

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

AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: May 22, 2014

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[Note: This is an interview in progress. Additional portions will be added as they are completed.]

Q: Today is the 22nd of May, 2014, and an interview with Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm -- better known to friends and colleagues as "Skip."

GNEHM: Correct.

Q: Well Skip, in the first place when and where were you born?

GNEHM: I was born in Carrollton, Georgia, and, in fact, grew up in Georgia.

Q: Okay then let's talk about the Gnehm family. In the first place how the hell did you get that name and where did it come from?

GNEHM: That is a very interesting question given the number of times in my career I was asked that question. Of course I got my family name from my father and grandfather. My grandfather was actually an immigrant from Switzerland where the family lived for centuries. But the interesting thing about my family name is that virtually all of the Arabs that I've known through the years have believed it to be an Arabic name as we pronounce it similarly to an Arabic family. My Arab friends just assumed that I was of Arab origin. And the Israelis believed that as well!

Q: Being an Arab is quite handy.

GNEHM: But in truth it is a Swiss-German name.

Q: Well what do you know about the Gnehm family? What were they doing in Switzerland and why did they leave the Alps and go to Georgia?

GNEHM: They were farmers in dairy country and my great-grandfather actually was a cook on a ship on the Rhine River. Family lore is that it was very bad economic times that led him to bring the family to New York City where he became a baker in one of the large hotels there.

Q: When was that that they came over?

GNEHM: It was just about the turn of the 1900s.

Q: Well then what was your father doing in, is it Carrollton?

GNEHM: In Georgia.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Well my father was born in the Bronx. Being a Southerner I never discussed that when I was a young kid growing up in the state of Georgia! My father joined the military when World War II broke out. The Army sent him to Macon, Georgia, where he was in charge of the NCO club at the base there. He had been working for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in its home office in Manhattan before the war. So when he got out of the military after the war, he remained in Georgia working for Metropolitan Life -- first in La Grange and then in Albany.

Q: NCO means a non-commissioned officers; that is corporals, sergeants?

GNEHM: Correct. It was while he was working in the NCO Club that he met my mother. She was a volunteer. They got married and that's when I came along. Since the NCOs called my father "Skipper," I picked up the name Skippy, the diminutive. I got rid of the last "py" at some point when I was in second grade. So that's what brought my father south and that's where he met my mother, whose family is an old Georgia family.

Q: I see. Well now on your mother's side what- where did her family come from?

GNEHM: Her family came from England to the then colony of Virginia in the 1700s. Over the years the family migrated first to North Carolina then on to South Carolina and, ultimately, to Georgia. That was in the days when the Creek Indians still roamed much of northwestern Georgia. Mom's family settled in Carrollton where they were quite prominent throughout the 1800s until the late 1900s.

Q: What sort of schooling did she have?

GNEHM: My mother went to LaGrange College in LaGrange, Georgia; my father started at Syracuse but didn't complete a degree.

Q: Did Sherman's army pass through Carrollton?

GNEHM: No, but my great-great-grandfather was actually a cavalry colonel in the Confederate Army of Tennessee. And my great-great grandfather on my father's side was in the Union Army. He fought the battle at The Wilderness. He was given the Medal of Honor for saving the American flag from capture by the Confederates.

Q: So what was Carrollton like? I mean as a kid.

GNEHM: Well, I actually didn't grow up in Carrollton. I used to spend my summers there but my parents moved from La Grange to Albany, Georgia, when I was 4. That is where I grew up and where I went to high school. My family (which included my two sisters – Barbara and Jane Ellen) lived at 1710 Lincoln Avenue, which I always thought was a weird street name in the south!

Q: Okay. Well let's talk about Albany. What was it like?

GNEHM: It was a very interesting city, located in southwest Georgia not so very far from Carter and his peanuts. That part of Georgia is famous for watermelons, rattlesnakes, and swamps in addition to peanuts, but Albany was very interesting city. It was a fast growing town in the '50s, '60s and '70s. There were two U.S. military bases in Albany. One, the Marine Corps Supply Center, is still there and supports Marines in the eastern United States and Europe. The second one was Turner Air Force Base, which was at one time a SAC (Strategic Air Command) base and sometimes was the base for other Air Force elements. The interesting thing about both of those military bases is that they brought into a community that was very conservative, rural, and agricultural people from all over the United States. The military families brought new ideas and broadened horizons in Albany. They were very active in the community -- very civic minded. For example, they were deeply involved with schools and promoted excellence in teaching and in building up the curriculum. They organized various civic programs, like bringing in an opera group or an orchestra -- programs that you would not have normally found in rural Georgia.

I was active in Boy Scouts. My Scout master was a Marine Corps captain and many other officers and enlisted men were volunteer leaders.

Q: Oh boy.

GNEHM: The military really made Albany a dynamic community.

Q: How about being a kid there? Let's take sort of elementary school. What was it like? Was it sort of Tom Sawyerish or what were you up to?

GNEHM: Well, it was a little bit like that because the house that I lived in was on the edge of town. A half a block from my house there were fields, woods, and swamps. So I spent my time climbing trees, digging in fields and running through swamps and pretending the Indians were still around and things of that sort.

Q: Oh yes.

GNEHM: But it was, as you know, a very, very different time in those days. It was a segregated South.

Q: As a very young kid did, you have much contact with what we call today African-Americans?

GNEHM: Well, the answer is “no” and “yes.” I can remember exactly the day when I realized that there were people with black skin. I don’t know if you want me to go into that.

Q: Yes, I would.

GNEHM: It was really a dramatic moment in my life.

Q: Well how did that come about?

GNEHM: It was in Carrollton, Georgia, where my mom’s family lived. My aunt, a dowager aunt, at least she seemed to be in those days, was a great favorite. She always pampered me and fed me. She lived in a house not far from my grandfather’s and in the backyard of the house was an older wooden framed house in which a black family lived. The children in the family were my best buddies and every time I went to Carrollton I would race to her house to see her and then bound out the back of the house to see my friends. And then there was one summer! I’m going to say I might have been five or six. I bounded down the street, raced through the front door, said ‘hey’ to Aunt Katie Lou, and bolted out the back door headed for my friends. They were all standing on the porch looking at me headed their way when she yelled at me, “Skippy, you come back here this instant.” I turned around and walked back to her because her voice was unusually stern and angry. She waged her finger at me and said, “It’s about time you learned that white kids don’t play with black kids. You understand that?”

Q: Good God.

GNEHM: I sat down on her back porch looking at my friends across the yard and just bawled my head off -- but I never went back.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Until that moment I never realized they were black.

Q: Well did this come up, I’m talking about particularly your early years, six sort of up through elementary and all, did it come up in conversations or was it just sort of acknowledged and one didn’t even, I mean the- the- you might say, what do you call it, the black/white problem, did it-?

GNEHM: This is really a very interesting question and, as we get into it, I have a very interesting story to tell. When I joined the Foreign Service in 1969 and was in A-100 training, Ruth Davis, who later became the Director General of the Foreign Service, was in my class and was from Atlanta, Georgia. We were and remain good friends. One long

weekend (I think it was Memorial Day 1969) Ruth, the girl I later married also from Georgia, and I decided to zip down to see our families. Typical of our age group, we left after work intending to drive all night. We pulled over in North Carolina late that night for a cup of coffee. Walking into the diner, it was immediately clear from the face behind the counter that we were not welcome. All three of us knew instantly what the problem was -- two whites and a black! Ruth said under her breath "let's get out of here." I said "not on your life" and sat right down on a stool at the counter. So that was my first (and I guess only) civil rights protest that I participated in. We got our coffee, by the way.

I look back on my days as a youth and I'm just sort of astonished, more than that, taken aback, that I never questioned it (segregation), that I just accepted it. It was just the way things were.

For example, I remember going into the fashionable department store on a hot summer day and heading for the water fountain. One fountain was labeled 'white only' and the other 'colored only.' I went to the one marked for whites. I would never have thought to drink from the other fountain.

Then there was the railroad station in Waycross, Georgia, when I used to go home from GW (George Washington University) by train. When you got off the train, there you were at the terminal -- colored waiting room, white waiting room. And who was the porter? It was a black guy who handled the bags. If you ask if there was any exchange yes, there was, and it wasn't hostile; but it was an unacceptable relationship that was defined that way by society at that time.

Q: I can relate to that because as a teenager I grew up in Annapolis, Maryland, and it was segregated as all hell.

Well now, were you much of a reader, you know, as a young kid?

GNEHM: Very, very much so. I was an avid reader as a kid. We had a very good public library in Albany. My mother, by the way, was a schoolteacher. She had given up teaching when she got married but went back to teaching when I was in elementary school. She was a history/geography teacher and sometimes English. So I early on developed a real interest in history. I used to read everything I could get my hands on about Rome, Greece, and Egypt. I also liked science fiction and, of course, Tarzan. I read every Tarzan book that came out.

Q: Can you think of any books that particularly grabbed you?

GNEHM: Yes, I was fascinated with the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Q: Well how many were in your elementary school. Were you good in any particular subjects and not good in some subjects?

GNEHM: Now there's a question I haven't thought about that in a while. I know the names of every single elementary school teacher I had; but I couldn't tell you some of my professors at university. I guess we're all that way. Our schools were on the larger side given that the population of Albany reached about 75,000 by the time I graduated from high school. I was a reasonably good student but by no stretch of the imagination the best in the class. I loved history and government. While I did well in biology, chemistry was a near disaster!

Q: I assume the school was segregated.

GNEHM: Yes it was at that time.

Q: Did you get much in the way of southern history?

GNEHM: Oh, yes. In those days, and I think it was in the eighth grade, you had to take a half-year of Georgia history and when we studied U.S. history it was usually with a southern approach to certain periods of time.

Q: I take it the schools were boys and girls together.

GNEHM: Yes, yes, definitely. Not in all towns in Georgia but in Albany they were.

Q: How did you feel about your elementary experience? Seems you were getting a pretty good education.

GNEHM: I think I got a very good education. Again, I believe it had much to do with the influx into the community of non-native Georgians, people who had a sense of excellence in education, expecting the courses to be good and the teachers to be good as well. They pushed the entire education system to higher levels.

Q: Well this often is the influence of the military. They come in, I mean, they demand something more than you might say of the status quo.

GNEHM: They were very active in the community--very, very supportive of community activities.

Q: Did the military attract you? I mean, was this something that led you to follow what the military was up to?

GNEHM: I can't say that it attracted me in the sense of thinking of it as an occupation. But I have to tell you that one of the comments made to me a number of different times in my Foreign Service career was 'Skip, you're one of the few people that I know in the Foreign Service that really seems to get along well with the military. You just seem to click together.' I think it goes all the way back to the fact that I grew up with them and developed a huge admiration for them as well.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: I have a great appreciation for their discipline. I have a great appreciation for their sense of loyalty and certainly the relationships between officers and troops. It is the way they take care of people, their own. It was my Boy Scout master – Marine Captain Donald Clegg – who taught me basic skills -- how to work as a team -- and the ideals that are important in life. But I have to also tell you that my church was a very important influence as I was growing up as well.

Q: Well what about religion? Was religion important for you and what was it?

GNEHM: I was raised a Southern Baptist. That was my mother's denomination. Her grandfather was a Baptist pastor. In fact, the cornerstone of the First Baptist Church in Carrollton, Georgia, has my great grandfather's name as he was the pastor when the church was built.

I would say in terms of activities, non-school activities, it was scouting and it was my church that had the most influence on me as a youth. There was a very young pastor, Albert Cardwell, in the church that we moved to when I was very young. He had been a coalminer in West Virginia who had found his faith and become a pastor. He was a great pastor and could relate very, very well to young people and others. He was one of those men along with my Scoutmaster who had a big influence in my life.

Q: Politically I assume your family was Democratic at the time?

GNEHM: Was there anything else?

Q: Yes, I was going to say.

GNEHM: In Georgia in the '60s and the '70s? I have to laugh because it was only in the last few years someone asked me whether I was a Republican and had ever registered as Republican or Democrat. I said no, I've never been in either party. And then I got to thinking about it after I'd gone home. I remembered that I did register as a Democrat when I became eligible to vote. There were virtually no Republican candidates for any job in the state of Georgia when I grew up. Winners were always decided in the Democratic primary. Of course it is very different today.

Q: What about foreign affairs? Did that attract you at all early on or did this come later?

GNEHM: I was interested in international affairs from an early age. I remember the day very, very well when I decided that I wanted to be in the Foreign Service. I was invited by my eighth grade civics teacher, Martha Westbrook, to come back after school. She knew I was interested in collecting stamps and she said, "I have some stamps in my drawer that you're welcome to come look at." So I was sitting there in the afternoon. It had to have been in March-April or early May because I remember how bright the sun was coming through the windows. It was one of these glorious days, not yet too hot but

headed toward summer. I'm sitting there going through her pile of stamps, and she said to me, "Skip, what do you want to be when you grow up?" I said, "Oh, I don't know but maybe an archaeologist or a preacher because I liked history and my religious experiences. Then she said, "Well, have you ever thought about the Foreign Service?" I said, "What's that?" And she said, "Oh, it's ambassadors and people who represent our country and you live and work overseas." I thought to myself that sounds really interesting. "And you want to go to George Washington University because it's the best university in America for Foreign Service," my teacher added. And you know. Right then and there I decided I wanted to be in the Foreign Service and that I wanted to go to GW. I never wanted to do anything else in my whole life.

Q: That's amazing.

GNEHM: It is amazing.

Q: Where were you getting your information? Was it TV or I guess radio more. Where was information about the world outside your town coming from?

GNEHM: It was largely radio because I don't think we got a television station in Albany until 1960 or thereabouts. We could only get TV from Atlanta and it wasn't very good reception. But from then on, yes, it was television.

The newspaper in Albany wasn't that bad. It wasn't great; but it catered to the military and others who were living in the city but were from other states. This leads to another question about how I ever got interested in the Middle East particularly. I think it was due to my mother's interest in world events and history that I got interested in Rome, Greece, Babylonia, and Egypt. I often tell people in the Foreign Service that I don't think I ever heard about the Arab/Israeli dispute at that time. I might have gone to some other regions if I had; but I just wanted to go to the region to see the pyramids, to climb the ruins, and to visit famous historical sites.

Later I met the commander of one of the important wings stationed at the Air Force base, Colonel George Humbrecht, who had served in Saudi Arabia at the Dhahran Air Force Base. His son, Brian, was in my Boy Scout troop and Col. Humbrecht used to go with us camping. At night around the campfire, he would tell stories about his time in Saudi Arabia, about the king and how the military brought TV to the Kingdom. The religious figures in the Kingdom thought that it was against the Koran to replicate human images. They demanded that the King close down the TV station. The King was clever and got the military to run a wire to the palace. When they turned on the TV, there was a member of the ulema reading the Koran. The King asked the assembled clergy if television was bad when it propagated the faith. So the military got to keep their television station. It was his stories that began to pique my interest in the Middle East.

Q: In many of these smallish towns and cities in the south there were small but rather influential Jewish communities. Was there such a community in Albany?

GNEHM: There certainly was.

Q: Did you have any friends or did you have any contact with them?

GNEHM: My very best friend from the first grade, who's still a friend of mine today, is Jewish and from a prominent family in Albany area. The synagogue and the Jewish community were very much integrated into life of the city. In fact the head of the Boy Scout council for a number of years was Jewish as was the Chairman of the Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, Albany's only hospital. Jewish children were in the public schools. I don't recall thinking of them in any different way from any of my other friends.

Q: Yes, it's been my impression that anti-Semitism is really a northern manifestation.

GNEHM: I never remember ever any negative thoughts about them. If I had any thoughts that they were different, it was my understanding that they were "Old Testament" people. If there were any negative thoughts it was about the Catholics.

Albany was a Baptist town (along with several other Protestant denominations). When one mentioned Catholics, the Pope was the target -- simply a rejection of the Papacy and its control over its adherents. Also they were somewhat separated from the rest of society -- at least those my age. They had their own school up to high school. So I did not have much interaction with Catholics my age until high school except through Scouting. There was a Catholic troop. I did not have any negative feelings toward Catholics myself; in fact I had many Catholic friends in Scouting.

Q: Yes. And they were a bigger group too so enough to maybe cause a difference.

GNEHM: Well, I think for most Protestants the pope was the problem.

Q: Well I remember as a kid, hearing from some people, and I'm including some of my family, well you really shouldn't date those Catholic girls because if you marry one you know your children will have to be brought up as Catholics.

GNEHM: Yes, I remember hearing that as well.

Q: I mean this is part of the ethos then.

GNEHM: I have to tell you that even as a young kid I had a rebellious streak. It wasn't just the Confederacy! I remember getting in really big trouble with the pastor that I mentioned to you earlier. It was 1960 and Kennedy was running for President. Of course, you can imagine in Georgia the idea of a Catholic becoming president meant that we were voting the Pope into the White House.

That meant that the Pope and not the President would be running the country! This particular Sunday the sermon topic was "Can a Tiger Change His Stripes?" It was clearly

going to be anti-Kennedy because he was a Catholic. I was so outraged by that approach that I wrote an anonymous letter to the pastor, really castigating the idea that he would preach and use the Bible and religion to attack Kennedy. I have to admit that I didn't have the courage to sign it. I slipped it under the door of his office before he got there and then scattered as fast as I could so that no one would see me near his door!

We're in church at 11:00, right, and he comes out to the pulpit. When he stands up for the sermon he said, I have never- and he's really angry- I have never done this in my entire life. I don't respond to anonymous letters; but there was one under my door this morning that deserves a response. He just tore into my argument! I just sat there trying not to show any emotions. I was sure everybody in the congregation knew it was me because I thought my ears and my face must have been red as a beet! Years later I admitted to him that I was the one who wrote the letter. And he said to me, "You know, you changed my life with your challenge to me. I was mad that day; but I thought of it later and you were right. And I've always regretted since that day that I preached that sermon."

Anyway, I have been a bit rebellious every now and then in my life.

Q: What was social life like? I mean early on, I mean, were you sort of kids turned loose? In a small town, I mean and particularly in those areas they- the kids could sort of get out and play and come back at dinner time and that was pretty much it, wasn't it?

GNEHM: Yes. Society in the South is a very hierarchical. It was different in Albany because of the military presence there. It tended to break through the traditional social structure. But it remained true that even in the high school there were students who considered themselves elite. They were members of this prestigious club and that exclusive organization. I wasn't in that group and they didn't have a lot to do with those students who were not in their elite clique.

But socially, there wasn't a lot to do in Albany?

Q: Movies?

GNEHM: There were movies. We went to movies on a really basis. In fact, going back to your question about black and white, I remember coming home one day from one of the downtown theaters. That evening my great-grandmother called from New York City, and in those days in the late '50s, you didn't make long distance calls very much.

Q: Oh no.

GNEHM: She had just heard on the news that there was this big demonstration, the blacks marching in Albany, Georgia, and she wanted to make sure we were safe. I had been downtown; I didn't even know there had been a march. It just wasn't evident and we told her that. But it goes back to your question about the relationships between-

Q: Yes. Well, during the Kennedy and Johnson thing, you were still in school, were you?

GNEHM: I was in high school, that's right.

Q: Well let's talk about high school. What was high school like?

GNEHM: High school was a lot of fun. School administrators had moved the ninth grade to middle school so high school was three grades. Football; big football team and the rivalry with the nearby towns were what it was all about during the fall. Big band; I did the band in junior high but not high school. There were various clubs to be involved in -- theater club and audiovisual club, things of that sort. I was pretty active at those kinds of things. In fact, I didn't play any sports. I was not a good athlete, to my father's chagrin, because he played first string football when he was in high school. But I was an announcer at football games and that was fun.

Q: Oh yes.

GNEHM: That was good. And we often made trips to the away games.

Q: Did you ever make a- sort of a senior trip up to Washington and all?

GNEHM: We did. In fact, I should just step back a little bit and tell you that one of the things you asked me about, news and what gave me a broader horizon on life. Because my father was from New York City and his grandparents were still alive, the family took a two week vacation every summer. Every other year we piled in the car and made the two day drive up Route 1 or 301 to New York City. We actually stayed with my great-grandparents in the house that my father was born in.

Q: Well, did you sort of get up to other places in the North?

GNEHM: Yes. Often we would add other destinations to our trip. Once we drove up through New England. Another year we went to the Expo in Montreal.

Q: And Washington?

GNEHM: Right. You remind me of another story. You recall that I mentioned my eighth grade teacher who first mentioned the Foreign Service and George Washington University. Well, I had no idea how you got into the Foreign Service or how hard it was to get into the Foreign Service, or how I would ever get into George Washington University. I knew it would be costly. My father worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in Albany as the office supervisor. We had plenty of money that covered food and housing; we weren't destitute or hurting. My mother went back to school to teach to make extra money for me to have piano lessons and my sisters dance lessons. So we certainly were not poor; but we did not have money for college tuition. One day... and I have to tell you here that I have a great faith in God. I'm not a rabid proselytizer but I can attest to many things that have

happened during my life that were without question due to God's intervention. And here is one.

One day my father came home from playing golf when I was in high school, 10th grade maybe, and he said, "Skip, you'll never guess who I played golf with today." You know how a teenager reacts, "No, Dad, I'll never guess who you played golf with today" wishing he'd just finish and go away so I could do whatever I was doing. He pressed on, "You do want to know who I played golf with today." "Okay, Dad, just tell me, who, who?" He smiled and said, "Well, you know my good friend's wife's brother is assistant treasurer at George Washington University." At that point I was all ears! "Yes, I told him you wanted to go to GWU and he wants to meet you. GW is trying to get people from states like Georgia and Arkansas and California to come to the University

So I met him. He liked me. He invited us to stop in Washington on our next summer trip up to New York, which we did. And that man, John Cantini, got me a full tuition Scottish Rite Scholarship.

Q: How wonderful. Boy.

Okay, well let's stick with high school for a little while. What year did you graduate?

GNEHM: Nineteen sixty-two.

Q: How did segregation affect you, particularly in high school?

GNEHM: Frankly, it didn't very much. The school system was still segregated; the bus station was still segregated. There really hadn't been much change although there'd been demonstrations and protests in the black community. Martin Luther King was a very popular figure with them. But I have to say it and I say it not as an indictment but something that's important to keep in mind in history. 1960, if you remember, was the hundredth anniversary of the War Between the States (as we call it). In my city as well as other places down South there were great centennial commemorations of the events of 1861 and 1862. We went through all the battles of the war. It won't come as a surprise to anyone when I say that "Gone with the Wind" was the most and maybe still is the most popular movie in the South ever to have been filmed.

Q: Yes. I swear she'll never be hungry again.

GNEHM: Everybody who goes to see "Gone with the Wind" keeps hoping it will have a different ending! But, you know, we were incensed in high school at the Supreme Court's decisions and talking about how secession was an absolutely viable option 100 years later! Of course looking back and even just a few years after high school these ideas were clearly the most ridiculous thoughts one could ever have. But you're asking me about the psychology of the moment!

Q: No, no.

GNEHM: I can tell you what changed white opposition to segregation in the public school system -- specifically in high schools. It was football. When coaches heard that there were some really good football players in the black high school and that with them on the team we could whip the town up the road... Well, there was nothing stopping them from recruiting those players!!!

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: That's life. But not while I was there. Schools were still segregated.

Q: Did your teachers ever bring up the subject?

GNEHM: In my recollection when the issue did come up, it was more often in the context of the Federal Government telling us how to run our lives and not on the question of equal rights or the downtrodden part of society. The view I heard from whites was that "they had their schools and they don't want to be mixing with us." They had their own churches and clubs and don't want to mix with whites. And if you spoke of the Masonic lodges, the last thing in the world they wanted to be was part of a white lodge. So it was not a balanced discussion.

Q: Well, when you went to George Washington how did it strike you? I mean Washington was-

GNEHM: A small town.

Q: Small but President Kennedy said Washington combines the efficiency of the South with the charm of the North.

GNEHM: Yes, it's true, it's true. I often laugh when I think back at what changes were about to take place in my life. When I came from Albany, my father dropped me off on the corner of 19th and H where my dormitory was located -- Adams Hall. (It's not there now; the entire block is now the International Monetary Fund.) And then he drove off. I met more foreigners in the course of the next week or two than I had ever met in my life. You know, all these people speaking funny English from Long Island and New York and New Jersey! During those first few weeks as a freshman, I was stunned and then later really angry at how these "northerners" thought of me. They all assumed that, as a southerner, I was a secessionist and that we were secretly trying to break up the Union! One of my closest friends from those very first weeks was Mike Enzi from Wyoming. He faced a similar problem as I did with the "northerners." Being from Wyoming, a number of the freshmen from New Jersey and New York thought Mike (and his family) was out there still killing Indians and they attacked him for how the pioneers had killed off the Indians. Mike was really incensed, as I was, in the way they portrayed us. So the two of us decided, well, we'll just fix them. We'll just agree that everything that they're saying is true and we'll embellish everything to the hilt! So, yes, I admitted all my summers spent at Boy Scout camp were really training sessions for the succession to come! Mike

(who incidentally is now the US Senator from Wyoming) had equally good stories about Indians in Wyoming! He would tell how they got all the Indians into cantonments so that they can't get out and scalp more people and things like that. We had some fun.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: But it was an experience; it really was an experience coming to Washington.

Q: Now you were there when Kennedy was shot.

GNEHM: I was there when Kennedy was shot.

Q: How did that hit the area?

GNEHM: Oh, I remember vividly being in the dorm when I heard the news. I remember it was a snowy day – or at least gray and cold. Everyone was stunned and most were crying -- myself among them. It was a devastating moment, just incredible.

Q: Well Kennedy in his inaugural address, called you for- not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country; did that particular tone and government work hit you at all?

GNEHM: I think it hit everybody. The people around me, we were all young at the time, really saw him as a very motivating and inspiring figure. People loved him. And the quote you recited really meant something. There was a feeling that here was someone who was really looking to the future, forward, upward, you know, with hope. It was something that you wanted to be part of and it was just cut off -- was just murdered.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: I think that was all our emotion. His assassination was very hard to comprehend.

Q: Okay, now you're in Washington-

GNEHM: I have to just tell you one thing, though-

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: -about that freshman year. My political science teacher in PoliSci One as it was called at the time, had a required reading, a number of required readings as professors do. One of them was Martin Luther King's book. I was incensed that I was being forced to read a book by Martin Luther King. I did not see him in a very positive light but as somebody who was causing all kinds of trouble and dissent and turmoil. As the semester went on, I realized that if I didn't read the book, I wasn't going to get the very best of grades and I better just start reading the book. I read it and I was very impressed. That

was part of my transition from where I'd been on the whole issue of race to where I ultimately came to in my life. It was my experience at George Washington that opened my thinking to different things and different views and different values.

Q: Yes.

Well, how about the Cold War? I mean, this was, you know, at its height had the Cuban Missile Crisis and all this; had you thought much about the Cold War before and coming to George Washington was there a different perspective on it?

GNEHM: Well it's a good question because it goes back to the military presence in Albany. We had B-52s stationed there. I mean these B-52s were going over our house every day. You could not miss them given the noise they made.

Q: Well these were the biggest bomber.

GNEHM: We knew what they were there for, what the military was there for and we were, I think, pretty conscious of the Cold War and the communist threat.

I think my earliest memory of any international event was at Boy Scout camp in 1956 when I heard the news of the Soviet military suppressing the Hungarian uprising.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: That's my earliest recollection of an international event that. That would have been two years before my civics teacher mentioned the Foreign Service.

Q: What about the Middle East during this time when you're in college? I mean were you taking courses, were you- was this particularly interesting to you or were you looking elsewhere?

GNEHM: I was an International Affairs major. The university really didn't have a Middle East program as it does today; but I was very interested in the Middle East for the reasons I gave you earlier. So I took all the Middle East courses that were available; but there weren't many.

Q: My impression is that dealing with the Middle East, particularly in that time, there really wasn't much sympathy for what you might say the Arab cause but tremendous amount of sympathy for the Israeli cause. Did you find that at the time?

GNEHM: I don't remember that as being that significant frankly at the time -- I mean at the university. It did become quite clear when I was actually in the region right after graduation. But in terms of the four years I was at GW I don't remember that this was a big topic of discussion. There were many Jewish students at GW, as there are still today; but I don't remember much activism.

Q: GW always has fed off the government for teachers and did you find- were there any teachers with connections to the Foreign Service teaching you at the time?

GNEHM: Actually no.

The professors that I recall and remember fondly were all full-time professors at the university, not adjunct. I know what you say is true, that GW had very close ties to the USG. They ran a graduate program for the military for a long, long time.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: It was a commuter school in those days. I don't think there were more than 1,700 resident students; a large number of students were from Virginia and Maryland.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: That's not true today. So in those days many students came in for classes and then went home.

Q: Did you sort of feel the lack of a campus life?

GNEHM: I was in a fraternity, Sigma Chi, and so I was pretty involved in university activities. There was a good active program for those who were on campus. Later got into student government and was president of the student body my junior to senior year and again a bit of a dissident. What I do remember about those four years is how my friends and I got to see some very important events that occurred during those times. I remember, for example, the funerals of both Presidents Kennedy and Herbert Hoover. Also the funeral of General MacArthur. And, of course, there was the inaugural parade for President Johnson. I even got to go to one of the inaugural balls.

Q: Well we were both in Vietnam.

GNEHM: So that was later, yes. But I do remember that when there were events like the ones I mentioned, we would go up to the Capitol or climb up on some monument to get a better view of events. As you mentioned in an earlier question, Washington was so different then. I love tell my students today about that and they just shake their heads in awe. It was a completely open city. Mike and I and others, when we got bored at night, would go up to the Capitol (and I'm talking about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning). When we went into the building, the guard would wave at us and we'd go down and underneath and through the tunnels beneath the Capitol. No one stopped us.

We used to go down to the State Department as well. Whenever there was a high level visit, a king of this or the president of that, the government would put the flags of the country all down Constitution Avenue and up Pennsylvania Avenue. There was always an exhibit in the lobby of State Department, not a big one but you know, an artifact or

two and pictures of important places in that country. We would go down there to see the exhibit. We would walk around to the front door (the C Street entrance), enter the lobby where there was always the guard usually in his chair leaning up against one of the post, often asleep. When we came in, he would set the chair down and say, "Hey guys, how you doing today?" We'd say just fine. We'd look at the exhibit. And then we would walk through the State Department and come out the 23rd Street entrance. There were no barriers. There were no cipher locks on the doors. Nobody said anything. It was just wide open!

When we wanted to study and the weather was good, we'd go down to the Lincoln Memorial and sit on the side facing the Potomac. It was a great place to read and study.

Q: You know you could even go to the cafeteria.

GNEHM: Yes. Nobody chased us away; nobody thought anything of it. So I have regrets that my own students today are not able to experience the city as open as it was in my student days.

Q: Did you get involved in any demonstrations?

GNEHM: Only at the university on university matters. I wasn't really involved in either Vietnam or civil rights protests.

Q: Well how did Vietnam, while you were at the university- I mean, you'd come from a military base city or town, how did Vietnam strike you sort of there and through your college years?

GNEHM: It wasn't the big issue during my student years that it became in the very late '60s into the '70s. In 1962, '63, and '64 the administration's view of the importance of being in Vietnam seemed to be the prevalent view of most people. By the time I was a senior, '65-'66, that was beginning to change. There were more and more questions as to why we were there, whether it was going well. I remember that every day there was a new tally about how many Vietcong had been killed. You wondered how many Vietcong could be killed and still have some Vietcong left. So students were beginning to question whether there was veracity in what the government was saying.

After I graduated, I went abroad for a year. When I came back to finish my MA in '68, there was a lot more activity, anti-war activity.

Q: Well let's stick to the mid-sixties when you were at the university. Were there any reflections at the time of what later became sort of the symbols of the sixties, you know, free speech, protests against people who were over 30 years old, all that sort of stuff?

GNEHM: Well there was and that was what I was intimating when I said earlier that there was trouble at the university. There was anger at the university by students who felt like they had been promised and promised and promised things, specifically a new

student union, and it never occurred. Then they put a student fee on top of tuition, a fee that was going to pay for the student union which was going to be built after all of us were long gone.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: And so there was anger. The president of the university had died unexpectedly and for the first couple of years I was there the provost was acting president. He was a very elderly man, not always there.

Q: Not a simpatico figure.

GNEHM: No. At all. And the board of trustees had a very old 'think' about their role. The board was completely isolated from students and, in fact, made it clear that dealing with students was not its business. So when I was the student body president, the anger had reached a point where I decided I could use it to try to get some change. I got all the student leaders together and we signed a letter - virtually every officer and every organization signed it- to the board of trustees. I admit that we made reference to Berkeley and noted that it wasn't so hard for things like that to happen at GW if they didn't begin to address our concerns. We demanded to meet with the board of trustees. Well, the board of trustees got the letter because we mailed it to every member of the board. Their first reaction was to have absolutely nothing to do with us, nothing to do with us at all. We were revolutionaries! We were probably right out of the Cuban model and Fidel Castro stuff and whatever! One of the members of the board of trustees was none other than J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI. Now, as president of the student body I got letters from many of the members of the board. I don't remember any of them being nice but his was particularly nasty. I didn't deserve to be an American. I didn't appreciate all America gave me. Years later, when I was applying for the Foreign Service, I had forgotten that he was on the board of trustees when I did this.

Q: Head of the Bureau of-

GNEHM: Federal Bureau of Investigations. I was thinking to myself later after I'd got into the Foreign Service and, obviously, gotten my security clearance "how did I ever get my security clearance?" Anyway, I guess he was with the FBI at the time but never mind. The result of our letter actually caused a division within the board of trustees, which they did not reveal to us. It led to the resignation of the then-chair. The new chairman called me and said, "I don't care what the others do, I'm meeting with you." That broke the ice. This was in the spring of '65. And just to take this story just one step further, during that trouble I got called in by the then-vice president who wanted to be president. He knew he was popular with the faculty but not with the Board of Trustees. He urged me to lead a student demonstration on campus on his behalf hoping that would help him get the job.

Q: On his behalf?

GNEHM: Yes. And I refused. Coincidentally, there was a selection committee for a new president underway at this time.

I got called back from Georgia in August, being told I needed to come back on some unspecified university business. I assumed it had something to do with the student protest. In fact, the person that they had selected to become president of the university had refused to give them an answer until he met with me as president of the student body. So I was taken to a hotel, The Washington Hotel on 15th Street, up to a room where I met a man by the name of Lloyd Elliott. He said to me: "I have read your petition to the Board of Trustees and I have discussed the points you raised with the board. I wanted to meet you to discuss the problems you raised and, frankly, I want to know whether I should come to GW. I will weigh my decision heavily on whether you think the student body would find me an attractive person as president of the university. He then proceeded to describe how he would approach issues similar to the ones we had raised. He then asked again whether students would accept and support him. I told him that, if he dealt with students and with issues as he had described, I had no doubt that he would have student backing. It was a very interesting approach. From that meeting Lloyd and I became close friends until he died in 2013.

Q: What was his background?

GNEHM: He was president of the University of Maine and prior to that President of the University of West Virginia. He was actually from West Virginia. He was a gentleman of a man and what he said he would do when he came was what we had been asking for -- just attention and movement and that is what he did. He was a great president. This story tells you that my GWU experience was a very good one -- meaningful. I was very active throughout my four years as an undergraduate and learned a great deal about people and bureaucracies.

Q: Well tell me, what did you find you needed to do to run for president of the student body?

GNEHM: Well I had been on the student council the year before. I was the Freshman Director so I ran the freshman orientation program. As Freshman Director, I had access to all the freshmen and they got to know me and like me. That gave me a good of block votes when it came to the following year elections. Also I was in a fraternity that was part of a fraternity coalition. Four different fraternities pooled together their votes. Since there was not a big resident student population, fraternities had a lot of influence on elections. So I ran the second year as the coalition's candidate for student body.

Q: Well I would have thought it would have been a difficult time because you had some really- people's names sort of ring around- ring today in Berkeley and at Columbia and other places. I mean it was the time when the class of '60, I use a term of the sixties, when they were really sprouting wings and getting an awful lot of people- I mean it was a great time to be a sort of a dynamic or even a demagogic leader. And you had all these

egos, these 21 year old egos in the act of- you know, running around. I would have thought that you would have found this a little bit difficult for a Georgia boy.

GNEHM: Well I had been a fairly active person prior to my election and I think personality-wise I had made lots of friends around campus.

Q: Well considering what actually didn't happen. I mean this is a time when some universities really went haywire. I mean it was not a very pleasant time for a lot of college administrations and you know, freedom of speech was not a- there were a lot of boycotting. I mean a lot of things were happening.

GNEHM: Let me put it this way. The administration of the university and the trustees were attentive to all these things going on nationally and were, I think, deathly afraid that it could erupt on the GW campus.

Q: I can certainly understand the despair of the times.

GNEHM: And so when the student letter came, intimating that things could go like Berkeley, it was the leadership of some trustees that really averted a more radical turn among students. It enabled me to channel student frustration in a positive direction. Yes, you are right. I was in those days still basically conservative. I wasn't one who relished demonstrations; but I was willing to lead one if that had been necessary. I saw a real chance to get what we wanted without having to be radical and my challenge was to convince all the other student leaders on campus to follow my lead.

