006

Alonzo called me a little later and asked, “Would you come back and stay at least a year and be my chief of staff?”

I said, “What is a chief of staff?” In AID missions, we don’t have chiefs of staff.

He said, “Well, it’s a little like a deputy, a little like an advisor and a little like a my man Friday and major domo. Basically, somebody who can help me in a lot of different ways”

I thought about it; maybe. The teaser that really got my attention about this is the idea was, I would be the AID chief of staff, but some portion of my time would be dedicated to doing some staffing for Ambassador Neumann and for General Eikenberry. The idea was if you had a senior enough person that had the confidence of the leadership in each of these organizations, you would be able to push things together much quicker than otherwise might happen. One thing I’ve never told my good friend and admired colleague, Alonzo, was that the other major thought I had was... “now take this bucket, and you see that fan...”

Yeah, this is a great idea in theory. What I did find is that – first I had the good sense to not try and work with General Eikenberry; I worked with his senior field commander and his senior field commander’s chief of staff. Again, the issue wasn’t a policy issue. It was where the rubber meets the road. We were doing a lot, like trying to build schools, and the question was really where do you build them? It was a relatively easy sale to the field commander; you want to build schools where they have the best catalytic effect. You want to be conscious of some of the things we were doing. That was the time when we mandated (appropriately) to build schools for girls. But in building schools for girls, there are two problems. First of all, you had a hostile local population because of the issue of girls going to school. But you also had a jealous local population because the girls were getting new schools and the boys weren’t.

So one of the things we did to mitigate against some of the problems was to say to the military (who had tons of money), as you’re dropping off candy and doing your hearts and minds things, let’s look at this more as an area where we’re on the same page, so if we’re doing a girls’ school, maybe you can help rebuild the boys’ school. Maybe you can give a little bit of money to the boys. We had cases of the elders who had misgivings about our educational work, so we’d work together to develop a relationship with them to insure their needs are met, be it water or food, whatever it is that we couldn’t just provide, but the military could. So the message that we generated got local folks starting to understand that this was a package: girls’ education means we get better housing and more food and water, maybe more protection. It had to be something for everybody. The military got that. Our goal was the same: to develop Afghanistan. Their goals were to develop it so that they didn’t have people shooting at them. It was a marriage made in heaven.

We had a structure called PRTs, provincial reconstruction teams. I think there were 13 of them around the country. The military sets up the PRTs around various districts and often

near senior warlords. The PRT was then staffed by a military command, then an AID officer; State insisted on having a State officer, usually political. In some cases there were NGOs from other countries; it was a whole package.

Q: It was a little bit replicating what your own position was. You were in effect a PRT.

GARY: But it was a package. You put these packages in place next to a major mayoralty, if you will. You often had the head person for that region in direct contact with this compound next door to them. You can generate a lot of development out of that. You can obviously also get protection out of that. People who inclined to be progressive, in the face of Al Qaeda and the Mujahedeen could feel a little more comfortable, right next door to a base. That process, replicating it around the country, was extremely successful. All of the girls' educational programs were around those PRTs. There were one or two schools where there wasn't a PRT. The mission was also able to launch income generation projects; local handicraft projects. You could have AID officers and NGOs operate because you had a secure spot. What ended up happening is all the PRTs had a military component, but not all of them were American. There was a German one, Swedish, French, Italian. Half were American, half were other allies. But there were AID officers in virtually all of them.

Q: Was it difficult to recruit for those PRTs?

GARY: Not really. We were at the point where AID was offering incentives. If you did a PRT, you got your choice of what you liked for your next assignment. But it was also an amazing development opportunity. A lot of people thought "Hey, we may not get another chance to do something like this again." So you didn't really have too big an issue.

I think the hardest part of the PRT were the PRTs towards the south. One of the problems in Afghanistan – I keep harping back, saying you've got to take places where they are and take them forward. One of the big problems is the most powerful warlords were in the south. That's also the opium-growing region. Over 65% of Afghanistan's GDP came from opium. To get them to stop growing opium was obviously going to be an issue. Given that the opium fields were contiguous with this powerful group of warlords, that was going to compound it.

What ended up happening though, with the initial successes we were having with the PRTs, was that those southern warlords sat on the fence. They were waiting to see what was happening. We were doing a major road program, Kabul to Kandahar. Again, there was a case where it was a wonderful piece of infrastructure that Afghanistan needed. It locked into our private sector, farm-to-factory program. It obviously was very positive for the military to have roads around the country. Again, there were those things that meshed well.

What happened with the opium...? Again, I mentioned earlier that I had matured. But there were still places where I was dumb and blind. I said to the ambassador at one point, "There's tremendous pressure from the Bush administration to do something about the

opium. We've got a DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) contingent here. They want to go in; that's probably not a great idea. Here's what I think we ought to do. If you look at the money we're spending to mitigate this problem... we know who these warlords are. Why don't we sit them down and say, 'Look. Here's what you're making annually off this opium.'" It was not a significant percentage of what we were spending to counter it. Say to them, "Okay for the next three or five years, we'll buy it all. You don't care who you sell it to; we'll buy it all. And we'll just burn it in place. After five years, you will have so much money it won't make any difference. If you continue your activities after that, we'll move to other means. We'll make you an offer you can't refuse."

I thought this was bold, but great. The ambassador said, "Let me understand this. You want me to suggest to the secretary of State that they use U.S. taxpayers' dollars to buy opium. I don't think so!" So much for that brilliant plan.

Q: Was there discussion of paying them not to grow it? Which is in some sense the same thing.

GARY: Yes, except not. The 'not to grow' movement I believe came out of Latin America bureau where you were doing crop substitution.

Q: I'm just saying, instead of buying opium from them...

GARY: Oh, paying them not to grow it. I don't think we ever came to that but I do know we came to crop substitution programs, which everywhere in the world can figure out in about 30 seconds that there's nothing you can grow that's going to make that kind of money. Even if you make the argument that the farmers don't get it, somebody's getting it and somebody's not going to be happy with tomatoes.

We were still able, I think, to pretty much push towards minimalization of it. And then there was a decision made in Washington, in the administration. They sent in something like 500 DEA agents and started burning it. At that point, we lost the southern warlords. They went back to Al Qaeda. There again was a case where clearly the destruction of poppy is the right thing, but is it doing the right thing? I wouldn't put the ambassador on the spot but I believe that the ambassador and all the military commanders and all the AID people saw no particular benefit in doing that route, or said differently, knew or believed that the negative reaction was going to far outweigh the benefits. Again, you've got people on the ground looking at the local situation and understanding – not agreeing with, but understanding local reality.