Q: Well we're talking about youth, volatility. This is a period when you were considered to be a 'has been' if you were over 30. I mean original sin did not apply to this particular cohort that you were with. If there had been people on the campus who were just thirsting to get out there and demonstrate and occupy and raise hell.

GNEHM: No, we were a small a group back then. There were not the numbers of students backing the more radical faction to be able to cause significant unrest at GW. It was still a mainstream sort of campus.

Q: Well, so you're getting ready to graduate in '66?

GNEHM: Yes, I graduated in May 1966. I took the Foreign Service exam December 1965, as a senior and flunked it. In those days it was a raw score. I got 69; 70 was passing. The letter from the State Department said, "Thank you so very, very much for your interest in the Foreign Service. You came so very close we hope that you will take the exam again next year." I still have that letter! Well, I wasn't as devastated as you might think. I was unhappy. There was no doubt about that because I still didn't have any interest other than the Foreign Service. But I had received a Rotary Fellowship for a year of non-degree post-graduate work. The university that they chose from my list of suggested universities in the Middle East was The American University in Cairo. So I

knew I had something to do for a year and I was going to the Middle East for the first time!

Q: Alright, let's talk about your year in Cairo. Was this the University of Cairo?

GNEHM: No, it was The American University of Cairo.

Q: American University of Cairo.

GNEHM: Which is one of several American founded universities in the region. The American University in Beirut and Robert College in Istanbul were two others.

Q: What was it like? You were there in 1966?

GNEHM: Yes, I was there for the academic year 1966-67. So this is an example of something I said earlier. I seem to end up in places where wars break out! I didn't get to take my exams the second semester due to the outbreak of the seven-day war in June 1967 between Israel, Egypt and several other Arab states.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: I often tell students, don't wish for your not having to take exams because you won't get credit! It was an interesting year.

Again, this was my first experience in the Middle East so everything was new. It wasn't an easy year. Nasser was in power. There were all kinds of Middle East issues at play that led towards the '67 War. The spring was much worse than the fall, no doubt about it. There was a lot of animosity toward Americans. The American University at that time was just trying to hold on because the nationalism in Egypt worked against anything called American. AUC had been an elite school prior to the '52 Egyptian revolution. So it was suspect as part of the former regime.

Q: What was the student body like?

GNEHM: It was largely Egyptian; but there were a number of students from the region -- Palestinians and others -- but largely Egyptian. I was studying Arabic and taking courses on Middle East politics and history.

Q: I mean, at the university did you feel the hand of Nasser and his apparatus?

GNEHM: Only in my relationship with Egyptians and that included even students at the university. The Egyptian students were always welcoming inside the university compound, in the canteen and in the classroom; but they were very reserved -- cautious -- when off campus.

Q: Egyptians are really a very nice-

GNEHM: They're very wonderfully nice people and as students we did things together. We went out in feluccas in the Nile in the late evening. They would sing and strum their instruments and beat their drums -- laugh and cut up. Wonderfully nice people is certainly correct.

I did notice that I did not get invited into Egyptian homes. As I got to know students better, I understood that they were very wary of the government's watching them and their families, especially about connections with Americans. They just didn't want to get in trouble. So it was one thing to go on a felucca in the Nile when you're a bunch of college kids; it was something very different to go to a home.

Because I was in Egypt as a Rotary fellow, the clubs of the Eastern Mediterranean district of Rotary International were technically my hosts. There were three clubs in the Cairo area, the main Cairo club, the Giza club, and one in Heliopolis. The Rotary clubs were considered proletarian, elitist, part of the old class and many of the members of the club were elderly. I visited these clubs from time to time as I was told to do by Rotary International; but even they didn't invite me to their homes. Only one family the entire year actually took me out to a restaurant. I think they were wary, again, of the government and possibly being called in for questioning. Many of them had lost property through sequestration or nationalization after the revolution in 1952.

As we get into the January/February timeframe, there was a sequence of events that are well known and documented that led to the outbreak of the '67 War. The tensions in the community went up dramatically.

I remember one incident vividly. My American roommate and I were taking the train down to Maadi where we attended church on Sundays. We were on the train and between two stations. Some young Egyptians on the train started spitting on us and shouting epithets. We were scared that something would actually happen to us. When we got to the next station, we went out of the train, just left and found our way back to town. That was the only really bad scary moment or experience that I had. I certainly never encountered any hostility from my colleagues at AUC; but we stayed out of crowds and decided not to be as free moving around town during that April and May period.

Q: Did you leave there before the war started or were you there when the war started?

GNEHM: Your question prompts a side story. During my time there in Cairo, censorship was extremely heavy. "The Herald Tribune," "New York Times," "Newsweek," "Time," -- none of these were allowed in on a regular basis except for the diplomatic community. I learned early on that the American Ambassador got "The Herald Tribune" on a daily basis. It was delivered to the in-house library at the embassy. So I went there on a regular basis and got to know Nadia Risk, a long-time Egyptian employee of the embassy who ran the library. She told me that, if I came by a certain time and the ambassador wasn't there, she would let me read his paper. That was how I got my news during the months I was in Cairo. I mention this as I got to know several people at the embassy. I went to the

church in Maadi. The choir director, Jeri Bird, was the wife of a political officer at the embassy by the name of Gene Bird.

She befriended me and my roommate. Frankly, we were both losing weight having trouble finding wholesome food. They took us home every Sunday after church for lunch. The Birds became lasting friends.

At one point in early May Gene called me to the embassy and said, “Skip, you need to get out of here. You don’t want to stay. It’s not going well.” I said I had to finish my classes. He said you’re not going to finish; you need to get out of here. So what does this intelligent young student do? He flew to Amman, Jordan, because he had promised the Amman and Jerusalem Rotary Clubs that in the course of the year he would visit them. So I took a service taxi from Jordan to Jerusalem. The president of the Rotary Club in Jerusalem was Anton Atallah who had been foreign minister of Jordan. When I went to his place to say hello, he asked what in the heck I was doing coming to Jerusalem at this moment? “Don’t you know this place is going to blow up?” he said. He took me up onto the wall of the old city, looking westward over the no man’s land toward where there were Israeli flags. Here we were standing, of course, in what was still Jordanian territory at that time. He said I’m showing this to you tonight; you’re going to have lunch at the Rotary Club tomorrow; and immediately after I’m putting you in a taxi back to Amman. “You’re getting out of here. You shouldn’t even be here.” It was during my flight from Amman to Istanbul and home when the June 1967 war broke out.

Q: Did you find that you identified with the Arab cause or how did you feel about this war?

GNEHM: Well in Cairo I was getting some news. I could still tune into VOA (Voice of America) and I was reading the ambassador’s newspaper. It looked to me like the two principal antagonists were sparring off at each other. Each was goading the other and making the wrong decisions. They seemed trapped in a deadly tit for tat routine. And there were other parties on the Arab side goading as well. I was very conscious, for example, of the Syrian attacks on Nasser, calling him a quisling, that he was secretly pro-American and whatever else and he would never do all the things he was saying he would do against Israel.

I remember when Nasser made the decision to ask UN forces to leave the border between Egypt and Israel.

It seemed to me a disastrous decision. Then when I heard, as everyone did, that the secretary general actually acquiesced and withdrew them, I was stunned as were most people I spoke with. It was a dramatic development and it wasn’t necessary. Everything I heard in Cairo from Egyptians indicated they were shocked; they didn’t believe the Secretary General would withdraw the UN force.

Q: Yes. For somebody who’s not familiar with this, a UN force was keeping the two sides apart, the Israeli-

GNEHM: And it had been there from the '56 war.

Q: I mean they were still there and Nasser demanded they depart?

GNEHM: Yes.

Q: They had the head of the UN-

GNEHM: United Nations secretary general.

Q: -withdrew them, which, you know, sort of uncorked the bottle.

GNEHM: Yes and then precipitated the steps that followed. Everyone in Cairo (that is of course a grandiose statement) -- all the Egyptians with whom I had conversations, like some of the Rotarians, all felt like Nasser was pushed into calling for the UN force to depart because of the Syrian propaganda. People were saying that Nasser acted under pressure but that he never ever intended for the UN force to withdraw. That was the opinion of the street.

Q: Yes, and the general feeling in the diplomatic community is, what a stupid thing to do --getting that force out of there.

GNEHM: Yes, the Secretary General could have easily prolonged this withdrawal for months and months, during which time any number of things could have happened but probably not war. But once the UN force departed, it was only a matter of time before Egyptian forces would occupy the former UN positions, particularly the position at Sharm el-Sheikh. Sharm el-Sheikh is at the narrow point where the Gulf of Aqaba connects with the Red Sea. It is the access point for the only Israeli port facing the east. The Israelis had already made clear that any attempt to block the Strait to Israeli shipping would be considered an act of war.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: It was also just a matter of time before the propaganda in the region, especially Syrian, was now saying "you've got it, what are you going to do, Nasser?" Of course he ends up closing the strait. It was just a sequence of events that could have been avoided.

Q: Let me tell you. I think for anybody looking at the history, looking at us, seeing how, you might say the stupidity on the part of leaders got into a war that wasn't necessary and-

GNEHM: That was another thing that I learned that year in Nasser's Egypt and that was the ability in those days of a state to in fact convince everybody all the time. There was that famous saying, "you can convince some of the people all the time but not all the people all the time."

Q: It's the Lincoln statement.

GNEHM: Right.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Nasser proved that that was wrong. In that period of time and that context he controlled the media. He controlled the propaganda. The Egyptians still celebrated Victory Day when supposedly their forces defeated the Israelis. It was in fact the day that they lost a huge battle in the Sinai with many Egyptians casualties. But the propaganda said this was a victory day and it's celebrated as such to this day. They have even issued postage stamps to commemorate the victory!

Q: I'm looking at the time; it's probably a good place to stop. But when you left Egypt and Jordan and all, did you come away with a desire to continue your interests in this area?

GNEHM: Absolutely. I was more entranced than ever.

Q: What grabbed you?

GNEHM: Well, I traveled all over Egypt. I wasn't as studious a student as perhaps I should have been; but I saw Egypt, got to know people, got to go places, and got to see things. I liked the Egyptian people. I was very much taken by them in spite of the negative observations that I mentioned previously.

By the way, before we close, I took the Foreign Service exam in Cairo that December and you know what grade I got?

Q: What?

GNEHM: Seventy, the one additional point from the year before that I had prayed for! But I had passed!

Q: Well actually I took the Foreign Service exam in '54 and I got a 69.75 and they averaged me into the Foreign Service.

GNEHM: Good for you.

Q: So anyway. Okay, Skip I've put it down here where we are so we're going to pick up when you are leaving Egypt and coming back to the United States and all hell's broken loose in the Middle East and you've taken and passed the Foreign Service exam. We'll pick it up from there.

Okay. Today is the second of June, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you came into the Foreign Service when?

GNEHM: I came in the Foreign Service in February 1969, but there was an interesting little interlude.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: I came back from Cairo where I had been studying as a Rotary Fellow at The American University in Cairo. I finished my MA at George Washington University in the '67-'68 year. I had passed the Foreign Service written exam which I had taken in Cairo in December 1966. I passed my orals and was offered a position in a junior officer class after I graduated in August (1968). And then President Johnson froze employment for Federal Government (BALPA – Balance of Payments crisis) The State Department said they were not able to bring in new officers but that they had approached the Navy to see if they were interested in hiring for their internship program. The Navy was willing to take me as a management intern.

So I went to the interview with the Navy and I told the Navy, “You have to understand. I really want to be in the Foreign Service; that’s always what I wanted to do.” And they said, “Oh sure, once you come here you’ll change your mind.” So I started working after Labor Day that year for the Navy. Two months later the State Department called to say that they had special permission to bring in a junior officer class in February. “Are you interested?” I said, “Absolutely.” I informed Navy that my two months with them had not changed my mind and that I was accepting the offer to join the Foreign Service.

Q: What were you doing in the Navy?

GNEHM: I was working for what was then called the Bureau of NavShips. My office was responsible for procuring items for the Aegis Class Frigates, which were still on the drawing board at that point in time.

Q: Okay. What was you're A-100 class, being the basic officers' training class? What was your class; how big was it and what was its composition?

GNEHM: I'm recollecting 38 in my A-100 class. It was a mix of people. All of us were told that the classes prior to the hiring freeze had all been assigned to Vietnam, that being where the need was. Our class, we were told, was going to be assigned globally to fill vacancies that had been left unfilled for quite some time.

Q: And how about composition regarding male, female, minorities?

GNEHM: Well, we had a core of women in the class and we also had a number of African Americans. In my class was Johnny Carson, who later went on to be Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

Ruth Davis, who later became Director General of the Foreign Service, was also in my class.

Q: She worked for me. How did you find the training? Did it acquaint you with the Foreign Service?

GNEHM: It did. I thought the training was very good. I think there were eight weeks in A-100. One of the things that it really did was build strong bonds between us in the class, which is something that I know they still do quite well. Yes, I learned a lot in that time.

Q: Where were you assigned?

GNEHM: Well, that was the shocker! When they announced assignments in those days, they didn't have anything like the Flag Day they have today. Everybody gathered in the room and a person from personnel stood up to read out our assignments. By the way, when we entered the Foreign Service and met our personnel officer, we were told to list five countries where we would like to serve. That was the only way we had to indicate where we might like to be assigned. I wrote down five Middle Eastern countries. When they got to my name to announce my assignment, they said, "Edward Gnehm, Saigon." I was shocked, having been told that none of us were going to Saigon. Three of us, I think, ended up assigned to Vietnam. This was the beginning of a really interesting saga.

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

GNEHM: Not very long. That's the saga. I arrived on the 28th of August; I remember it well.

Q: Sixty-nine?

GNEHM: Yes, 1969. And I departed the day after Christmas that same year.

Before we get to my time in Saigon, you need to hear a little anecdote, which is related to my background in the South.

I met my wife, Peggy, here in Washington during the time that I was in A-100. That lead may sound very ordinary; but it so happened that her parents lived in the same town, Macon, Georgia, where my parents lived. My mother was having a back operation and my wife's mother was a Pink Lady volunteer in the hospital. She was asked by the doctor to visit my mother to explain her experience with the same operation. That's when they discovered that each had a child in Washington. Each sent us a message about the other and so we started going out together here in Washington.

So, back to my assignment to Saigon. The reason why I inserted the story of how I met my wife-to-be was that Peggy and I had talked about getting married. She left Washington for Atlanta in the middle of August to go back to Emory University, her alma mater, for an MBA. My intentions were to fly from Washington to Atlanta, spend

some time with her, and go on to Saigon. Personnel told me that was impossible. I had to go directly to Saigon; they were in urgent need of me. There was to be “no passing go” - just go straight to Saigon.

Well, you’ve already heard that I’m a bit of a rebel at heart. So I bought my ticket routing myself through Atlanta and spent the long weekend with Peggy and then flew on. I did have a stop overnight in Japan in route to Saigon. On my first day in Saigon I went to the Personnel Office to find out in which section of the embassy I was going to work. (In those days you were assigned to a post and the post decided where in the mission you would work -- not like today where you are assigned to a specific position.) When they saw me and I introduced myself, there was a great deal of commotion and clearly some confusion. You could see it. People were talking and mumbling to each other. They told me to sit down for a while. Finally, after about an hour the assistant came out and said, “Mr. Gnehm, our personnel officer is actually out of country and we’re not sure where in the embassy you’re going to be assigned.”

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: So the assistant told me to just take off a few days until the personnel officer gets back. Walk around town; get to know Saigon. And I’m thinking to myself, I’ve never been in a war zone in my life and I don’t even know how to get from here back to my hotel, much less wandering around. And, of course, I was thinking back to the Department’s insistence to get to post immediately!

Q: This is the Foreign Service. You’ve got to hurry up, you’ve got to be there immediately and get to the post and they don’t know what to do with you.

GNEHM: I’m going to jump ahead of you though to about two months later. So that would have been in October or late October/early November. Elaine Shunter was the personnel officer.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: By the way, I was assigned in due course to the commercial attaché office. But here it was about two months after my arrival at post and Elaine called me, “Skip, I need to talk to you if you’ll come over.” I said, “Sure.” I went into her office and she said, “Skip, we have a problem.” I thought to myself ‘I haven’t done anything that bad.’ She said, “The problem is that we abolished your position last February and you have to be out of post by the 31st of December. Otherwise we will be over our staffing limit.” “Well,” I thought to myself, “Well, there’s a blessing,” but I tried to keep a very straight face so it didn’t look like I was excited about being kicked out of Vietnam!

But in the meantime, I am working as the Assistant Commercial Officer. My boss was an older well seasoned officer who was happy to have a younger officer to whom he could pass any number of onerous tasks.

Q: Who was this?

GNEHM: I can't remember his name, but the job I was given will tell you how vitally important I was. I was given one of those old computer printouts. You know, the ones that looked like an accordion! It was a huge list all of the surplus military equipment that had been sold over a period of time. I was told to go out and find the buyer, ascertain that he still possessed the material or to whom he had sold it, and then, if necessary, follow up with the new owner. This effort was to verify that none of the material was going to the Vietcong, right?

Well, here I am climbing around Saigon in what are overgrown jungle fields littered with rusted equipment trying to find the code numbers on various pieces of equipment. It was ridiculous!

Q: A make work shop.

GNEHM: It was awful -- truly awful. I did not learn a lot about commercial work nor did I think that I had contributed anything to the war effort.

The secretary to the commercial attaché was Mary Hall, wife of the administrative counselor at the embassy. She had heard that I had to leave the country. She was very upset and wanted to help me. She decided early on that I was like her son and she treated me very nicely. She was a very nice person; but her efforts to help me were not what I wanted. She said the required departure was bad for my career. She was determined to find me another position in Saigon. She came back to me the next day to tell me that there were vacancies in the CORDS program. CORDS was the rural pacification program. Well, that was the last place that I wanted to go. And I said, "Mary, why don't we just wait and see what Washington has in mind for my new assignment before I go interview for a position in CORDS?"

The next thing I know she had made an appointment with Ambassador Colby, who was head of the CORDS program!

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: -and so I end up at the Ambassador's office. His aide, a major in the U.S. military, came out and asked me exactly why I was there. And I said, "Well, I'm here because Mary wants me to meet the Ambassador about a possible job in CORDS." He asked me if I wanted to be in CORDS." And I said, "Not really." The aide said that in that case we would be wasting Ambassador Colby's time and I returned to my office. Well, when Mary heard what I had done, she said, "You'll never go anywhere in the Foreign Service. This is the end." She called her husband, who then called me over to talk. Anyway, the long and short of it is that I had signed up for R&R (rest and recreation) in Hawaii in December. I was to meet Peggy and I intended to ask her to marry me. Mary thought I should not leave the country with no assignment because at any moment it might come in and it would be bad if I were not there ready to go to the

new job. I went anyway. She was very upset with me at this point. As I said earlier, I knew her intentions were to help me.

I got to Hawaii. I met Peggy. I did ask her to marry me and she accepted. I called my personnel officer in Washington who said, "Haven't you gotten your orders yet?" I said, "No, I haven't." "Oh", he said, "I thought your orders had gone out. If you didn't get them, I am glad you took your R & R."

Well, when I arrived back in Saigon, Mary was there in her husband's car at Tân Sơn Nhut Airport to pick me up. Her first words were: "You may have ruined everything. Your orders came." I told her that I had spoken to Washington and they were not upset that I had taken my R & R. Mary said Washington did not matter in this case. You are being assigned to Kathmandu as the ambassador's staff assistant and they want you there 'yesterday!' So that is how I learned about my next assignment. It is important to point out that Ambassador Carol C. Laise, the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Nepal, was the wife of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon.

Q: Yes, there was this commuting ambassador.

GNEHM: Exactly. When the President asked Bunker to take the ambassadorial position in Saigon, Bunker made his acceptance conditional on there being a plane that could shuttle between Kathmandu and Saigon whenever the two could have time together. The President had agreed.

I think I returned to Saigon on the 22nd or the 23rd of December. It so happened that the T-39 was flying to Kathmandu on the 26th of December, the day after Christmas, to pick up Ambassador Laise. I was to go on that flight. I was told not to worry. There are no other passengers. I would be able to take all of my belongs on the plane with me. Right!!!. So my friends and I spent all Christmas Day packing. The Admin people gave me cardboard boxes and some packing material. Truth be told, I did not have much as Saigon was a limited shipment post. I had bought a stereo system, however, and had my clothes and other personal items. Because we had very little time and were trying to get it all done quickly, I didn't really pack thinking anything other than getting it done, right? So the top drawer with all the underwear went into one box. The next drawer with shirts went into that same box and so forth until that box was full. And so I packed box after box until all was packed.

I arrived at the airport early the morning of 26th of December. It was about 3:30 or 4:00 on a dark and foggy morning. Who takes me? Mary Hall. As I said, Mary was really very nice and trying always to be helpful. She did not have to take me to the airport that morning.

When I arrived in the small military hut that served the VIP aircraft, the pilot said, "Where have you been? You know we've been waiting for you; we got to go, we got to go, we got to go. Come on." I said, "Okay, I'm ready, I'm ready, but what about my things?" He said, "What do you mean your things?" I said, "My things that are going

with me.” “There’s no room in the airplane for anything,” he replied with some considerable irritation. I said, “Wait a minute. I was told that I could take my things with me on the plane to Kathmandu.” And he said, “Look. Get on the plane; whatever space you can find you’re welcome to fill up.”

So I climb up the steps located toward the back of the aircraft and I look forward toward the cockpit. The plane is full of vegetables, watermelons, cheese -- all kinds of stuff going up to Carol Laise to refurbish her larder. There was an empty seat, which I took, and room for one suitcase and I think a carry-on. Everything else I had to leave. I didn’t know when that plane took off whether I had 20 pairs of underwear and no pants or 15 shirts and no underwear. I had no idea what was in that one suitcase!

From Saigon our flight path to Kathmandu headed out over the Gulf of Tonkin en route to Bangkok, then on to Calcutta, and over India north to Kathmandu. Above the Gulf of Tonkin I heard uproarious laughter from the cockpit. One of the pilots comes back and says, “Yeah, they did it again. Our support personnel never do our flight clearances properly. They forgot to get a flight clearance over India so we are going to have to spend the night in Bangkok; yea, whoopee!” I’m thinking, “Hmm, this is really great. At least I’ll find out what’s in that suitcase; that’s for sure.” Then I remembered that there was a big PX (Post Exchange) in Bangkok and ended up buying a package of this, a package of that, so that I knew I had at least something of everything that I would need to be fully clothed!

Next day back at the airport I was told that there was going to be a bit of delay in our departure. I said, “Okay, doesn’t matter to me, I’m not going anywhere.” Why was there a delay? The fruits and vegetables!!! The plane had sat out on the tarmac all the previous day in the heat. All the fresh items had spoiled and had to be thrown away. I watched as the crew shoveled the vegetables and other stuff out of the plane. Of course, you know I could have brought all my stuff on the plane had it not been filled with food! So anyway, in the end I did get to Kathmandu.

Q: Okay, before we leave that, would you describe your impressions of Saigon? I was there, by the way. I was consul general there during this time but would you describe your impressions of our presence in Vietnam?

GNEHM: My impression of Saigon, it was a bustling alive city with no lack of movement -- people everywhere, open markets, traffic jams. There were certainly many uniformed Vietnamese forces and our forces, of course, but I didn’t find it overwhelming or scary, as I expected to find it. I remember going up on the roof of one of the hotels; I’ve forgotten the name of it.

Q: Rex or something like that.

GNEHM: Yes. It was a nice place to eat dinner. You could hear rumblings of artillery fire off in the distance and see lightning-like flashes on the horizon.

I remember taking one boat trip on the Mekong River as part of my efforts to find purchasers of surplus material. I had heard stories about Vietcong attacks on the river but everything was just as normal and as calm as it could be. I think it was a relatively peaceful period in South Vietnam.

Q: This was after the Tet Offensive and it really was quiet.

GNEHM: Yes. I made a lot of friends at the embassy in the short time I was there. Many of them were in the consular section because that's where many of the younger officers are assigned. Also, by the way, it was during this period of time that the US allowed personnel to visit Cambodia. So I got to take a very trip with some friends to Phnom Penh and then drive overland to Angkor Wat.

Q: So what was your feeling, by the way, about our involvement in the Vietnam War at that time?

GNEHM: Well I guess I fell into that group of people that thought we were there for good reasons and that things seemed to be going well. At the time I was there, I thought it was going to be successful.

Q: That's pretty much the way I felt too.

GNEHM: I wasn't against the war in particular.

Q: Well then okay. You were in Nepal from when to when?

GNEHM: From that late December, 1969 until June of '71. So it was an 18 month tour. I was curtailed when the Department abolished one of the two junior officer positions in the Embassy.

Q: Okay. Well first let's talk a bit about Carol Laise, who was a well-known Foreign Service officer, ambassador there and she was Director General too, wasn't she?

GNEHM: She was indeed.

Q: How did she operate and what was your impression of her?

GNEHM: That's a big question. She was a very formidable person and she was very strict, very set in what was right and wrong as a diplomat, as a representative of our country. In my experience with teachers, the really strict ones are the ones you learn the most from. I learned a hell of a lot from Carol Laise in the time that I was there. And I had some unusual experiences with some good stories, including the fact that I came home, got married and brought my wife back to Nepal. I greatly admired Carol. Later on in my career, I became her desk officer in Washington and subsequently her aide when she was appointed Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. We became very close. I have another story from when she was Director General which I will relate in due course. I got

to know both her and Ellsworth Bunker very, very well. I would say that she was a terrific person. You know, any woman in that day and time who became ambassador had to fight it out in a very male environment. So she was tough and rightfully so. Throughout my career I treasured my friendship with Carol.

Q: What was the sort of political-economic but particularly political situation in Nepal?

GNEHM: At the time I was in Kathmandu, the country was still a Hindu monarchy. The then King's father, King Tribhuvan was the monarch who restored the monarchy to power. A number of years earlier the Rana family had usurped authority as hereditary prime ministers. Tribhuvan was actually captive in the palace before he fled to India. In the end the Ranas were overthrown and he returned to Nepal. His son, Mahendra was on the throne when I served in the embassy. The monarchy was still very much respected in those days. The monarchy was credited with having rid the country of the Ranas who were not considered good rulers.

There was a lot of rivalry between Nepal and India. There was a great deal of angst in Nepal about Indian influence and meddling in Nepalese domestic affairs.

China was the other factor. The Nepalis were very much afraid of Indian dominance and were using their initiative to build up their relationship with China to balance the Indian one. In fact it was not a balance simply due to the geography and to the significant ethnic and economic ties to India. The US often got involved in attempting to reconcile India and Nepal even though the Indians generally rejected our involvement.

One of the issues I remember, where the Indians squeezed the Nepalese a lot, was over trade. There was a bilateral transit trade agreement between the two that served as the basic document governing trade between the two countries. The Indian port of Calcutta was and remains the main port for Nepal -- a landlocked country; but as it is in India, goods going out of Nepal or coming from abroad to Nepal had to pass through India. The Indians squeeze the Nepalese in trade whenever they do not like the politics.

Q: Well did the Chinese have representation in Nepal and were they much of a factor?

GNEHM: They had a large embassy and an aid program, particularly road construction, and the first road they were building was the first highway connecting Kathmandu and Tibet, which had the Indians apoplectic. The road was finished. The Chinese are good road builders; but it has not been easy to keep the road open. As the road threads its way through miles of the Himalayas, the avalanches and the floods in the rainy season, the monsoon season, continue to wash away the road.

Q: The Indians must have stood in memories of the 1962 Civil War between India and China.

GNEHM: Yes.

Q: Up in the mountains where the Indians didn't do very well.

GNEHM: That's right and the Indians constantly reminded the Nepalese of past Chinese aggression and intentions.

I think while I was in Kathmandu, though I may have the timing wrong, I remember that Sikkim had a hereditary ruler and the Indians actually deposed him because they thought he was getting a little too cozy with the Chinese nearby. It was an interesting time to be in Nepal. The country was still very much like it probably had been in the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s. Not like today. I've been back recently (2012) and it is so overpopulated; the whole Kathmandu valley is city now. In my days there, it wasn't. There were beautiful green fields and scattered homes that separated the three main towns in the valley.

Q: We had Peace Corps there though, didn't we?

GNEHM: We had a large Peace Corps presence and a large AID mission (United States Agency for International Development). Peace Corps volunteers were scattered all over the country.

Q: Yes, I've read some accounts of it took two days for Peace Corps volunteers to get to the village where they'd be dropped off at a point in a road and then all they had to do is walk for two days up in the higher regions.

GNEHM: That's right. Peter Burleigh was the Nepal desk officer in the Department. He came out to visit Nepal during my assignment; he'd been a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepalganj, located in the western Terai region south of the mountains. I got to travel with him back to visit the village. I remember how excited his many Nepali friends were to see him again.

Q: What was our main policy towards Nepal at the time?

GNEHM: Our policies were to establish good relations and to assist the country to develop economically. Nepal was a very poor country. We supported the monarchy, in other words the government. There was also a parliament and there was always some friction between the government and the members of Parliament. I already mentioned Nepal's sensitive relations with India. We tried not to get between the Indians and the Nepalese; but it was difficult--especially with trade issues. Like the Nepalis, the US Government had to bring all our things, including pouches, through India. Whenever the Indians blocked transit trade, our own goods were held up. Carol Laise had served in India and had good relationships with many Indian officials. She was able to use those close relationships at times. I recall her going down to New Delhi at least once; but it was awkward. But again, Nepal was so primitive. They had not yet opened up the road to Pokhara, which is out to the west of Kathmandu. If you wanted to move around Nepal, you flew to small airstrips located throughout the Kingdom and from them you walked. Those who could not afford to fly had to go down to India and then traverse east or west in India then turn north to reenter Nepal. The road to China was often closed, as I

mentioned. The main road to India was the only way out of Kathmandu and in those days. Kathmandu was truly the end of the road. You know in those days the hippies would start their travels in Europe, work their way through Iran, which was a monarchy in those days, of course, and then into Afghanistan. When they got tired of Afghanistan and Pakistan, they moved on to India and, ultimately, to Nepal. I served the first half of my tour as Carol Laise's staff assistant and the last half of my tour as a consular officer, which was when I got to deal with the American hippy community.

Q: You know all of us were having to deal with the '60s generation, which has spilled over into Europe and was getting in all sorts of trouble. I understand that Nepal and our embassies are the only place that keeps two mortuary drawers. Did they have those then when you were there? I was talking to someone that was there recently because people die in climbing Mount Everest and other, you know, fiddled around the mountains.

GNEHM: No, there were no mortuary drawers at the embassy and no mortuary in the country!

Q: Oh.

GNEHM: We didn't have anything like that. In fact, our great problem was what do you do with the body when someone died? We usually put it in somebody's walk-in cooler or refrigerator until we could figure out what to do. A couple of times families allowed us to cremate the remains; but that was an ugly thing to do. Nepalis cremate their dead on platforms using wood to burn the corpses.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: And that wasn't a pleasant experience at all.

Q: Yes.

Well what happens- Okay, you're a young kid out of, say Davidson College or something, going on a weekend trip to- I mean a long trip around the world and you end up with a lot of hashish or something and you're caught in Nepal. What do the police do and what did you all do?

GNEHM: Well most of these hippies arrived on the back of trucks from India. It was a cheap way to travel -- only costing a few rupees to ride the truck up to Kathmandu. The hippies arrived with very few possessions -- just whatever they had in their backpacks. There were sort of colonies around Kathmandu Valley. Some of their clusters were at Swayambhunath, which is a Buddhist temple up on a hill overlooking Kathmandu. Some were out at Boudhanath, which is another big stupa, Buddhist stupa, that's slightly east of the center of town. The Nepali government basically didn't interest themselves in these groups unless individuals in the groups caused problems, such as getting into fights or causing disorder. In these situations the Nepali Government tended simply to arrest them, throw them on the back of trucks, and deport them to India. Of course, the hippies get off

the trucks at the border and walk toward the Indian checkpoint; but before you get to the Indian checkpoint, there's a little path across the fields to the next road. The hippies would take that path over to the next road where the same truck that had just dropped them off was ready to take them back up to Kathmandu! So the only problem the hippies had was getting sick on the truck, on the curving mountain roads.

Q: You must have had problems of kids running out of money or dying or something like that. And particularly in that society it must have been very difficult, wasn't it?

GNEHM: It was difficult. In fact, I received many messages through the State Department, called welfare and whereabouts cables. Usually they were from families in the states. "My son or daughter, I've lost them. I don't know where they are, the last heard from them they were in some place in Goa in India. They said they were going to Kathmandu, I haven't heard from them in three months." Of course they wanted us to find them. We always tried. Our local staff was good at knowing where to look. Sometimes we were successful; but often the "missing" person did not want to be found! And there were the many that we never located.

I would just add an important point. Anyone reading or listening to me talk about Kathmandu today will think of it in a more modern context. But Kathmandu in 1969, '70 to '71 was a very different place from what it is today. It was very isolated. Back then the only planes that flew into Kathmandu were prop planes until Thai Air decided to use a jet on its two flights each week from Bangkok. People would go to the airport to watch this jet come in because they'd never seen a jet before. But the real breath holder was the jet taking off. It was a really hairy experience. The plane had to climb rapidly to clear a mountain peak that was straight off the end of the runway to the north. It had to bank immediately on its side to be able to gain sufficient altitude.

But my point is that communications were almost nonexistent. If you wanted to call the United States, you had to go to the central post and telegraph office. You had to book a time for the line to the US and then return at the time that they gave you for your call. You could have 10 minutes or maybe 15 minutes. You entered an old booth and they would put the call through. The call had to go through India then through Europe and onto the States. Most of the time you could not communicate with the person you were calling. The static was so bad and often one party could hear the other but not the reverse! It was basically worthless to try calling the States and it was very expensive -- and you had to pay even if you had not been able to talk with your party!!!. The pouch, which was the only way we got mail, took between two and three weeks one way; therefore a letter from our parents saying they needed to know about something quickly was a source of great frustration. By the time we answered it, it was about five weeks before they had the answer they were looking for.

Q: How'd you arrange your marriage through all this?

GNEHM: Well, it was done by slow mail and letting my wife do most of the work once we agreed on the date and things of that sort. And remember, use of the diplomatic pouch

in those days was limited to letters only. I remember when the Department made one grandiose exception to allow medicine and eyeglasses to go in the pouch. That was all. No other packages of any sort. So we couldn't do what people do today which is to send themselves all sorts of things that are not available locally. We had to survive on what was in the market. And, of course, there was no email. So you were really isolated.

Q: Well did you get-

GNEHM: Let me tell you about the embassy and I have one hippie story worth telling.

Q: Alright.

GNEHM: The embassy was located on a main street with lots of traffic. The door was right on the sidewalk. There was no more than five feet from the curb to the glass door. The Marine Guard sat behind an elevated wooden desk just inside the door. So much for security and set back! These weren't issues in those days. The Chancery was a three story building constructed of stone and plastered with a combination of mud and straw. As a consequence, we had more termites in the building than employees! Up on the third floor on the wall there were little termite tunnels. I don't know what you call them but they build up on the outside. The communicators used to place bets as to which of the termites would make it to the ceiling first. Then they would wipe them all out and start all over again.

The consular section was located in a villa across the street -- a former residence. I tell you this only because it was not constructed for an office. When you entered the front door, you were in the former living room across which had been built a wooden counter. My office was one of the former bedrooms and located behind the barrier. One day about 5:15 or 5:30 in the afternoon after the consular section had closed, I came out of my office and pushed through the swinging door in the barrier. I stepped past the counter into the waiting area and was shocked to see a baby wrapped in a blanket on the floor up against the counter.

Q: Enjoy this.

GNEHM: -a baby wrapped in a blanket and no one in the waiting room. Someone had abandoned the baby in my office!

Q: Oh boy.

GNEHM: Well, I wasn't sure what to do! I'm not even married at this point; it's before my wife was there so I couldn't call her and say 'hey Love, we've got a baby.' So I called around and finally found the wife of one of the embassy employees who would take the baby while I tried to find out who the mother was. I guessed it was a hippie from Swayambhunath; it had to be. And I thought, I'm going to do something absolutely dramatic. That's the only way I knew how to precipitate action.

I was in my suit, coat, and tie as usual. I waited for about an hour until it got dark. I thought it would be much more effective after dark. I went up the Swayambhunath where I knew a particular group of hippies met in what I would call a smokehouse. It was a long narrow building with a fire in the middle and seats around the two of its sides. The head honcho who sort of ruled the group sat at the far end. When I got there, I stood in front of the closed door then hit it as hard as I could, making it go ka-wham when it hit the wall. That got everybody's attention! I walked in and I stood just inside the door. I addressed the leader at the opposite end of the long room and I said to him: "Someone left a baby in my office. I want to know who the mother is and I want that mother to come pick up that baby. And if that baby isn't picked up by open of business in the morning, I'm going to have every one of your asses thrown out of this country and make sure you never get back. And I turned and I stalked out. The mother came and picked up the baby.