Having military staff, AID staff, embassy staff on the ground, it looked very different than it looked from political Washington; where they were seeing a country they were trying to protect and save growing opium. Those are very different perspectives. Several examples I've tried to share – not having access to the weight of an informed local perspective, you can make the right decision at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The law of unintended consequences: nobody in Washington intended those southern warlords to be pushed back into Al Qaeda. That's not an A+B+C formulation that you

would think of if you're sitting in Washington; it is something people on the ground learned.

Q: And the voice from the field is not always heard or listened to. Some people have preconceived notions in Washington.

GARY: That's definitely the case. I think one of the other problems is that lots of decisions are made without enough field input. One variation of the Peter Principle is that the higher up you are in an organization, the more important and intelligent you are likely to think you are and the furthest from the tip of the spear you are likely to be.

Decisions being made at DEA and Treasury that are then taken to the higher levels of the administration are often not fully vetted at the field level.

Q: As chief of staff to the AID director, you were working on the PRTs and helping to make those work. Did you get involved in other issues as well? It must have been complex.

GARY: It was extremely complex. I got involved in virtually all aspects of it. Frequently personnel issues were big issues. Again, you had very strong personalities in AID and other agencies that work in places like Afghanistan. I would say on a monthly basis someone ran afoul of the embassy or the local government or some other entity that was competing for attention. So that occupied a lot of my time. Programmatically, I spent a great deal of my time working with the Swedes, Germans, and to a lesser degree the Italians. Our view of PRTs was as one-stop shops. The concern of a lot of Europeans was that co-locating AID humanitarian officers with the military, would make them targets. I ended up spending a lot of time trying to make the Germans, Swedes, and Italians comfortable with the concept of co-location. Partially successful; they ultimately allowed us to collocate the AID officer there but they did not co-locate their own. They didn't have SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) or the Italian AID or the Danish AID there. They would not co-locate their people because they really did believe that made them fair game, and there's an open debate about that. I spent a great deal of time with that issue.

I also spent a lot of time giving talks to the military field officers about the distribution of hearts-and-minds kind of money, candy and so forth. A serious part of the military approach was "give aways" to try and ingratiate themselves. I spent a lot of time trying to explain to them that if not done in the proper manner, not only did it not ingratiate them, it made them hated. That was hard. Their primary mission was a military one, and they didn't want to spend a lot of time worrying how they did this other piece of business. At the field level, that took a lot of time. It also was critically important to us at AID—for instance, if we were trying to build a school and get them to allow girls to go to the schools, we're on a very tight budget. If you then have somebody who comes by and drops a few hundred dollars off the truck, it makes it difficult to get those villagers to appreciate that, no you should just collect the cash, you need to participate in building the school for your community. It took a lot of effort to be able to help shift that thinking.

One of the major flashpoints – security is always an issue. The military was doing a police training program. They wanted AID to be involved in it, in training locals. We can't do military or police training, by statute. There was a lot of friction over "you won't help us and we're just trying to do this good thing." I remember it, dreading when I first had to go see the guy who was running the program. It turned out to be a retired colonel named Billy Fitzgerald who was at the war college when I was there. That connection was everything– we were able to sit down. Our rapport was good; I didn't tell him anything anybody hadn't said to him already, but he was prepared to listen. "Where can we go from here? Perhaps we can do some program swaps. We can figure this out." And we did. That brought us very close to that particular rotation who were there.

Q: What about your lessons from teaching the counterterrorism class? Would you have made any changes to your curriculum after your time in Afghanistan?

GARY: No; they were reinforced. I have a hard time thinking and saying it but; one of the things Bard [O'Neil] does in his typology in his book is point out there are seven or eight different types of movements. With almost all of them, there is some lynch point where you can, if not reason, ameliorate to some certain extent what it is they want. When you get to religious terrorism, there is no middle ground. You either do it their way or they kill you or you kill them. I found in Afghanistan that was the case. There was with Al Qaeda and groups that were affiliated with it a mind-set on their part, that they are in jihad/holy war with us, there was no middle ground. They wanted what amounts to recreate a kind of seventh century Islamic society. Most of the Afghans and we didn't. It is or it is not. So it didn't change it my understanding; it just reinforced the importance of knowing when there is something you can do. The thing we can do in Afghanistan is help Afghans build a better society. There's nothing we can do in terms of an interaction with the radical fundamentalist group because our very presence, our very being, is anathema to them. There's nothing you can do.

Q: Interesting point. I know at some point there was an assistance coordinator. They replicated the European and former Soviet Union model of a State Department coordinator for assistance and I think they've had an office in Washington. I believe at some point an assistance coordinator was assigned to Afghanistan; that may have been later...

GARY: It was later, after I left. I was spared that. That did not happen while I was there.

Q: The ambassador –

GARY: Ron Neumann.

Q: He was really responsible for the coordination.

GARY: Yes, he took full control of the coordination. Again, Afghan hand – had lived there as a kid. He didn't brook any foolishness; he was the ambassador. But he also really valued the ground-up information. Again, he was an ambassador I enjoyed because you

debated, discussed, argued about what to do. Then he made a decision, and it was yes, sir. A classic example of what I think was a difficult decision; we were supporting – IRI/NDI (International Republican Institute; National Democratic Institute) successful programs in Afghanistan. Very successful.

Q: These being the Republican and Democratic institutions.

GARY: Exactly. Building local constituencies and local political organizations was their goal. They were both doing an excellent job. The president, Karzai, got the job with the backing of Khalilzad. Karzai was considered a relatively minor actor, not one of the more powerful warlords. I think in truth his reign was really Kabul and not a lot further. NDI/IRI were doing a great job of building the institutions around the country, trying to set up a framework for a nationwide government. One of the things I didn't know, not having studied Afghan history before I got there was Afghanistan had never had a central government. It had a king at one point, but never a centralized national government. It was always a warlord state, and the kings coordinated the warlords. So this notion of a national, central government was somewhat new. What happened was NDI and IRI were building regional entities much faster than Karzai was prepared or able to build up the central entity. Karzai went to the ambassador and said NDI and IRI were undermining him because they were building up strength in the regional areas which was the same model that had existed essentially with the warlords, and because they were so far in front, their program should be suspended until he had fully developed the central government. The ambassador agreed that he would suspend it; some thought that was a bad idea. The cases were made and debated; the Ambassador decided to support the PM's wishes... everyone saluted and we continued to do good things.

Again, actors. If Karzai had been sincere in that request and had built up the central government – it could have been a strong governmental structure. But Karzai was about Karzai, and at the time I don't think we really appreciated how much so, and how little interest he really had in having a centralized government.

Q: So you were there for a year?

GARY: A little over a year. I left when Alonzo left.

Q: So you were there when Alonzo was there. Do you recall who replaced him?

GARY: Skip Waskin. Skip came and visited once.

Q: Who had been before Alonzo?

GARY: I think Patrick Fine. When Skip came – I think this is instructive – Skip asked if I would be willing to stay an extra term. I knew and liked Skip, but I told him that he really had to bring in his own person. In situations like in Afghanistan, which is obviously very different from your normal AID mission, a director really has to have a senior person they can trust; who will not only go out and do what they have been asked to do, but will

do things that they see need to be done at that moment and have the judgment and experience to do it. And also, even if it is something that the director might not have done, they would be willing to support it because of an understanding that we need to be alter egos in this.

One of the conversations I had with Alonzo when I first got there was, “We have to be totally candid with each other. I knew you when you were an IDI (international development intern). But you’re the director and you have to know that I will always be subservient to your position as director. You don’t have to worry about me upstaging you; that is something that is not going to be on the table. If you ever think that, then we need to talk so I can go, because you can’t have that.”

So what I said to Skip was, “In those unique kinds of circumstances you will find that you often need an older, maybe more experienced, even higher-grade officer to be your assistant. That’s a difficult relationship, so you have to have someone you trust explicitly who is clearly your person.”

I would say to a lot of officers of my generation who go back and play those roles, that you really do have to be willing to see yourself as very much the subordinate of this person who you may well have taught. That relationship can be rich and with that kind of relationship you can not only contribute to the agency but help a director in a hard space really be successful. But you truly have to be able to park your ego. And as important as parking your ego, given all the battles that you’ve fought by the time you reach this level, you have to know if you can. There’s nothing wrong if you can’t. That gets to be onerous after a while. But you have to know. So that’s the one piece of advice I clearly would give people going into that situation. You have to have somebody with you who stands a little bit outside of the structure and has no vested interest in the structure, whose only interest is your agenda.

Q: And your success.

GARY: Seeing your success as the agency’s success. That’s a hard job; I will tell you, that was a very hard job.

Q: How did that work? Were there multiple deputy directors?

GARY: Only one.

Q: They moved later to multiple deputy directors. How did the relationship work with the deputy director? Did the deputy see you as threatening or –

GARY: Initially. And I went in and talked with him and said, “Here’s what I’m here to do. I’m not in the chain of command. When Alonzo is not here, you are the director and I will play the same role for you. I’m not here to be over you; I’m here to help.” You have to work to build that relationship. The harder relationships are down at the office director level, because that’s often where there’s conflict between the embassy and a program or

some local entity and a program. It's also where in a place like Afghanistan where you have a quasi-political program where you may have to say, "That's the right thing to do but you can't do that right now." Often a piece of the role you play as chief of staff is being the bad guy and going to tell a senior office director, "I'm sorry you can't do that." Which also is a way of allowing the director to keep harmony. You've got a lot of roles to play. It's very rewarding, but hard.

Q: I can see the huge value of it. I think it's not something that's done that frequently, but an interesting model for people to look at.

GARY: I do think what will make it work is looking at it and deciding it's a model you can use, but understanding that each and every situation like that has to be a one-off. Not only do you not have a one size fits all, you have to have absolutely the right size for just that little widget.

Q: Did Skip Waskin find someone for that role?

GARY: I believe he did.

Q: So this period was around...

GARY: It was 2005 into 2006.

Q: One question I have on Afghanistan – looking at it from afar, I know that recruitment was difficult during certain periods and there were a lot of former FSNs from around the world who went in as third-country national employees to work in Afghanistan. The degree to which you saw that and how effectively it was done, your views would be interesting. The other thing I'm curious about is one of the incentives for people to go into an environment like that is that every couple of months, one can leave. How can you manage continuity with your work when you're in and out as much of that – I mention it in part only because I'm a Facebook friend with a former FSN who's been there for some time and half the time I see postings on Facebook from around the world! I just wondered did you see that as an issue, for people to maintain their focus on their jobs, being in and out so often?

GARY: Simply put, yes. I remember that the AID administrator came out and we ended up sitting and talking. I need to give a couple of quick answers because I think they're still relevant, and I'll hearken back to Africa bureau. The people I saw there wanted to be there, were dedicated to being there and made a tremendous difference because of their commitment to understanding and being a part of a place. I thought when we signed up, we signed up for worldwide service. While clearly very few development officers sign up to be put in harm's way that is always a possibility. What I personally found interesting is that I didn't find that I was disproportionately in harm's way in Afghanistan; not more than I would have been in other ways at other posts. There wouldn't have been anybody shooting at me, but when you're in least-developed countries the kinds of things that can happen to you are pretty serious. I think that's part of the package of being committed to

working with other peoples who need your help. That's why we don't have a mission in Paris. I really didn't think that the incentive program was a particularly good idea. I thought that suggested that you had a different mandate or task or approach than you would have had in Rwanda or Gambia or El Salvador. I thought that undermined at some level what an AID mission is.

Q: Did all the agencies have the same incentive package?

GARY: Yes. And you know well from the missions you ran – I take you back to Thailand again, the things you did with the offices in the mission to make it a group. You were a group. What held Kenya together after the bombing – some people were traumatized and wanted to leave, and some wanted to stay, but they were all there for each other. They were a group. That is what continues to make AID so unique – it's on the ground presence; it's a group. In the case of Afghanistan-like situations where you change that dynamic, you lose a lot. You get presence, but a different kind of commitment. It's a very different commitment to know that you're going to do something for 60 days or for 2-4 year tour. The reason I continue to think of Yemen as my favorite post is because I was thrust into a situation where I really had to understand the culture and language in ways I had never had to at other post. We could only have been deeply successful in Afghanistan by doing the same thing. You had to be willing to understand the culture and situation in ways most of us had never had to before. The incentive programs, the special X Y and Z programs I think were disruptive to that. I think we would have been better served by the all-volunteer – if you weren't going to place people which I thought we should have, we would have been better served by an all-volunteer, smaller group pitching in, knowing they're here for one or two years or until we get this done, as opposed to "I'm here for three or four months, I'm going to manage this." I think that was disruptive.