Q: Oh boy.

GNEHM: Yes. That's not in the textbooks. Sometimes you just have to do what you have to do!

Q: Well this is the thing that, you know, as time has gone on consul officers become more and more constrained and really it hasn't been to the good of anyone.

GNEHM: No and I'll give you another example of this. Forgive me for interrupting; you can always tell me to stop.

Q: No.

GNEHM: There was a particular American missionary family among the many missionaries working the country. They came to my office one day with a little girl baby, a Nepali baby, which they had had for some time. I don't really recall how long but a significant time. They had been given the baby by an orphanage with the intention of adopting the child. Now, they were being transferred back to the States and, of course, they wanted to take the child with them. Well, the regulations for issuing visas to adopted children being taken to the US are quite specific. I can only issue a visa or an entry permit to a child that's not an American citizen if I have proof that the perspective parents have met all the adoption requirements in the state in which they intend to reside. And most of those states require that the family comply with the adoption law in the country from which the child comes.

Problem! Nepal did not have an adoption law of any sorts.

They said that they had been to the government and the government had said it was fine with us for you to take the child to the US. Well, I said, "It's not fine for me. I can't act on a verbal permission from some government official." This is your point about what one can and can't do. I know that as a government official I'm constrained in what I can do in my official capacity and I am careful about that. I said to them, "Look, I can't issue a visa on the verbal word of an official, as I told you; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I will

go with you to see the Minister of the Interior and we'll see what happens." Now, I knew the Minister of the Interior well from the many times that we had been together. I explained to him exactly what the problem was -- that I can't issue a visa unless I can say that the perspective parents have complied with local adoption laws. He confirmed that Nepal did not have an adoption law "so really they are not out of compliance but they're not in compliance. There's simply no law." I said "Yes, I know, but that's the problem." He said, "Well, if I wrote something here on my stationery that said it was okay and there weren't any problems with the Nepalese government on this, will that be sufficient?" And I said, "Yes, I can accept that." So he wrote it out and gave it to them.

I tell this story because I really think I exceeded what I probably should have been able to do.

Q: Well you know, there are a significant number of people, a Protection and Welfare officer in Germany who had mental problems and you've got to go through all series of things. I had a doctor who had given him a shot, put him out for awhile and we sent somebody with him. But they sort of arrived without any consent form or something back in New York and all and would be picked up by Social Services there, you know. You just do these things.

GNEHM: Well the wonderful thing about it was that when I was posted back in Washington in the late '90s one day my phone at home rang. A man on the phone said, "Skip, you won't remember me. But my wife and I came to you for help in adopting our daughter many years ago in Nepal." Of course I remembered the incident. He said I'm just calling to tell you she is a terrific young girl. She just graduated with a doctorate degree and it would never have happened if you had not helped us. You know how wonderful that makes you feel when you get that kind of call.

Q: Yes. Well this is the thing being a bureaucrat is sometimes avoiding the law.

GNEHM: Yes, there are some things that just are the right thing to do, you know.

Q: Well did the hippie community -- this -- I can think if somebody would be reading this in the 21st, 22nd, 23rd centuries; so a hippie is sort of a free willing, a free roaming young person probably smoking some marijuana or some sort of drugs a little bit and all but basically unemployed and living off of the kindness of strangers. But were there any particular problems of fights or medical problems?

GNEHM: I don't remember fights as much as medical problems. Nepal is really prone to intestinal diseases, well quite a lot actually. It's not a healthy environment. There are no sewers; sewage runs in the street; and there is a lot of tuberculosis in the country. So yes, most of the hippies wanted nothing to do with US government until they really got sick and were out of money and destitute and sometimes even starving. Then they would come, of course, and want help; they wanted money or to go home. We had a process to deal with their requests. We would try to reach their families and facilitate the transfer of money. We also had authority to assist their return to the US but on a cost recoverable

basis. But there were many people in the embassy who chipped in on a completely voluntary basis to help someone really sick or to provide a place to stay for a while. That was the biggest issue.

I will tell you there was one other experience that I had there that I remember to this day. I think I was in a staff meeting when the Marine called and said, "I've got a call down here for the consular officer and you'd better come down but you're not going to like it." I went down and when I picked up the phone, there was this guy on the phone who said, "I want to talk to the f--king pig of a consular officer, you know, and right now." I said, "First of all, I am a consular officer but would you like..." He said, "I know you f--king pig don't have anything to do with people like me, whatever. I can't stand your f..king guts, buddy." And I said, "I beg your pardon? Why are you calling?" And he said, "I've been picked up and am down here at the jail and I want you come down here and help me get out of here." "OK," I said, "There are certain things..." He interrupted, "Yeah, that's what I thought you pig of a government agent would say." I had pretty much had it by this point and asked, "Are you calling for help or are you just calling to mouth off?" He repeated a few ugly phrases. I asked one more time, and I got another verbal blast. I just took the receiver and returned it to its base!

Q: Did you have much contact with the Indian embassy there?

GNEHM: Yes we did. We got along very well, again mainly because of Carol Laise's relationship with the Indians. They knew her well and they liked her a lot.

Q: Yes, I mean she was open. That was her specialty.

GNEHM: That's right.

That leads me to tell you a bit about my time as her staff assistant. It was a rather unusual situation- I almost used the word "peculiar"- that's probably more apt. It was a unique situation in that she was, for all intents and purposes, a single woman carrying out her ambassadorial responsibilities and hosting dinners and receptions, etc. I sort of rounded off the numbers at dinners by being male. So I often was either included in dinners or events so the numbers remained balanced. She basically was a possessive personality, not unusual for ambassadors in those days. They possessed the mission. I was her staff aide and clearly belonged to her. These were also the days when the ambassador's secretary sent out an embassy notice on official letterhead to all officers to inform their wives that the reception the ambassador was hosting Friday night for XYZ required 20 dozen cookies, for which each recipient of the notice was to provide a specified amount to be delivered to the residence no later than a set time. I'm not complaining about my time as Carol's staff assistant. In truth it was exciting and fun and I learned a lot. I was there and with her often at different times, many different times, and traveled with her around Nepal. All this was fine when I was single, right? But then I got married...

So I arrived in Nepal in December 1969. I went home in June 1970 to get married and I brought my wife back to Kathmandu. There was a distinct feeling that three didn't make

an easy number. The ambassador still assumed that I would do everything as I had before and that my wife would just take care of herself. This was a bit of a difficult situation. My wife still reminds me of those times even though it's been 40 years!

Q: No, no, I can certainly understand that.

Well did you have any connection with Ambassador Bunker, the ambassador in Saigon?

GNEHM: Yes. I'm glad you asked me that question because as I was telling you the story about going back to the US to get married. I remember vividly a special moment with Ambassador Bunker. It was in Nepal, either late May or early June just before I left for the States. I was always at the airport when he was arriving or leaving. This particular day he said good-bye to his wife and to all of us who were standing there on the tarmac. He walked a fair piece across the tarmac to get to his plane. He went up the steps, turned to wave at his wife, and saw me standing next to her. Now he had already said good-bye; but he came down the steps, walked all the way back to me and said, "Good-bye, Skip. I'm not going to see you before you get married, am I?" "No sir," I said. "I just wish you the very, very best" were his parting words.

Q: How wonderful.

GNEHM: And he went back across the tarmac to his plane. The man was a gentleman.

Q: He really, really was.

GNEHM: A very genuine person. I mean, he didn't have to do that. He could have sent me a cable back from Saigon after he got there. But that was very touching for me and that's how he was. He was always gracious. He was always calm.

Q: Did you have problems, or not problems but experiences with the business, particularly maybe congressional, other types and officials in Kathmandu?

GNEHM: I'm laughing because the answer to that is a whopping big 'yes' to visitors. You can imagine how many people wanted to visit Nepal. It was such an exotic place and the Himalayas simply spectacular. Not so many CODELs (Congressional delegations) but many friends of Carol Laise and Ellsworth Bunker dropped in. These were often very prominent people. One was Robin Duke Biddle, the wife of a former Chief of Protocol and several time Ambassador -- Angier Duke Biddle.

She was coming to Kathmandu and then flying out to Pokhara to visit Tibetan refugees and see the mountains close up. Carol Laise had planned a very large dinner in her honor on the day she was supposed to return to Kathmandu. It was one of those bad weather days in Kathmandu. Carol was determined to get her guest back to Kathmandu for the dinner. So she decided to charter a plane, one of these small single engine planes, to pick her up in Pokhara. Royal Nepal Airlines wasn't going to fly in that weather. So she put me in the plane to go get her. I had to go because the pilot would not be able to leave his

plane to go into Pokhara to find the guest. This was when I thought my life was over. The weather was horrendously bad. Since there are no navigation aids, you must fly by sight. So we were flying low across the valley to stay below the clouds. Now the valley is rimmed by mountains. We headed west toward where the road to India leaves the valley, that being the lowest point in the rim around the valley. As we went up over that ridge to the other side, we were totally enveloped in clouds, huge clouds. Well, as I said, there are no navigational aids; we were in a precarious situation.

Q: Radar?

GNEHM: No radar or anything; it's all visual. And the pilot, using a four letter word, said, "Boy, we've got to get down to below these clouds." So he starts circling, going down, down, down. We had no idea whether we were going to hit the side of a mountain or a tree as we made these circles, right? We finally got down underneath the clouds and he said, "I'm going back; I just want you to get back alive. We're not going on to Pokhara." All I could think was that this is the end of my career, second tour in less than two years and finished; but we got back safely. Carol was actually angry that we came back without her guest and all I could say was we're alive. And I don't know whether I should actually say this and you might want me to stop.

Q: Oh, go ahead and we'll look at it.

GNEHM: There was a little problem with our ambassador in New Delhi, a former senator.

Q: Well then Keating?

GNEHM: Yes, it was Kenneth Keating. Keating had a lot of visitors to New Delhi. These were often single women who stayed with him for a period of time. There was this one occasion when a second woman was going to arrive before the one in residence was leaving. So he called Carol and asked if he could send the woman in his residence up to Kathmandu as her guest -- at least until the arriving one left! Carol just about exploded over the idea that she was going to take care of his girlfriends. But she said 'yes' and then told me, "I don't even want to set eyes on her. You're going to take care of her; you're going to do whatever is necessary." So yes, we had quite a variety of experiences with visitors at different times.

Q: How about mountain climbers? Were they a nuisance? Now it's turned into a huge industry but how was it then?

GNEHM: In those days we had climbing expeditions each season but not that many. They were usually organized outside Nepal and already had a connection with the Nepalese government. Your question does call to mind one experience. This development occurred before I took the consular position. There had been an avalanche on Everest on the glacier many years before -- perhaps in the late 1950s. A couple of Americans were

killed but no bodies or effects ever retrieved because they were buried deep under the ice fall.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: We received a call from the Nepalese government that the bodies had come out the bottom of the glacier as a result of its melting and movement. We had to send the vice consul up to retrieve whatever was left of the bodies and the equipment. That was not a very nice experience.

Q: How about the Peace Corps? I would think it would be a very difficult place for them to be working, wasn't it?

GNEHM: It was for the reasons we were talking about earlier -- especially health issues. Of course when they were out in villages, they were really on their own. There was no communication. They didn't come into Kathmandu except for very specific reasons and at specific times. My house, incidentally, that I was given to live in was located directly across from the Peace Corps office. The funny story is that when I arrived from Vietnam and was walking home on the first or second day from the embassy to my house, I had to walk right by the PC office. 20 to 25 volunteers or friends of volunteers -- looking like birds on a telephone wire -- were just sitting on the top of the wall watching. I learned later from one of the volunteers who was in Kathmandu and became a very close friend (Regina Mellon) that they were all there deliberately to see the new vice consul and to find out what kind of a person he was. In their minds I might be a source of hot water and booze! They were staking me out! Anyway, I ended up making a lot of friends with the volunteers because we were my age. It was nice having such friends.

Q: Yes. Well-

GNEHM: By the way, I had a vegetable garden next to my house. I came home one day plodding my way down the little street. It was mostly mud. I turned into my street and noticed that there were huge turds in the street. At the time I didn't know enough to know what they belonged to or where they'd come from; but as I turned into my compound, I noticed the turds did too. When I got to my house, my cook was standing at the back door beating on a pan. There in my garden was an elephant devouring one cabbage after another. So I didn't get any cabbages that year. That elephant wasn't afraid of that gonging either; it must have sounded too much like a temple gong.

Q: Alright. I was interviewing somebody who was in Central Africa who said you know, everybody thinks of how wonderful elephants are and all. But these, they'll go right through a village and destroy it. I mean these are not benign. I mean it's not that they particularly attack they just - anything in their way just-

GNEHM: Got knocked over.

Q: -got eaten or stepped on.

GNEHM: That's right. That's something.

Q: Well was there any Marxist movement going on at that time?

GNEHM: There was. There was a group down on the Indian border; they're still there, a Maoist group.

Q: Maoist, yes.

GNEHM: And they were a problem but not significantly. Both the Indians and the Nepalese were trying to defeat them without much success.

Q: Did you get any feel about the royal family and the prime minister's family and all? I mean ruling clique.

GNEHM: I did because of my relationship with Carol. The royal family was pretty aloof from society. The king was considered a reincarnate god and there were rituals whenever a royal was present. The ambassador did host Crown Prince Birendra and his wife on a couple of occasions. (He later became king and was killed by his son, the then Crown Prince, in a family dispute, they say.) Once a year he and his wife came to the residence for dinner and I was there because Ambassador Bunker could not always get up to Kathmandu for those occasions. So I got to meet the Crown Prince -- a very, very nice person, very open and down to earth. As I said, they were considered gods; therefore there was considerable formality whenever they were around other Nepalese.

Q: Prostration.

GNEHM: Prostration and you know, not diverting your eyes. They were really very much separated from ordinary people. So on the Fourth of July the Crown Prince and his wife would come to the residence for the Fourth of July reception. The ambassador immediately took them from the front door up to the roof, where they were given food and service. They were kept separate from any of the common people or even foreigners. Anyway, one visit I remember very well. It seems like right out of some novel. There was always a great fireworks display on the Fourth of July. This particular year one of the fireworks went off sideways and set off all the fireworks. Everybody in the garden hit the ground to avoid being hit by the fireworks. Once the last firework fired, we all got up and dusted ourselves off. Clearly the fireworks got over a little bit quicker than normal. I went straight to the front door because I knew Carol was coming down with the Crown Prince to help get them in the car. She said, "Oh, Skip, that was the most spectacular fireworks we've ever had." And I just went "Hmm-hm, just put them in the car and get them out of here." Then she discovered what had happened. But it was classic!

Q: Did you get any secretary of state or anything like that?

GNEHM: Never. I don't think we even had an assistant secretary come in the year and a half I was there. We had the desk officer; that was about the highest.

Q: Did you have much to do with our embassy in New Delhi at all?

GNEHM: I did because of working for Carol Laise. I was in touch with them for a variety of things. I went down a couple of different times to New Delhi on business for the embassy. We shared among the people at the embassy the responsibility of taking the classified pouch down to New Delhi. That gave people a chance to get out of Kathmandu to the big city where you can buy things that you could not find in Kathmandu. And the New Delhi embassy always had people coming up our way. It was a pretty good relationship between the two embassies. We helped people coming up for tourism and they helped us with people who needed to transit the airport in New Delhi.

Q: Well how did your marriage, I mean the ceremony and the rest, where'd you do this and how did your wife come back?

GNEHM: I did return to Macon, Georgia, where Peggy and I were married in June 1970. Both our parents lived in Macon. Peggy had had to make many of the decisions that normally we would have made together. I already explained how it was virtually impossible to communicate from Kathmandu. So Peggy shouldered most of the burden planning for the wedding and all. There were many things to do to prepare for her traveling back with me to Kathmandu. One matter was her medical clearance and also getting her diplomatic passport.

She learned far too quickly that things don't always go smoothly. I have not mentioned my troubles getting off language probation. After A-100 and before leaving for Saigon, I was put into French language training at FSI. The Department chose French because I had studied it in the university. I had not done well in college and my time at FSI left me short of the required 3/3. I was taking lessons in Saigon; but then my tour was cut short. So the Department decided that before I returned to Kathmandu, I would go back into intensive French to get off language probation. It meant, of course, that Peggy and I were stuck in Washington longer than we expected. I did pass my French test; but she had to sit around waiting for me!

Now as for our arrival back in Kathmandu, Peggy would have her own story to tell; but I can tell it because I've heard it from her quite often. It begins with my being a really bad male chauvinist. In retrospect it's so very clear. I didn't think I was at the time.

I brought her back to a country that I had already been living in for six months. I had all these friends in Peace Corps -- who were all single, of course. And I knew everyone in the embassy. I already had my house with my things in it. I already had a cook, my cook. I even had a dog that I'd gotten after one of my treks. And then to bring my new wife to my house, my cook, my dog, and my ambassador and my embassy...! I'm a typical Foreign Service officer, really into my work. I love it; I'm there, working late. Carol Laise had her meetings and events in the evening all of which she expected me to attend -

- rarely with my wife. I didn't get off to a good start in my marriage and I deserve all the grief that I got!

Q: No, I can certainly understand that. This is one of those sorts of untold stories of the Foreign Service that with marriage that the officer, usually a male, has his job, his secretary, everything that sort of, you know, office is all taken care of and then the wife is put into a place which isn't an office. She doesn't speak the language, has to go out and get the food, deal with servants if she's lucky and there's no real support system.

GNEHM: None whatsoever.

Q: And it's very difficult.

GNEHM: Particularly in those days. But in the end we're still married.

Q: I went through this too with mine but it's not easy.

GNEHM: It's tough.

Q: What was social life like there?

GNEHM: Interesting. We actually had a good community. There was a nice pool in our recreation area. That was a hangout place during the warmer weather. Various groups organized things. The one that Peggy and I got involved in was a group of couples that liked to play bridge with potluck dinners in conjunction with cards. These were fun bridge games; they were not serious evenings.

Q: Oh yes

GNEHM: They were not high stress games. We rotated from one family to another hosting the evening and everybody brought something. This was a lot of fun. It bonded us together and everybody enjoyed themselves. Groups often organized day hikes and picnics in the hills around the city.

I was a trekker. I liked to hike. Peggy did one with me but she's not a trekker at heart. I went up to near base camp of Everest with the political officer (Stan Brooks) one time. And I went on a 16-day trek in western Nepal with the Bob Fleming. His father and mother were missionaries and had been in Nepal for decades. Bob Fleming was an ornithologist. He studied birds of the country and it was fascinating trekking with him.

Q: Good. Birds, yes.

GNEHM: We hiked for 16 days and this was my ultimate mountaineering effort. Over a two day period I hiked 52 miles round trip -- up to the Tibetan border and back. Bob was taking his time and I wanted to make it all the way to the Tibetan border.

Q: Well tell me, during this period we must have been Tibetan observers, I mean China hadn't taken Tibet over or fairly recently, hadn't it?

GNEHM: No. I believe the Chinese had taken over Tibet in the 1950s but in the 1960s and 70s, there was a large exodus of Tibetans into India and Nepal.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: I don't recall exactly when the Dalai Lama fled Tibet.

Well, I do remember that there was still knowledge -- untalked about -- of a covert CIA program in Nepal to support Tibetan resistance to the Chinese. They were not a formal militia. They were located in the Mustang area, which is on the other or north side of the Himalayan range. Nobody talked about it in Kathmandu; it didn't exist! But it was known and still being whispered about, when I got there a decade and a half later.

Q: Well were we reporting, were we picking up and interrogating refugees from Tibet and all of that sort of stuff?

GNEHM: You know that was part of the mission's activities, though again many of them passed right on through to India.

Q: So most of the support of the free Tibet movement or whatever you want to call the Tibetan exile was taken care of in India, I suppose.

GNEHM: Yes, even the Tibetan refugees in Nepal looked to the Dalai Lama, who set himself up in Dharamsala, in India.

There were refugee camps in Nepal and the UN was deeply involved

Q: Did you ever run across the Gurkhas and the military?

GNEHM: Oh yes.

Q: Were they much of a presence?

GNEHM: The British embassy had them as guards. Because they hired lots of Gurkhas for several of their diplomatic missions, like Hong Kong, the British actually ran a training camp in Nepal for Gurkhas.

Q: Yes.

Well then, you left in what, '71?

GNEHM: I left Nepal in June of '71. The Department cut a number of positions worldwide and one was Carol Laise's staff assistant position. The position was, in fact,

re-established not long after it was abolished. Carol worked the system. I was posted to Washington.

Q: What did you do in Washington?

GNEHM: My assignment was to NEA/P, the office that handled public affairs for the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. There were three of us in the office: the office director, a number two and me. To be very honest, I was upset about this assignment. I thought it was a bad assignment.

Q: Well wasn't it moving you toward what you wanted?

GNEHM: Oh, I didn't think so then, but in retrospect it was one of the most valuable assignments that I had in the Foreign Service. What I learned from a very, very professional director stood me in good stead throughout my career. He taught me how to deal with the press, how to establish ground rules, what to do, what not to do, and how to deal with a reporter who broke the rules. These were and are valuable skills.

Q: Well what sort of lesson did you learn?

GNEHM: One of the first lessons that he taught me was you want to talk to the press. You want to be open. Reporters are not bad people.

Q: Which is not the normal Foreign Service reflex at all.

GNEHM: My boss had been a reporter himself before coming into the Foreign Service and he said, "They are important for our work and they're only going to be doing their job well when we work with them."

Q: Who was this?

GNEHM: Glenn Smith. The second thing he said to me was to always establish ground rules at the beginning. Is it on the record? Is it on background? Or as I recall deep background. And he explained that if your conversation was on the record, you could be quoted and everything you said is attributable. If you were talking on background, tell them how they have to attribute it, like a senior official, a spokesperson or unformed source. And for deep background the press can use it but cannot in any way quote it, attribute it or claim where he got it. The information was provided for the reporter's knowledge only. Glenn was adamant on one point. "Always be honest. Never lie. Be straight with them. If you can't say something say, I can't go into that. Period. A professional reporter understands that and accepts it. If you've talked with someone in the media or press and they screw you, they break the rules; never talk to them ever again. Make it very clear how they broke the rule, explain that you can't trust them, and they aren't going to have the access that they had before."

And said he added, “You tell me about it and I’ll fix the goose!” I never had many problems with the press in my Foreign Service career. I credit that to the excellent training and experience I got at this point in my career. I often went to the noon press briefings to listen to the spokesperson answer questions because I thought it was a good learning experience. I wanted to see how he handled difficult situations and how he fielded questions.

Q: Were you there from when to when?

GNEHM: I think it was about a year on this job, from ’71 to ’72.

Q: Did you find-

GNEHM: Oh. I should tell you the other thing that I learned out of that job, which was critically important. I’ve used it in terms of advising young officers or people throughout my career. One of my main responsibilities each day was to get Bureau clearances on talking points for the spokesman to use at his press conference. That meant that I got to know people in every single office in the bureau, and the bureau in those days covered all the countries from Bangladesh to Morocco. Networking is important in the Department, as it is in most places. My job made that effortless. So people around the Bureau got to know me. And this led to one of my assignments actually, little bit further down the road.

Q: Did you have a problem- I mean this is the first time you’re within the State Department dealing with it. The Arab/Israeli conflict, which you may have heard of, dealing with particularly the very strong, pro-Israeli movement in the United States and lack of a strong feeling within the public relations culture of the time as far as Arabs are concerned. In other words I see very strong bridges for Israel and lack of any real interest in the Palestinian cause at that time.

GNEHM: Yes. I was aware of it. I don’t recall it being a major issue that I had to spend a lot of time on. I was quite aware of the lobby groups and their influence but other people were dealing with those topics.

Q: What sort of things were you grappling with?

GNEHM: Again, one of my big chores every day came after Glenn’s return from the NEA staff meeting with the list of the questions that the Bureau thought might likely come up at the press briefing. My job was to have cleared language or guidance for the spokesperson before the noon press conference. Sometimes I drafted the proposed responses, sometimes he drafted, and sometimes we just had to get it from various offices. Your deadline was the noon press briefing.

Q: Does this system work fairly well?

GNEHM: It did. It was very time consuming, as you know, because the headlines of the morning newspapers, or the news on the radio or TV, tended to drive everybody in the

morning. You had to drop everything else to get the cleared responses to the spokesperson.

Q: Did any incidents particularly involve you or not? Or at least, I mean, take your time during this particular time? Can you think of it or is it-?

GNEHM: I don't recall any real difficulties. Again, I had such a great boss and the number two was equally helpful in terms of mentoring me and in terms of support.

Q: Well, what about was there an Israeli press in the house, sitting press contingent or Arabic contingent coming in every day?

GNEHM: Definitely Israeli, Jewish as well as representatives of Arab news agencies. The Jewish press media from the United States was there, of course. Not every day but almost every day, yes. I don't recall very much on the Palestinian side. They just were not that active or organized.

Q: Well did you find the Israeli press abided by the rules? Did they understand the rules that background and so forth that you were-?

GNEHM: They were probably the ones we were most wary about because they were the ones that often did break the rules. So in those cases you just have to be more careful in what you said.

Q: How about the country desks? Did you find- was it hard to pry the questions out?

GNEHM: No, I found we had really great people in the Bureau and hard workers. They all understood what had to be done.

Q: Well the Near Eastern Bureau has always been a bureau dealing with the most contentious clients and there's always, always crazies all the time.

GNEHM: That's right. There was always a sense that the people there knew how to deal with any sort of emergency or crisis situation. Even later on in my career I remember Secretary Schultz and Secretary Baker and others saying, "If you've got a crisis get an NEA person up here because it doesn't matter whether it's China or whatever else-- they know how to work a crisis under pressure. It's good to have them around."

The other thing I did that you probably wouldn't ask me out was that I became very active as a junior officer in the JFSOC, Junior Foreign Service Officers Club.

Q: JFSOC.

GNEHM: Yes, the Junior Foreign Service Officers Club. The "C" was for "club." We had to call it club because these were the days before the Foreign Service had a labor organization. I actually was president of the organization.

Q: Well let's talk a bit about that. This is still the time when sort of the influence of the '60s was still around and I'm probably misstating this but there was a feeling among the young officers that anyone much over 30 years old was probably a bit beyond the age to learn anything original, truth, virtue and all rested in those who were in their 20s. Was this going on at that time?

GNEHM: There was definitely a sense among the younger officers that no one was interested in hearing their opinions and voices and that some of the rules and regulations were a bit absurd and needed to be looked at and people weren't willing to do that. You know, it was all, "This is the way it's been done."

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: It was definitely a sense within JFSOC membership that we needed to confront some of the old approaches, mainly personnel matters.

Q: Yes, well this part of the noble era.

GNEHM: Yes, that's what it was.

Q: Probably then along when things came out better because of it. I-

GNEHM: We demanded to see Secretary Rogers at one point and I think he perceived initially that JFSOC was a disruptive group.

Q: Well there was a time when junior officers were- signed a petition about getting out of Vietnam or something. Was that the issue?

GNEHM: No. No, it was trying to find a way to get some of our views to the secretary on the system and how it was working and operating or not operating, in our opinions. It was time in our opinion to look at personnel issues. There were no cones in these days; there were no facts provided. But the Department had already begun to think it needed to do something along those lines. I remember getting a letter saying that the promotion boards had met and recommended me for promotion as a consular officer; but I had to sign a statement that I would be a consular officer for the bulk of my career. I remember being very upset. I didn't want to say 'no' to a promotion, but I also didn't want to be a consular officer for most of my career. So I began trafficking around with my letter to different people to seek advice. One of the people that I spoke with was Tom Boyatt, who was on the Greece/Cyprus desk at the time, and went on to serve as an ambassador and later President of AFSA (American Foreign Service Association).

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: I showed Tom the letter and he said, "Where in the hell is this coming from?" I explained what I knew about it and he said, "Oh, just take the promotion because nobody

will remember in six months what you signed. And in a year they'll have a new system." This was generally the advice I was getting from most people -- don't worry about it, nothing's going to last. But I decided I wasn't going to sign my name on the paper I had been given and so I said no. Six months later I got offered a promotion as a political officer which I accepted. But Tom was right; the Department changed the system before I finished my next tour.

Q: Well one of the things that one quickly learned was that any promise from Personnel was good for about oh, a month or two maybe. When the personnel officer would change, the system would change. So somebody says, sure now, if you go to St. Helena for, you know, two years, we'll certainly make sure you get a nice job afterwards.

GNEHM: Right, Copenhagen or something.

Q: Yes, something like that. Ho, ho, ho.

GNEHM: Right. Well I didn't have a lot of confidence in the personnel system because of something that I didn't mention to you previously. It was a letter from the personnel officer that I'd spoken to in the States when I was transferred from Vietnam to Kathmandu. The letter said, "Skip, I know how excited you will be to get back into the Middle East, which is where you always wanted to serve." This was referring to my assignment to Kathmandu! I'm looking at this letter and saying, "What geography class did he attend?" But in all fairness Nepal was in the NEA bureau, so he wasn't all wrong. But it wasn't my definition of the Middle East.

Q: Well the Middle Eastern Bureau was so wide back in '58. I wanted to go to Africa. So of course I went to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. But it was all in the same bureau so that- But anyway.

Well with this public affairs job did you have much of a dealing with the press? I mean-

GNEHM: Yes I did.

Q: What sort of dealing was it? More sitting down with them as opposed to standing up at a podium?

GNEHM: Yes, it was phone calls from reporters that worked with NEA that were referred to me. They asked about background information and facts or asked for texts or things of that sort. Also people came in for interviews. I did a lot of press interviews in my office.

I also did a lot of public speaking. I traveled on behalf of the NEA Bureau. I did that whenever I was in Washington but I also began speaking at universities or clubs, Rotary Clubs, things of that sort.

Q: Well were you still seeing a residue of the dislike or suspicion about the gentlemen from the '60s when you went to universities at all or could you pretty well have a solid dialogue rather than confrontations?

GNEHM: I would say that in almost every engagement my first goal was to get a good sense of the audience. It might be by walking through the group to get to the podium or noting the expressions on faces in the audience. Occasionally I felt some animosity and some expected confrontation but that did not intimidate me. I found that the way I speak and the way I talk tended to disarm most people.

Q: No, but I mean there are ways of dealing with this and if you're not saying, this is- the law has been handed down from ages past and you should except it, rather than to try to explain-

GNEHM: How it works.

Q: -how it works and all that. I mean that's very disarming.

GNEHM: It was disarming to be able to say "wait a minute" and explain how certain decisions are made. I could say that I had a lot of ability and flexibility within the Bureau to give my opinions. This approach would catch people off-guard.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: At that time I got a response.

Q: Well I'm looking at the time. This will probably be a good place to stop because I want to turn it over for a minute to our interns who are sitting here listening to this. But where did you go after you left NEA/P?

GNEHM: I went to be the desk officer for Nepal working once again with Carol Laise.

Q: Okay we'll pick it up then.

And do you have anything? I'll leave the mics on so-

INTERN #1 NAOMI KAUFMAN: Forever recorded.

I have a quick question. While you were in Nepal what sorts of relationships did you have with the Nepalese, if any? To what degree did you interact with them on a reasonably consistent basis?

GNEHM: That's a very good question. In the staff aide position I was often dealing with officials, primarily on matters that the ambassador had been working on. When I was the consular officer I dealt with officials on a regular basis. At most small posts, the younger officers are often given a secondary position in the economic or political section. I was

working in the political section part time during some of my tour in Kathmandu. I was given the youth portfolio. That gave me the opportunity to call on the head of the Nepal Youth Organization. He was a leftist and not an obvious friend to the embassy. But in fact I actually ended up developing a really good relationship maybe because nobody had tried to see him before. I remember the first time I saw him the conversation was very straightforward -- even a bit stiff. At one point he said he didn't think we had anything in common. And then after again talking with him I think he kind of liked having someone like me to talk to about things and I enjoyed talking to him. So through him I got to meet other people who were in that organization and whom we had never met before.

The other group of Nepalese that I got to know well, I have to tell you, were our local hired employees and through them their families. With a couple of them I actually went trekking and hiking.

INTERN #2 ANDREA CARLS: Stu said you all, being in a foreign services all days, is a passion of your neurons and it's all- let me just- I didn't go to work every day, especially in a cold sled, was maybe- was not your first choice .

GNEHM: You mean Saigon?

INTERN #2 ANDREA CARLS: Yes.

GNEHM: That was harder but then I always felt Saigon was not a normal situation, operating situation for our troops. But in Nepal and in my subsequent ones I loved the kind of work we did. I loved the contact with local people. I loved it out in the countryside. I'm an activist in that regard of going out and all over the place and meeting people and being overseas in a different culture was full of different experiences. There were always things happening, unexpected, like the baby in my waiting room or the elephant in my garden.

I remember coming back to the US at one point and staying with friends of my wife from their days at Emory University. He had a good job at Xerox. We were sitting around their table one night and he was asking me questions about my life. He stopped me at one point and he said, "I envy you so much. I go to work every day, I do the same thing every day, sit with the same people every day. I'm going to get promoted and continue to do the same thing every day. You have all kinds of different things happening." I have remembered that throughout my career that, yes, our lives are indeed full of adventure.

Q: It's true. I've had exactly the same reaction from people in my college. I mean afterwards, you know. Because we've had remarkable lives. Well that's why we have an oral history program.

INTERN #3 REBECCA SATERFIELD: I do, yes. So it's actually in regard to ____ and second tour _____ you couldn't find enough access to mentorship, people who were there to give you good advice on how to continue your career or was that something you wish they provided you a bit more of?

GNEHM: Oh it was a mixed experience. Overall I felt I got good mentorship. I had really good people who liked me and who wanted me to do well and gave me good tips. I mentioned the head of NEA/P in particular; he really did take me under his wing and wanted me to be good at working with the press and media. Through my career there were situations where I had no guidance. I had to draw on my own instincts and the knowledge I had gained from those who had mentored me, like Carol Laise. The first boss that I had in Saigon, the commercial attaché, I didn't go into it, was an old codger. Maybe not as old as I thought he was at the time; but he dressed with a cowboy hat, boots, and a lanyard and he was very, very jealous of my popularity with the secretary and others. So he wasn't terribly helpful, actually. But Carol Laise in her own way, mentored me and she became a friend well after our serving together. So yes, and the political officer in the embassy... I can think of a whole group of officers in the embassy that were always there to sit down and talk, even the one who told me I was actually an atrocious drafter and that he wasn't sure I was going to survive in the Foreign Service.

INTERN #4 KATHERINE TUSCANY: So you're kind of out in Nepal; what do you think was the most important relationship you built, whether it was someone in the consulate or someone in New Delhi, wherever you were working, what relationship was the most important One?

GNEHM: It had to be with the ambassador, with her. Working so closely with her and it just developed into a relationship that comes back into play later on. Then there was the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) who was Harry Barnes during my first year in Nepal. He went on to be Director General of the Foreign Service.

Q: He was director general, yes.

GNEHM: Well. He was a wonderfully nice person. Again, he had an open door. He was one I was able to go up to and say the ambassador's got me doing this, that and the other and I'm not sure what it is she really wants to come out of this; he could tell me. They were close. And he wouldn't go tell her. The next one, Carl Coon, was a completely different personality. He did not like how close I was to the ambassador. So when the ambassador was out of the country, he switched me to the consular section. When she came back and found that out, she was furious and reamed him out, which didn't help me at all in my relations with him.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: So I began to learn the intricacies of relationships and how to be very careful with all relationships.

Q: Well embassies and all are offices, particularly in our business because we move around all the time, are a bit like families, you know, and you're a bunch of siblings and how come he got the peanuts and I didn't, you know, this type of thing.

GNEHM: That's right.

Q: I mean most of the time it works pretty well but sometimes you find yourself, it's like being in a family you wish you could be out of.

GNEHM: Yes, that's very true. And what it also is, for a second, I learned how important the ambassador's leadership is; it's just incredibly important.

Q: The ambassador sets the tone.

GNEHM: Personality, discipline, whatever. You name it. Everything flows from that person on down.

Q: Yes.

INTERN #5 CAROLINE WALLACE: I know you talked about your wife's experience a little bit so I'm curious if she ever took any work in the countries you were posted.

GNEHM: This was a big problem in our marriage. My wife had an MBA. She was actually working in Washington, I told you, for the Securities and Exchange Commission when we met. So she had her own professional life and wanted to work. Going to Kathmandu was not a step for a professional. There was really not any kind of employment in Kathmandu worthwhile. Later when we get to Riyadh, my wife got a job at CitiBank; it made all the difference in the world for our marriage, for her self-esteem and I bless her for it. And then when we went to Yemen, CitiBank actually had a branch in Yemen and though there was no obligation they actually transferred her. Well, they actually hired her there. So for those years she actually made more money than I because I had to pay federal taxes and she didn't!

Q: Okay, great. Skip, we'll pick this up, you're going to be working on the Nepal?

GNEHM: Desk officer for Nepal.

Q: Desk officer Nepal.

GNEHM: Which was in the Office of India, Nepal and Ceylon (INC).

Q: The India/Nepal and what period?