In terms of the FSNs; of all the places I have been, I thought they were the least effective there.

Q: You're talking about Afghan FSNs?

GARY: No, I'm talking about third-country FSNs, the FSNs from other countries. First, one of the great things FSNs bring is local knowledge. Well, they didn't bring that obviously. The second thing they have is great contacts in the community; they didn't have that. The third thing is a relationship between the AID officers and the FSNs that generally speaking is pretty harmonious. That existed to some degree but what you ended up with was sniping between the Afghan FSNs and these third-country FSNs, because the third-country FSNs made a lot more money than the Afghan FSNs. So that was disruptive. Again, my experience was that was not particularly good environment. In terms of utility, having an FSN – we had a GSO (general services office) FSN from India who was excellent. The fact that he was excellent at what we did and we would not have had access to a U.S. employee for that position made him extremely useful. But he did have issues – a lot of his staff were Afghan FSNs and they thought, "Why are we listening to him?" So I think a lot of lessons learned out of that are "do business the way we do business." That's our great strength.

Q: Interesting observation. Other thoughts on your time in Afghanistan?

GARY: I would tend to leave it at that. I think as a mission director I would screen people and in many cases turn people away and leave the position vacant rather than have people I didn't think were wholly appropriate. For instance, women in development – something like women in development (WID) is beyond critical in a place like Afghanistan. Having a WID officer who was not passionate about it or committed to it is not neutral; I think it's detrimental. You're better off without anybody. But the system really wasn't set up for that. The system was set up to say you need a WID officer. If one officer was willing to come they were vetted in Washington. If they were technically competent they were assigned. I think in all missions but doubly so in situations like Afghanistan, it starts with technical competence but that's just a start. The question is, can you translate that competence into an action program. While that's always true, asking that question in that environment was a different question. Can you suspend your cultural analysis – I picked WID because it was a case in point. We have very specific views on gender equality and brutality towards women. We are absolutely clear and there is no room between us in what we think – which is about 178 degrees different from what a lot of Afghans think. Can we work in that environment? Do we have the strength to be incrementalists in that kind of environment? When you see a guy do something, you just want to shoot him – I want to shoot him! Can you work in that environment? If you can't and you end up making a scene, you've pushed the whole agenda backwards. My advice to any AID officer going into those sorts of troubled, fluid environments – make sure the folks with you are really and truly committed to development the way we talk about it and to the environment and are able to both live in that environment, hold our values, but not try to live in our environment over there.

Q: Do you think there was enough training? I'm recalling when I first joined AID, Vietnam was still going on and there was the Vietnam Training Center that was over in Rosslyn. I think all AID and State people spent a year at the Vietnam Training Center and learned Vietnamese and a lot about the culture. I suspect when we were mobilizing people to go to Afghanistan, there was very little training.

GARY: None. The standard enhanced security training, but that's it. The answer is you've nailed the main issue, in the sense that we really need to train people for specific situations. The vast majority of AID situations, the development situations you and I were dealing with when we first came in, I don't think you needed enhanced training for that because that's why they hired us in the first place. If we didn't have those skills, they don't need us. I think you have to have the enhanced skills for special circumstances. I believe that the one strand that would hold it all together, that we so missed, was not investing in making sure that every AID officer is fluent in a local language. Usually more than one. Again as I said, I thought I understood cultures and interacted well with people, but until I was forced to be in a culture where that language was all that was spoken and in my case, a language that represents a very different cultural perspective, you really can't know. And you can't know if you don't know. By investing in language training for officers at different junctures in their career, it would help them deepen their

career. If you're going to go to Senegal, we expect that you get French. But French is the government language. We should make sure they get Wolof. Now, they'll only use it in Senegal and the argument has always been, "They can only use it in one country." Well, that's true. But it's not just learning a language, they're learning how to understand culture in a part of the world that's not their own. It's not just language. That's something I didn't understand initially. By providing that language training periodically, you would end up with a cadre of officers whose learning style had been enhanced so they knew how to make cultural learning adaptations from place to place. I think that would be an inexpensive investment that would repay itself over and over again.

Q: Interesting observation. A related question, an issue people grapple with – the length of assignments in these very difficult assignments. It's usually one year, but everybody knows it takes a few months to get settled and then a couple of months before you leave you're starting to think about that, so it reduces the amount of time you're focused. So that dilemma versus the dilemma of people staying too long in a difficult environment and the whole phenomena of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) – do you have any observations on that? AID ultimately has had some cases where people have been affected by being exposed too long in places with conflict. I wonder what you think about that delicate balance?

GARY: I do think you don't want people to be in a place for too long. How long too long is, is a matter for discussion. A lot of that has to do with doing a different level of personnel analysis undertaken before you send a person to a place. I'm not aware that/if we sit down and do what starts to be a psychological profile before we send a person to a place. I think that would be beneficial to them and to the agency – is this a person whose temperament and skill set is well suited to this place and this point of time? You can get a better feel. In difficult places, you do have to engage mental survival skills. Over a period of time, they will shift how you tend to perceive the world. I do think we ought to say for difficult posts, you can do one tour of three years. If you want to go back after six months or a year, you can but you have to take that break. Same principle of why people come for home leave; we want you to get back into who you are. I think that one of the greatest problems is that AID, like most organizations, don't assign their most talented people to personnel/human resources. During my time, virtually everyone in personnel was Civil Service and had never worked overseas...yet these were the people we were relying on to make the kinds of difficult assessments I've been speaking to...I've always believed that our staffing of the personnel office was a little nuts, kind of like having a civilian making decisions about who gets assigned to what combat unit!

I am totally opposed to one year assignments. We don't do the person or the program any favors. You get more done than you would if you didn't do it, but sometimes that's not good enough. Catalysts and how we start things are just so important; a three year tour in some place allows you to shape whatever input you want to make. A one year tour is almost development tourism. I personally, if I were a mission director, wouldn't want any one year fly bys.

Q: I think this is something people are looking at and trying to figure out ways to manage longer tours.

GARY: I don't want to be pious. We just need to go back to basics. We're asked in an increasingly complex world to do more and more. But the agency strength is what it is and we need to maintain that strength. We have people come into AID because they're committed to doing development. We could probably have a smaller force and pay them more but I think we'd lose a lot. We have people come in because this is a life commitment they want to make to do something for our country, to help someone else, at the core of it. Again, we all have different takes on that, but if we take that as the core of why people are there and set up our structures around that, I think we've done the best we can do. There will always be the possibilities to make an exception, but I don't think we ought to make the exceptions part of the program.

Q: Okay. So we're in 2006.

Retire (Again) – 2007

GARY: I'm going to go off and teach in Durham, N.C. for a while, and futz around in Iraq a little bit...

Q: When you went back to Afghanistan, were you a re-employed annuitant?

GARY: Yes.

Q: So you retired again.

GARY: Retired again, went to Durham and worked with a local organization on Iraq, so I spent a bunch of time in Iraq. I also spent a lot of time teaching at Carolina Friends School. I never taught at high school before. I enjoy being around kids. That was a good mix. I learned a couple of things. I continued to like teaching; I continued to like kids. I continued to like development in all of its aspects. But I did not like doing development not working for AID. AID, we're practical – we have to be, we manage money. We do all sorts of things, and there's never a question of profit. I had a university experience, I taught at universities, I came to AID. It's a quirk but I have a lot of discomfort with doing good for profit. It's okay to do well while doing good, but the primary goal ought to be doing good. The for-profit world, I didn't enjoy it. Nice people, a level of commitment, but not my cup of tea. I think I worked for the best organization in the world. Working with a lot of nice people and some of the most sincere people over many years. So being away from AID and dabbling in development just didn't work for me.

Q: So the private consulting world wasn't for you! But they did drag you back into USAID one more time?

OFDA Chief of Staff – Haiti Earthquake Recovery – 2009

GARY: One more time! Alonzo again. I should stop taking phone calls from him! But by this time he was the acting AID administrator; Raj Shah had just come in and Haiti had just happened. We had a mission director who had been down there a couple of weeks. Raj was new. The president was new. Alonzo asked if I would “come be chief of staff.” I said, “Chief of staff of what?” He said, “We want you to work with OFDA; we’re trying to put together an approach to manage Haiti.”

Q: This is after the earthquake?

GARY: After the earthquake. “The president has put Raj Shah and AID in charge. Would you come up and help us?”..that was the request

I said, “I’ll give you six months.” So I came up, and it took a couple of days to get signed in; I’d been on the rolls recently enough that it didn’t take that long.

Q: Again as a retired annuitant?

GARY: As a retired annuitant. And I got there, met Alonzo and Raj. This is all happening in a matter of days. On the way up I tried to read in as much as I could on where things stood. When I got there, we were in Raj’s office. What had happened, Secretary Clinton had been in Hawaii, and had flown from Hawaii to Port-au-Prince. As part of her press conference, she had announced “I am in charge.”

Q: I, Secretary Clinton?

GARY: I, Secretary Clinton. I said to myself, “Just go and get back on the train.” (Laughter) I stayed. The goal there obviously was – we have a human disaster. The second day I was there I was asked to go over to –

Q: This is how long after the earthquake?

GARY: A few days. I was asked to go to AIA, the American Institute of Architects; they were having their big convention. They wanted to know what they could do; could somebody come and speak to them and tell them? So I said sure. I had assumed I was going to speak to a small group. I go over there and there are 3000 people in this hall. I had taken some slides the mission had sent up showing before and after. I showed them the slides and said, “One of the things that’s happened in Haiti – the entire infrastructure is gone.” You could see that from the aerial slides. “The airport is severely damaged, and the roads going to the Dominican Republic are down. The docks no longer exist. So the question that we’re facing is not one of designing or building shelter; it’s saving lives. The shelter provision activities in terms of anything more than emergency shelter is going to be a little later.” They all seemed to understand that.

Then there was a Q&A and this one guy said, “You know, we have this modular design we’ve been working on, yadda yadda yadda.” He goes on about how he can take this package and do this and this.

Again, a lapse of diplomacy on my part. I said “I don’t think you understand. This was Haiti, not Martha’s Vineyard.” You have to understand. Port-au-Prince had no piped water system before the earthquake. So this notion that we’re going to do this and this and this – it’s not understanding the level of development and the implications of that in terms of what you can and cannot do.

Then I went and had a similar engagement that afternoon with the Organization of American States, who were interested in what they could do. One of the things I learned there was the first conflict, focus on that – all my lessons learned in Afghanistan (and later, Iraq), I had already started formulating in my head when I got there, what we’ll need to address and how to triage. As you begin to fix the airport, how many flights can you get in a day? Haiti has a government. The government of Haiti owns the airport. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq, we did not own it. Well figure out what you need; logistics is just getting stuff from point A to point B. It’s not a question of, “Can you land?” So we’ve got limited landing slots because the airport was severely damaged. You could get one airplane in, unload it, turn it around on the tarmac and get it back out. So you couldn’t bring in multiple planes and lots of supplies. You were competing for slots, because everybody wants to help. The Brazilians wanted slots; the French wanted slots. So working to get just slots to get stuff in turns out to be a political art.

Next problem: what do you bring in first? Let me get on record with a moment of truth. I have developed a fairly strong dislike for Anderson Cooper. What do you get in? What do you put into a Haiti? Water. If you don’t have water, you’re not going to live. There’s no water system, so you’ve got to bring water in. We’re busily trying to organize water and people are saying, “Wait a minute, we’ve got to get doctors in. Look how these people live.”

You’re trying to say, “If we get the doctors in, what are they going to do? Where are they going to get supplies? There are no supplies. You want them to operate? All the electricity’s out, so they have to use generators.”

“Why can’t they use generators? “

“Well, who’s going to get the fuel in to use the generators?” You’re constantly trying to triage and as you’re triaging the health people want to get doctors in, get water, food, shelter. Trying to get that triaged in a way that minimizes causing the different sectorial support groups to go to their Congressional representatives to get their issue moved up the line is pretty grave. We’re trying desperately to make all of this come together and you get Cooper reporting back about not feeding hungry people or providing shelter, etc. and of course everyone watch CNN wonders why the US is doing so little when in fact the activities of the agency are saving untold lives and making the systems, rather than telegenic one-shot interventions advocated by drop in would-be tv experts.

Q: Right. So you were doing this from Washington, led by Raj? We’ll come back to Secretary Clinton and her chief of staff in a minute. Raj and OFDA?