GNEHM: This would have been 1971 to '73.

Q: Okay.

Today is the 25th of June 2014, interview with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, would you explain where we were?

GNEHM: I think we had finished discussing my tour in NEA/P, Public Affairs, after coming out of Nepal.

Q: Okay. And then where'd you go?

GNEHM: I went to the Nepal desk in what was then NEA/INC (India, Nepal, and Ceylon Country Office). There was an interesting anecdote right before my assignment to INC. Elizabeth Jones ("Beth"), who joined the Foreign Service about the same time that I did, and I became close as we were junior officers in the Bureau. She and I both discovered at roughly the same time that there was a vacancy in Cairo. You remember I wanted to go to the Middle East; that was where I was aiming to go. So I ran across the hall one day and told her that I just heard about this job in Cairo and talked to the people about it and they seemed interested. She had a strange look on her face and then said, "Skip; they have already asked me to take the job." Beth and I remained good friends for the rest of our career; but she got the job and I went to the Nepal desk.

Q: So you were doing the Nepal desk from when to when?

GNEHM: That was about 1972 to 1973. It was a year.

Q: And at that time you were still in the Near East Bureau?

GNEHM: Yes, South Asia was still part of the Middle East bureau, the NEA Bureau. There were two South Asian directorates, INC and PAB. PAB covered Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. As the Nepal Desk Officer, I was still working for Carol Laise, who was still the ambassador at Kathmandu. Because we had a very good relationship from my tour in Kathmandu, it was an extremely good job. When you are a desk officer for a small country, such as Nepal, you end up covering all the issues, whether they be political, economic, even administrative and consular. Having been at post, I had a good sense of what was going on in the country. I was able to do a lot of networking around Washington with other agencies, like the Peace Corps and AID. It gave me a great insight into how Washington worked. So while I mentioned earlier that I was really unhappy that I was assigned back to Washington after less than two years abroad, in retrospect, it was a great education and learning experience. When I then went abroad, I had a good sense of what I needed to do while serving abroad in terms of reporting, communications and personal calls. So it was a great experience and I would strongly advise young officers to have that Department experience early on in their careers.

Q: You mentioned the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was crafted so not to be considered part of the, you might say the intelligence operation of the United States. How did you find relations with the Peace Corps and the State Department?

GNEHM: Well you're quite right. This would have been 1971, 1972, & 1973. That's about a decade after the creation of the Peace Corps and still in many countries around the world PC volunteers were accused of being CIA agents -- out in the field reporting to

the embassy or the CIA. So there was a big effort on the part of the Peace Corps not to be seen as part of the mission. In Kathmandu, Carol Laise and the then-Peace Corps director, Bruce Morgan, were very close personally. He did attend the country team meetings but that was it. Most of us at the embassy were told that we shouldn't be close to Peace Corps volunteers to avoid fueling this accusation. That wasn't true in my own personal case. I think I mentioned to you that my apartment was across the street from the Peace Corps office and the volunteers learned pretty fast that I had hot showers and scotch. So I ended up having lots of really close friends among the Peace Corps volunteers. In Washington I never had any problem working with Peace Corps as a desk officer.

Q: Well then in the time you were on the desk were there any issues in particular that came up?

GNEHM: As I remember the biggest issue, which was also an issue when I was in Nepal, was what is called the Trade and Transit Agreement between Nepal and India. This had to do with the movement of goods in route to Nepal or actually exported from Nepal, all of which went through the port of Calcutta, which is an Indian port, of course. This agreement was vital to the economy of Nepal, but it was also a means for the Indians to squeeze the Nepalese whenever they didn't like something in the relationship. One issue in particular that concerned the Indians was Nepal's relationship with China to the north. The Nepalese enjoyed using the Chinese as somewhat of a balance to India, which of course was not practical in reality. Nevertheless, they did and India often responded with actions that squeezed Nepal -- in this case closing or obstructing the movement of Nepalese goods through India. This was one of the issues that we constantly addressed -- trying to convince the Indians to be more understanding and less brazen in their squeezing the Nepalese on trade.

Q: Did you feel Chinese influence when you were on the Nepalese desk?

GNEHM: Only that in those days the Chinese were very opportunistic, I would say. In other words, they sent high level visitors on a fairly frequent basis to Kathmandu. There wasn't a great deal of substance; but it just sent the Indians up the tree. I think that that was, in fact, what they intended -- to aggravate the Indians. The Chinese also were funding a number of development projects; the one I most recall was construction of a road from Kathmandu to the Chinese border. This Chinese project upset the Indians immensely as they saw this road as another way China might be able to send its military toward India.

Q: Well how did the Nepalese desk fit into the bureau, particularly vis-à-vis India and Pakistan? Well India I guess.

GNEHM: I have two observations. One is that to be a desk officer of a small country gives you a lot more latitude and freedom than, say, desk officer for India or Pakistan. There is less interest in Washington and overall less attention. So you had far more opportunity to be directing the issues, to be involved on a personal basis.

My second observation made very clear to me from David Schneider, who was the country director at the time, was that India was the important country, not Nepal or for that matter Ceylon, and that ultimately U.S. interests lay in New Delhi. I just needed to keep that in mind as I did the Nepalese portfolio.

Q: Well would you check with the India desk if any issues came up?- Did you find yourself at all a conduit from Indians about the situations in Nepal?

GNEHM: Well it was a fairly tight knit office. We met most mornings. I was on the distribution for all the cables from India as well as Ceylon. In fact, I was the back-up desk officer for Ceylon. Most of the issues were discussed openly within the office. Carol Laise, who, as I mentioned earlier, had served in South Asia previously- and in India specifically, knew Indian politics well. She counted on me to keep her informed about Washington thinking on the subcontinent issues so that she could gauge how she needed to weigh in on issues that involved India. That is an important function of a desk officer - - to be the eyes and ears of the embassy in Washington and to give your embassy advice and guidance that they need to know to deal with issues.

Q: Well with the area you were in particular, India, but more so with Nepal, did you find that our involvement in Vietnam, which was certainly waning at the time, was an important factor?

GNEHM: Not really. I would say that it came into play most often when India was attending international forums and speaking as part of the non-aligned movement, which in those days was very vocally hostile to the U.S. military actions in Southeast Asia. India's voice would always be quite prominent in that criticism.

Q: Well while you were doing the Nepal desk, were there any events in Nepal that got your attention or absorbed you?

GNEHM: No, just the ones that I mentioned. I guess the only one I would add relates to AID. Our AID program was very important in Nepal. Yet the Nepal AID program was always competing for funding. My job in Washington was to fight for the level of assistance that the mission was seeking. Competition was always fierce and the fighting rarely pleasant!

Q: Well did you find that Nepal, being where mountain climbers went, was both the playground of the hippies and the very well to do? Did you find that it attracted a lot more attention than the country itself probably deserved on an international interest scale?

GNEHM: I think that's true. The other nice thing about being the ambassador's aide in Kathmandu and also the desk officer was that I got to meet people like Sir Edmund Hillary and other mountain climbers. They would call me in Washington to try to get messages to her or arrange to see her in Nepal. This added really interesting issues and

people to deal with. And you're right; Nepal in the eyes of lots of people was an exotic place, the high Himalayas, the tinkling bells, the temples and a Hindu monarchy, and things of that sort. So yes, there was a lot of interest in Nepal in that respect.

Q: Are there two or three other little kingdoms up in that area?

GNEHM: There are. I'm not sure about the dates, but I believe that when I was on the desk, India moved to take over Sikkim, which was a small semi-autonomous region of India still under its prince, going back to the days of the raj. The Indian government decided to depose the ruler because they didn't like his playing around with the Chinese while there was a perceived Chinese threat along the India-Chinese border. That was an unsettling development because Bhutan, which is another of those small countries, and Nepal were clearly independent but under a great deal of Indian pressure. There was a sense in Washington that the Indians were being overly aggressive. I can't remember the exact date but they certainly at one point during this period also seized Goa from the Portuguese.

Q: Yes and they just moved in.

GNEHM: Just marched in.

Q: Did you get a feel when you were there that the- subcontinent area was a place a part as far as the Foreign Service people were concerned? Were there a lot of people who made their careers in that particular region, as you would find later in the Middle East?

GNEHM: Definitely there was a coterie of people, officers, who served repetitively in these countries and in Washington. There was throughout the '70s and '80s into the '90s criticism in Washington, particularly from Congressman Solarz who claimed that the subcontinent did not get the attention in the State Department that it deserved. He became a strong proponent of separating South Asia from NEA, a division that did occur later. I never really sensed that when I was serving on the desk. I do know, of course, that there were particular issues and developments in the core NEA area, like the '67 war and '73 wars, that certainly took the attention of the NEA front office as well as other senior Department officials; but I never really felt like the South Asian offices were ignored.

Q: Did Stephen Solarz run across your radar while you were there?

GNEHM: Rather frequently in my career, yes.

Q: How about during the Nepal time?

GNEHM: I remember while on the desk he did visit Nepal at one point; I can't remember exactly when. We had many CODELs (congressional delegations) come to Nepal but largely for the reasons that we discussed before. Nepal is an exotic place so congressional

delegation visiting India, an important country, would spin off to Nepal to see the mountains and temples of Kathmandu.

Q: For somebody reading this Stephen Solarz is a congressman from, was it Brooklyn or from New York?

GNEHM: He was from New York.

Q: And he was very much involved in Africa, later in South Asian affairs and was at one point nominated to be ambassador to India but he got shot down because his wife's- they hadn't paid income tax or something like that. Anyway, I've interview Solarz so one can know to look at that.

Well then you were only on the desk a relatively short time.

GNEHM: Yes, about a year, and in the summer of '73 Carol Laise came back to Washington as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. She asked me to go to that bureau with her as her principle staff assistant. So I did, again because I'd worked with her so closely.

Q: How long were you in public affairs?

GNEHM: From the summer until February of 1974, so a relatively short time. And that was because of a phone call that I received on New Year's Eve of 1973, so December 31st. I remember it well. It was after 11:00 and just before midnight. I had a phone call at my house from Tom Scotes. I got to know Tom from our work together in the NEA bureau. Tom said he was calling me from Dulles Airport. He had permission from Secretary Kissinger to call me. I was the only other person in the bureau other than a very few at the top-who knew where he was headed. He said, "I'm on my way to Damascus to reopen our interest section with Americans and I'd like you to come as my deputy. The secretary said I could make that offer. Are you interested?" I looked at my wife who was sitting at the kitchen table and said, "I really need to talk to my wife about this." Tom said, "Well that's okay; but just tell me if you're interested." I said "Well, hold on half a second." I explained to my wife what I was being asked and she said, "sure." So I told him: "Yes, Tom, I'll go." So of course I had to tell Carol Laise. She didn't have any objections. She was a little disappointed; but she knew that's what I wanted to do all my life. And I was on the plane to Damascus by mid-February with Peggy and my then young daughter, Cheryl.

Q: Okay. Well let's talk about what had been going on with the United States and Syria?

GNEHM: Well in 1967, the so-called June war, Syria along with most of the Arab countries broke diplomatic relations with the United States. Syria, unlike Egypt, refused to allow any Americans to remain in the "U.S. interest section." We asked and the Italians agreed to be our protective power, which meant that they staffed our interest section with Italian diplomats. This is an interesting phenomenon; I think there were

some five to seven Italian diplomats who worked in the U.S. embassy building, the former embassy building, handling our affairs. There were, as I recollect, in the neighborhood of 15 to 18 Syrian local hire employees who remained employed as part of the interest section, again being managed by Italians at this point. What was happening in this January-February of '74 timeframe was that Kissinger had actually negotiated with Assad the re-staffing of the interest section with Americans.

Now, I mention Egypt only just as a footnote. The Egyptians allowed Americans to remain working in the embassy building as part of the U.S. interest section. They did restrict the numbers. I don't remember the number but it wasn't large. So although we had Americans in Egypt but between '67- and '74, there were no American diplomats under any guise at all in Syria. So this was a rather momentous development and it came at a time just a few months after the '73 war. Immediately after the war was a good opportunity for moving pieces on a chessboard, as people like to say. In the aftermath of a real crisis people are jockeying for new positions. A person like Kissinger could step in and work those positions to try to make progress and he did, on both the Egyptian and the Syrian front. It was during the months of March and April, that you had what became known as the shuttle diplomacy. Kissinger moved between the Syrians and the Israelis multiple times leading to a disengagement agreement on the Golan Heights. As a result of the agreement, Israel returned a slice of the Golan Heights to Syria including the region's capital, Kuneitra. I was fortunate to be there on the ground when all this happened. This was one of those times in my life where God put me in interesting places.

Q: Well how was your Arabic at the time?

GNEHM: My Arabic was not great. I had studied Arabic at the American University in Cairo in 1966-67; we are talking about several years later. My Arabic was very rusty. In fact, I could only handle greetings and minor phrases at the time. But I'm glad you asked the question because I really did intend and want to bring my Arabic up to a good spoken level. So one of the things I did do in the one year that I was in Damascus was find a tutor. The Department supported me by giving me funds to hire a tutor. My tutor was actually a Palestinian refugee living in Syria and a professor at Damascus University, as I recall. He came to the embassy at 6:00 AM, five days a week and for one hour taught me Arabic. After one year with the tutor my ability to use Arabic was much improved. The Department agreed that my level of proficiency was sufficient to permit me move to the Foreign Service Institute Arabic School in Beirut, which I did in March of '75.

Q: You were in Damascus from when to when?

GNEHM: From February of 1974 to March 1975. Interestingly I entered Syria with an Italian ministry of foreign affairs i.d. because I was posted to Damascus as an Italian diplomat in the U.S. Interest Section of the Italian Embassy. So while I still had an American passport, I was issued an i.d. that said I was an Italian diplomat.

Q: What was Syria like when you arrived?

GNEHM: It was an exciting time, to be very honest with you. I arrived with my wife and a daughter who was born in '71. So she was really quite young. The mood in Syria toward us was very welcoming, very open; there was a lot of excitement that we were back. Clearly among the Syrians that I met (and I found it wasn't difficult to meet Syrians) it was an "Oh, so glad the relationship is better, it's got to be better." While I was there, there was a high level visit and the Syrians put American flags all along the two main boulevards in Abu Rummaneh. We didn't even have diplomatic relations; but they had American flags on every pole going up and down the streets. It obviously was a decision by President Hafez al-Assad to highlight the decision to improve relations with the US. It wasn't something that was done due to popular pressure; but it had popular support.

I have to tell you one more story. When Tom Scotese, our new Head of the Interest Section, got to Damascus, he moved into the ambassador's residence, which was a nice mansion that we had bought years ago on a very nice piece of property located not very far from the embassy. In fact we still have this property. When I arrived a few weeks later, Peggy and my little daughter, Cheryl, and I also moved into the residence. At that time we had no other apartments and no other housing. I don't think there had been a three year old running around that residence for many years!

There were five Americans assigned to the interest section: Tom Scotese, Head of Section, myself as deputy, an administrative officer (Gary Lee), a secretary (Nancy Barber) and a communicator (Tom Bell). From our arrival Tom Scotese and I began hearing stories from our national employees about the Italians. Some were good and some funny and some were not so good. Our locally hired staff, all of whom had been our employees before the break in relations, was glad we were back. They did not like working for the Italians who they considered haughty and condescending. They also told us that the Italian ambassador just hated the Italian Head of the Interest Section because he lived in this huge mansion (formerly the US ambassador's residence) while the Italian ambassador was in an apartment on the second or third floor of some apartment house. Then, too, the Head of the Interest Section had this big (former) embassy building and all its employees working for him. Our Syrian employees said that there was a lot of friction between the Interest Section Head and the Italian Ambassador.

I have to tell you this. The dedication and loyalty of our locally hired employees is something that saw from early on in my career straight through to the last day that I was employed at State. We have terrifically dedicated and committed local hire employees around the world.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: In this particular case our Syrian employees were watching out for us very carefully. They kept logs and records of almost everything the Italians did to buildings, to money, to everything else. They came to us when we arrived to divulge that the last Italian head of the Interest Section had declared that most of the property in the residence was old, tattered, and to be disposed of. He held an auction for the carpets, the paintings

and the other artifacts that had been collected for the residence over the years by the American Government and by American ambassadors. Then he purchased most of them during the auction and ordered our employees to crate them up and send them to Rome. The items were valuable and this action by the Italian diplomat was inexcusable. We raised this matter through diplomatic channels. The Italian ambassador was extraordinarily helpful in this regard.

The Italian foreign affairs ministry investigated and found that it was totally true and retrieved all the items. Again, the inventory that the Syrian employees had done was specific, clear, with pictures; I mean everything. There was never any doubt. The documentation was pristine and all the items taken were shipped back to us.

Q: Oh boy.

GNEHM: That's one of those things that happen, I guess, in life. It could have gone much differently had it not been for the diligence of our own employees.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: I'll tell you this other story about these employees. They suffered greatly at the hands of the Syrian government after the break of relations in '67. One of the more senior employees

was arrested and tortured. What I remember about his story is that he was stretched so that it broke his arms and legs. He had severe back injury. He, of course, was not able physically to get the kind of treatment that he should have gotten. After we returned, we actually sent him out of Syria for medical treatment. There were other stories about the way the Syrian government had actually threatened their families in an effort to force them to be spies for the government. I remember being appalled -- being naïve and young when I heard these stories. At one point I saw intelligence that one of our employees was continuing to report to Syrian intelligence. I remember Tom telling me, "If you were in his shoes what would you do? They have control over your life, your family, and all your relatives. The employee has no access to classified information except what you or I might say in front him." So we accepted it; we all just lived with it. It was part of my learning experience in the Foreign Service. Again, I want to repeat that our locally hired employees were really devoted and dedicated. I don't want to disparage them. They were under intense pressure.

Q: What was the feeling towards Hafez Assad from within the people you were talking to both in Washington and the Americans at the embassy?

GNEHM: There was general excitement about the new opening to Assad. It was seen as an opportunity to move things forward with the Israeli-Arab dispute. So the general attitude around the Department was to go with it, to make it work and to try to improve the relationship. Hopefully, we could achieve some progress through diplomatic efforts some of the important issues in the region. I remember being so excited to be going to Syria and also being so cocky. That's a good word for it. I had had this one year

experience in Egypt and, therefore, I was sure I knew Arabs and I knew how to deal with them. I was excited about going back to the region. Yet, my arrival in Syria was like having someone slamming their fist in my face. Syrians are not like Egyptians!

Q: I'm told they're really a people apart.

GNEHM: I learned immediately that all that I thought I knew about the people in the region had to be reconsidered and that I had to take a step back. This gets to your question about attitudes toward Assad. The Egyptians are very open. They're much fun to be with. They go out on the Nile, strum their guitars, sing and cut up and laugh and dance; but you know something? In the year I was there only once was I invited out by an Egyptian family and that was to a public restaurant by someone in the Rotary Club. I take it back. There was one other visit to a Rotarian's house.

The situation was very different in Syria. I often went to the souk where it was easy to meet people. I also met people in government positions. For example, we were working with the head of the National Symphony to try to do some things in the cultural area. He was very open -- even excited about working with us. Yet he had strong ties with the Russians as he had received his musical training in the Soviet Union. In fact the Russians had trained most of the musicians in the Syrian national orchestra and most of the musicians had spent time at Soviet conservatories. I discovered that, in spite of their ties with the Soviet Union, they were very open to working with us. The Director invited Peggy and me and Tom as well as others in the mission into their home. I was really quite surprised by that and they were not the only Syrian family to do so.

Syrians often asked you questions like, "Skip, what do you think about Assad?" Man, you know, red flags went up because I figured it was the ear of the government trying to get me or trying to find out what I would say. I would be very wary and give a diplomatic response like, "Well you know, we don't have relations; but Assad agreed with the secretary that opening a relationship was a good thing." So I really did not even answer the question. Yet they responded saying, "Well we think he's a dictator; but I guess he's a good dictator if we can live like we are." Again, I wasn't going to say 'well I'm glad he's a good dictator!' What I discovered is that the Syrians weren't afraid to express their negative views about the way things were. It was such a contrast to the way Egyptians tiptoed around anything political.

Q: What was your job there?

GNEHM: I was specifically responsible for economic issues and the consular work while Tom Scotese did the political. We had an administrative officer for the admin work. I can tell you that handling the economic/commercial work gave me great access. All the Syrian businessmen wanted to open up business with the United States. That's one of the reasons why I got so many invitations.

Q: And there's quite a Syrian community in the United States-

GNEHM: There is indeed.

Q: -Boston and other-places, but I know I ran across the Syrian community in Boston because I had a Syrian landlady when I was at Boston University.

GNEHM: Both because I was doing commercial work, which ended up being very important during this year, but also because I handled the consular work, I was a fairly popular person with the Damascus community. We had a few Americans in the UN force on the Golan (UNDOF). I remember one day an American major came in to talk to me about a young Syrian that he met with whom he was quite impressed. The young Syrian (Ossama) wanted to go continue his studies in the States to become a dentist. The major inquired about visas and other information about a Syrian going to the US. Going right to the bottom line, he brought Ossama to meet me. The major also helped get his admission to dental school at Boston University and, ultimately, a scholarship. Ossama was an outstanding student and, after graduation, actually came back to Syria and opened a dental practice. I maintained a personal relationship with him up to the last time I saw him which was when I left Jordan in 2004. I also became friends with his older brother who sold carpets in the souk.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Syrian community in the United States?

GNEHM: Only in that many of them came to Damascus to visit, seeing that the opening gave them some political cover to return. I would run into them when I was invited to family houses or they dropped into the embassy for consular services; but that's all.

Q: Yes. Was there much social life for you and your wife there?

GNEHM: There was. Not so much in the diplomatic community. I was really active with the Syrian community and we were invited out quite often by business families. I also met many Syrians as I made my introductory calls around Damascus. For example, I called on the head of the Chamber of Commerce, the patriarch of an old Syrian family. He had with him that day his son, who was about my age. We actually became very close friends. They had a farm up at Zebdani, a town up in the mountains between Damascus and the border with Lebanon. We used to go up there several times during the good weather, summer, fall and spring. When I was later studying Arabic in Lebanon, we often would go back to see them. Frankly in the years when I was in Jordan we went up to Damascus several times and we would go up to the farm and spend time with them. It was very interesting to me that, when we made friendships in Syria, the Syrian friendships were lasting -- 20 to 30 years. I've been very careful in communicating with them in the current situation (2015) because I do not want to get them in trouble with their own government.

One of the other things that I did, that became a fun pastime, was learning about Persian carpets. My boss, Tom Scotese had served in the Middle East previously and he had a few carpets that he had purchased: Persian and tribal carpets. He took me down to the souk to introduce me to a merchant from whom he had bought a carpet. Needless to say, I got

hooked on a carpet that I saw. It was a little bit larger than a kitchen table, a beautiful Bokhara. The merchant wanted \$300 for the carpet. All I could think was that I had never spent \$300 in my life for something to put on the floor in! He said, "Take it home, put it in the room. If you like it after three or four days we'll talk about it..." Of course, he knew that if I took it home, I would like it and keep it. He was right!

I ended up buying lots of carpets during the year that I was there, but I also became friends with the young merchant. His father had died when he was young. So he had taken over the carpet business. When you go to Damascus, there are lots of Lahams and they're all rug merchants; but this particular young guy really loved his carpets. If you went to his store and sat on a pile of carpets, he would tell you the history of the carpet, where it came from, and what the symbols meant. He loved to do this. When there was no one else in the shop, he would pull out carpets one after another just to tell me about it. So I began to go down there on my off time, climb up on a pile of carpets and listen to him selling carpets to other people, learning about the weave and the colors and whatever else about it -- the cotton, the wool, and the other sorts of things. This is where my Arabic really began to improve because he spoke only Arabic. His English was very weak at that time; but now it is remarkable good. All the Damascene wanted to speak Arabic with you and they loved to do it. So they were very encouraging toward my efforts to speak Arabic.

Q: In my two and a half years in Saudi Arabia, in Dhahran during the '50s, Israel got thrown in my face again and again and again. The Syrians, of course, had lost territory to the Israelis. How did things stand personally and then in international terms?

GNEHM: There's no doubt about how the Syrians felt. All the Syrians would tell me how awful and biased American policy was and they hoped that now with a new relationship, we'd become smarter in their terms -- less biased, more just, more balanced, whatever. They actually responded well to Kissinger in what he said and what he was doing at the time to negotiate a disengagement agreement, which gave part of the Golan back to Syria. In that regard there are several things I want to make sure that I mention.

One is this whole experience with Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy between Syria and Israel, which was incredible. The second was the aftermath of the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Another one is the Israeli playing the U.S. card because they thought they could get away with. Another is the decision to participate in the Damascus International in August (1974). So there was a lot that happened; it was really an exciting year to be there.

Q: Were there any incidents of Israeli-Syrian clashes while you were there?

GNEHM: Yes. When I arrived in mid-February, at night you could hear artillery, the sound of artillery, up on Mount Hermon, and you could actually see the flashes. It was similar to my experience in Vietnam that we talked about on the rooftop of a hotel in Saigon. You could see the artillery barrage going on. They were still actually exchanging

mortar and artillery rounds up on Mount Hermon even as late as '74 but not along the Golan front, as I recollect.

Q: Did many American tourists go to Syria while you were there this time?

GNEHM: Tourism picked up. It began with lots of Americans living in Beirut coming over to Damascus. Syria was not a dangerous place for Americans; but most tourists wouldn't go there given the lack of diplomatic relations, the rhetoric of the Syrian regime, and unease in Israel, but tourism definitely did pick up.

Q: You know in our business we see all kinds of relationships. How would you rate the Assad dictatorship as far as its control over the people and all?

GNEHM: During the time I was there, I would say the government was quite dominating. The Assad regime was very much in control and in charge. They used their intelligence agents to arrest anybody that they thought were dissidents or threats. People disappeared into jails, maybe came out years later, maybe not.

Q: Was Beirut the sort of a place where you went to get some fresh air or not?

GNEHM: How about food.

Q: So you went for food.

GNEHM: Yes. There was a modest commissary in the embassy in Beirut. There was very little available in the markets in Syria.

Q: I'm very surprised because you think of Damascus and the souk and, you know, it's a fertile country, isn't it?

GNEHM: Yes. There was fruit and vegetables in season but not the kinds of things that most Americans would look for. So we would go to Beirut and Chtaura, a Lebanese town in the Bekaa Valley which was closer than Beirut, just across the Lebanese border. There were grocery stores there where you could buy American brand items such as diapers, things like that.

Q: What was the role of the Soviets at the time you were there? Were they everywhere?

GNEHM: The Russian presence was large. The embassy was big and they were very popular with the Syrians. I didn't hear any criticism of the Soviet Union. The Syrians saw the Soviet Union as a patron and supporter, a provider of military equipment and political backing. Again, I learned through the person that I previously mentioned in the cultural community that Syrians had great experiences with the Russians. They didn't speak negatively of that experience; it was a good one and they liked going back and visiting. There was no hostility toward the Russians.

Q: What about dissident groups from other areas? In other words, we probably call them terrorists, gangs or something.

GNEHM: Yes, you are referring to Palestinian groups? The Assad regime saw it as opportunistic to have dissident, more radical is the right word for it, Palestinian groups such as the PFLP, PFLP-GC and the PLO in Damascus. In fact, one of them was in an office right on the main Abu Rumani Street about two blocks from the embassy. The Syrians supported them politically in the region as a way of establishing their credentials as an important player on the Israeli issue. They were also in competition with Egypt and Jordan over support in the Palestinian community. The Syrian Government monitored and controlled their activities very closely to be certain these groups couldn't do and wouldn't do anything that might blow back badly on the Syrian regime. So we never felt threatened by them.

Q: Well this is not a year of hyper attacks.

GNEHM: Well that's true. But again the regime had significant control over all these groups and what they did.

Q: Was Assad's son the apparent heir apparent?

GNEHM: Yes, but I don't remember Rifaat being that prominent in this year. I don't remember him ever being a part of any of the Kissinger-Assad talks during shuttle diplomacy, for example.

Q: Did you get involved in the Kissinger sound box?

GNEHM: Yes. I was not in the room when the talks were taking place, but on the periphery. During a short period of time in April there were 30 or 40 different visits by the secretary going back and forth over a period of several weeks. It was very intense. Kissinger developed a very good relationship with Assad and a pretty strained one with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. But it was, for us, an incredible experience. Kissinger would come and go any time of the day or night. When he finished his talks in Damascus, he was back to the airport, which was 30-something miles out of town- and then was back on his plane to Tel Aviv. I remember one night we hadn't even gotten back to the embassy to finish our report before we had a message from Tel Aviv that he was in the plane coming back our way! We actually did not make it back out to the airport in time to meet him but saw him headed into town as we headed toward the airport! So, even at 2:00 in the morning he was on the move and Assad was always there.

Kissinger used the ambassador's residence as his work space and they had set it up for his secretaries and everyone that supported him. We walked from the residence the two blocks to the house where Assad was staying or where the meeting was taking place. I remember one really funny incident I would say two thirds the way through this time period. Kissinger sent a cable saying he was heading back, that he was going to be arriving at roughly prayer time in the evening but that he had to see Assad immediately.

He insisted that he didn't want dinner. He ordered us to make sure that dinner was not going to happen. So we walked up to the house with Kissinger muttering about no dinner. By now I had gotten to know the Syrians on his staff quite well. We had discussed with them during the day that Kissinger wanted no dinner. But, of course, it was dinnertime and the talks went on for an hour or hour and a half. It got later and later. The Syrian staff and I were sitting on the stoop outside the meeting house when we heard the tinkling of glasses. We looked at each other and said "dinner"? Yes, so Kissinger had dinner. He mumbled and complained; he loved to mumble and grumble and complain about, you know, 'you guys didn't do as I said.'

Initially, Kissinger tried to negotiate the entire Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. When Kissinger could not get an agreement for a total withdrawal from the Golan Heights, he proposed a disengagement compromise that would give back to the Syrians a fairly significant sliver of the Golan Heights from Mt. Hermon all the way down to the Jordanian border. It would include the capital of the Golan province, Quneitra. It was always clear in the negotiations that this would be the first of subsequent withdrawals. There was also a commitment on the part of Assad that the displaced population of Quneitra, which had been displaced seven years earlier, would go back. In other words, the city would be repopulated. Kissinger argued with Golda Meir that this was a commitment on the part of Assad to have a non-threatening relationship with Israel. Otherwise he would not have put his population under the guns of the Israelis who commanded the entire city from a fortified hill on the other side of the line.

The Syrians at one point complained to Kissinger that the Israelis had destroyed the city. Kissinger went to see Golda Meir about this. She denied that they had destroyed the city, saying that the damage was from the war in '73. Later, Kissinger produced satellite photography that showed buildings standing the week before and now flattened, to which she said, "Oh, actually that happened earlier. There was target practice: we used the buildings for target practice but that was not done this week." Kissinger said, "The date on this picture is just last week. Don't tell me this was over a period of years." Kissinger really confronted her over this.

When withdrawal took place and there was this charge by the Syrians of bad faith on the part of the Israelis, Kissinger actually sided with them. He asked for an on-location report to the situation in Quneitra. I was the one delegated to go to Quneitra, to verify for Kissinger and the U.S. Government the condition of the city.

I remember this day very well. The small convoy with Syrian officials and myself took the road out of Damascus toward the Jordanian border and then turned onto the road that angles straight across the Golan Heights to Quneitra. For maybe three or four kilometers along this road, there were cars after cars pulled off on the side of the road waiting to go back home. Syrians, their vehicles, mattresses on the roofs, furniture, in some cases trailers, some with animals in the back of trucks were just waiting for the government's order for them to proceed. I tell this story because I am absolutely convinced that Assad intended in total good faith to repopulate the city with its former civilian population. The people of Quneitra had been told they were going home and were there prepared to go.

We arrived in the city; “town” is more descriptive. The site was appalling, absolutely appalling. We drove through the part of the town where there had been villas of the more well to do people. These villas were constructed like most building are in the Middle East. They use concrete with reinforced steel in the piers, pylons if you want to call that - up to one, two or three floors. Clearly charges had been placed against the piers at the bottom and blown up so that the structures collapsed like a layer cake. There was no way could you rebuild them; you could only bulldoze away the debris.

The hospital, which was something the Syrians made a big issue of, was pockmarked from gunfire. It was, of course, completely plundered. The building physically was standing but totally unusable. But the more dramatic sight, and the Syrians had seen it the day before, was the cemetery. Bodies had been pulled out of graves; there were skeletons lying next to tombstones. Cloth artifacts from inside the tombs were scattered around; some tombs were just smashed. The Syrians, of course, claimed that the Israelis had desecrated the cemetery. Someone had, but who? It wasn't accessible to Syrians or tribes in Syria at all until the day before; these bones appeared to have been where I saw them for some time. Skeletons, where they were lying, were partly covered in dirt, dirt that had been not been disturbed in the last 24 hours. This was definitely something that occurred during the period the Israelis were controlling the territory.

Clearly there was no way that the civilian population could return. There was simply nothing there to go back to. Kissinger was livid, as I said, with the Israelis and Golda Meir. He refused to accept their explanations and, in my opinion, he shouldn't have. I think it was a significant missed opportunity on the part of the Israelis because it would have been telling if several thousand Syrians had moved back in their homes and repopulated a city that was under Israeli military observation. The population's vulnerability would have made it difficult for the Syrians to be belligerent.

Q: Yes

GNEHM: I think it was, in fact, an indication on the part of Assad to the Israelis that he was ready for peace, ready to negotiate the Golan. Certainly the negotiations intended to go on for further withdrawals and for an ultimate resolution. In these 1974 negotiations, the same issue came up that ended up being problematic in later negotiations and that was exactly where was the boundary between Syria and Israel along the shore of the Kinneret, the Sea of Galilee. This disputed territory was a little piece of flat land at the foot of the Golan Heights. The Israelis claimed the flat area as sis the Syrians. To affirm their claim of sovereignty, the Israelis attempted to farm this area with armored tractors, in the period before 1967. The Syrians would shell them from the ridge of the Golan Heights. Admittedly, it was not a very big piece of land but; the crucial issue was water rights to the Sea of Galilee. If the Syrian-Israeli boundary was at the water edge, then the Syrians had claims to a certain amount of water from the Sea of Galilee. If that land as part of Israel, then Syria had no claim to any water. This issue was never was resolved; it hasn't been to this day. Also after this disengagement agreement, the United Nations

Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was established. It was and created to insure there were no violations to the agreement. It is still there to this day (2015).

Q: One almost feels that too much discretion has been lofted; brokerage really to commanders. And many of these are, you know, trying to create intolerable situations to fill so that they won't be responsible.

GNEHM: It's hard to say obviously whether the actions in Quneitra were a result of lower commanders, though that's often been likely in certain cases. It was my impression at the time that there were certain elements of the Israeli government who wanted to make sure that the agreement didn't go forward.

Q: Yes. And one, you know, Sharon blew up some Palestinian homes. I mean he was renowned for this, his basic nastiness.

GNEHM: I have to step back and tell you another really important story because it happened before the shuttle diplomacy. It would have been within a couple to three weeks after my arrival, either late February or fairly early March. How to explain it? We received from Washington a NIACT - a designation on a State cable that called us in any time day or night. The cable passed on to us an Israeli intelligence report.

Q: Let's stop here for a minute. A NIACT in State Department terms means a Night Action Cable.

GNEHM: It's a night action which means that the communicator is called in to receive the cable and a requirement is that the cable must be seen by a responsible officer immediately. In this case, it was Tom Scotese. Since I was living at the residence, he said, "Come, let's go; let's see what it's about." So he and I and our communicator were sitting in the communications room. In those days by the way everything came in on tape.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: You had to punch in your messages and take that and feed the tape into the system to get it to work.

So this NIACT immediate cable informed us of an Israeli intelligence report that in the previous day or two, five Syrian Jewish girls who were attempting to flee Syria had been murdered in route to Lebanon by Syrians who were supposed to be assisting them with their flight. The Israelis were really upset, indeed incensed, and the Department was extraordinarily concerned. It was a delicate moment for us. Here we were reestablishing a relationship and talking in more positive terms about the Syrian regime and now there was this possible horrendous murder of five young girls from the small Jewish community in Damascus.

We realized we had a very serious problem on our hands. Tom said, "We've got to do something tonight." It was already 8:00 or 9:00 at night. He said, "I'm going to go see the

head of the Jewish community, the rabbi, and you need to try to find the three Jewish families of the five girls. See if you can find any of these named families, and then I'll meet you back here at 11:00 or 12:00." What we discovered was that nothing had happened at all! The rabbi told Tom that nothing of the sort had happened -- that the girls were with their families. And I found two of the families who said, "No, our daughters are here; they're in their rooms sleeping."

I mention this incident because of what Tom and I learned and the Department learned from this saga. Again, this is before we had re-established diplomatic relations. The Israelis, who knew we had no diplomatic relations and no presence in Syria for all the years since the 1967 war, had gotten used to feeding us "intelligence" information on Syria. That information tended to present the Assad government and the Syrian situation in the most adverse and hostile way. I think, and this is my opinion, that they fed us this information deliberately hoping to undercut any opening up of a relationship with Syria. I believe they feared that we might become more sympathetic to the Syrian point of view. In this particular case, they knew that this particular report would really incense and inflame Americans (and rightly so, if true). What Israeli intelligence forgot was that we were now physically present in Damascus. They did not count on the fact that we would be able to verify the situation for the Department. We learned from then on to be very careful of anything the Israelis passed us. You want to know something? We never got another intelligence report from the Israelis on the situation in Syria, at least not in the period of time that I was there, along these lines.

Q: Yes.

You mentioned something, Stephen Solarz, who came out of Brooklyn- had- been involved in trying to get Jewish girls out of Syria.

GNEHM: Possibly, yes.

Q: Maybe in his earlier days. He was Jewish and came from a district that had a lot of Jewish voters in it and got very much involved in the U.S. and the Jewish cause, particularly girls. Jewish girls in Syria were limited in getting mates, getting married and so he was all the time working to get Jewish girls out. I mean, what was the situation with Jews in Syria?

GNEHM: Well the community had, of course, atrophied over the decades, certainly following the establishment of the State of Israel; but they still remained a reasonably large community when we went there. I think probably by my time though the number was in the several hundred if maybe a thousand, but I don't really recollect exactly. It wasn't large; but it still had an active synagogue and there was a rabbi for the community. So it had not atrophied to the point where the Jewish community couldn't practice their faith in the ways that are required by the Jewish faith. I don't think they were considered a threat to the regime. The regime watched them carefully, of course. It always had a suspicion that they could be a 'fifth column' for the Israelis; but there was not discrimination in other ways -- at least no more than other Syrians.

Q: Yes well the Assad regime, had they leveled Hama or whatever?

GNEHM: No, that occurred in 1982.

The Assad regime was a Ba'athist regime. The Ba'ath Party was a political party founded on secularism. While Assad reinterpreted Ba'athi theology in a different direction from the founders' view of it, the Assad-run government was and remained a secular regime. It was very anti-Islamic and anti-religious fundamentalism.

Q: Yes. Of course, because there's a civil war going on in Syria in which we are basically still indirectly supporting the side of the anti-Assad the son; but I think with sort of a lot of trepidation because there's a strong fundamentalist group involved. It's a very serious, probably the most complicated of all the Islamic states because of the mixture within-

GNEHM: The mosaics, yes, of the Syrian society are complex. When I was there, I attended church. There were no problems with the presence of churches. The Christian community in Damascus was well established and, I don't think, felt particularly vulnerable. Last year (2014), however, Islamic fighters attacked Ma'loula, an Aramaic speaking Christian village not far from Damascus. Christians had felt very at ease and very safe in the milieu of the political situation under the Assads. I think they felt they were protected by a secular regime that opposed extremism. I think the Jewish community and other minorities felt similarly. That being said, I think the Jewish community was more vulnerable given Syrian concerns about Israel.

Q: Did you watch what was happening in Iraq?

GNEHM: In this period of time?

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Oh, yes. There was intense hostility between the Ba'athi regime in Damascus and the Ba'athi regime in Baghdad.

Q: They're both Ba'athist.

GNEHM: Both Ba'athist but the Ba'ath Party had split between its wings in Syria and Iraq. There was no love between the two during this period of time. It was very hostile.

Q: Well then, your boss is Tom who?

GNEHM: Thomas Scotese. He went from this job in Syria to be ambassador in Yemen.

Q: What was his background and what was he like?

GNEHM: Tom was a career Foreign Service Officer and proud of his Greek-American roots. He was tremendously effective in his interpersonal relationships -- no better seen than in his deep involvement with Greek communities in the region. He was a very competent professional diplomat and I enjoyed working under him. He served in the Middle East multiple times and spoke Arabic extremely well. The Secretary of State got to know him while he was serving in the NEA Bureau, his assignment just before Damascus. As I said, he was a great boss, the perfect officer to open the mission in Damascus.. These were really heady times. The decision in both Washington and Damascus following the disengagement agreement was too improve the relationship. The one thing that Assad asked of Kissinger during this period was for the United States to participate in the Damascus International Fair that summer (1974). Assad asked in late April; the fair is in August. I got the task, as the economic- commercial officer, to put together our participation. Alright! It was a big task to complete in a very short time; but this first US participation in the fair in many years was clearly going to be a showcase of our new relationship with Syria. In a coup we got NASA to agree to loan us, upon signature of death, their model of the Skylab. We planned to use it as the gateway to the U.S. pavilion.

Q: That's a very big- I mean SkyLab is-

GNEHM: A couple of stories high.

Q: You've seen it in the museum, space museum.

GNEHM: Yes, it's very impressive.

It was flown into Damascus by the US Government. My next big task was to recruit American companies to exhibit in the pavilion. Fortunately, many of them wanted to come because it was an entrée back into the Syrian market, hopeful for sales of course. We actually put it together. I was able to enlist many of the American companies located in Lebanon. It actually turned out to be very successful; but there are two stories I need to relate.

I was at dinner in the home of our primary contractor, a very prominent businessman in the construction sector. Not surprisingly he was very close to President Assad and, obviously, was working with us at the President's request. Around 9:30 or 10:00, we were into dinner when I heard kind of a thud, deeper sound than that. We all looked at each other very much aware that there was still artillery exchanges between Syrian and Israeli forces up on Mt. Hermon. The phone rang. It was Assad himself on the phone telling our host that a bomb had just gone off in front of the American pavilion at the fair. The fairground was closed as it was night and the official opening was still days away. Assad ordered our contractor to go immediately to the fairground and to fix everything so that, "when the sun rises," there is not one single trace of anything. Okay! So the businessman and I went to the fairgrounds. I was figuring that this might be the second time in my career that would have to leave a post early. All I could think of was NASA's reaction when they heard their Skylab had been damaged!

When we got there, I was relieved to see that there was only modest damage to the front of the Skylab. The bomb had been placed near its façade. Fortunately, it had not been inside the model because they couldn't get in. Workers swarmed over the site. When the sun rose, there was only one indication that there'd been any explosion at all and that was a small black smudge in the concrete in front of the model -- hardly noticeable. The official word, of course, was that nothing had happened. Of course, we had to report the bombing to Washington and, thankfully, to NASA did not demand my execution!

The other story that I want to tell is really kind of funny. Every participating country was assigned a special day which included a reception in the pavilion in the evening. One of the companies in Lebanon that I convinced to cater at the reception was a famous American franchise that specialized in fried chicken. They sent over truckloads of fried chicken and it was displayed beautifully. Well, the Syrians could have gotten fried chicken if they'd gone to Lebanon; but there was no franchise of this famous fried chicken in Syria. At the reception people headed straight for the fried chicken table -- eating and eating and eating. People were so into the chicken that some people had stuffed their suit pockets with the chicken. It was amazing. Well I was glad everyone was happy! The pavilion was very popular. People flocked to it and there was a constant line of people waiting to enter through the Skylab. Because it was the first time in years for the US to be back in Damascus, the U.S. Government decided that it wanted to make even a bigger splash. So the U.S. Government, under its cultural exchange program, which, unfortunately, we don't do anymore, flew the entire Florida State marching band to Damascus.

Q: Oh boy.

GNEHM: Yes, oh boy! This is like a hundred plus person band. I don't remember the specific number but 100 might as well stand as a ballpark figure. And, to dramatize the moment to its fullest, they marched -- with the majorettes in their short skirts in the lead -- from the old souk past the Hejaz railroad station, down and along the main road by the river, and all through the fair to the pavilion. Then they performed another night at the main soccer stadium -- again majorettes and all. The band was a tremendous success and no one seemed bothered by the short skirts!

Q: Oh yes.

GNEHM: Oh, yes, Majorettes marching in front of the band twirling their batons. I was shaking my head and thinking: "I don't know whether this cultural exchange is going to work or not;" but they loved it. It was very popular.

Q: Oh I'm sure it was.

This is one of the premiere bands, college bands in the country. I mean, it's first rate.

GNEHM: It was and they put on a great performance. The stadium was completely packed; there wasn't an empty seat in the stadium. So there you go.

Q: Heady times.

GNEHM: Heady times. It was in this period of time that the decision was made to restore full diplomatic relations and we raised the American flag on the embassy building.

I guess the last thing to mention was the visit of President Nixon to Damascus on the last trip that he made to the Middle East before he resigned. People speculated that he hoped that this foray into the Middle East would bring international affairs back into prominence and reduce pressure for his resignation. In the end his visit did not make much difference in the Washington political atmosphere; but it did in Damascus. The streets of the city were lined with Syrians as he cruised around Damascus. It was quite a moment in time in such contrast to our relationship during the previous seven years.

With the restoration of relations, obviously the next step was naming an ambassador. The President chose Richard Murphy, Dick Murphy, who I knew from my NEA days. He arrived in the fall. That changed the complexion of the embassy entirely, of course. We were no longer just five. I wasn't the deputy of the office anymore; I was way down the totem pole in staffing. The embassy was to be staffed with a political officer and an economic officer and so forth and so on. It was toward the end of the year when I asked Dick if he would agree to my curtailment to be able to go to our Arabic school located in our embassy in Beirut at that time. He agreed as did the Department.

Q: Okay. So we'll pick this up the next time. This has been when, 1970-?

GNEHM: This would have been 1975.

Q: Seventy-five. And you're going to?

GNEHM: To Beirut and I moved there in March of 1975.

Q: And we'll pick it up then.

Now we have four interns here and I'll let have a go at you. Do you have anything that-?

INTERN #1: No, thank you

INTERN #2: I'm curious with the human rights violations that were going on with the regime, if there was any open advocacy against that, either by local actors or by international organization in the area?

GNEHM: No, not really. The issue of the Jewish girls brought up the issue; but this was not a prominent subject in our discussions. The frustration of our relationship and trying to put them back on a positive note was our focus at that time. There certainly were

Syrian dissidents around the world, including in the United States who were red hot against the regime and who spoke up against anything that Assad did. But Kissinger was very, very dominant, very prominent and he saw his chance for... I mean I think he really did see this as an opportunity to resolve the Syrian-Israeli issue; and that was his focus.

INTERN #3: I don't have a good question.

INTERN #4: I'm just curious; you mentioned that, while you were originally in Nepal you really, really wanted to go back to the Middle East. Was the time you spent in the Middle East what you had expected or was it different?

GNEHM: Yes, it was what I expected. I had interesting experiences and I loved it. And this was the beginning. The Syrian friendships that I made were very important to me and I believe good relationships work to our national interests. This assignment came when there was a chance to improve our relationship with Syria. And through the years I was able to go back to Syria multiple both in the '80s when I was deputy chief of mission in Amman and later when I was ambassador in Jordan. I've seen Syrians come to the United States. My friend, the son of the man who was head of the Chamber of Commerce in Damascus, actually graduated from the University of Oklahoma. Both his sons went to the University of Oklahoma as well. So there were warm ties and we got to see these friends many times through the years.

The only other thing I could mention that underscores how one develops close ties relates to the Foreign Service itself. As I have described, the embassy in Damascus was very small. We were few in number. As we tried to cope with the many comings and goings of Secretary Kissinger and a host of other visitors, there were a lot of TDYs (temporary duty) from our embassy in Beirut. One of the TDYers was a young officer by the name of Jim Callahan who was in the public affairs section. He was sent over to help handle press and organize the press center at a downtown hotel. By this time I have an apartment. So I invited Jim to come and stay with us. So he took over a bedroom in our house. Of course it wasn't a week; it was like three to four weeks that he stayed with us. Some weeks after Jim left, we had friends visit and we put them into the same bedroom. One day our friend came out of the room with a note that he had found stuck to the back of the door. This note said: "don't come out undressed, I'm here." What does that mean, my friend asked? Well my wife had put a note on Jim's bedroom door and no one had taken it down! It has been a joke between my wife, me and Jim ever since. I just mention this is to illustrate the close friendships that we in the Foreign Service build with each other.

Our story with Jim doesn't end with his time in Damascus. Jim was living in Beirut. My wife was expecting our second child. Her gynecologist was in Beirut. So she was going back and forth to see her doctor. Once she went over and was told "you can't go back across those mountains, you need to stay here this time." So she moved in with Jim; my daughter was with her part of that time. At this time Jim had a girlfriend (soon to be his wife) living with him. Jim loved to joke that the neighbors in his apartment house thought it was fantastic! Here was an American with two wives! And then Jim's mother decided to visit during this period of time and Jim said he could just hear my daughter saying,

hello, you know, my mom is living with Jim and his girlfriend! Later I was best man for Jim and Susan when they got married in Beirut and they've been friends throughout the years. That is the real spirit of the Foreign Service.

Q: So well, next session we're going to start in-

GNEHM: Beirut.

Q: In Beirut, when you go to Beirut to take language training.

GNEHM: And it's another saga.

Q: Okay.

Alright. Today is July 15, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you're off to Beirut for Arabic language training? When did you go?

GNEHM: March 1975 was the year of my migration across two mountain chains from Damascus to Beirut. I had improved my Arabic sufficiently in my studies in Syria that the Department agreed that I did not have to come back to Washington for first year Arabic. They agreed that I could go directly into the second year program at our Arabic School in Beirut.

Q: How did you find the Arabic training at that point?

GNEHM: It was very good, actually, and one of the things that was obvious and became important later was the strength of the faculty. Our instructors had been with the Arabic school for a long time. In fact, several of them had actually authored much of the training material. Most of those people are now gone, of course; but I will always feel indebted to them. They were very dedicated and very committed to the students.

Q: Were they wrestling with a problem that certainly appeared when a language, Arabic language school moved to, was it to Tunisia?

GNEHM: I was in charge of moving the school from Beirut to Tunis -- at least at the Beirut end of the move -- and, yes, our locally hired professors were in a great quandary about leaving their homes and families given the serious security situation in the country.

Q: What Arabic -- formal Arabic or Radio Cairo Arabic or souk Arabic -- was the school teaching?

GNEHM: Which form of Arabic to teach was always an issue. At that point in time, the Department had decided that modern, standard Arabic, which is what you hear on the news on television, would be the Arabic that they would teach. That's essentially what I studied. Now, I had studied in Syria more the Levantine Arabic; but it wasn't difficult to switch.

I would just add that I found throughout my career that even though that particular form of Arabic -- modern standard Arabic -- is not generally spoken because everybody speaks their local dialects. Yet, I discovered that when I used it, immediately people fell into using it with me. It was easy for them as they knew that form from television and radio. I never had a problem communicating in Arabic.

Q: Is Arabic situational? I ask this because I served in Korea and it depended what sort of class the person you were talking to. In other words, if you're talking to a woman or a man, somebody higher than you, somebody lower than you. Were there complications in Arabic this way?

GNEHM: No, there were not. There are differences in the endings of some words whether masculine/feminine. Generally, you use the same Arabic with a man that you do with a woman excepting that there are gender endings. There are also honorific terms for kings or ministers; but those are just titles.

Q: What about your class? Who was in it, what were they bound for?

GNEHM: My recollection is that with the arrival in late summer of the new students, we were about 35 students in total at the school. Most students were from the State Department; but there were students from the Agency and Defense. It was a diverse group. Some came from the Arabic school in Washington; others had studied Arabic in the field, as I had.

Q: Was there a comparable British school or French school for diplomats?

GNEHM: Yes, there was a British school in Shemlan, up in the mountains, a very famous school. In fact most Arabs, when I said I was studying Arabic in Lebanon, immediately assumed I was at Shemlan. Shemlan was known by the general public in the region as the British spy school.

Q: That's where Philbys went?

GNEHM: Yes, indeed, that's where he studied. And because people always confused our school with the one in Shemlan, I had to correct them to note that our school was located in Ras Beirut in the Embassy.

Q: Well you were there about a year?

GNEHM: Actually, I was there only from March to October. In March of '75, the very same month I moved from Damascus, the first atrocity that was the forerunner of the terrible civil war that followed occurred that month. A bus was stopped by armed men. All the occupants were taken out of the bus and mowed down. The bus was set on fire. As I said this was the very first incident that led to civil war. The fighting became so severe by October that Washington made the decision to move the school from Beirut to

Tunis. The interesting thing about this period of March, April, May, June, even into July and August was that there tended to be a major incident like that one that I mentioned followed by a week of really intense fighting -- bombs going off, plate glass windows shattered. Then there would be some sort of cease fire, step back, negotiate, talk, talk, talk. For a couple of weeks everybody would put the glass back in the shop windows and things would begin to resume to normal. Then there would be another serious incident of some sort and the cycle would begin all over again. But each time, each month that that happened, the fighting became more severe. The opportunity for peace got smaller and smaller; by October it didn't exist anymore.

Q: Were you used as adjunct officers by the embassy at all?

GNEHM: The school was largely apart. It was located in the embassy building; but it was involved in most of the embassy's activities. We did serve on the duty officer roster, which expanded the pool of officers reducing the number of times each officer in the embassy had to serve as duty officer.

Q: So what happened during this on again off again fighting as far as you were all concerned?

GNEHM: When the fighting was severe, when there were attacks and counter attacks, i.e. retribution by one force against another, we just had to cancel classes. We didn't want people out on the streets. But interestingly enough, that March, April, May, June time frame, the Department of State didn't evaluate the situation in Lebanon as serious or headed in the direction it actually went. Otherwise they would never have permitted all the new students to come out to Beirut in August.

Q: What year was this?

GNEHM: Nineteen Seventy-five.

Q: Seventy-five.

GNEHM: So we got a large cadre of new students in the summer of '75.

Q: Was there concern about kidnapping?

GNEHM: There was always a concern about kidnapping given the incidents that had occurred in Beirut in the past. Many worse kidnappings occurred later.

Q: Anderson and-

GNEHM: Yes, they came later.

Q: Did you have any connection with American University of Beirut, AUB?

GNEHM: No, not really. We were very much focused on our Arabic studies in the Foreign Service Institute in the embassy.

Q: How about getting out on the street, in the souk, you know, getting around? I mean was this encouraged?

GNEHM: In the early months, March, April, May, even most of June, we were not restricted except when the serious incidents began to occur in a certain area. So we did some traveling around Lebanon as a family or in groups, picnics and just some sightseeing to historical sites. But that ended once we got into late summer and the fall. Your question reminds me of at least two incidents. My apartment was located just off the Corniche about half, maybe six-tenths of a mile from the embassy. I could walk the half block down to the Corniche and then all along the Corniche to the embassy. Along a large stretch of that walk the AUB grounds flowed down the hill to the Corniche. Along this stretch there is a wrought iron fence with iron posts embedded in a granite foundation that was about six, eight inches, certainly no more than 10 inches high. One morning I was walking to school, around 8:00 or 8:30. I was about halfway along that open stretch when I got shot at. Ping, ping, bang, wham. The next thing I knew, I was flat on the ground. I tell my students today -- even looking at my size and girth -- I think I got my entire body lower than that 10 inches of that granite stone. And I remember just how I felt at that moment -- strangely, not afraid but full of a sense that God had me where he wanted me. I say it that way because that's how I felt -- totally calm. Nevertheless, I crawled like a caterpillar, you know, front end, back end, for the rest of that distance until I got to where a building shielded me from where the shooter was. So Beirut was not as safe as it seemed even on the better days.

Then there was another incident -- pure stupidity on the part of three of students, me among them. But then young people take gambles. Three of us decided that since there was a lull in the fighting, we would go down to Martyr Square and just see what the damage had been down there. I remember one was Charlie Engelhart. I forgot the name of the other one; but Charlie had been a tackle on the Philadelphia Eagles before joining government. So he was a big guy and the other guy was bigger than me too. When we got down to the square and had just turned the corner, someone started shooting at us, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping. There was a sort of two foot step into a door of a building. Like lightning we all piled into it. Charlie was at the back. I was at the front, the littlest of all the guys! I said "What the hell is this? Charlie you should be up front." "Not on your life, he replied!" But truth be told, we should never have been out there in the in the first place; it was just too dangerous.

Q: Well, did they know who you were?

GNEHM: No, it was simply random.

Q: Could you have been an American or anything? I mean do you think you stood out?

GNEHM: I certainly did not think in either of those cases that I was being shot because I was an American. There were snipers and they were killing people randomly. It was just an awful situation in Lebanon. But even into September, we were not overly concerned about our safety, as strange as that may seem. My apartment was on the second floor of an apartment house and located over the garage. We had a small patio about 12 by 12 feet. We used to eat supper sitting out there at night. The weird thing about crisis situations, and I found this is true throughout my life, is that you do strange things. For example you are not as concerned, in retrospect, as you should have been. We would sit out there at night eating and watch tracers and rockets go across the sky and hear the bombs going off and the rat a tat, rat a tat tat of shooting, and look at each other saying, 'here they go again.' But by the time we got to the first of October or perhaps late September, it was clear that the situation in Lebanon was going downhill and badly. The embassy wanted all non-essential people out. The decision was made in Washington that the Arabic School had to be moved. The question was to where? Cairo was the most obvious place from the language point of view because of the Arabic spoken there; however, the ambassador in Cairo didn't want the school there. He was already concerned about the size and high profile of the official American community in Egypt and was loath to add another new element (with families).

Q: Who was the ambassador?

GNEHM: Hermann Eilts was the Ambassador. Eilts was appropriately sensitive to the size of the American presence. Egypt had broken relations with the U.S. during the June 1967 war and relations had only been restored in 1974 -- a year before the events I am describing in Beirut. Nevertheless, the Department decided to send the director of the Arabic school, Harley Smith, to Cairo to investigate the possibilities -- was there a suitable place -- would there be instructors readily available. And of course, he had to talk to the embassy about their support for the school. Smith's departure left me the ranking officer, seniority-wise, and, thus, in charge then of the school in Beirut. Harley did not return as the fighting intensified considerably. Given both Eilts on-going opposition to moving the school to Cairo and the necessity to move the school urgently, Washington made the decision to move it to Tunisia. Ned Walker was the number two ranking officer. He and his wife had just arrived in Beirut in the summer. We decided that he would go advance the Tunis location -- to get things set up to receive all the students and their families. So the decision was made to move the families and students out of Beirut while there was still civil air transportation. People were taken to the airport in armored convoys. Everyone was tense as the route to the airport passed next to a Palestinian refugee camp where there was considerable fighting. My wife, young daughter and one-year old son were among those evacuated.

I was told to stay -- to be the last person out. That week between the family evacuations and my departure was chaotic. There were some significant issues that arose rather quickly that I think are worth noting. As part of the Department's decision to move the school, they decided to hire all new instructors in Tunis. This was an ill thought out decision from a number of perspectives. First and foremost, Tunisians speak a different dialect of Arabic, one not easily understood by Arabic speakers in the Levant. Secondly,

none of the new teachers would have had any training in teaching American diplomats using the course material that many of our existing teachers had actually written. So I sent in a cable protesting that decision and arguing that we take our faculty with us. After several negative responses, the decision came back, "Alright, we will take a core group, X number, but just them, no families." I replied that none of our teachers were going to walk off and leave their families in Lebanon which was being rapidly pulverized. I was told that the Department did not have the necessary authority to move families. I said this is ridiculous and asked what I needed to do. Clearly, I was very active, I think, more brazenly than my grade at the time warranted. But if the school was to exist and succeed, we had to have our faculty. So I went up the chain and sure enough a senior official in the Department backed me. Even as I worked the faculty issue, we were packing up books and materials in earnest.

When the embassy and the Department decided that the students were to be evacuated, they were told that they could pack airfreight. The Embassy distributed boxes to all apartments and employees self-packed and left the boxes in the apartments for pick up by the embassy at a later date -- hopefully within the week. Then I was told that I would be the one to supervise the pick-ups! I was given a truck, a driver and two workers. I was to go around to all of the apartments of students and collect the air freight and move it to the airport on a given date to be shipped out.

This episode was one of the more existential experiences in my life. In five days, this is what happened. On the first day, I had the truck, driver, and the two workers. On the second day, I didn't have the workers; but I had the truck and driver. On the third day, Beth Jones, who was one of the Arabic students who had gone to Cairo to see her husband, returned against Department orders, and she joined me in the truck. The third day, I had no driver. I was driving the truck! Beth and I were alone going around to the various apartments. We had to get huge air freight boxes from third and fourth and fifth floor apartments. Due to size and weight we were literally rolling the boxes end over end to get them out and then pushing them up into the truck. I don't remember getting any sleep for those days. Beth says when she got back to Beirut, she didn't think I could continue to walk. Her help was a godsend.

On the fourth day, she and I were driving the truck through Ras Beirut headed to the next apartment house. I made a left hand-turn at an intersection in the business district. Just as I was straightening the wheel, there was the sound of a horrendous explosion. I looked in front of me. I saw nothing unusual. I looked in the rear view mirror and every building in that intersection was falling down in the intersection where I'd just been.

Q: Good God.

GNEHM: I tell you, you do believe in God at these moments in time. Had I paused, just paused in that turn, we wouldn't be doing an oral history today.

Then there was the day we took all the air freight to the airport. I had a police escort, a security escort, two cars in front and me in this truck. The route from Ras Beirut to the

airport runs along the waterfront and then makes a left hand turn that goes up a hill then down to where you turn onto the airport road. The truck I am driving is packed. I have the accelerator floored, particularly after I made the turn to go up the hill. Even with my foot on the floorboard, we were barely going 15 miles per hour, maybe only 12 or 10 miles per hour. In any case we were creeping up that hill! My escort, meanwhile, was over the hill - - out of sight -- long gone. I said to Beth, "Well Beth, just pray this truck gets up and over the hill before we are noticed by any shooters." It did get up the hill and went down the other side gaining speed. In the end nothing happened; but it was a very, very scary few days and drive to the airport especially so.

The postscript is that the air freight did get to Tunis where it was much appreciated. We had no idea if or when we would see our personal effects that were still in war-torn Beirut.

Q: Oh boy.

GNEHM: And then I flew out to Tunis.

Q: Just to get this straight, what was causing this insurrection or whatever you want to call it?

GNEHM: In Lebanon?

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Well it was largely, I would say, sectarian. It was a power struggle between Christians, Muslim Sunnis, but also Shia and other sects. Those designations do not adequately describe the fractious nature of the religious factions in Lebanon as any one of them is in fact fragmented, i.e. Christians are Catholic, Greek Orthodox, etc. The Shia too are divided -- Hezbollah and others factions. In my own mind's eye, I felt that the arrogance of the Maronites, who dominated the political system that was delineated in the constitution that established Lebanon, was an central precipitating factor in the outbreak of civil war. And that is what it was. The constitution gave the Maronites the presidency and, thus dominance in authority and power. They were not willing to share or make concessions to reflect the demographic changes that had occurred between the 1940s and the 1970s. By the 1970s the Christians were no longer the majority. In fact the Moslems were. Even though the constitution gave the Sunni Moslems the Prime Minister position and the Shia the position of Speaker of the Parliament, the Maronite Christians acted as if Lebanon was theirs.

As the fighting intensified, there were attacks by one religious group on another. Muslims attacked Christian villages, murdering everybody in the town, burning down the churches. Then relatives of the dead in nearby villages would attack a nearby Muslim village -- often a village with which they had never had any previous trouble. These acts of retribution formed a never ending cycle of atrocities; but this is what happens when the fighting erupts into civil war pitting one group against another.

At one point I sensed a strange feeling. The word “tipping point” is often used to describe it. It’s that moment in time when the individual realizes that there is no longer anything out there to protect him, to work for him, no structure to provide protection. Everything is gone and you are on your own except perhaps for your brother or your family or your sect. And there was that moment in October that that happened in Lebanon. It is really hard to describe or predict because the day before it happened the banks weren’t open. The government wasn’t functioning; the military wasn’t there. Yet people still had a perception up in their brain that there was a structure -- that there was a government, and that things would somehow come back together. And then an instant later -- at that tipping moment -- there is no hope -- just fear and hopelessness. And you don’t go back across that tipping point. You take refuge in the most secure group that you can -- your family, your village, your tribe, your whatever.

Q: Well you were married at this point?

GNEHM: I was married. I had a four year old daughter, Cheryl, and an eleven month old son, Ted.

Q: Well how did they fare?

GNEHM: They were okay during this period. Of course, they didn’t go out except to the local supermarket or when I’d go with them. My daughter was not in pre-school at that time and my son was at home. They were evacuated in the first group that went out. Only later, I met them in Tunis. They were initially evacuated to Athens where they stayed for a few days while Ned arranged for the housing in Tunis. I only learned when I got to Tunis that in the chaos at the Beirut airport, when families were fighting their way through the hordes of people trying to get out of Lebanon, that my daughter got lost -- separated from my wife. You can imagine how distraught and anxious my wife was. Then she saw Charlie Engelhart, the big guy I told you about earlier standing behind me in the doorway at Martyrs Square, with Cheryl on his shoulders. He found her outside the airport. She somehow had gotten back outside the airport door. So again thankfully nothing serious happened; but it was traumatic for my wife.

Q: Was there at all a feeling that your clerks, your servants or somebody might turn on you? I mean was it that type of situation?

GNEHM: No. Most of the household support in Lebanon was ex-pats. Our maid was from the Seychelles thus not a part of any of the fighting factions.

Q: Well how were they faring?

GNEHM: Not well because they all got left behind or either had to flee. Some became victims in the fighting.

Q: I assume there were big areas of sort of “no go” areas were there?

GNEHM: Indeed there were. In fact, just beyond the embassy there was a so-called green line demarcating the Christian controlled area of north Beirut and remainder of the city to the south, which was largely Muslim. That skirmish line was more than a skirmish line; it was like a three football wide area of bombing and shooting and killing of anything that went into or through it. There were only brief periods when it was peaceful enough to be able to cross from one side to the other.

Q: Well all teaching must have stopped then.

GNEHM: Yes, it did.

Q: What was our embassy doing? Were the embassy officers able to do much or try to carry on business?

GNEHM: Well, in the initial period the embassy had contacts with almost all the factions and those continued to be maintained; but it became increasingly difficult for people to get out. It was very dangerous. In fact June 1976 our Ambassador and Economic Counselor, who I knew well, were assassinated.

Q: Meloy, Frank Meloy and-

GNEHM: Yes, Ambassador Frank Meloy and Robert Waring. Their driver was killed as well.

So yes, it became very, very difficult to move around and, of course, a few years later -- in 1983 -- the embassy itself was bombed with great loss of life both of Americans and our locally hired employees.

Q: Well what was your impression of your initial contact in Tunisia? I mean, the embassy and elsewhere.

GNEHM: The embassy in Tunisia was overwhelmingly supportive. They did what one expects of a Foreign Service family. Wives, officers, and local staff were at the airport picking up the arriving families that they had been assigned to assist. The embassy had negotiated a contract with the Amilcar Hotel near Carthage in Sidi Bou Said as the temporary site for the school as well as the lodging for all the students, their families, including our instructors. It was a tourist hotel on the beach at the foot of a large bluff. It sounds lovely only this was, of course, October! (I actually left Tunisia in May of the following year.) We were there in the winter and the hotel was not exactly a nice winter spot. It was built for summer and sunshine. If you know your geography, you know that winter storms in the Mediterranean come from the Atlantic through Gibraltar and go the length of the Mediterranean until they hit the Levantine coast. Well, when a storm came past the Amilcar Hotel, it blew rain in the windows and under the doors on the west side, across the hall, under the doors of the rooms on the east side and back out into the wind.

It was a little cold and a little damp. But again, you asked me about the embassy. It was absolutely extraordinary in the way they helped us.

The setting in the Amilcar is worth noting. The entire school -- all the students, all their families, all the teachers and their families, my dog, everybody else's pets -- all lived in the hotel together. We ate all of our meals in the one hotel dining room. All families have their complex relationships and good days and bad. As you can imagine, living so closely together we got to know everybody's complex relationships and personalities. There was the one family whose kids were really awful -- meaning unruly. They would scream and yell and the parents would shout them down. I am sure the parents were embarrassed; but so were all the rest of us. Over time you just you just got used to it and kept your mouth shut.

My son had his first birthday in Athens in route to Tunis. He was not yet sleeping through the night so he would scream at night for his mother. The Lebanese wife of one of the Arabic teachers, a lovely, lovely person, would come running down the hall, bang on the door, say "Give me the baby; you know you can't let a baby cry." Finally after about two weeks of this my wife said to her, "Don't come tonight. I'm going to let this kid cry until he goes to sleep. We've got to break this habit." They were, of course, appalled that we would treat children in such a way. In Arab culture you would never do that. In the end it worked -- both getting my son to sleep through the night and all of us at the Amilcar learning to live together. It was a very unique situation.

There is one other thing to mention. I've complained about a couple of Department decisions. Yet the government moved all of our cars, our private vehicles, from Beirut to Tunis. Now, they didn't get there for a couple of months; but by December, we actually had cars so we could drive around, visit sites and simply get out of the hotel.

There was the issue of per diems. Of course, under the regulations per diems taper off after 30 days, to half and then to nothing. We were going to be in this situation for at least a year, if not more. So the Department had to come up with a new per diem mechanism to support us. Remember, we were paying for our meals as well as laundry to the hotel; we had no kitchens. They finally came up with an absolutely atrocious formula to calculate what each of us and our families would get each day. I could not replicate it or explain it today except it was based somewhat on the number of people in a family, which was reasonable. They estimated what it was going to cost us in the hotel and then they estimated what would be our normal expenses if we had been living in houses. They then subtracted what they thought we would be paying in normal circumstances from what they believed we were paying in the hotel. It was crazy. The formula actually left a single officer owing the government money whereas those of us who had kids were drawing large per diems. We tried repeatedly to get them to correct their formula but to no avail.

Q: How about the learning?

GNEHM: The Arabic training, which of course was why we were there, actually went well. We had our instructors. They knew us since they had worked with us before. They knew the material, and they had their close knit family with them. It did go well.

Now, they were distracted, no question about that, watching the news and seeing their own country destroyed.

Q: They had relatives back in Lebanon, like everybody else.

GNEHM: Yes, they had relatives caught in the fighting and they were concerned about their property and the towns and villages that they came from. They were very distracted by this; but they were super, super committed and responsible, and there was a great bonding amongst all of us because of this experience.

Q: How about the Tunisians language-wise?

GNEHM: It was nonsensical. If you went out into the market or the souk or a village, you could not understand their Arabic dialect and they didn't understand you. "Parlez vous Francais?" Is what they would say; do you speak French? And if you did speak French you were quite alright. English was not that widely spoken.

Once I was on the train going into Tunis. There were two young guys -- probably not much younger than me -- but college kids. We got to talking and I said to them, "You know, I'm really looking for somebody to go around with and practice my Arabic." And they said, "Oh, we'd love to do that." So I spent the rest of the day with them; but you know what I discovered? While they were very nice people, they didn't know the Arabic words for many of the things that I asked about. They knew only the French words. So I gave up on that and I don't think any of the students really found it possible to use locally the Arabic that we were learning.

Q: Were there forces that you were at least aware of that were trying to stir up nationalistic or whatever you want to call it turmoil in Tunisia?

GNEHM: Not during that time, no. The U.S.-Tunisian relations were extremely good. The government was happy to have the school in Tunis.

Q: Bourguiba was still President of Tunisia?-

GNEHM: Yes, Bourguiba was still alive though not terribly coherent, as I recall.

Q: Well he was - at a certain point - suffering from the dementia.

GNEHM: There were crude jokes that went around during this period of time, yes. His wife and her relatives were known to be influential -- often interpreting what he meant. Their interpretations were the way, of course, that they intended things to be. None of that impacted on us.

Talcott Seelye was our Ambassador to Tunisia during this time. He left post in March 1976.

Q: How were relations with the embassy once you got settled? I mean you kind of did your thing and they did theirs or-?

GNEHM: Yes, after we got settled, the main issues centered on administrative support, such as clearing our personal effects and getting our cars registered. The embassy was very supportive and helpful about these things.

Q: While all this was to a certain extent exciting, did you begin to have doubts about whether you wanted to be an Arabist or not?

GNEHM: No, I didn't have doubts. I would admit to you, though, that our situation was difficult. It was hard living in the hotel in such close quarters. We had two rooms, one for Peggy and me and the other for the kids. Of course, the dog was in the room too. It was really close. It was hard to have any privacy.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: It was difficult. I remember walking the beaches some nights saying, "You know, God, you were with me in Beirut. You saved my life twice at least that I know of. Now we are in this awful situation here. I don't understand." It made a big difference when the car came and we were able to take trips and get away.

Then, of course, as the months passed those of us who were in our second year knew we were coming up for assignment. That began to loom as the big anxiety, concern, in our minds. Where were we going to go; what was our assignment going to be? As we got into March, most of us still had no assignments, which was unusual. In April we began to get word.

One day my best friend in my class—who had just come to Beirut in the summer—and his wife, who was also taking Arabic with us, came to tell me that he got his assignment. "Hey, I'm going to be Consul General in Port Said. They're opening up the consulate at the north end of the canal." And honestly, I was furious and angry because I thought I was the obvious candidate for that prime assignment. I was the one, after all, who had been in the Middle East before. This was my region. I know that that reaction was not right; but I am being honest

Q: No but-

GNEHM: But I'm admitting my feelings.