GARY: Raj and OFDA. We set up a task force; Craig Fugate, the head of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) was seconded as Raj's second. He came in, and of course he has pieces to work with. One of the first decisions – one of the great decisions I thought – we asked immediately DOD to help and they sent a medical ship, the USS *Mercy*. That was the hospital. It was ferrying people out of Haiti onto the ship for treatment. Rebuilding hospitals was too far down the line. So we had *Mercy* in. We got the Corps of Engineers to help fix the airport, so we could start to increase the flow of planes come in. Then you started running into political problems. That is, all these refugees were crowded into very small spaces. I remember my first one on one meeting with Raj. I said, "You're not going to want to hear this, but one of the things I suggest you try to do over the next week is do as little as possible in terms of building up the camps."

He looked at me like I'd just come from Mars. I said, "The reason for that is, because Haiti was in such poor shape before the earthquake; we're now sheltering people in place. If you start bringing in piped water and regular food supplies, sanitary units, and security, in a very short order where they are now is going to be better than where they were. Well-intended as it is, we're going to create a slum. If we intend to move them out of there fairly quickly back into regular housing or different parts of the country, we just cannot build this up to a place that's better than it was. What was wasn't good, so this is not going to look good, and that's going to be a problem."

Raj looked like why did I take this job? We went up on the Hill and talked to Congressman Donald Payne and a congressman from North Carolina. They were leading a committee. Raj put it in less stark terms explaining why we would have to not go but so far at each step because we wanted to be able to insure that we could build a really meaningful and permeant solution to the plight of all the displaced people.

Enter Anderson Cooper. He goes down with his camera. He grabs up this little kid and runs because it feels like an aftershock, and he goes on about what the U.S. government isn't doing. "Why are we not getting in food? Why are we not getting lights into these camps? There are six women who were raped?"

You can't go back and say, "Well there were 20 people who were raped before the problems caused by the earthquake; you can't say stuff like that because it sounds as if you are truly callus; pre-earthquake, the slums of Port-O-Prince were a horrible place. The current situation was not good and not a single person should ever be raped. The current situation, however is not worse, than what it was, and we have a plan to address it and deal with the breath of the issue. Those approaches/arguments do not make for not good sound-bites. "Rape is not a big problem" is a great sound-bite taken out of context; no matter how true, in context, you simply cannot say it.

After Cooper's reporting we're getting calls from the Hill because they're getting political pressure, saying "You've got to provide security and infrastructure for the camps" So, we upgrade the camps. We still have camps and I believe these "make it better now" requirements are a big part of the reason.

Q: Some places where people went after the earthquake; they're still there because the conditions were better?

GARY: They're still there; the conditions were better. Every development officer who hears this will know immediately and will just shake their head. But if you don't know those things, you can't know. I think one of the lessons of Haiti is we have to as a society maintain our compassion. But we also need to know what we can do. Well intended actions that do not take account of local circumstances are generally not going to come out well.

That was one of the big things in Haiti. The other thing, when I was sure that we were not going to do as well as we should do in Haiti, was after the secretary's intervention. Lew Lucke was bought in as a special envoy type to coordinate the work in Haiti.

Q: He was ambassador in Swaziland; he had been mission director in Jordan.

GARY: Lew immediately came and went to Haiti and started setting up parallel structures to the mission. He got a program officer-

Q: He went down as?

GARY: As special envoy.

Q: Envoy. But was he assigned to AID or to State?

GARY: State. So they sent Lew down, who then starts setting up this parallel structure. Part of what I had to respond to were requests from Lew for more staff to be transferred in to help run Haiti. So you essentially had an AID mission that had been there – perfectly capable. You set up a parallel structure because “I'm in charge.” You end up putting together disaster assistance, development, and political agendas in a way that ensures that none of them are going to be well served. Haiti could look a lot better than it does if we had left it to development professionals.

One of the other problems that was unique in Haiti; Haiti's government was very antagonistic towards the NGO community, arguing that the NGO community had essentially formed a second government in Haiti. My sense at the time I was there is that it was probably true. And probably good, because the Haitian government certainly had not been doing the kinds of things it needed to do for its people. The NGO community characterized, I think accurately, much of Haiti's officialdom as a near kleptocracy, so it was making sure that to the best of their abilities, the citizens, especially the lowest income and most vulnerable, were getting as much support as they could. They were doing so in a way that the government wasn't filtering off its share. I think the government's accusations of the NGO community as a parallel structure was accurate, but for the sake of the Haitian people, thank goodness it was.

The problem with the reconstruction effort though, was that the NGO community was busy doing a lot of the same things we were doing and that the new Lucke group were doing. Again, lesson learned. Keep it simple. One of the things I have never understood the need for parallel structures, from Khalilzad to Eastern Europe to Haiti – the ambassador is U.S. government’s point person. If one really felt that the development program, in an emergency, had to be put under embassy control for some immediate need, why not just do it through the ambassador in place?; That’s who the AID director reports to anyway. I never understood this desire to have this secondary structure that parallels what you already have in place.

Q: What one often hears is that sometimes senior State officials don’t see AID as being very responsive, in part because we always say that there’s a long-term perspective. So they feel the need to create something they have more control over.

GARY: I’ve heard that but you end up not having more control because the laws that prevent us from moving funds willy-nilly are still there. You can set up as many structures as you like; they still don’t have the funds. The logic of it has paled in my mind.

I do have a theory. When I first joined USAID, in the 80’s, political appointees were pretty much exclusively at the uppermost levels of the organization. By the time I left, you had appointees not only at middle management levels, but often at staff levels. These politicians are almost exclusively in Washington...and many believe that they have near Churchillian command over the world’s complexities. One trait I observed, which seemed nearly universal, was a tendency for the political appointees, at the lower levels, to see themselves as more able and enlightened than the career staff (often calling career staff “bureaucrats” in tones that suggested that they were akin to luddites). I think the advent of the hyper politicalization created a disrespect for traditional institutional structures, as well as, for subject matter expertise (especially where it conflicted with the current next best great idea). In such an environment there would naturally be a tendency for the political staff to want to have hands on control over any major or high profile issue; and since they tended to be in Washington, tried to have day to day management centered there...i.e. all of the special envoys and staff who reported directly to DC.

This observation relates directly to Haiti. As I noted, when the earthquake struck, we had a new Mission Director in place...a super talented officer named Charlene Day. She had worked previously in South Africa, as well as, other places and was a pro a handling crisis. After the event, she immediately mobilized her mission (although many of them and their families were effected by the quake) and they were out aiding people. As you might expect, she was getting lots of calls from Washington wanting information. She basically, as I remember it, took one or two calls a day but sent up sitreps (situation reports) multiple times a day. She was managing a huge crisis and simply didn’t have time to be on the phone with everyone who believed that they needed to personally be briefed. You can guess how that was received! What is really interesting is that, to my observation, no such pressure was placed on the embassy? Ambassador...it was the AID director who was expected to have the best information, but ironically, to spend time reporting on it as opposed to acting on it. I once heard a great description of politico

officers...they're like little kids playing soccer, everybody is trying to kick the ball at the same time. Of course, I've been speaking in generalities; many political appointees are some of the most able people you'll meet, but those folks are usually at the highest echelons of organizations.

Q: I think a lot of energy gets spent on coordination as opposed to doing.

Q: This is Carol Peasley; January 31, 2017. Continuation by phone of the interview with Philip-Michael Gary. Phil, when we last spoke we had gotten you through your retirement; I don't remember what year that was?

GARY: It was 2003.

Q: The first retirement. Then we had talked a bit more about your consulting work then you came back into AID and worked as chief of staff on Haiti. I don't know if there was anything further you wanted to say about Haiti. I know it was a very complex interagency task, but if there is anything you'd like to say further about Haiti or we could move on and you could talk about your final thoughts about your career with USAID and lessons you might want to pass on to others, and your deliberations on the impact of what you did.

Concluding Thoughts

GARY: I think the first thing that I think about and I would really try to share especially with young officers, but even people who join the agency at the mid-career level; or folks from other disciplines is this. The best way I can put it is, your failures, you see immediately. Your successes you often never see and that's something unique about development. It's very rare that any single action or program is going to be wholly successful within the timeframe you're participating in it. Conversely, if you get something really wrong it's likely to be there for everyone to see almost immediately. That's just the nature of what you do; that I would share with young officers. You have to have a long-term goal, commitment, and vision – not just for yourself but whatever you're working on. That has to guide you. That's the first thing I would say.

The second thing, thinking back across career and things I learned from people I worked with. I think a Foreign Service officer, especially an AID officer, has to have a thoughtful mix of realism and idealism. I think you constantly have to believe that you can make things better and that your conceptual design, the paradigms you work within are tilted towards making things better. You have to do that in the context of realism. We could go through any number of countries; you can look at those that are development challenges, those that have political issues that further complicate development, countries where the leadership is less than noble. You have all sorts of realistic things that butt up against your idealistic goals and threading that becomes absolutely critical. I wasn't involved directly in it but one of the best examples of that was something I know both you and Aaron and others worked on in South Africa – looking at what South Africa could be and

at the same time understanding what it was, and what kinds of legacies you were going to have to deal with to get from point A to point B to C.

I learned a lot from you and others dealing with that that I think ought to be put in a case study for young officers, especially as it's ongoing. The democratic institutions that you and others worked so hard to put into place are there, but the reality of the current leadership makes you want to go "ugh, get with the program." It's never a straight line, and hanging on to that is important.

Related to that, I think the notion of both global and national service has to be something which underpins what you do. We're Americans, we represent the country; we have views and values. And then we have a commitment to globalism. That too is a contradiction at times that I think emotionally we have to work with. Our political system changes every four years. Development doesn't. One of the things I think that both AID and State and other Foreign Service officers get far, far too little credit for is the fact that they serve and carry out programs through different administrations, different ideologies, different conditions and they do so on a global stage but also always with not only national backing but with the notion of representing America and the American leadership. I think of times over my career when we looked at issues like population. Population problems are very simple in some ways when you look at them on the global stage. But when you start addressing those, our national politics is often in a different place. An AID officer, especially, really has to be able to respect and represent the national political being at the same time looking to solve a country specific problem.

Those are very unique things, things that it would benefit every incoming officer to have the opportunity to understand. One of the things I would love to see happen – Obviously we have had the intern development classes, and State has its A-100 entry class, but having a weekend in which senior officers spend the entire weekend in retreat with small classes of incoming officers – not only junior officers, but incoming officers – to just talk about these kinds of things and build a kind of network. I think the military is especially good at this; I think it would be a real gift. I think of the times how lucky I have been in knowing people who I could call and say "Help! What should I do about this?" Having that kind of support is invaluable and I think we ought to if we could have a sort of council of elders, if you will, that young and/or new officers could reach out to if they wanted to; it would be a real gift. Those are the professional kinds of notions I'd like to share.

Q: Thank you Phil, those are important points and show the complexity of a career and the ability to be adaptable while maintaining certain principles and values and vision.

GARY: One thing I would like to leave with and make part of the record. I saw a lot within the Foreign Service with tandem couples. As you know, I am part of a tandem couple. I think in many ways that's a unique opportunity, but also a very challenging one. You think about how nice it would be to be able to work closely with your spouse, both being in the same field and working on the same set of problems. For me it was a real blessing. When you go home in the evening you may or may not leave the job but you

always have someone who is there, that you share with, that you think out loud with. That's something that ought to be encouraged, especially when the talent you can get from two officers being together, living and working together as a couple.

The challenge is something I've reflected on and to be honest I'm not sure the context I could put it in. But I look at my career and my wife; we joined the agency a year apart; we came into the same office. I look back at the assignments, and I got the lead assignment and my wife got the supporting assignment if you will. That was true throughout much of our career. I recognize now especially since we spoke so much and spent time on issues of equity; we worked on other countries in women in development issues, we worked to try and improve the participation of women and people who had been historically kept out of the mainstream. My career was tremendously enhanced by my wife's and the work she did and the work we did together. The one regret I have is focusing so much personally on program that I did not say to myself, "Your wife is really the more talented of the two of you. Have the courage to step back and push her forward." I think if we had been in different disciplines, had worked in different places, it might not have been such an issue. I think that in that way the agency got a little bit short-changed because her talents weren't exploited nearly as much as they should have been. I think that's one of the things that can be problematic with tandem couples – a tendency to not let both stars may not shine as brightly. For me, it should have been incumbent to recognize, that the burden of making sure that happened was on me and not on anyone else, not the system, but on me. That's one thing I regret not having done. But we still talk about it. I wanted to say that; I think that's an important message for other officers that come in. It can't be about you; if you are committed to what you're doing, you have to be fully committed to it within the service, within the advancement, all the rest of it.

Q: That's a good sentiment to share, though I think in this specific case the system could and should have done more as well, to help come up with more win-win solutions. I do know that there were cases in which secondments were made to other agencies. Oftentimes this was for State officers; I know that USAID a number of times created positions for State Department spouses when that was needed. Was this ever discussed in the case of you and Viviann? Did AID ever approach State or did you ever discuss having one of you seconded to another agency at post so you could both have senior positions?