Q -it's there.

GNEHM: Yes. So another week or two went by and then I got a call from Washington asking if I was willing to go to Riyadh, the Saudi capital. Now recall that in 1976 there were no diplomats in Riyadh; the Saudi government refused to permit diplomats to live in Riyadh. All foreign diplomats were required to live in the western coastal town of Jeddah.

Q: We were in Jeddah.

GNEHM: I said, "What do you mean, Riyadh?" He said, "Secretary Kissinger negotiated with King Faisal before he died an agreement that the embassy could have one person in Riyadh and we'd like you to go there." Well, that was clearly going to be a fantastic assignment -- to be the only diplomat of any country living in Riyadh. Living might be hard; but it was a professional bonanza! So that is where I went, which is the start of the next chapter of my life. But let me jump ahead to about six months after I got to Riyadh. I got word from my friend in Port Said that the US had decided to close Port Said because there just simply wasn't enough business to do and his life there was very difficult. My friend was so angry about the conditions under which they had to live that he vowed he would never serve in the Middle East ever again and he never did. There was a lesson in this for me -- not to covet, not to jump to conclusions, life has a way of unfolding.

Q: While you were studying Arabic, did they have activities or were things too chaotic? this idea of get a month to go out and travel around or not?

GNEHM: No, given the conditions in Beirut and in Tunisia, we weren't even thinking about those kinds of activities.

Q: Yes, I wouldn't imagine you were. Did you run across the Maghrebian dialect?

GNEHM: Well Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia all do speak a Maghrebian Arabic though there are differences even between Morocco and Tunis. As I mentioned before, those of us studying Arabic were not bothered by the local dialect. Your question, however, reminds me of one very interesting episode. In the breakfast room at the Amilcar Hotel one morning the crew of MEA, Middle East Airlines, was trying to order breakfast. Tunisian workers were serving the meal. A great brouhaha erupted at the MEA table. The MEA workers were shouting and yelling at the Tunisians and the Tunisians were yelling and shouting back at them because neither could understand what the other was saying. Because we understood the Levantine Arabic and we had been in Tunisia long enough to know a little bit of the local dialect, we ended up going over and translating between the two about what it was that was the problem. We laughed about that for a long time.

Q: I'm sure you did.

How did the Lebanese, teachers and families, settle in?

GNEHM: They weren't happy. They didn't really like Tunisians or Tunis. They didn't feel the Tunisians treated them very nicely; but I think that had a lot to do with their anxiety over what was happening in their own country.

Q: Well of course.

GNEHM: I don't remember any encounters that were necessarily bad; but for them it wasn't home. They were displaced.

Q: How about French tourists? Were you inundated with them or not or-?

GNEHM: Not in the winter. But there were lots of nice French restaurants along the coast, going up past Sidi Bou Said. Eating out at these nice restaurants with their good food was a consolation to our otherwise bleak life.

Q: Alright well then, let's pick it up when you went to Riyadh. What was the situation in Saudi Arabia? This is still '76, isn't it?

GNEHM: Yes.

Q: What was it like then?

GNEHM: Well I arrived in July and it was hot, hot, hot, hot. Quadrupled hot, right.

The first thing that I recall was a communication from the Economic Counselor, Gordon Daniels, who wanted to make it clear that I worked for him. He was technically correct. The embassy moved an economic slot up to Riyadh. So I was actually assigned to Riyadh as an economic officer. Gordon made it very, very clear that I was to come first to Jeddah when I arrived in country and then he would be taking me up to Riyadh. This was an indication of what probably was the most significant problem that I faced in those two years, certainly during the first year but less so in the second year. There was considerable frustration among embassy officers in Jeddah who could not get to Riyadh easily to do their work with the Saudi government. Meanwhile, I was up there free, easy and able to see most anyone I wanted to. I think given my personality I was not seen as a threat to the Saudis. I went everywhere. I went to the king's palace. I was there any day of the week I wanted to go there. I saw Minister of Finance; I saw the Minister of Oil, Zaki Yamani at the time, and many other high-ranking officials.

In contrast the embassy people still had to get permission from the Foreign Ministry to travel to Riyadh and, once they had permission, they had to get a ticket on an airplane which in those days on Saudia Airlines was chaotic. Saudia was the only airline that flew domestically. Royal family members and others with 'wasta' (connections) were given priority seating even if one had confirmed reservations. The embassy people would get to the airport with a confirmed ticket only to discover that a prince or friend of an airline employee needed a seat! Inevitably, many, many times I ended up getting messages from Jeddah, saying that they just got kicked off the plane, would you please go see the

minister and deliver this communication or discuss with him this issue. So for me, it was a great assignment and I have lots of stories to tell about it.

But when I arrived, Chet Pauley was the Admin Counselor in Jidda. I received a message from him during my home leave telling me that he was sad to report but thought I ought to know in advance that my personal effects from Beirut had arrived; but they were not in very good condition. The embassy had collected it from the airport and placed it in one of the wooden sea crates on the embassy compound. He said they would show it to me when I got to Jeddah.

Well, when I got to Jeddah with my wife and two kids, the number two in the economic section invited us to stay at his house. I went to the embassy and over near the warehouse was this wooden crate and it was open in the front. When I looked inside, it appeared as if someone had shoveled debris, cardboard, some wood splinter pieces, and some cloth into the crate. Peggy and I started sorting through the debris taking things out piece by piece to see what had actually survived. There were disappointments and some surprises. For example, the china box was turned on its side up in the back corner and crushed at an angle at one end. When we opened it, we found that not one piece of the china was broken. Three salad plates were missing.

So I was telling my friend with whom I was staying that this had happened. We were fixing lunch. I opened the cabinet and saw that they had the same china. When I told him that we had the same china, he said that they had only a few pieces left. Fortunately, he had three salad plates which he gave us! Incredible!

So what was the journey that our personal effects had taken since we last saw them in Beirut? The Department had used Pakistani International Airlines (PIA) to move our things from Beirut as they were determined to be the cheapest carrier. Our effects, therefore, went from Beirut to Karachi and were then flown back to Athens, the designated destination where effects from Beirut were to be collected until officers got their onward assignments. Unfortunately, the aircraft ran off the runway when landing in Athens scattering its contents (our effects) across the airfield. It was raining! All the items that had been packed by our dedicated locally hired employees in Beirut under dangerous conditions were soaked. The embassy in Athens did not do its job. When the items were finally collected, they were put directly into storage. None of us in Tunis were informed until much later about the crash and the condition of our effects. As a consequence, many of us lost valuable items that simply rotted in the warehouse.

So here I am back in Jeddah. I was super happy to discover a bundle of my Persian carpets; but when I opened it, the carpets had turned to powder. The wool had, of course, rotted. Since our effects were being air shipped from Beirut (as opposed to the normal surface shipping), my shipment was packed in 68 pieces. They were delivered to a Jidda airport that was, in those days, overwhelmed by imports. My effects had been stashed on the tarmac along with thousands of other crates and boxes. The embassy had only been able to find something like 48 or 50 of the pieces. Chet suggested that I could go with our senior employee to the customs area in the port to see if I could find any more of my

things. Chet said that they had had to go up and down this humongous freight area looking for individual boxes and was able to collect one here, one there, two there, another one here. He thought there might be more stuff out there. So I went to the port. As I walked around looking down, I began to find a few pieces. In one pile I noticed the stuffed toy that belonged to my son and, when I went over it, there was a box of our stuff. I guess with some exasperation, I climbed up on a pile of debris to just to get a broader view. I don't know what I thought I'd see from up there. In disgust I kicked a piece of metal with my foot. It flipped over. To my astonishment it was a metal tray that I had bought in Syria just laying upside down on top of the pile. If I hadn't gone up there, I would have never noticed it.

And there was more! I was waiting for a customs person to process the pieces that I'd found. It was extremely hot -- being July. I'm at the checkpoint going out of the customs area and decided to squeeze between a fence and a building where there was a little shade. My shirt caught on a piece of wood. When I disengaged, I discovered it was a crate of our pictures. Why it was stuffed between the fence and this building and not out in the custom's yard I have no idea. So there you go.

We moved all of this stuff ultimately to Riyadh and, for all that had happened, we got an amazing amount of our stuff. It was rather incredible. That's how we started our Saudi experience.

Q: This is one of the things that people forget. The Foreign Service, I mean we're diplomats and we're supposed to put on a nice display of chinaware and silver and all this. I mean this is the era, I think; times have probably changed. But certainly nice china and nice silver were part of the name of the game we were all playing and they were all subject to the problems that Skip here has described, terrible transportation and all that.

GNEHM: I always said after this particular incident that we had one of the major collections of dented, bruised, torn, and shambled artifacts. So everything we owned looked beautiful; but, if you looked at the lamp, it was broken a little bit or there was a dent!

Q: Well another thing that I can remember is going to a dinner party in Belgrade hosted by people we didn't know. I said, "Oh look, they've got the same pattern of china that we have. My wife said shh.

GNEHM: Yes, exactly.

Q: It was of course- it was our china. People were spreading these things around. But anyway.

GNEHM: Gordon Daniels was the economic counselor and he insisted that I had to stay in Jeddah until he was able to take me up to Riyadh. He wanted to be the one to take me there and introduce me around. That was fair; that was nice; and it was okay. We finally flew to Riyadh. I was told that I would have two local hired employees, a Pakistani

(Farouki) in the Commercial Section and a driver. That's all -- two locals and me. Farouki picked us up at the airport and the first thing Gordon says is, "Farouki, what time does the PX close?" The big US military PX was in Riyadh -- not in Jeddah -- as the US military generals were located in Riyadh. Since the PX closed at 4:00, Gordon said we needed to go directly to the PX so he could register us to use the PX and get food for us to have at the house for the evening meal.

So we went to the PX located a small way out of Riyadh and then came back to the two villas that were assigned to me, one of which was my house. The other was to be the US Embassy Liaison Office. Gordon says, "Here's your house. It is completely furnished. We have it on loan from the US Army Corps of Engineers. They agreed we could use these villas." With that explanation he literally dropped us off and had Farouki take him back to the airport. So much for being introduced around town!!! I walked in with Peggy and our two children into a house covered with thick dust. No one had been living in the house for some time. It's late in the afternoon. I discovered there was no water. I didn't know that you had to pump water into the water tank on the top of the house in order to have water in the house. I didn't even know where to find the main switch was for the lights. This was really a start from scratch. Fortunately, the our wonderful driver, Omar, knew where all of this was. And we did okay. Omar, a Sudanese, was a terrific employee -- extremely dependable, kind and generous, and, in the end, was like a member of our family.

The next morning I went over to villa that was to be the office. I walked up three steps, across a little porch to the door with Farouki by my side. The door handle and its accessories were scattered on the porch in front of the door. I said, "Farouki, what happened?" He said, "Oh, it fell off." I said, "I can see that; but why did it fall off?" He just shrugged. That was when I learned that in addition to any other responsibilities that I had, I was also the chief administrative officer. I would have to fix it. There was no one else to do it!

There is one story worth noting. We had phone lines in each house. At this particular time, Riyadh was really a huge construction site, building and digging everywhere. It was quite common that your phone line went dead because somebody somewhere cut the line when they were digging for other purposes. After the second or third time of calling and finally getting a telephone tech to come and fix my line, I watched him. I learned how to do fix it myself! I told people that the mark of my excellence at this point in time was that I could be on the second floor of our office villa on the phone and have it go dead, and then be down the stairs, out the front door and down to the corner and catch the guy who cut my line before he could cover it up and run away. Then I fixed it and went back up to my office and recalled my party. I did that dozens of times. Well, okay, I exaggerate -- maybe 10 or 12 times in the course of a year.

Q: Alright, well what was your job? I mean basically what was your job?

GNEHM: Let me give you some background. The U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia when I arrived was William J. Porter. Porter has served as Undersecretary of State for

Political Affairs and the U.S. Ambassador to Canada before his appointment to Saudi Arabia in 1975. He was not particularly happy with his assignment and, in my recollection, was not active around the Kingdom. Let me quickly add that he was a professional -- a very good diplomat. He just did not think his appointment to Saudi Arabia was where he should be.

When I arrived in Jidda to take up my post in Riyadh, Ambassador Porter explained the origin of the position in Riyadh. He told me that Kissinger asked the late King Faisal to permit the stationing of one embassy officer in Riyadh. The King had replied that under no circumstances were they going to agree to allow foreign diplomats in Riyadh. There was, I should add, a significant U.S. military presence in Riyadh; but they were not diplomats. Kissinger pointed out to the King that his government had agreed to the establishment in Riyadh of the Joint Economic Commission (JECOR) led by the U.S. Treasury Department. Kissinger told the King that if he could not have an officer in Riyadh, he would block JECOR. He did not trust Treasury and had to have someone from the embassy in Riyadh to watch the Treasury Department. Porter said Faisal had agreed but made it clear that the one officer was in Riyadh only to watch JECOR for Kissinger. He was not to do anything else.

Then Porter said to me, "Now that you know the truth, let me tell you what you are really up there to do. You are my man in Riyadh. You are the embassy man in Riyadh. You do my business, our business with the government, all of it. And you better watch JECOR and make sure they don't do anything that I don't know about." He added, "Now let me make one final point. You're moving to Riyadh. You will be the senior American diplomat in the capital and you will be resident co-located with three United States generals -- the general who heads the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) that is building bases throughout the Kingdom, the general who heads the U.S. Military Training Mission in Saudi Arabia (USMTM) headquartered Riyadh, and the general who heads the SANGMP, Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program. You, as a civilian diplomat, outrank all three; but I never ever want to hear that you made that an issue. Do you understand me? You never ever will make that an issue. I don't want trouble with the three generals." I said, "Yes sir, I understand." I never had a problem with the generals.

My relationship with the military was actually very close. For example, I had no communication unit in the Riyadh office. It was USMTM that provided my communication support. I had to go over to their compound to pick them up my cable traffic. And as I mentioned before, the Corps of Engineers furnished my housing and provided major maintenance.

In actuality I worked for the embassy exactly as Ambassador Porter had described. I actively made my rounds in the capital -- getting to know officials, delivering material sent up to Riyadh from Jidda, and supporting both visiting embassy officers and other delegations -- especially trade groups and members of Congress. No Saudi ever made an issue of my activities. There was one moment in time, probably a year into my life in Riyadh, where the fact of my presence came up with some drama. I was at the palace of

King Khalid, sitting in office director's large reception room. The room resembled more a majlis than an office with the seating around three sides of the room and a humongous desk on the fourth wall where the director sat. On this particular day there were only three of us in the room -- the director, myself and one other Saudi, none other than the Chief of Protocol from the Foreign Ministry in Jeddah. (Now take note that this person had held his position for many years and was the keeper of "protocol" -- and he was known to be particularly upset that there was an American diplomat in Riyadh.) I am in one corner trying to be as inconspicuous as I can; he is in another corner directly opposite me with the office director sitting at his desk between us. The director looks over at the Chief of Protocol and says, "Salem (his name), have you met the American ambassador in Riyadh?" He was just being mischievous; that's the right word. In Arabic I would say he was 'miskeen.' But he did not stop there. "He's really very good. He does everything. He's very effective. He's all over the place. He sees everybody." Of course this was everything that the Chief of Protocol hated. I was mortified and fearful there might be ramifications. In fact there were none -- probably due to the status of the director in the King's entourage such that the chief of protocol could really do nothing. Later when I was there again, I asked the director what this exchange was all about? He said that he was just having a little fun!

Q: Well how were your relations with the generals to begin with?

GNEHM: As I mentioned before, my relations with them were extraordinarily good. I had no problems. I think it very much goes back to my earlier growing up in a town with the military -- an Air Force base, the Marine Supply Center and, of course, my Scout master being a Marine. I always got along with the military throughout my career and I had no issues with them. There were never issues from their side either. In fact, because I got to know them all really well, they occasionally invited me to accompany them to their meeting with senior Saudi officials. General Richard Lawrence, head of the SANGMP, took me several times on his calls with Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, then head of the Saudi National Guard and later King.

Q: What were we doing? The National Guard, was that what used to be called the White Army? There was a sort of the non-army when I was in Saudi Arabia in the '50s, called the White Army.

GNEHM: The tribes?

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Clearly the Saudi royal family understood that it was useful, valuable, even prudent to have a balance when it came to security forces. In the Saudi case there was the mainline military in the Ministry of Defense and then the Saudi National Guard.

Q: Yes because every year some country learns what troops can do.

GNEHM: The Saudis had a senior member of the ruling family heading up the National Guard, which recruited largely from the tribes. Another senior prince headed the Ministry of Defense and Aviation (MODA). They developed separately, different units, different equipment, training all kept separate. The U.S. had agreed to train the National Guard and a separate group of US military from USMTM trained the forces under the Ministry of Defense. Our relationship with the Saudi military was a very good relationship, very close. Prince Abdullah and the SANGMP general were very close. General Lawrence, for example, could get in to see Prince Abdullah whenever he needed to for any reason and Abdullah often invited him out to his desert camp.

Q: What was your impression of Saudi Rule?

GNEHM: The ruling family -- the Sauds -- was very much in charge, very much in control. The population accepted that as valid. I don't pretend, by the way, to know the inner workings of the family though I had certain insights at different times. There were some moments when I had a sense of family views when I was working an issue that they were involved in. There was a small group of senior princes who got together and reached consensus on how to handle something. Once that consensus was reached, it was done. I mean that it was carried out. That group at the time included Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh. I got to know him well because of my position in Riyadh. There was Prince Sultan, the Minister of Defense, Prince Nayef the Minister of Interior, Prince Abdullah of the National Guard, Prince Fahad who later became king, and, of course, King Khaled the king at the time. It was this inner group of senior family members who tended to make the consensual decisions about major things.

Q: Did you get close to the families? In other words were you entertained at their homes? Because one of the things I'm told today is that there isn't much socializing.

GNEHM: No, there was little socializing with the royal family. I did get to know several of the ministers and many senior officials well enough to be invited to events. There was one minister who was married to an American. They invited Peggy and me to their house for dinner. Usually it was a small group and close to the family and not the bigger dinners that you find in other Arab countries. Zaki Yamani, the Minister of Oil, and other senior officials entertained when there were visitors from Washington.

Q: He was the oil minister?

GNEHM: He was the oil minister. And yes, the other ministers would host a lunch or a dinner in honor of a visitor or a congressional delegation or a trade delegation. Then they would invite Saudi businessmen and others; but those were usually the only times there would be social events with Saudis. When I hosted an event, my approach was to keep it small and only invite the particular individual I want and whoever he might suggest to come with him. The main issue was always concern by the Saudi about bringing his wife to an American home and how that would be interpreted in the society. Saudis are very sensitive to social criticism.

Q: What did this mean for your wife?

GNEHM: When we first arrived, it was difficult for my wife. I was working and she had the two kids. She couldn't drive, though the driver could take her to the PX or wherever she needed to go. She ended up being offered a job with CitiBank. CitiBank was a consultant working with a Saudi entity. Once she got the job, she was going to work in the morning and returning home at 1:00 or 2:00. That was the normal work day. She was quite happy working -- something productive to do. Then, too, she was earning money. In fact she was earning more money than I was because she didn't have to pay taxes up to a certain amount and she wasn't making that threshold amount. The important thing, though, was that it gave her something to do. And through the bank she and I met people that we could do things with.

There was a large ex-pat community in Riyadh; much larger now, of course. There was the military, some with families, and some businessmen with families as well. There were several organizations like SRI, Stanford Research International. They were doing economic planning for the Ministry of Planning. So there were families with whom we could do things. There were not too many kids but our kids were younger then. So we began building relationships with people we could do things with. I think it's worth mentioning that there was a very active Protestant church in Riyadh. Congregation might be the better word for it. One of the American companies had brought in a pastor, sponsored a pastor. He wasn't as a pastor officially, of course; he was there as a counselor. Of course churches and Christian preaching was and, to this day, not permitted in Saudi Arabia. Yet the church was so well attended that it was having three, it later went to four, different services on Friday mornings. We used Friday as the Sabbath day because Sunday was a work day in Saudi Arabia. The services were mobbed. We met in the auditorium of the SANG compound where the U.S. military advisors lived. It began to become a problem when the neighborhood began complaining about the cars parking and the congestion on Friday mornings, not unlike, by the way, my church in Bethesda, Maryland, where the neighborhood complains about parking around the church on Sunday. But this brought the congregation to the attention of the Saudi Government and they were going to close it down.

My ambassador during my second year in Riyadh was a man by the name of John West, former governor of South Carolina and a very close friend of President Carter. He was a committed Christian and he was determined to contest the new order. He talked to me about the problem and we worked out a strategy. We decided to see the Minister of Interior Prince Nayef bin Abd al-Aziz. We reached an agreement with Prince Nayef that the services could continue as long as there was not a public profile, nothing outside the compound wall. At my suggestion, I drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) of our conversation with the Prince and we gave him a copy for the record.

I mention this because we're talking about '77 or '78. In 2002 when I was ambassador in Jordan, I received a call from an officer in the embassy in Jeddah. He said he just wanted to call and tell me that the embassy had some trouble with the church services in the Kingdom. They found this memorandum of understanding that I had negotiated with

Prince Nayef. The ambassador had taken it over to Nayef to show it to him. When he looked at it, he said, "Oh I remember those guys. Yes, I agreed; you're right. I can't change my position." I was amazed that the memorandum was still on file and, further, that it had been found. I was equally astonished that it remained valid almost 25 years later!

Q: What were your essential duties? I mean you were an economic officer keeping an eye on Treasury. First, was Treasury up to anything?

GNEHM: Always. Always they were up to something. Treasury Department loved having this independent relationship with the Saudis. Of course the objective of JECOR was to build the US-Saudi relationship in a variety of economic areas all of which was in US interests. In particular JECOR was to develop initiatives that would lead to Saudi investment in the U.S.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: There were times when they used their presence (access) for other purposes, which is exactly what Kissinger had been worried about. But as fate would have it, the first head of JECOR was Bruce Morgan who had been Peace Corps director in Nepal when I served there and a close friend of Carol Laise. So he and I were very close friends. I didn't have any problems at all with JECOR in the first six months. Bruce had a falling out with Treasury. Treasury wanted to manage him far more closely than Bruce was willing to accept. They let him go after six months; but by then I knew all of the deputies and most of the other Americans. Also, these were people that Peggy and I got to know socially at the church and around town. So I didn't have any problems. In fact, there were many times that I was able to help them.

You asked what I did in Riyadh. Yes, I was labeled an economic officer, but I did everything. I did work for every section of the embassy from fixing the front door, faucets, and telephones to delivering diplomatic notes to the Palace. When we had congressional delegations, I was the control officer in Riyadh. Sometimes the embassy would send people up to escort the delegation; but I was the one who arranged the visits and the appointments. I met them at the airport; I escorted them around town; and I put them back on the plane.

Q: Did you have a secretary?

GNEHM: I was allowed to hire a secretary locally. I found an American woman living in Riyadh. I got her clearances and she worked for me. I got to hire a couple more national employees. They weren't Saudis; they were all ex-pats. By the time I left at the end of two years, the Liaison Office, as it was called, had grown significantly. I had seven Americans working for me.

In terms of consular work, I took passports applications and sent them to Jidda for processing. I did the paperwork for death certificates, birth certificates and other similar

things. They gave me a seal, finally, and I actually was doing the consular work to the extent that I could. The embassy also sent a consular officer up to Riyadh from time to time to handle the workload. I didn't do a lot of consular work. I did political reporting. I reported conversations that I had with almost every ministry that I worked with.

I mentioned that Ambassador Porter left post in the summer of '76. I learned that the former governor of South Carolina, John West, was coming to be ambassador. I got a letter from my uncle, David Garrett, my mother's brother-in-law, who had been president of Delta Airlines telling me that he was a very close friend of John West. In fact, my uncle was from Aiken, South Carolina. He had told John West that I was in Riyadh. When the new ambassador and his wife arrived, I was invited to come down to Jeddah to go to the airport to greet the new ambassador.

It is customary for the senior staff of the embassy to receive new ambassadors at the airport. Ambassador West was due to arrive in the evening. I was invited to be there. I was excited but it turned out to be a moment of some embarrassment! There is, of course, a pecking order. First in line is the Chargé, followed by the ranking counselors and then first secretaries, second secretaries, and third secretaries. I am still relatively junior at this point. So I am probably number 22 or 23 in this line in the reception hall. John West and his wife entered the room. I recall how jovial he was, a wonderfully nice guy. He greeted the Chargé; the Chargé introduced him to the next one or two in the line. I think John West got to the third or fourth person when he spotted me down the line. He left the line and came all the way down to me and he said, "Hey Skip, they told me you were going to be here and I'm so glad to see you." And I thought, "Oh no, you don't know what you just did to me. Everybody he skipped is to be angry and I will pay the price!" I said, "Thank you, Mr. Ambassador" to which he replied "No, call me John." Well, I said I couldn't as he was the Ambassador. "No," he said, "I've got to go by John; that's me." I said we could talk later and I kind of nodded back in the direction of the receiving line. So he went back and came down the line. Truth be said, I was very touched by his approach. John and I became extremely close -- very close as a matter of fact. He turned to me for advice on almost every issue to some extent because he didn't have a Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) that he trusted.

Q: Who was the DCM?

GNEHM: Marshall Wiley, who later became ambassador of Oman. But Marshall Wiley did not think a political appointee, and specifically John, knew how to do the job properly while he did. So he often undercut him.

Q: Is this sort of the typical thing that political ambassadors complain about, that some DCMs have contempt for political ambassadors?

GNEHM: Yes. Those situations are, in fact, far rarer than the stories that abound; but in this particular case it was stereotype. Marshall Wiley felt he understood Saudis and the Foreign Service and this guy, who was a politician, knew nothing. Marshall would countermand what the Ambassador had ordered; he would counter-instruct; he would

issue orders and not tell the ambassador that what he had done. I would tend to find out about it because I would hear from an officer what he had been ordered to do. And I would say, "Well, I know the Ambassador talked to somebody about this last week. Are you sure about this?" Then I would realize that the ambassador didn't know anything about it.

Marshall didn't like me very much because I was so close to the Ambassador. John West was as decent a person as there could be. People often credit political appointees with having a close relationship with the sitting President. In this case John West had that relationship with President Carter.

Q: Often it's not-

GNEHM: It's rare, that's true.

Q: It's very rare but when it works it really works.

GNEHM: It's one in a blue moon; but John West was the first governor in the United States to endorse Carter for president and, of course, they were governors in adjoining states. John West wrote a letter to the President, a handwritten letter, every Sunday night. Most of them he showed me. And about every other week he got a letter back from Carter, handwritten.

Q: Were you able to figure out why West wanted that particular job?

GNEHM: Yes, I think in many ways John was thinking of business and commercial interest and the future. He actually turned down the President's offer to be Secretary of Commerce to take the job in Saudi Arabia. He viewed Saudi Arabia as a very important country for the United States. I also think he was excited about coming to the Middle East. He had a real interest; but he didn't have much knowledge about the region. But here again stereotyping didn't work. John asked people like me about how to handle matters, how officials were likely to react to this or that. He was very open and was always trying to learn.

Q: Well this is one of the things, yes there's a certain amount of stereotyping but in the South they're very interested in family relationships-

GNEHM: You got it.

Q: - and of course family, I mean, the Saudis are a huge family.

GNEHM: The personality of a Southerner fit the Saudi culture almost perfectly. Now I realize that's a stereotype. But family, hospitality, saying 'good morning,' there was always a greeting, is exactly what Arabs do. They'll never pass anyone by that they don't say, in Arabic, 'good morning' whether they know you or not, like a Southerner does.

And you're quite right; this gregarious, warm personality that was John -- and his wife Lois as well -- just took with the Saudis. They loved it and loved him.

There was one example that really highlights John's personality. I get a telephone call late in the day from John. "Skip, I got to come to Riyadh tonight. I've got an important message to deliver. I've got to see Prince Saud (the Saudi Foreign Minister)." I said okay. And John added, "I am bringing with me the chairman of the South Carolina Democratic Party. He's visiting me and he's never met a live prince before. I told him he had to come with me meet a real live prince."

The embassy transmitted to me the very sensitive instructions that John was to use so he didn't have to carry it on the airplane. So I know what they're going to talk about. Frankly, it was not a subject that you would expect to talk about in front of someone without a security clearance.

The plane arrives and we head to Prince Saud's home. We arrive and knock on the front door. Prince Saud, himself, opens the door. John greeted him with 'howdy, prince.' Prince Saud then noticed another man. "Oh," John says, "Prince Saud, I want you to meet so-and-so. He's the chairman of the Democratic Party of South Carolina. He's never met a live prince before and I said you've got to go meet Prince Saud. He's a live prince." Well, at first Prince Saud is kind of taken aback; but then he just cracks up laughing. We had a very pleasant meeting and John and his guest got back in the plane and flew away.

Now I'm going to jump way ahead because this is going to be funny. I'm professor at George Washington University. It's around 2005 or 2006. I get a call from the declassification office at the Department of State. The caller says he has been asked to declassify a cable out of Riyadh that I drafted reporting on a conversation between Ambassador West and Prince Saud. I immediately guessed which one it was before he went any further. He said, "I'm very perplexed. We're asked to declassify this cable on a rather sensitive matter but there seems to have been another person in the meeting. Let me ask you straightforward. Did this person have a security clearance?" I said, "Not to my knowledge. He was the chairman of the Democratic Party of South Carolina." The caller then said that since the subject matter was discussed in an unclassified situation, he guessed the message was really already declassified. I said, "Look, I'm not getting into this. You do whatever you need to do. I reported it the way it was. What's in that cable is what happened. John took him into the meeting and that was that." So some things from the past just come back.

Q: Well did you find that you were in a position to pick up family gossip of who was running things and who was doing what, who was influential, who wasn't? Were you able to get that or was it a pretty tight system?

GNEHM: Saudis do not readily talk about their family and personal matters. The princes, members of the al-Saud family in particular, would not speak much about their family issues. About the only way I could pick up some sense of family relationships was when I was in a group with two or three of them. I could watch their interactions and see that one

was really differential to another. That would indicate their relative position in the family hierarchy. That was about it.

Q: Did your wife or you pick up anything about the role of the wives? Particularly the mothers in Saudi society. They may be behind the veil but boy oh boy they're very powerful.

GNEHM: You are right about the influence of women especially in the family setting. Peggy did pick up things when she was with the Saudi women. They would talk about among themselves. One time she said to me, "Oh, you won't believe what I heard today. There was one woman who said her husband kept going out at night, coming back drunk. So she said she just locked the gate, locked the house, put a guard outside and ordered him not to let her husband back in the yard. She said that when he came home, he beat on the door and screamed and yelled; but he finally had to go to a relative's house to spend the night." What Peggy was describing was that within the walls of the house women have enormous authority, influence.

The other thing that you become quite conscious of, though at a distance, is the fact that many Saudi men still have more than one wife; but the Koran is very clear that you must treat each wife equally. So how do you do that? I am not sure what that means in personal terms but in physical terms it can be amazing. When you drove around town or out into the country, you would, for example, see three identical houses sitting side by side -- down to the same color paint, same number of TV antennas and everything. Those would be the houses for the three wives.

Q: Did you pick up any feel for the effects of American or western influence, for example TV, education abroad and all? Did you have a feeling this was breaking down the upper class societies of Saudi Arabia?

GNEHM: Yes, to some extent. The '70s was a period in which the government was in fact sending Saudis abroad in fairly large numbers for university level education. There were quite a few in the United States. This was then reversed in the '80s when Fahd became king. Then the Saudis started building universities around the country and the King gave the ulema (the religious leaders) enormous influence over the education system. That was a concession Fahd made to the religious authorities. King Fahd had come under attack, surreptitiously of course, for his loose living style, specifically gambling, women, etc. But in this time I was in Riyadh, a large number of Saudis had gone abroad to study and were now in reasonably prominent positions, such as the Minister of Planning--American educated -- and the Minister of Commerce -- also American educated. Many in the petroleum sector were mostly Western educated. The University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran was set up by ARAMCO. It was largely staffed by foreign faculty using a western curriculum. Yes, there was definitely television and media influence also. I don't remember satellite television being as dominant then as it is now; but Saudis had access to outside media.

That reminds me of another interesting storey. We were invited by the minister with an American wife to their house for dinner and he told this story. He said his father lived up country in Buraidah, an oasis north of Riyadh maybe six or eight hours by car. He said that was where he grew up. He said his father comes to town to visit them. He brings his tent and pitches it in the front yard. Now the minister's home is a gorgeous villa with a meticulous front lawn with flowers and the father's tent is pitched out there on the lawn. He said his father told him that he had never slept under a roof in his life and I never would! Just imagine? This was '77. You have a western educated minister married to an American one generation away from the father who has never slept under a roof. He brings his tent to downtown Riyadh. That really underscores how far the country had moved in one generation! Sure, there are going to be problems when that happens. It is a real challenge for the country.

Q: Well what about the religious authority, the ulema? Was their influence very overt or was this sort of under everything?

GNEHM: For most Westerners and for most of my work it was not apparent. What was apparent was the mutawwa'in, the religious police, that ran around town with their switches whacking people, mostly women, who they thought were not properly dressed or properly behaving. They would move through the market to insure that shops closed during prayer times.

Q: These are called the religious police?

GNEHM: That is how we westerners describe them. I think the Arabic stresses their role protecting virtue and correctness. They were out and about and they would whack even Westerners that they felt were violating religious tenets.

Q: Was there much in the way of ex-pat workers, Pakistan, Korean, Filipino?

GNEHM: Large numbers, large number of ex-pats even then working in everything from business to construction.

Q: Well something that strikes me today just looking at it from a great distance, here you've got a growing Saudi population and outside of oil extraction they don't do anything. And what do you do with, particularly the young people and all? I mean they're absolutely dependent on the largesse of oil and that won't be there forever.

GNEHM: That is a big problem for the Kingdom.

Q: Were we looking at this and trying to figure out what's going to happen?

GNEHM: Yes, we were and part of the Joint Economic Commission's work was to try to develop alternative areas of employment. It was not very successful. You had Saudis who would go into banking because there were even then sound Saudi financial institutions, banks, investment authorities; but you didn't find them going into other occupations.

They certainly would not do most of the jobs that ex-pats were brought in to do. It has gotten much worse since then, of course; the population has grown and the youth population is larger.

Q: When you were there at that time computers weren't a big deal, were they?

GNEHM: No. But I your question about youth reminds me of things I saw and heard. Young Saudis were mad drivers. There was a lot of hot rodding and racing at outlandish speeds. The number of people, young people, killed in accidents was quite significant. It was a constant news story every day. They had nothing else to do.

Q: You were there for how long?

GNEHM: Two years.

Q: Were there any major developments, incidents during those two years?

GNEHM: Lebanon was an issue that we discussed often with the Saudis. The Saudis were very close to certain of the Lebanese factions. We hoped that they might be able to use their connections to bring about a solution to the civil war that was ongoing in Lebanon. Military sales and training were other bilateral issues. This had to do a lot with the pro-Israeli lobby groups in the States which opposed most military sales to the Saudis. It was during that first year of John West's tenure that the possibility of the sale to the Saudis of some AWACS, the early warning, intelligence gathering platform, arose. There was huge opposition from members of Congress and Jewish lobby groups. Later the sale went through, but that was after I left Riyadh. The anti-Saudi rhetoric and the public attacks on the Kingdom caused lots of problems for us in the field. It was very difficult to explain why such things were being said about them -- by their close ally and friend.

Q: Did you find that in your dealings with the Saudis that our relationship with Israel would come up all the time?

GNEHM: Yes, it tended to be a common topic and usually with the most obvious point. 'We understand the friendship you have with Israel but why can't it be balanced? Why can't you just see what they're doing? Why don't you argue for the same things for the Palestinians that you all for the Israelis? Why can't you be fair, just?'

Q: Well how would you answer?

GNEHM: My answer was always, "Look. We have concerns that we share, views like you do about the Palestinian situation. We think Palestinian issue needs to be resolved peacefully. We have a political system in which lobby groups play an important role. That's the way our system is built, whether it be labor unions or education groups or medical groups or Jewish based groups. There's nothing to stop the Arabs from having the same kind of lobby groups. That's the way our system works." I always felt that one

had to fall back on the fact that we have a political system that works and they need to understand better how it works..

Q: Yes.

Well this is probably a good place to stop. Where did you go after?

GNEHM: I went to Yemen. I'll talk a little bit more about Saudi Arabia and go into Yemen. I want to mention President Carter's visit to Riyadh and, oh yes, the visit of the congressman from Texas of Afghanistan fame.

Q: Oh yes. Charlie Wilson.

GNEHM: Charlie Wilson's visit with his girlfriend. These are worth recording.

Q: Okay, we'll pick those up for next time.

We have four interns with us and I will let them- If you have a question- Do you have anything?

INTERN #1: I have one quick question.

Q: You want to put in your name.

INTERN NAOMI KAUFMAN: My name is Naomi Kaufman. I'm a research intern from Davidson College.

And I think at this point you said that your wife was developing contacts, filling up her time with her job at the bank. Your daughter at this point would have been five or six. Did the children stay home?

GNEHM: Yes. We had a wonderfully nice maid/housekeeper from Eritrea. In fact I first met her on one of my trips down to Jeddah. I was told that there was a woman out in the lobby from Eritrea, a refugee, looking for a position with a diplomat that would give her work and a residence permit. I interviewed her and brought her to Riyadh. She stayed with us the whole time we were in Riyadh and continued to work for the head of the office for the next 12 to 15 years. So she kept the children and she was wonderful.

KAUFMAN: They hadn't gone to school yet? I guess there were no schooling opportunities then.

GNEHM: No. My daughter was born in '71.

KAUFMAN: Born in '71, '78 so she would have been seven?

GNEHM: Our daughter, Cheryl, attended the Riyadh International Community School (RICS) two years -- her K-1 and first grade. The school only went to the eighth grade. The Saudis didn't want any teenagers in the country so they refused to approve a permit for high school.

INTERN REBECCA SATTERFIELD: Sure. Rebecca Satterfield from Rice University. You talked a little bit about the status of women in Saudi Arabia. What was the U.S. policy towards women's issues at that time or was there one at all?

GNEHM: Not seriously vocalized. I mean when it did come up it was always very clear that we did not feel that women were being treated appropriately. The response was they have rights under the Koran that they never had before Mohammad came along. I stayed away from the driving issue. At that time it was not being challenged; it was challenged at the time of Desert Storm when a number of Saudi women got behind the wheel demanding the right to drive. The Saudi Government came down pretty hard on them -- and their families.

Q: My wife had a Saudi driver's license but that was back in the '50s.

GNEHM: Oh wow. But did she drive?

Q: Oh yes.

GNEHM: Oh wow.

Q: But again it was in the '50s. Our consul general, Walter Schwinn, was very persuasive.

GNEHM: Very interesting. I didn't know that ever happened.

INTERN CAROLYN WALLACE: Carolyn Wallace from University of Pennsylvania. You talked about how you were able to form relationships with some of the members of the government, families like that or ex-pats. Was it more difficult to talk to people below that level?

GNEHM: In the government?

INTERN WALLACE: No, people outside of government, like were you able to talk to people in the market or something like that?

GNEHM: Yes. You could do that. I didn't get to the souk in Riyadh as often as I did in Syria and later did in Jordan. I guess I was just so busy. But yes, you could. The community easiest to meet was the business community. They have interests in making contracts and doing business with the U.S. Government and American companies. The business group was willing come to the house for events and they would also invite you to things -- in a business context always and only males, not mixed.

INTERN KATE TUSCANY: Kate Tuscany from Alleghany College. I'm curious with your being the only American sent to Riyadh at first, you know, really kind of pioneering this city. How did your wife and children like it outside of, you know, the personal relationships; were they with other civilians there? You know how did they spend their two years.

GNEHM: There were a lot of activities within the American and expat community. While I was the only American diplomat, there were, as I said, lots of Americans with the military and also with some of the consulting groups. Peggy got involved in the church with the ex-pats and others who had more difficulty surviving and living. She ended up being very busy. That wasn't true in the first few months until she got a job. That made a huge difference. I can understand that as it enabled her to get outside a walled compound.

Q: Okay. Well we'll stop at this point. I'll put once again we'll pick this up and you're off to Yemen?

GNEHM: I went to Yemen.

Q: But before we get there you want to talk about the Carter visit, the Charlie Wilson plus accompaniment and maybe there's some other things you want to mention.

GNEHM: Yes, and I have to tell you about one of my other Consular challenges when I had to take care of embalming the body of an American pilot killed in a plane crash.

Q: Today is the 23rd of July, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you had mentioned several things before we move on to the Yemen.

GNEHM: Yes, I just wanted to mention a few things about my Riyadh assignment that came to mind since our last session.

The first thing I want to mention is Ambassador John West, who was Governor of South Carolina. He was a Carter political appointee and very close friend. He was a terrifically engaged ambassador, a political appointee, yes, but someone who came with Southern hospitality and charm -- a very outgoing and personable individual.

Q: Also I think something we in the Foreign Service sometimes forget about their political instincts.

GNEHM: Very definitely.

Q: -Foreign Service people don't have that that political instinct that a politician has.

GNEHM: And he did. I just want to mention a couple of things. And one I want to mention is Lois West, his wife. She was a terrific partner in their relationship. When I would go to Jeddah, they always either put me up at their place or found me another

place. But one thing was remarkable. The Wests had a table in the residence that sat 24 or maybe even 36. It was a huge long table and Lois used to tell me that she set the table every day for lunch for all seats and the same for dinner because John West invited everybody that he met in the morning to come to lunch and everybody he met in the afternoon to come to dinner. She had no idea whether she would be alone at one end of the table and with him at the other end or if they would have 20 to 30 people in between. John was a remarkable.

And you're quite correct about his connections. I mentioned that he wrote the president virtually every Sunday night and about every other Sunday he got a handwritten letter back from Carter.

I have a second John West story from one of my trips when I went down to Jeddah. The then B and F (Budget and Finance) officer, Howard Smith, was a really good friend. I got to know him quite well. He helped me a lot with the financial problems up in Riyadh. He called me in one day all disconcerted. He shut the door said, "Don't tell the ambassador I brought this up, but the ambassador has spent all of his representation money and it's only two months into the fiscal year. He is overspending." I said, "Wait a minute Howard. You've told him that he's spent all of his representation money?" He said, "Yes, but he doesn't seem to pay any attention." I said, "And he knows that from now on he's going to be paying out of his pocket?" "Yes, yes," said Howard. "So," I said, "it's not your problem; he will have to pay out of his pocket. So you shouldn't be worried about it." He said, "Yes but you know, he didn't ask. That's his problem, you know."

Last scene, several months later, Riyadh -- John West is in Riyadh. We pick up a close friend of his by the name of Fritz Hollings, then senator from South Carolina. I'm sitting in the front seat, shotgun, and the two of them are in the back seat and the conversation goes something like this. Fritz: Well John, I'm really glad I got to come out here and visit you while you're ambassador. West: Well I am you did, Fritz. You know I wanted to show you around while I was out here. Fritz: Yes, everything going alright? West: Oh yes, everything's going just hunky dory. Fritz: So, no promises? West: Ohoo! Yes, I've got one problem. Fritz: What's that? West: I don't get enough money for representation out here. Do you know I had more money as governor of South Carolina than I have here in Saudi Arabia and this is a big country. Fritz: well how much do you need? West: Well I think I could use three to \$5,000 more for this year. Fritz: Done. I will take care of it.

I'm down in Jeddah several weeks later at the B and F office. Howard tells me: "Skip, Skip, come here. Somebody gave the ambassador \$3000 more in our representation account." I said, "I told you not to worry."

Q: Oh man.

GNEHM: Anyway, that was interesting.

Another incident was when Charlie Wilson came to Riyadh on a visit and Charlie Wilson let me know in the cables-

Q: Why don't you explain who Charlie Wilson was?

GNEHM: Right. He was a congressman from Texas, and well known for his involvement with Afghanistan but also known always to travel with a very beautiful, charming woman.

Q: There was a very famous movie called "Charlie Wilson's War," based on a book about him.

GNEHM: I can attest to at least one aspect from that book. Cable traffic came out from the Department asking the embassy to support his visit and that he would be traveling with a female friend. I was told to reserve one room at the specified hotel as they would be staying together.

Well, when I went to the Saudis to arrange this, of course they said to me, "Well she's not married to him, right?" I said "No, but..." Their immediate response was: "Well then we don't book rooms like this; they will have separate rooms." I said, "No, it's not going to work." The Saudis then said he can't come. I said that he is coming anyway whether you like it or not. And so he arrives and they put her in a second car, not with him. He gets out of the car with his chaperone from the government from the ministry and gets in the car with his female friend; he refuses to get out of the car. When they get to the hotel, guess where she stayed? In his room. And the Saudis were obviously very upset.

Q: I'm surprised they didn't just chalk this up to the peculiarities of Americans.

GNEHM: Probably at some level they did so; but those who were working the scene were not of that bent.

Another thing I want to mention was the official visit of President Carter to Riyadh while I was there. Carter came from India to Saudi Arabia. Because I was close to the Ambassador and he trusted me, he made me the control officer for the president's visit. Now that's a pretty big job for also a middle grade officer, compared to the norm. The control officer for such a high level visit would normally have been the DCM or a senior counselor but they were down in Jeddah. It was an extraordinary experience for me. The cable that came out to post with very detailed instructions talked about the hundreds of thousands of people that needed to be set aside to do different jobs! I'm exaggerating.

Q: And the president does not travel alone.

GNEHM: No. And there are also many requirements that come out in long cables. I remember one in particular that was both funny and not funny! One cable informed me that a certain number of aviation fuel tanker trucks were to be set aside at an isolated location at the Riyadh International Airport for a certain number of days before the arrival of the President's plane. I think it was something like 10 days. They were to be under American military guard around the clock once isolated and samples of the jet fuel

in the tankers were to be sent back to U.S. military labs to make sure that it was not contaminated. The tanker trucks were then be sealed and kept there under American guard until the President's plane had been refueled and he had departed.

Well, I responded to Washington that "this was not going to be possible. You asked for five tanker trucks and there are only three total at Riyadh International Airport. If you take all of them for 10 days, the entire airport will have to close. This is obviously impossible." I got back a response that in view of my message the president would probably cancel his visit. This was the first of several threats that the visit would be canceled, to which I simply replied, "I can only give you the facts; maybe you should ask the President of the United States whether he wants to cancel his trip before you plan to cancel it." Of course the president had no intention of canceling his visit, not only because of Saudi Arabia's importance to the U.S. but also because of his personal relationship with John West.

Then there was the advance team for the visit -- a large group even in and of itself! Managing them and their demands on the Saudis was a real test of survival. At one point the advance team was meeting with the chief of protocol at the palace. I was at the opposite end of the table from the chief of protocol; Saudis on one side, the Americans on the other. The two sides were haggling and hassling over any number of details but one that was very contentious was the motorcade. Who was going to be in which car and in what order the cars would line up in the motorcade. It went on and on -- an absurd exchange. The Saudi chief of protocol refused to accept the American requests. There were strict protocol requirements as to the order of royal princes in the motorcade and who road with which foreign dignitary. At one point, I saw the chief of protocol make a note on his notepad which he folded in half and sent down the table to me. The note said, "Skip, don't act surprised. I'm getting ready to concede everything but the motorcade is going to happen my way." Sure enough after the next intervention by the Americans saying the motorcade had to be as they demanded, the chief of protocol said "Alright, okay, fine. Let's don't waste any more time. If that's the way you want it, that's the way it will be." And sure enough at the airport when the President arrived, and all boarded the motorcade, it was organized exactly as the Saudis had wanted! So there you go!

Knowing what I did about the motorcade from the chief of protocol's note, that evening I watched with considerable amusement (and some disdain) the advance guy who was responsible for the motorcade. He sat on the floor for five or six hours with cutouts of cars, motorcycles and trucks, redesigning the motorcade. At least he was busy. It was an interesting experience.

The visit went well. The Saudis loved the President. He had a great visit and flew off happy as can be. But you know, these are the kind of things you have to deal with when you have high level visitors.

Q: Well you also had to deal with the very sharp elbows and personalities of people in protocol on your side and their side. I mean this is a bunch of Munchkins or something all trying to prove that they're important.

GNEHM: That's very, very true. It happened again when then Vice President George H. W. Bush came to Jordan during my tour there as DCM and other visits that I have done as well. Many of the people they send out on advances are selected as a reward for their success in organizing a motorcade in Missouri or they were on the campaign staff somewhere. They often had never been abroad or never done a visit overseas. It's awkward.

Before I get to my time in Yemen, I'd like to tell one story about an incident that happened during my time in Riyadh.

I'm in Riyadh at the beginning of my second year. I get a phone call from Carol Laise, (remember my ambassador in Nepal) who is now Director General of the Foreign Service. She said, "Skip, we have a really serious staffing problem at U.S. UN in New York. We're looking for a chief of staff for Ambassador Andrew Young, Andy Young, the former congressman from Georgia, very close to Carter, a prominent civil rights leader. And actually we all thought of you and we'd like to bring you back to pair you up for an interview for this position." It sounded like a really good opportunity. I said yes and they flew me back. I come to Washington. I go to see Carol Laise and she says, "Look, Skip, we have a big problem. Andy Young is kind of a wild card; he's up there doing his thing without communicating with anyone. Upstairs the secretary's office, the seventh floor principals, and those on the sixth floor can't figure out what's going on up there. The White House is absolutely apoplectic and you are the perfect person for the position with your roots in Georgia. I didn't know that you knew Hamilton Jordan." Hamilton Jordan was Carter's chief of staff. I said "Yes, we graduated from high school together, went to the same church and got thrown out of the same Sunday school class. That is more than you wanted to know about me and my relationship with Ham?" She said "Yes, but that means they know you and they trust you and when the executive secretary and the secretary heard that you had that connection and the lights went on. Go upstairs and see the executive secretary."

The executive secretary says to me, "Look, you know we have a problem in New York. There have actually been days when there was not a single person in the chair over in the General Assembly -- maybe because they're so disorganized. We need a chief of staff up there just at least to make sure there's someone in the chair over at the UN whenever there are meetings. We think you would be really great in this position, Skip, because you have this good connection with the White House and you are Foreign Service. You understand how the system works." The phone rings and it is Hamilton Jordan. He wants me to come over and see him.

So I go over to the White House and Ham says to me, "Skip, I swear I forgot that you were over there in Saudi Arabia; but we can really use you in New York. You can at least tell us when Andy's going to do things. Do you know that he announced that Khomeini

was a saint and then he called for recognizing Arafat? This is outrageous; he's blowing us out of the water." He concluded that the White House had to have somebody up there to tell them what's going on

I go up to New York on a day that Andy Young's close personal aide says I can see the Ambassador. He asked me to be there very early because in the morning as he often had time then for interviews. So I arrived at USUN around 7:45. I sit and I sit. I met with the Ambassador's aide. I sit some more. I see the Ambassador come and go. I go get lunch. I sit some more. I go around USUN introducing myself and talking with staff. I return to the floor with the Ambassador's office and sit. At seven thirty in the evening the Ambassador's secretary says, "Andy's got time to see you; you can go in." I go in and take the seat that was offered and say, "Mr. Ambassador, it's nice to meet you. I've heard so much about you in my life coming from Georgia." (I was trying to establish rapport -- some connection.) After a few pleasantries, I said, "The Department told me that you were willing to have me come to New York for this interview for the chief of staff position at USUN." Young responded, "Look Skip, it's a waste of time to beat around the bush. If you want to come up here and be a spy for the State Department and the White House, it's okay with me. I don't care; that's fine." Well the Ambassador was starkly clear! But I replied that I should tell him something about me -- who I was -- before we went any further. "I'm a Foreign Service officer; I work for the United States Government and for my country. I'm very loyal to the people I work for. If I come up here, it's to work for you. If I can do something that makes your life easier, if things would work better, I'm happy to do that. That's the only reason why I will accept the assignment. So, I would like just to know if you think I can be of help." He said, "Skip, if you want the job it's yours. And when you get here, I'll have you up to the apartment at the Waldorf. We'll have a couple of drinks and work this out and we'll have a good time together."

So I got the train back out to Massapequa where I was staying with my aunt and uncle. I walked the three miles from the station to their house trying to decide what I should do. I certainly did not want to take a position where my boss thought I was a spy -- and for that matter friends and colleagues in Washington thought of my role in the same way. That was not where I want to be in life. I got on a plane the next day and flew back to Riyadh. I called Carol Laise, who said, "Where in the hell are you?" I said, "I'm back in Riyadh." She said, "You're what?" I said, "Yes. And Carol, I don't want that job. I'm not going to be everyone's spy, I'm not going to go up there." Her reply astonished me, "That's a great decision." I said, "But you sent me up there." She said, "I had to. Ham Jordan knows you; all these people know you. I can count on you. You are right; it is an impossible situation to be in. We had to go through this process but you made the right decision." I said to her, "Look, John West needs me. I feel like I'm doing something important -- something that is necessary." So ended my saga with USUN -- at least in 1977.

Q: Well you might explain what the basic problem was with Andy Young.

GNEHM: Andrew Young was from outside the system. He was a political appointee who had never served in a diplomatic position.

Q: H was a very powerful political person.

GNEHM: A very powerful political person who had his own power base nationally and in the Democratic Party. While he was certainly loyal to the President based on their friendship in Georgia, he had his own mind about politics and about issues. I would say, too, that being an African-American confronting a white dominated system, he had some sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians. He did not think the Palestinians were being treated fairly in the way that Africans had not been treated justly. In both cases he felt there was a need for change. The bigger issue was that he felt no need to work through the "system." He didn't feel like he had to clear things; so he didn't. So he would say things that were not policy or contradicted policy.

Q: And of course our Arab-Israeli policy is quite nuanced. I'd say the only other one that's comparable certainly for a long time was over Berlin. Everything that was said had repercussions.

GNEHM: Yes. You remember how we argue over the article in front of one of the words in UNSC Resolution 242!

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Because it makes a huge difference in the way people decided to define the sentence.

If it is "the occupied territories" or just "occupied territories," it made a difference.

Back to Andy Young, I think he comes out of a world -- experiences -- that are not disciplined or structured. That's the Congress and that's the civil rights movement. So to go into an embassy type structure, U.S. UN, where you have hierarchies and committees and you have to be present. Remember what happened when the Russians walked out of the Security Council in the 1950s. They ended up with a UNSC resolution that established a UN forces in Korea. You don't leave your chair empty for fear of what might happen in your absence. There were details that were just not important to him. There was a pragmatic reason why the Department needed someone up there who understood the system and the requirements. It went beyond just the spying part; but I they thought I would keep Andy Young from making those outrageous remarks. That's impossible. You know, impossible.

The last thing I want to mention is my ultimate transfer to Yemen in the summer of 1978. One bids on your onward assignment about nine months before you are due for transfer. The Department asked if I would consider going back to Beirut as political counselor. By the winter of 1978, the political situation in Beirut had actually improved from what it had been since 1976. Remember we were evacuated in 1975. I told them that I would take the assignment; but I wanted them know that my wife and I had been through some

difficult times. The one thing I didn't want was to be separated at that moment in our relationship. I was assured that families were now being allowed to accompany officers.

Peggy, my wife, and I flew to Beirut to talk to the embassy and to search for an apartment. In those days in Beirut you were given a housing allowance and then you found your own apartment. One of the persons I met was the deputy chief of mission, George Lane. Everything looked set for my assignment to Beirut. I think this trip to Beirut was in the spring. I had not been back in Riyadh long when the security situation in Beirut just went to pot again. To the credit of the Department I had a call from personnel recalling my condition when I accepted the assignment that I go to Beirut with family. I was told that with the deteriorating security situation in Beirut families were not going to be allowed to go. I was asked if my desire not to be separated remained. If it did, they were willing to break my assignment. I said, "I just could not go without my wife." The assignment was broken; but it meant that in May I didn't have an onward assignment, which is unusual.

Two weeks later I had a call from George Lane. George told me that he was not supposed to talk to anyone but he had been chosen by the president to be the next U.S. ambassador to Yemen. He was looking desperately for a deputy chief of mission who spoke Arabic. He had looked at the list of officers at grade and there were none available. He asked if I was willing to consider the job. That would have been a stretch assignment for me -- meaning that the grade of the position in Sana'a was a grade above my personal rank.

Q: Oh yes.

GNEHM: And it was a fantastic assignment for me as well. But I was a little concerned. Again my focus was on my wife and my family. We'd been talking about going to Beirut, which is a modern city that Peggy knew, or to a number of other places, like Europe, where it would be an easier assignment for us as a family. Going to Yemen certainly didn't fit that kind of onward assignment. At the suggestion of a friend, I proposed to Peggy that she go down to Yemen to see how she felt about living there. The ambassador was a friend, Tom Scotese from our Damascus days, and she could stay with him. I told her that this move was going to be her decision. If she wanted to go to Yemen, we would go to Yemen. If not, we would find another assignment. She went to Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, and came back saying "Yes, she thought it would be a great assignment." To be completely honest, I was stunned but pleased knowing that she was fully on board for this move. It was then that I called George back and accepted his offer.

I mentioned that Peggy had been working for Citibank in Riyadh in an administrative position. Citibank actually had a branch in Yemen and, while they were under no obligation toward her, they were very happy to have someone who had worked in the regional headquarters to now work in their Sana'a branch. So they offered her a hire there. So Peggy worked in Sana'a for Citibank during our first year there. So that leads me to my next assignment as DCM in Sana'a, Yemen.

Q: Would you put this down to the fact that NEA wanted to get a lot of rough pogo posies? I mean a lot of people were shooting at each other in the region, as they're doing right now. But the decision in your case took into account family concerns? I mean you were part of the NEA family and that there's a little more care than say they would be taking in ARA or some other bureau where people have a lot of rather nice assignments and they don't really think about family matters.

GNEHM: The bureau in those days was exactly as you describe. You really felt like you were part of a family, part of a close knit group. I mentioned to you earlier that as a result of my job in NEA/P, I got to know people in every single office in the bureau just walking around to get press clearances. People knew me. I knew them. In those days people in the bureau looked out after one another. I include the leadership in NEA. It was officers like Tom Boyatt, who was a couple of grades ahead of me, that I turned to with questions about the career. He mentored me and others. There were many in NEA like Tom. And yes, I think that's why I got that phone call that said, "Look Skip, you expressed this strong opinion about being separated from your family and we're willing to break your assignment." There were no negatives even though the Bureau was now stuck without a political counselor for Beirut.

Q: Well you went to Yemen from when to when?

GNEHM: I arrived in Sana'a in August of '78 and I left there in the summer of 1981.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

GNEHM: The ambassador was George Lane, an NEA veteran who spoke excellent Arabic, an extraordinarily nice person. His wife, Betsy, was daughter of a missionary family and had grown up in Lebanon and Syria. So she spoke fluent Levantine Arabic. She used to laugh and say "I'm an illiterate Arab speaker. I can't read it; but I can speak it." She was a delightful person and a wonderful partner to George.

Q: Okay, when you went out there at that time what was the situation like?

GNEHM: Good question because it's important in the modern day context when we're doing the oral history that we recall that in those days there were two Yemens. There was North Yemen, which I'll probably keep calling Yemen in the course of this oral history, and then there was the PDRY, the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen, a communist dominated state. Its capital was Aden. That region had been a former British colony. The British had tried to set up a confederation using the old sheiks from the various parts of South Yemen to be the collective leadership of the independent state. Within a year, however, the communist party overthrew the government and established a communist dictatorship, with very close ties to the Soviet Union. By the time I arrived in Yemen there was an observation that was illustrative about the situation in the south. South Yemen was probably the only country in the entire world that in 1978 had a smaller population than it did when it became independent (in 1967). The communist regime was so dictatorial that many Yemenis fled the country -- often to North Yemen but also to

Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It was also very poor. The economy had collapsed and there were almost no employment opportunities. The government nationalized most all private property intensifying the exodus. So in any case, it was not a very stable country. It was politically fractured. There were factions within the communist party that kept overthrowing each other. Defeated leaders would flee the country then return from exile when their faction came back into power. This background is important to understand because only a few months after I arrived in Sana'a the South invaded the North, which I'll get to in a minute.

Q: Okay. You were in a country; did we have relations with the South Yemen?

GNEHM: We did not have relations with the South and never did throughout its entire history.

I arrived in late August. As with the situation in the south, it is important to understand the politics in North Yemen at the time. Several months before I arrived (actually on October 11, 1977), President Ibrahim al-Hamdi was assassinated in his bordello which sat on a hill overlooking Sana'a. He had been president for a three years and I would say a popular president. Under his leadership Yemen had been as stable as Yemen ever is in terms of domestic tribal affairs. But he was not well liked by the Saudis. He was far too strong a figure in a country the Saudis wanted to dominate. A strong leader, like Hamdi, undermined Saudi ability to influence events in Yemen. He was assassinated and most persons believe it was instigated by the Saudis.

He was replaced by a man by the name of Ahmad Ghashmi. Ghashmi departed the world rather suddenly when a ministerial envoy from South Yemen came to his office in June of '78 and opened his briefcase in front of the president's desk blowing himself and the president off the face of the earth. In other words, it was a South Yemen assassination of the new president of Yemen.

Who comes to power but Ali Abdullah Saleh, a colonel in the Yemen military, who had spent time serving in Taiz, a city in the southern part of North Yemen. At least in those days, Saleh was considered to be close to the Saudis and the rumors were that the Saudis had been behind getting him into the presidency. I say this because I met Ali Abdullah Saleh very early on under not terribly pleasant circumstances. But given that encounter, which I'll explain, and then the South Yemeni invasion in December, I actually developed a good relationship with him -- a relationship that was still good when I last saw him in Sana'a a few years ago. (This was while he was still president.) When I arrived in country as DCM, the ambassador, George Lane, had not yet arrived. The previous DCM, David Ransom, had left the morning before I arrived in the afternoon. I expected him to be at post when I arrived as diplomatic protocol is quite precise that exchange of authority in a diplomatic mission is either at the level of Ambassador to his deputy (as Chargé d'Affaires) or one Chargé to another -- in this case from David to me. But never mind. Life goes on.

The very day I arrived, a very funny thing happened. I was told that there was an important gathering of the diplomatic community that very evening and I had to attend. I went and during the reception I received a huge bear hug from the North Korean Ambassador! I remember seeing him and his entourage making their way across the room in my direction but thought nothing of it until I got this rousing welcome and hug. To this day I wonder if anything happened to him for giving the American Charge such a stunning welcome! It turned out that he had thought I was the new Soviet DCM who arrived the same day as I did!

On my third day I got summoned to the Presidential palace. I was told that the President was very angry, in fact furious. There had been a "Washington Post" story, front page lower left; with a headline something like "CIA predicts Saleh won't last." The article was about the politics that I just mentioned and predicted that he wasn't likely to survive. Well, you can imagine that he was absolutely livid. When I arrived, he started screaming and yelling. The one thing I noticed right away was that he seemed ill at ease -- somewhat uncertain -- as he kept shifting in his seat as if he did not know exactly how to position himself. He also kept shifting his eyes away from me. I took it to be the lack of experience being president of the country; he'd been a colonel in the military. But he was angry about the article and it certainly came at a delicate time as he was trying to consolidate his power. It was an unsettled time for him.

Anyway, Saleh kept yelling at me and all I could think was that this tour in Yemen was likely to be the shortest tour of my career. I imagined Saleh sending me in a car directly from this meeting to the airport, declaring me persona non grata (PNG). When the President seemed to stop to catch his breath, I said, "Mr. President, Mr. President, Mr. President..." He seemed startled at my interruption and asked "What?" I told him that no one in the embassy in Sana'a had anything to do with that article. We had no input in it. We were as surprised when we saw it as he was. I said, "I'm going to make this prediction. I bet you are around a lot longer than the analysts who wrote that article." Well, this was 1978 and he didn't resign until 2013! In the years that followed he and I have often laughed about encounter. Obviously I was not PNGed!

Q: Did you ever find out what instigated that?

GNEHM: I think it was an analyst, who saw the two assassinations, an unknown colonel becoming President, and the Saudis playing their games, that simply concluded that Ali Abdullah Saleh could not survive. Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, the Saudi Minister of Defense and Aviation, was the designated prince of the Saud family to deal with Yemen affairs. It was well known that the Saudis paid a lot of money to various Yemeni tribes, playing one against the other, paying different factions within the military, simply doing anything they thought would advance their interests in Yemen.

There was a legend that I heard often in those days. It related the words of old King Abdullah Aziz al-Saud, the founder of the current state of Saudi Arabia, on his deathbed in 1953 to all of his sons around him. He purportedly made them swear to three things. The first was that the monarchical succession in Saudi Arabia would be from his oldest

son to the next son to the next son to the next son so that there would be no infighting in the family. This harbored back to what is called the second Saudi Kingdom, which was in the mid-1800s when the Saudis had established themselves for a second time in the center of Saudi Arabia. The family fought with each other including assassinations and exiles. They so weakened their own grip on power that they were defeated by rival tribal family.

The second point was to never permit Yemen to unite. In other words, keep the two Yemens separated. The Saudis always perceived Yemen as a threat to the Kingdom's survival, given its huge population, their constant tribal in-fighting, their independent spirit, and the volume of arms. I think there were over a million Yemenis living in Saudi Arabia at the time I was in Riyadh. When Ali Abdullah sided with Saddam Hussein when he occupied Kuwait in 1990, the Saudis were both angered and alarmed. They forced large numbers of Yemenis to leave the Kingdom. The Saudis were feared what the Yemenis might do inside Saudi Arabia.

Q: What did we see vis-à-vis tribal politics and all in the Yemen- And what was in it for us? What did we want out of them?

GNEHM: The United States' interest was very much to try to maintain stability in the peninsula. There was recognition that the situation inside North Yemen, with tribal factions and infighting created the potential of destabilizing Saudi Arabia. It was and is very clear that the United States' interests on the Arabian Peninsula were linked primarily to Saudi Arabia. Yemen was and is secondary. In fact, I remember a conversation that I had with Jim Placke who was DCM in Jeddah when I was going to Yemen. This conversation was before I left Riyadh. He and I met and talked through the whole gamut of issues of US relations with Saudi Arabia and Yemen. He and I made a pact. We agreed that we were never going to let the Saudi/Yemeni issue become a personal problem between each of us or between the two embassies. I mention this because historically, in the region on occasion embassies have taken on the issues of their country and found themselves in conflict with our embassy in a neighboring country, Jordan and Israel for example or Damascus and Tel Aviv. There had been times when the US ambassadors in Jidda and Sana'a were at odds over US policy, especially when our ambassador in Yemen believed that bowing to Saudi pressures was not in overall US interests. Whenever that happened it usually resulted in Washington (and Jidda) reminding Sana'a that our interest with Saudi Arabia were paramount. I knew that. But again, the US did have interests in Yemen including maintaining stability and containing communism and Soviet influence in South Yemen.

Q: What made the Yemenis so susceptible? Because you know you had various regimes in the Arab world, most of which were rather violently anti-communist.

GNEHM: Right.

Q: I mean they might be nationalistic and not nice towards us but anti-communism just didn't seem to fit with the Arab psyche or something.

GNEHM: You say it did or did not?

Q: Did not. But maybe it-

GNEHM: Well the Saudis were vehemently anti-communist because they saw communism as atheism and that is what led the Saudis in many cases throughout the decades to support anti-communist efforts in parts of the world quite far geographically from the Kingdom, such as Nicaragua and Vietnam. For example, an ARAMCO official has documented the fact that, when King Feisal imposed the oil embargo on the US in '73 because of our support for Israel, he got King Feisal to modify the boycott only when he pointed out that the embargo was undermining the U.S. efforts in South Vietnam fighting the communists. The US army and navy, and air force were getting most of their fuel from Saudi Arabia. Faisal told him, again this is documented by the then ARAMCO president, that ARAMCO could resume oil sales to the US military but he wanted no public reference to this change in the boycott.

But I thought you were going to a question on Yemen. You have to understand Yemen and Yemenis, which is difficult to do, I admit. They're very tribal-focused to this day. Loyalties are to themselves and their tribe and the local sheik. Then there is the geography. The coastal areas are at sea level and the capital Sana'a is at 7,500 feet. Other elevations go up to 10,000; there are huge valleys and mountain chains that separate one tribe from another. They love to fight each other. This is their pastime. While soccer is the main sport of other countries, in Yemen it's squabbling! It's fighting; it's stealing sheep and. And then there is retribution. The victim has to get even -- to save face. They fight all the time; but throw a foreigner into the mix and they all turn on foreigners. It's absolutely incredible. In Yemen in '78, you had to remind yourself because we don't have a good sense of history. The Egyptians sent hundreds of thousands of Egyptian troops into Yemen in 1962, '63, in support of the Republican coup against the monarchy, the imam. They were there until after the '67 war when Nasser had to bring them home. He needed troops; he was impoverished and he was trying to survive. So they were there for five years, virtually.

When I arrived in Sana'a in 1978, Yemenis were still telling tales about the civil war between the Republicans (who won) and the Royalists. I remember being told by the Yemeni who was Treasurer of the Republican Government how he fled one night with the entire treasury in a foot locker because they thought the Royalists were going to attack the capital the following day! He went on to tell me a story that underscores how Yemenis feel about foreigners -- even other Arabs in the country to help the Republican Government. He described how the Republicans were on one ridge with the Egyptians with the Royalists deployed on the far ridge. When the royalists began shelling the Republicans, they took out mirrors and flashed that the Egyptians were down at the other end of the ridge. What did the royalists do? They redirected their artillery and started shelling the Egyptians and not the Yemenis!

Let me jump ahead to the present (2016) to say that my advice to the administration in the last three years on how to deal with the troubles in Yemen was don't put U.S. troops

on the ground. It would be the end of us because all the various fighting forces would turn their focus on fighting the foreigner. The USG did actually decide on their own not to deploy forces to Yemen. I don't think it was my advice that convinced them of this, but there you go.

And so, back to understanding Yemen... Traditionally the central government controlled the capital, Sana'a, most (but not all) of the major towns, and most (but not all) of the major highways. In 1978 the central government's authority in outlying areas was tentative at best; and until this day don't have a lot of authority out there in those hills. I used to describe Yemen in this period of time as like Denver, Colorado, in 1870. There were sidewalks, picket fences, beautiful house, gardens, and everybody well-dressed; but you didn't go out on a picnic in 'them thar hills. There were Indians out there and they weren't always friendly! Well, that's the way it was in Yemen when I posted there.

Now I have to tell you that in the three years that I was there with my family, we loved Yemen. I could go out into the countryside even though we knew there could be some problems. My family and I went all over. We went camping down at the Red Sea. We went climbing the hills and mountains. We traveled in our 4x4 to all kinds of back places including the historic ruins out in Ma'rib, the famous dam. Yes, there were problems. If you took the road to Saada in the north, which is where there's trouble to this day, you would certainly pass through two or three government checkpoints and probably two or three tribal checkpoints. The tribal checkpoints on any given day were collecting something. Today it might be watches. Tomorrow it might be wallets. There were days when they were collecting tires. Tires are a particularly serious problem to lose because you can't keep going. Watches, you can keep driving, right? But if they take your tires you're stuck. But they weren't killing people. They weren't shooting. I know of only one incident in those years of anybody getting wounded. An AID employee was stopped on the Saada road at a tribal checkpoint. One of the tribesmen, who came to demand some item, accidentally shot off his Kalashnikov and a bullet hit the steel rim of the tire and ricocheted up and grazed the AID person's leg.

I remember another incident when Peace Corps volunteers were going on an excursion out to Ma'rib to see the ruins. They were going up this one valley and they stopped around 12:00 one day in a village to buy supplies for the rest of their trip. The village sheik saw that they were there, came over and greeted them, said "Oh, this is wonderful and we want you to know how much we love the Peace Corps and love America. Please come to my house for lunch." They agreed.

So they all went up the hillside to his house for lunch. When lunch was over, they said they had got to get going and the sheik said, "No, you can't go." The Peace Corp volunteers said, "Yes, we have to go soon." The sheik said, "No, you can't go; you're going to be our guests for a while until AID agrees to come and dig a well and build a water reservoir for our village." Word came to the embassy that Peace Corps volunteers were being held hostage by this sheik out in the hinterland and was demanding a well and water reservoir for their release. I called the President and described the problem. He said, "I'll take care of it." I said, "Listen. We've got to get them freed without hurting

them; but we're not going to concede to this demand. We are not going to get in that situation." "Okay, I understand," he said.

Well, two days later the volunteers end up coming into the embassy. I said, "Oh, you got loose." The president didn't call and tell me they were loose. They said, "Yes, yes, yes." I said, "Well how'd you get out?" "Oh," he said, "somebody told the sheik that AID had agreed to do the well and reservoir. So he let us go." We had to put that whole valley off limits for any Americans because when the sheik realized that there had never been such a promise, he threatened to take hostage any American that ever came through his village. But again, my story being that they weren't hurt, we weren't into a situation as of today.

Q: Well were Egyptians, Soviets, Saudis mucking around there? I mean-

GNEHM: All the above and more; the North Koreans too.

Q: Oh yes, the North- obviously. North Korean-

GNEHM: Oh yes. The Yemenis are wonderfully good at playing everybody against everybody and they do it with aces and spades, part of which you'll hear later. But this does allow me to tell you a funny, funny anecdote.

The day I arrived, I was told by the embassy that there was a very big diplomatic reception that night and that I had to go because if the U.S. embassy was not represented it would be a big, big issue in town. So I went.

I'm in this big ballroom at a hotel with a huge numbers of people, and I'm talking to some colleagues. They pointed out a cluster of diplomats dressed in blue uniforms with little blue hats telling me that they were North Koreans.