GARY: Only in passing. The closest it came was when we were in Indonesia. Because the director was gone for a chunk of time and I was the acting director, Viviann reported directly to the ambassador as opposed to me. But she was still in the mission.

Q: She was still in the AID mission. There'd never been discussions of working for another agency?

GARY: No. I think I know that there have been several State officers for whom AID has created slots for them. We never discussed it because quite frankly both of us are deeply committed to development and to areas within the development community, where our expertise lies. The notion of being in the State hierarchy had no appeal to us. That's going to be true of most AID officers. State officers coming into AID – you had political

officers, economic officers and you could have positions within our planning offices especially where they could practice their trade but also learn more microeconomics or micro-political analysis in a specific country or area. When they went the other way, AID officers who had a specific development expertise weren't going to be able to practice that within the State Department. So I think what you would get in terms of tandem couples, it would have to be someone who was in the program office and was interested in looking at a broader political application. But going to State you'd have to know that you weren't going to be able to practice development. So for us, that didn't have much appeal. Again, you'd have to have a specific goal where that would be something attractive to you.

Q: Before we depart – we've talked about it a little bit throughout – any final thoughts about diversity within the agency and the degree to which AID did a good job in trying to advance diversity? Any lessons learned on that front?

GARY: I have mentioned it; I don't know that there's a whole lot more I would say. I do think that AID – it's bifurcated in the sense that like most Federal agencies over the course of my career, I don't think it did a spectacular job in recruitment and in understanding how to recruit and what were the skill sets you would look for in officers of diverse backgrounds. The agency had an entry program and an agenda, and you had to fit within it, as opposed to "it" looking for specific people who brought something unique to the table. So, no, I don't think we did well there. There was a mentality that you should recruit at Harvard U., not Howard U.

Organizations may be liberal or conservative, progressive or reactionary, but they all exist within the same national culture. All of the organizations are made up of people who were educated and live in the culture. As a part of the American cultural narrative, AID members (I think uniquely more so than the actual institution itself) bring the same baggage as anyone else in the culture. I think far too often, people of color, and women, found themselves in what George Bush coined as the subtle bigotry of low expectations. I've been in too many meetings and situations where a person of color or women would make an intervention only to be dismissed and get a non-verbal "you just don't understand; only to have a white male make virtually the same intervention a little later (and at times, barely paraphrasing what was said) and be told, "yes, yes, that's very insightful. People of color are also burdened by the A or F factor. You are either great, terrific, outstanding, etc. or you are a lightweight, dullard, or burden. I usually heard minority officers spoken of in glowing terms (because they worked extraordinarily hard to complement extraordinary skills) or as poor so and so who just can't cut it. While your white colleagues could be good, ordinary or bad, you were seen as either really good or bad...there wasn't much middle ground.

When I say it's bifurcated, once you were in the agency I think you could find a network that helped you navigate AID. You could find wonderful people, in terms of dealing with diversity inside of the corps; and they worked tirelessly to ensure equity in assignments and promotions. I served on several promotion panels; the agency made efforts to include diversity on the panels to tease out and try to address some of the inherent biases in a up

or out system like ours. I think in terms of agency's postures, I don't know of any organization that has done any better job internally than AID in terms of at least trying to harmonize its diversity of staff.

Q: Good to hear. I vaguely recall that you participated in a group that may have been primarily State officers – the Thursday Group or the Tuesday Group or something like that?

GARY: Mmm-hmm. There was a group of relatively senior State officers of color and their interest was in talking about policy in recruitment, retention, but also in terms of contribution internally. How do diversity members, members of colors have an impact on the policy planning process and add a point of view to the policy planning table? Many of those meeting members got to be or were ambassadors. Ed Perkins was in that, Jim Joseph...

Q: So it was mainly senior State officers?

GARY: It was. There were a number of AID officers who were invited. I think Aaron Williams, Keith Brown, a couple of others but primarily a State policy forum.

Q: Any other final thoughts? You talked about the importance of looking long-term and understanding that your successes may not be felt for some time. Now as you look back, what would you say you thought was the most important programmatic success during your career?

GARY: Easily the most important programmatic success was one Viviann and I worked on together – HDFC, the Housing Development Finance Corporation in India. When we started, India had virtually no housing finance system. Now, HDFC is one of the biggest housing finance banks *cum* lending companies (it has diversified) in India. I think that is by far our biggest success and one of AID's biggest successes.

My most personally gratifying action was when I was in Thailand, with you. A Catholic priest (a real cage rattler) (Father Joe) was working in Klong Thoi...one of Bangkok's most notorious slums. He had come as a young priest and stayed...actually living in the slum. We became friends and one day he told me that they just couldn't raise money for a school/classes in Klong Thoi; and that nothing was more important than finding a safe place for little kids. We talked and I found enough money to start the school/classes. As you know, such an activity was nowhere "legit" within my program...so one secret I'll never share is where the money came from. This year, I got an invitation from Father Joe to visit (we've only visited a couple of times since I left, but we keep in touch). While Klong is still a slum, it is also a community. Father Joe still lives there, but now there's a full fledged school and many other community sustaining activities. The visit was to celebrate the 45th year of Mercy Center...a small place making a huge difference.

Q: And probably one that few people know about.

GARY: Very few people know about it. As I said your successes don't stand out so much; your failures do!

Q: So you need to follow up on your own!

GARY: That's one of the things I can't emphasize enough. You can help develop and build those sorts of things but you have to understand that you're the catalyst; you get it going, you help make the inputs. Then it grows. It grows because of those inputs. If it's real, it belongs to them – it belongs to the country and those people. It doesn't belong to you. You move on and you try to do something equally positive someplace else. That's the nature of what you do. You're not going to take bows. I think there's something positive about that. Your satisfaction has to be generated internally. When I was in AID, AID officers appreciated that in each other. And having that appreciation from your colleagues was something that really counted. That was it! Many of us have stayed in touch over the years because yeah, we did something that we think was pretty good. That's us. We're a little club.

Q: Often too many of the people in those countries years later will also acknowledge that little bit of support and help that made a difference. Again, it's often very hidden. Hidden stories – that's one of the purposes of the oral history program, to reveal some of those stories and to broaden the understanding.

Any final thoughts before we close and I let you get ready to get on another airplane?

GARY: I've said all I can say, and I really appreciate the opportunity.

End of interview