And as I was talking, I noticed that one large fellow with two others behind were pushing their way through the crowd headed in my direction. I didn't pay any attention until suddenly the big one comes up to me and gives me a huge bear hug. He starts speaking in Russian and kissing me on both cheeks! I'm thinking what in the hell is going on. And then he turns and goes away. I turned to my own group for an explanation. They didn't have a clue. Then there was pandemonium over among the North Koreans and they all fled the room. It turns out that a new Russian chargé had arrived within a day or two and they hadn't met him yet. They thought I was the Russian chargé. We got a big laugh out of that as well as did several other diplomats. We wondered if they all got called back to North Korea to the gulag or something.

I think that I'm probably the only American diplomat in that period of time that got bear hugs and kisses from the North Koreans.

Q: Well while you were there was the Iranian revolution going on?

GNEHM: Yes, indeed it was and that's in 1979. Before I respond to that question, I need first to speak about the war that erupted between the two Yemens.

Q: Yes, let's take the time, yes.

GNEHM: The war erupted in December, as I recall. There was panic in Sana'a. I got a call from the president telling me that there had been an invasion by the South. The Southerners were making great progress up a valley, headed towards Sana'a, and would I please come over immediately with my defense attaché so that we could talk about strategy and actions.

So I went over to the Presidency with my military attaché where we met with the President and his chief of staff. The first thing we asked was to show us where the invasion occurred. They unfolded a huge map of Yemen on the coffee table. The president and chief of staff are looking at the map and they turn it halfway around and then they turn it back another way and then they turn it completely around. I realized immediately that neither of them knew how to orient or read a map. So I pretended to be puzzled and I turned the map the right way saying, "So here's Sana'a and Taiz and the border's here. So where did they invade?" Once I'd done that, they showed me the valley and the direction the southern army was taking.

We reported all this to Washington. Of course, Washington was quite aware. The Saudis went berserk that the South was invading. They had a sense that the government in Sana'a was going to collapse. I remember a minister in the Yemeni government that I got to know quite well calling me late one night asking me to come to his house urgently. When I got there, I found him shaking and trembling out of fear. He said, "Skip, the whole North Yemen military has collapsed; they've gone back to their tribes. The road to Sana'a is wide open to them. There is nothing to stop them from reaching Sana'a and I know what's going to happen. Skip, I know if you all don't do something to save us, we are going to all be hung, as we did the royalists, in the square downtown." Well, the government in Sana'a also disappeared. I spoke with George Lane the next morning after I drove to the embassy. "Did anything seem unusual today?" He said, "the traffic wasn't as bad." I said, "Yes, that's because there's no government here anymore; but that's not what I was asking about." He asked what I meant. I said, "Well, the electricity's still running and the water is still running. It just proves that the government is really not very important in this country in keeping things going!"

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia called the President Carter. He was almost in a panic. He told the President that we had to do something and urged the US to provide military assistance to Sana'a to keep North Yemen from falling to the communist south. He said Saudi Arabia would cover the cost. And so we got a telegram the next day not knowing anything about the phone call, that President Carter had made a decision to provide North Yemen with F-5 fighter planes and M-60 tanks within 60 days. The Saudis were going to transfer the tanks to Yemen from their inventory and we would replace them in due course with new ones. Ambassador George Lane and I were incredulous! We thought "are you kidding? This is ridiculous." First of all the South is headed into town like

within a day or two. The F-5 won't arrive for months and even then the Yemenis don't know how to fly them! The only fighter planes they had flown previously were Russian.

Q: The what?

GNEHM: The Russian fighter planes.

Q: Migs?

GNEHM: Migs and Sukhois. Again, the North Yemenis had never flown an American plane before. We met President Saleh and told him about Carter's decision. He was quite pleased, of course. As I recall, the Saudis did fly in a few tanks several days later. Three or four days later I was over to see the president and we were talking about how things were going. The military attaché who'd been with me when we had met the President and his Chief of Staff was Paul Ruskowitz. He did not believe that there was any invasion that began a controversy that ultimately ended up before a Congressional committee. Ruskowitz went down the highway to the south and parked himself where this the road in the valley identified as the attack point met the main highway. When he returned to Sana'a, he reported that he had seen no military traffic whatsoever. He contended, therefore, that there was no invasion. I said to him, "Well, that's because first of all the southerners haven't gotten that far yet. Secondly, I did not think one could conclude from one day observation at one point on the highway that there had been no invasion.

Well, it turns out that the South Yemeni army never made it to the road. You know what happened? They filled up their vehicles with so much loot as they moved through villages that they had to go home to empty the trucks so they could come back for more loot. Only when they got home, they were having so much fun with the loot and they had done so well that they just never came back. So the South was having the same problems that the North did in terms of discipline and military muscle. As a result the North Yemen government survived.

Then what happens? The Saudis sent a message that they no longer wanted the F-5s to go to the Yemenis and they did not think that they needed to supply anymore tanks as there was no more threat from South Yemen. The White House through the State Department reacted quite negatively pointing out that the President had made a public commitment and we could not just reverse that decision. What we were facing was classic with the Saudis. They were afraid (at the moment of the invasion) that the North was collapsing and the communist South would unify all Yemen. Once there was no longer a threat, their fears turned to a 'too strong' North Yemen. They didn't want the North Yemen military to gain this new military capability. Again, back to my point that the Saudis were always concerned about a threat from Yemen. Now there was no serious threat from the South and, therefore, no need to bolster North Yemen militarily. Well, the President said he was going ahead with the military assistance that we had promised. But for me, one of the problems that I had to face in Sana'a was dealing with the Saudi military mission. The M-60 tanks (at least some of them) had been delivered and it was to have been the Saudi responsibility to provide maintenance support and spare parts -- at least initially. Of

course, what did they do? Since they did not want the Yemenis to get the tanks now that there was no threat from the South, they stopped sending spare parts.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Since we intended to proceed with the military assistance that we had promised, we needed the Saudis to come through with what they had promised. It took a lot of argument in Sana'a and a lot of pressure by our embassy in Saudi Arabia to convince the Saudis to follow through with their commitments.

The F-5s do arrive at some point -- a year later or so. The Saudis had agreed to support the F-5 program as they had with the tanks. Part of the agreement was that the Saudis were going to pay for the training and the spare parts and provide maintenance support as well.

Now, we watched a weird situation develop that could only occur in Yemen! The Russians, who had supplied Migs and Sukhois of course, signed a contract with the communist Chinese to provide the maintenance and support for the Yemen air force's Soviet planes, right. Who provided the maintenance and support for the Saudi F-5 fleet in Saudi Arabia? The nationalist Chinese (ROC). So who did the Saudis send to Sana'a? The Taiwanese Chinese. So you had the Saudi-funded Taiwanese Chinese on one side of the airport with the F-5 program, and the Peking (PRC) Chinese supported Soviet Mig fighters on the other side. I don't think there was any other place on earth where the two Chinas were training the same military at the same time. And over time there were two different groups of pilots in competition with each other -- one trained on Soviet aircraft and another flying US made fighter planes! This was a good example of how the Yemenis could handle both Chinese -- play both sides. The PRC did not withdraw because the Taiwanese were there because they had a lot of influence and presence in Yemen which they did not want to lose. In addition to the military training, they had huge road construction projects and lots of other aid programs. The PRC obviously calculated that their relationship with North Yemen was more important than contesting the ROC presence. I remember that the Sana'a government claimed in public that they're not really Taiwanese but Saudis! My response was "Give me a break." But, you know, it survived, absolutely survived. Incredible.

Now you asked me earlier about '79 and the Iranian revolution. Yes, it impacted us but not due to any trouble in Yemen itself or in the region, but because of heightened anxiety in Washington. The Carter Administration decided, given the hostage situation in Tehran, that there should be a drawdown of U.S. presence throughout the region to avoid more hostage taking. Yemen was a particular focus on Yemen because some official discovered that there was a "Shia" population in Yemen. It was obvious, therefore, that they would be sympathetic to the Iranian revolution and thus a direct threat to the American mission in Sana'a. Now what were they referring to? They were referring to a sect called the Zaydis, which we hear a lot about today because they're called Houthis. They're located in the Saada region in the northern part of North Yemen. They were the royalists back in the civil war in Yemen, supported the imam, and to that extent were fairly close to the Saudis even though they were Zaydis and the Saudis are Sunni

Wahhabis. We kept telling Washington these Zaydis have no relationship to Iran at all. In fact, their religious practices have migrated so much in the direction of Sunni Islam in particular the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam that it is almost unrecognizable as a Shiite group. We stressed that they don't have any interest in the revolution in Iran. Washington ultimately conceded the point; but they still ordered us to downsize by a certain percent. The Ambassador asked me to work out the numbers. I had to go to AID, to Peace Corps, and other agencies that operated under the ambassador's authority to get their approval for a reduction in force. And from this experience I learned a very important lesson for the rest of my career.

It turned out that the other agencies were more willing to cut dependents, in particular, and there were dependents who were more willing to go voluntarily while the Foreign Service core from the State Department were less willing to go. The State dependents winged it through trouble and said that this is our region and we're not going to leave. We did succeed in reducing the size of the mission but, as everyone knows from the Department's history, once you evacuate you don't have any authority to bring people back. That's a Washington decision. And while the trouble in Iran went on, Washington refused to allow people to return even though we had no problems or incidents in Yemen at all. As a result the anger and frustration of the AID and Peace Corps directors and other agency heads grew. There was rising animosity toward State that their dependents were out and ours were in -- a sense that they were suffering and we weren't -- that we had somehow plotted with Washington to avoid our drawdown. They felt that we knew dependents would be out a long time and we took care of ourselves and not them. In honesty I felt for them; they had a legitimate complaint, primarily because I didn't think dependents should still be out of the country. But I learned from this experience and, when I faced orders for evacuation later in my career, I made sure that all agencies, including State, shared in the reductions.

Q: Was there an Ayatollah Khomeini strain going through the sermons and things like this?

GNEHM: In Yemen not at all. Not at all. He had no following. The Iranian revolution was some distance away, something happening in Persia. The Yemenis were still very much focused on themselves, their internal problems, etc. Economic issues were of dominating concern. We haven't talked much about it; but Yemen is an extremely poor country. Add economic concerns to other internal troubles, the troubles with the South, and the interference of Saudi Arabia, you can understand that Yemenis were not too focused on a revolution so far away. That at least was the case in 1979.

Q: Well there's a significant Yemeni community in the U.S.

GNEHM: Yes, particularly in Michigan.

Q: In Michigan?

GNEHM: And why? Because they came to the United States taking jobs in the automotive industry, in very large numbers. I'm glad you brought this up because, when I was there in those years, we were issuing about 3,600 Social Security checks to Yemenis. These are Yemenis who came and worked 20 and 30 years in the United States and when they retired where did they go? Back home. They never lost their identity, they never lost their ties with Yemen.

Q: And they lived fairly well.

GNEHM: Oh yes, they lived very well on a Social Security check in the hills. Housing and the cost of living, in general, was much, much lower. There were some issues, a variety of different ones that are common even today. For example, we had Yemenis who came to the States, stayed here and married American wives but who also, when they came back to visit Yemen for the summers, married Yemeni wives. So they had two families. Sometimes the American wife knew about it; but often she didn't. And then there was the child custody issue.

Q: Oh yes.

GNEHM: If there were children in the States and the Yemeni father decided to return to Yemen on a permanent basis, he would take the children and not tell the wife.

Q: Well did you have the problems that many consular officers do of trying to help the American wives smuggle their children back to the States?

GNEHM: There was at least one of those incidents while I was in Yemen, where an American wife hired a group to come into the country and take out a couple of children, as I recall. It's an ugly and nasty situation.

Q: Back in Washington with all this turmoil going on in Iran and difficulties elsewhere, how did Yemen fit in? I mean what did we want from Yemen from a Washington perspective?

GNEHM: Well again, in these years Washington was much focused on developments in Iran and the hostage situation. The US relationship with Saudi Arabia was hugely important, particularly after the fall of the Shah and the end of the Twin Pillar Policy -- a policy that looked to Saudi Arabia and Iran to be responsible for the security of the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia was the important key country for the US at this point in time and Yemen policy was always measured against Saudi interests. Our policy objective was to keep things calm and stable -- don't have any more problems. Yet at the same time, we in the embassy in Sana'a were trying to nurture our new relationship with the Yemeni government, which now had a military assistance component as well as an AID program. The AID program wasn't that large -- about \$8 million a year. The AID program, by the way, was not entirely a positive experience with the Yemenis. The president often complained that he and Yemen didn't get very much of the money. He noted the amount of money that was spent on salaries, cars and home leave. He wasn't wrong about that.

There was also a long lead time to get projects going, even longer when implemented in a country in constant turmoil. There wasn't a lot to show for what we were doing since our focus was in agriculture, education, and health. We were not into major infrastructure projects like the Chinese -- road building and airports -- things that looked big and shiny. On the other hand, the Yemenis weren't telling us to close down the AID program; they just wanted us to double it.

Q: What was happening in South Yemen where we had no diplomatic relations? Yet they are adjacent to Oman. Did you get involved in any of that? Or is that too far away?

GNEHM: Only in a marginal way. . South Yemen had been supporting an insurgency in western Oman; but that had been largely suppressed by the time I reached Sana'a. The Sultan of Oman with support from the Shah (with Iranian troops) and Jordan had defeated the insurgency. What we did watch carefully was the constant political turmoil in the PDRY as that had a way of impacting on North Yemen.

Q: What about the schooling? Did many Yemenis go to schools in the United States?

GNEHM: Very, very few. Yemen had remained a very closed country until the imam was overthrown in 1962. At one point in the late 1950s, the imam decided to send a number of students to the US. I believe it was 50. They did well and returned to Yemen and played an important role in subsequent years. After the 1962 coup the Republican government was very socialist minded and very much tied to the Egyptians. So there was little inclination send large numbers to the United States.

Q: Well now the Egyptians in this period, where stood we with the Egyptians?

GNEHM: In the '78-'81 period?

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Well much better off than in preceding years. Sadat was president following Nasser's death in 1970. This was also the period of the Camp David Accords. The Egyptian presence in Yemen was diplomatic and there were some advisors but not a large presence.

Q: Did we try to use our influence on developing relations between Yemen and the Israelis or was that beyond the pale?

GNEHM: No, but your question sparks a memory that I haven't thought about in a long time. When I was in Yemen, there still was a small minority of Jews, Yemeni Jews, a remnant of a community that went back centuries. In fact, at one point Yemen was a Jewish monarchy, was a Jewish state; but in the late '40s, after the establishment of Israel, there was a major effort on the part of Israel to move large numbers of Yemeni Jews to Israel. So the numbers of Jews in Yemen dropped dramatically. Nevertheless,

there was a residual community. While I was in Sana'a, a Jewish faction based in Brooklyn called the Neturei Karta, a religiously ultra conservative group that opposed the establishment of the state of Israel as a violation of the scriptures, decided they would take on the Jewish community in Yemen as wards. So the rabbi, whose name I've forgotten, out of New York City, and a couple of colleagues decided to come to Yemen. We were asked by the Department to facilitate their entry so I did have to go to the government to get visas to permit them come. The government agreed but was wary about it and thought it strange that there was a Jewish group that didn't like Israel. The delegation went out into the hinterland with a government escort to visit Jews near Saada in the north. They came back to the embassy absolutely appalled at the condition of the Jewish community certainly in economic terms but importantly in religious terms. There were, of course, no rabbis; there were no instruments for circumcision and others religious items that are very important to have. They said these are Jews who can't be Jewish because they don't have the means to. So they wanted to bring in these things to give to the community so they would have them. Then, they then raise the possibility of bringing someone to Yemen to be permanent to help them. The Israeli government came to the U.S. Government and protested our support for this group because of their anti-Zionism. The Israeli Government made clear that they were the right authority to be dealing with the Yemeni Jewish question, not this group. Yet, the Neturei Karta people were American citizens and we had to be helpful to them as we would with any American citizens. The group visited Yemen several times before the end of my tour. In fact, even after I returned to the U.S., I was still their contact man as far as they were concerned in terms of problems in Yemen. They did do some good things for the community; but it didn't really change that community's situation very much. I did visit them once with the Neturei Karta and then later alone. These Jewish families lived in villages far off the main highway. The numbers were small, maybe two Jewish families out of 20 or 30 families in a village. They still were the artisans or the carpenters in the communities.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: They told me that they felt was no hostility from the local tribe, and noted that in fact they lived among them with no difficulty. In Israel the Israeli government said, "Well that's what they'll tell Americans because they won't get in trouble with the Yemenis." Yet my own assessment was that they were poor, absolutely very, very poor but so were the villages in which they lived. It is true that they were not able to practice their religion the way the Jewish communities in Israel or the States would want them to. No, they couldn't because they were so small number; they had no synagogue; they had no rabbi.

Q: How about your relations with tribes? Did you spend a lot of time visiting tribal chiefs?

GNEHM: I did. I did go out quite often and it was fun. These were excursions sometimes overnights in villages.

Q: Go sit on a rug and-

GNEHM: Yes. And climb up to the top floor in Yemeni houses. You know the Yemeni houses are quite interesting. They're multiple storied with a room on the top which is a sitting room where they chew their qat and gossip and waste away half a day. There is often a great view looking out over the mountains and valleys. I knew government officials in Sana'a who were from the tribes and, when they were going to go out for visits, they would be willing --even happy -- to take me with them. I went to weddings and for special occasions and holidays. Yemen was a fun place. The people were very hospitable and friendly. Local politics was interesting and Yemen's role in the peninsula was intriguing.

One observation from my time in Yemen is worth mentioning. I served many years in various ME countries. Yet I was a bit taken aback when I got to Sana'a to see how important Africa was in their world perspective. Once you see it, it is obvious. While as Arab and Moslem they certainly have one eye looking at the Arab world, they are right across from Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Sudan. There is significant movement of people across the red Sea. The Yemenis were interested in what was going on across the water -- even more so today. You have refugees from Somalia and Eritrea, some of whom are affiliated with terrorist groups. Anyway it was just a reminder that an Arab Muslim country in the region has other interests that go beyond the more traditional Arab concerns.

Q: Were the Saudi princes messing around with tribal politics in Yemen?

GNEHM: All the time, constantly. Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, who was the Minister of Defense and Aviation, was the senior prince in the family designated to deal with Yemen. He implemented Saudi policy aimed at keeping Yemen disunited. Essential in carrying out the policy was to play tribes off against each other. Money was the chosen instrument of influence. So there was a constant flow of Yemenis to his ministry dealing with his underlings. The Yemenis were often there collecting bags of money.

There was one particularly unfortunate incident that I remember well. The Foreign Minister of Yemen, when I arrived, was Abdullah Asnaj. Asnaj was a very competent, experienced international affairs professional in the region. He traveled extensively in the region and globally. He attended foreign ministers' conferences and Arab League meetings. His deputy foreign minister, Ibrahim al-Kibsi, was coming back from Riyadh when he was arrested at Sana'a Airport. The diplomatic pouch he was carrying was opened by the security people and in it were letters from Prince Sultan to Asnaj that implicated Asnaj in a plot to overthrow President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Both Asnaj and his deputy were thrown into prison. Ibrahim was my primary contact at the Foreign Ministry during my first year and a half in Sana'a. He was a real professional and very open, very pleasant, and very facilitative when there were issues. For example there were two Americans who came into the country and were arrested for being CIA spies, allegedly. They were asking too many questions; they were seeing too many people that the government didn't like. Ibrahim actually went to the General Intelligence Directorate and ultimately spoke to the President convincing him that they were not CIA. Working with

Ibrahim we actually got them released and deported.

I believed Ibrahim when he said he was unaware of the contents of the pouch that he was carrying. To this day he swears to me he did not know what was in that pouch. I found myself as a diplomat torn and caught in a dilemma. I think this is a good story that illustrates the dilemma of a foreign diplomat working in a foreign country. I had extraordinarily good relations with the president and others but I also felt close to Ibrahim. I knew that if I said or spoke to the government in any way on his behalf, it would probably be interpreted as me working for the Saudis to try to get out of jail somebody that they wanted out of jail. And in fact it might hurt him. But I didn't want Ibrahim and his family, because I'd gotten to know his wife also, to think I had no concern for Ibrahim.

You know what I did? I talked to my wife, Peggy. I said, "Peggy, in this culture I can't do anything but I want you to go to Ibrahim's house and see his wife and tell her point blank how upset I am about his arrest. Tell her that I fear doing something right away that might hurt him but that I would never cease thinking about how I might be able to help him at some point." She did it. She went and saw Ibrahim's wife. The women get away with things in the local culture. I mean the government is not going to see my wife's visit as any sort of sinister thing because who would use a woman in that way.

Q: Besides, the woman's control is very powerful underneath the surface and if they mess with that they're in trouble.

GNEHM: Yes, so true. Ibrahim was ultimately released and, in fact, given a sinecure in an economic position. He was later assigned as an Attaché in the Yemeni Embassy in Washington where he still resides. To this day Ibrahim and I remain friends. Asnaj was also ultimately released and went into exile in Cairo. This incident illustrates how deeply involved the Saudis were and are in Yemeni politics.

Q: Did you have a problem interpreting the relationship between Riyadh and Sana'a to the BEA Bureau in Washington?

GNEHM: Actually no. I attribute it to the interpersonal networking that you asked me about earlier in NEA. Also important was that understanding with Jim Placke, the DCM in Jeddah. The fact that I had served in our Embassy in Saudi Arabia and John West was still the ambassador. George Lane was very prominent and well known in NEA and the Department. Jim Placke and I kept our word. Whenever it looked like Saudi-American issues and Yemen-American issues might somehow conflict and cause trouble, we were on the phone with each other or coordinating cables -- working on how we would fix it and how we would deal with it. And we avoided most of the issues that might and could have queered things.

Q: How did you deal with the qat situation? Because this is really a major part of the culture there.

GNEHM: It is very much a part of the culture of the culture. Qat is a tree. They chew the new tender leaves. They gather together in the late afternoon and sit together until late in the evening. As they sit and talk, they chew holding great wads in their cheek. They look deformed, actually. What is not well understood about qat is that it is a stimulant, not a suppressant as most drugs are. The result is more intense senses. They are wide awake, to say the least. They also drink lots of scotch afterwards to bring themselves back down. And you're right; they get together and I guess the word "pontificate" comes to mind. They just go off into all kinds of theories and discussions and poetry and recitations. They love doing this sort of a thing but they waste hours and hours of life doing this. Even worse due to the high demand for qat, most of the agricultural land is now used to qat, a cash crop. Coffee production, for which they were famous, mocha coffee, has almost disappeared. Further complicating Yemen's economic stress, qat takes large quantities of water which Yemen doesn't have. Yemen is already one of the poorest water resource countries in the world. In the days I was there, qat was not on a list of prohibited items for the United States; it has since been added as a narcotic and you can't bring it into the U.S. But there you go; part of culture.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Can I just add one fact about the American presence in Yemen. There was a group of Baptist missionary doctors in a town about halfway toward the southern city of Taiz. They ran a hospital for decades. I mention it because in subsequent years a radical Islamic group attacked the hospital and killed a number of doctors and nurses. It was tragic and the truth was that they were greatly respected by the local population. They were a very important American presence in the country those days.

Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. And where'd you go next?

GNEHM: I came back to the United States. I can probably handle a couple of things really quickly.

Q: Sure.

GNEHM: For the next one, I had to leave Yemen about two months before I intended in late June because I received word that my father was terminally ill. In my opinion the Department of State does take care of its personnel. They brought me back to the US on early departure so that I could be with my father before he died.

My next assignment was to the office of Senator Edward Kennedy under the Pearson Program, an initiative of both the Department and Congress to have Foreign Service Officers work in Congressional offices.

Q: To what?

GNEHM: To Senator Kennedy's office where I worked in his foreign policy section for a one year detail. I mention this because I often, tongue in cheek but not entirely, thought this was some sort of manipulative plot by someone unknown to me! Here is am, a Georgia boy from 30 miles south of Plains, Georgia. I told you about my relationship with the Carter Administration. And I am now being assigned to the one man who challenged Carter in the Democratic primary the summer before and many people say Kennedy's challenge weakened Carter severely in his effort to run. And they stick me there!

In truth I had a very interesting assignment.

Q: And so, was your experience with Senator Kennedy a good one?

GNEHM: Yes. It was very interesting and I learned a lot. I learned how a Congressional office works. Here you come out of a system where there are clearances and you're very careful about words and into an office that is very decentralized. I was assigned to work with Jan Kalicki, the Senator's foreign policy advisor. Once he asked me in Massachusetts, where there is a large Portuguese community very pro-Kennedy. After I had written the article, I went to see the chief of staff to see who needed to clear its contents. He said Jan's clearance was all that was needed. When I observed that the Senator had not seen it and could well be asked about it at some point, he said that the Senator did not need to see it. If he was asked about the article, he would know what to say. I went back to my office thinking that I would never be able to do this at the State Department -- just write something and send it out. But that's the way it was in the Senator's office.

I observed firsthand something that people have written about -- the Kennedy machine. The Kennedy machine started with JFK and RFK and now Teddy. It was a group of people who shared the 'Kennedy' ideology and who were loyal to the individual, worked for him and had his welfare in constant focus. It was their politics as well. It was a machine. It wasn't just a man. It was a big machine.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: And so it operated. If the chief of staff said it was good to go or if Jan Kalicki said it was good to go, then that was it.

Q: Well I recall some of the earlier oral histories I did 24 years ago. People talked about what control officers experienced when they supported Kennedy during visits when he was a very junior senator traveling around Latin America. He was pretty wild and wooly as far as young ladies and young senators were concerned.

GNEHM: Well I would say again that I learned a lot working in Senator Kennedy's office. Of course, Senator Kennedy is dead and I grew to respect him; but there was this one time that I saw the Senator at his petulant best! There was a vote called on the Senate

floor. It was a vote on an issue that the Jewish lobby groups felt strongly about and desired to see passed. I can't remember the specifics but, when I went into office to brief him on the topic, he threw the briefing paper on the floor and said he wasn't going to vote for this bill. I remember him calling it outrageous. He said he didn't believe in it and the Jewish groups needed to learn some lessons (unspecified). His chief of staff said, "You don't have any choice, Senator; you've got to vote for this because it's the way it is. You've got to vote for it; there's no other way out of it." The Senator said, "I'm not going to. I'm not going to and that's that." He pitched a little bit of a temper tantrum and the chief of staff repeated, "Well you're going to have to and you need to go to the Senate floor right now. Skip, take him out to vote." The chief of staff leaves the office. Kennedy goes out another door from his private office and he goes into the gym for senators marked clearly "senators only." I go back to tell the chief of staff that Kennedy refused to go to the floor and had gone to the senators' gym. He went to the gym and was hollering at the door for the Senator to come out. Finally he enters the gym and virtually drags the Senator out. He said again, "You've got to go over to vote." Kennedy went back to his office and locked his door. Eventually he does go and he votes for the bill.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: The other thing that I learned was how the Jewish community can have the influence it has on members of Congress. I have often used this insight to try to explain American policy on the Arab-Israeli dispute and the influence of the Jewish community in American politics.

Kennedy is making a trip; it's a fundraising trip. I go to see the chief of staff who is writing some notes on possible questions the Senator might be asked on his trip. I asked some question about the audiences at various stops that led the chief of staff to stop what he was doing and say "I'll give you a lesson in politics."

Now, I don't have all the facts exactly right but the point is there. Kennedy was going to fly to Chicago for lunch, to Los Angeles for dinner, up either that night or the next morning to San Francisco for breakfast and back to St. Louis for a luncheon. I'm not sure whether it was lunch or dinner; but you get the point. He said "Skip, we've got a \$1000 a plate dinner in Chicago for 500 people. I called the Jewish groups in Chicago and sold 400 tickets. I made about more than 40 phone calls to try to sell the last 100. You got my point, Skip?" And it was true at every single stop because when he traveled, the Zionist Organization of America or AIPAC or the synagogue community of a particular city, whatever the groups were, the answer was quickly "Hey yes, I'll take 30 tickets or 50 or 100." They then sell them to the synagogues or either they pay for them themselves and hand them out to the leadership. But to get the other hundred \$1000 tickets sold, it was frustrating. "I'll buy one, my wife can't come, you know." It's fundraising. It's the way that community supports candidates financially that ultimately is important in how the senator goes and votes on the floor. Members are wary at jeopardizing such an important source of funding needed for their reelection. So I teach this as a lesson in American politics.

Q: Well, okay. So what are we picking up the next time?

GNEHM: We pick up the next time when I go back to the Department. I go back as head of the junior officer division in personnel often referred to in those days as “JO.”

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

Alright, now we have- you got a minute or two?

Q: I'll start with Monique. Do you have anything-?

INTERN MONIQUE: I don't have any questions so thank you for coming to speak with us again.

INTERN #2: I don't have any either.

INTERN #3: I have one. You mentioned when you started the Yemen job that you were deputy chief of mission but it was kind of like a jump in your career. So was that a hard transition or were there any challenges in taking that position the first time?

GNEHM: That's a good question. I would say the rank itself is not an issue. I mean I didn't have anybody in my staff saying oh, he's only an FSO-1.

Q: Rank was not overly important. Most of the time when you get to a place what your job is is important.

GNEHM: But your underlying question is a really good one. The fact is that this is the first time I would have been a deputy chief of mission and that's an extraordinarily important position in any mission. Not nearly important as the ambassador. The personality and leadership of the ambassador marks everything. Everything. You can't have a DCM who corrects an ambassador or who makes up for the shortcomings of the ambassador. No, you can't. But a good deputy chief of mission is the manager of the post for the ambassador, takes the day to day issues, and is sometimes the buffer. This would have been the first time I was in that kind of a role. I think the fact that I had been in the job in Riyadh where I was in fact in charge of an office, even a very small one, was important in preparing me for the job in Sana'a. I didn't have the interagency cluster that I found in Sana'a but I had to deal with the military what was like an office outside the embassy. I like to think, too, that I understand, like, and work well with people and that people skill is really, really important when you're in a leadership position like the deputy chief of mission. The ambassador himself was a seasoned ambassador from the system who knew how it worked and who was good with people as well. So we were a good team. I've spoken a lot about what I personally did and it would be totally misleading or wrong if I have left the perception that I was doing the Ambassador's work. We were a team and George Lane a true professional. We each did what was required at the time. Many of the stories that I told you were incidents that came up when he wasn't in country or when it seemed more appropriate for me to be doing something

than him. So I'm telling you that, if he were doing his version of the story, he would be telling you about how he called Washington about the decision to provide Yemen sophisticated military equipment, etc.

In summation you learn in these jobs. The real point is to try to do things in a way that, if you do make a mistake you can recover or you can put it right. Then you need to be honest enough to admit it. The evacuation issue that I discussed was one that we didn't handle well.

Q: What was the evacuation issue?

GNEHM: This was the drawdown that Washington insisted on after the Iranian seizure of our embassy in Teheran. As I explained, I worked to get the numbers down and ultimately the drawdown was preponderantly in non-State offices. A huge percentage of our staff at the time was in AID and other agencies. SO in any case most of those designated to leave post were going to be from other agencies. The issue was that no State employees or dependents opted to leave.

INTERN #3: You mentioned on the Peace Corps incident while you were in Yemen; how did you decide whether it was too dangerous a situation for them to operate safely? How much of that program closed down?

GNEHM: It had to be a guess -- meaning the assessment of the threat was not based on absolute calculations. When we felt that the hostility between tribes or against the central government had grown to such an extent that it was no longer possible to have volunteers safely out in the hinterland, then we had to pull them back to the city. When we first posted them in a village, we understood that they were under the protection of the sheik. When we began to have doubts as to whether tribes would protect the volunteers, then we had to decide to close down the program. It was a good program and I will tell you that the volunteers loved it. It was not an easy decision.

Q: You know, I mean it's one thing, you know, to be teaching English in Brasilia but to be up in the hills of Yemen, I mean you're really in a different world.

GNEHM: I have a very close friend in my church whose son had a Fulbright in Yemen. This would have been five or six years ago, before the current trouble. He found Yemen the same fascination that we're talking about even as recently as that. He talks about how he and several other foreigners who liked to rock climb went outside of Sana'a with their ropes and gear to where the cliffs were. The villagers came out to watch. My friend is a very outgoing person. So he asked them if they would like to try. At first the answer was no. And then two of the young guys tried and they liked it. The Americans ended up creating a club in the village to rock climb. So yes, Yemen can be entrancing.

Q: Okay well, thank you; I guess we'll pick this up next time when you're back to Washington, dealing with junior officers.

Today is the 14th of August, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you're in Washington. What period were you in Washington?

GNEHM: I came back to Washington in the summer of 1981 and I departed for my assignment in Amman in 1984 as deputy chief of mission. I was there for almost three years.

Q: Okay, we may be retracing ourselves a bit but what were you up to then?

GNEHM: The first year I was in Washington I was in the Pearson Program that assigns about 40 Foreign Service officers each year to various members of Congress. I was assigned to Senator Kennedy's office.

Q: To the Pearson Program.

GNEHM: Yes, It's a very good program.

Q: Well from all accounts from many people it exposes people in the Foreign Service and in the military, too, to the workings of the government.

GNEHM: It's a different approach to often the same issues and it's useful when you're in the Executive Branch to know how the Legislative Branch approaches things. It's very important. It helped me over a longer career to deal with congressional delegations, staffers and others because I could relate a bit to the environment in which they were operating.

I came back to the Department into a personnel job, heading what was called the JO (junior officer) division in personnel. Junior Officer was the term that we used in those days to refer to entry level officers. I headed that division for not quite a year during which about 350 new officers entered the Foreign Service.

Q: What was your impression of them and attitude and all?

GNEHM: I felt we were getting top notch people into the Foreign Service. And, as you know, I later became director general and I maintained my interest in this group of new officers. I felt the same about the quality of our new officers when I was the DG. The Foreign Service Institute through the A-100 course basically trains the new officers, but the Junior Officer Division in personnel worked very closely with FSI. During that A-100 course new officers are asked to submit preferences for their first assignments. It was my office that made the assignments. We were responsible for officers during the period in which they are untenured which is usually four to five years. Some JOs get tenured in three years, but for most new officers they remain under the JO Division for their initial and second assignment and advising for them during that time.

Q: Looking back on my time I spent quite a bit of time as a supervisory officer in consular affairs and I may have mentored but not- I didn't even know what the word

meant back then. It wasn't used in my time but I think it's- for a long time, at least during my career, I didn't have people leaning on me or sending either instructions on how best to mentor a young officer. Was this an issue at all when you were working with the junior officers?

GNEHM: It very definitely was an issue. Many of our new officers go into consular positions. It's required. During the first two tours they have to serve at least one tour (at least one year) in consular work. One reason is the statutory requirement that we provide consular services worldwide; but it is also good for all officers to have a working knowledge of consular issues. We had and still have large numbers of junior officers serving in consular sections. That was probably the most significant problem that I had to deal with during the time that I was in this job. I had to try to deal with morale problems and issues at certain posts. For example, I had actually went to Mexico City to deal with morale problems and issues the post was having with their junior officers. We had a similar problems in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and in London as well, a big post. Do you know what the problem is? In my opinion, the issue was (and it's not a very good commentary on the Foreign Service) that you have very, very intense, excited, and committed young officers. You had, in most posts that I mentioned senior consular officers heading the section who were very good; but the middle management of those sections was terrible. I realize I'm making gross generalizations.

Q: I agree absolutely but-

GNEHM: In my personal view it was people who were not doing that well and who ended up being stuck or stay in the middle management positions, such as head of the American interest section or head of the visa section or non-immigrant visa section. And they tended, in many instances, to resent the new officers' enthusiasm and excitement. They wanted to put the young officers in their place rather than encouraging the young officers to broaden out or to at least listen to them. It was often lecturing and hectoring and I had to deal with this problem on more than one occasion.

Q: How'd you deal with it?

GNEHM: In the first instance, I went to post because I think you deal with people best on a face to face basis. I began by having reviewed the issue with the head of the section before I went; I always met with him first to let everybody know who's in charge and so you're not undercutting them. I then held a meeting privately with the group of new officers or at least all who wanted to come. I then met individually when there were individual issues just to let them talk, just let them work through with me what their concerns were. I would then go back to the supervisor in hopes of working out ways of them dealing with any issues that I had found. What I found in almost every case was that openness of communication made a big, big difference. I would explain to new officers that they had to think of the bigger career; they needed to place their current situation in the context of a career. You need to do your work well. People who come to see you are expecting good service, good treatment. I told them to think about those kinds of things and not always be depressed or held back by the attitude of others. And I did not hesitate

to say that this is life. You're going to run into people who are going to resent you for your ambitions or who are not as good as you perhaps, even though they're over you, and they have their own problems that they're dealing with that you have to learn to deal with yourself. You won't have this problem throughout your career but, it does happen in life - - whether in the Foreign Service or the private sector.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: And it helped. I had established myself with most of them during their time in A100, not all of them because some of them would have come in before I was in this job. But when they were in the A-100 I was often out at FSI (Foreign Service Institute), I went to all the off-sites because there you're in a very informal situation, maybe playing games in the evening and interacting in a more casual atmosphere than back in Washington. I at least established myself as someone that they trusted. I had a solid base from which to work. Those officers who knew me would tell those who didn't know me, "Oh, Skip is good. Yes, you want to tell Skip exactly how you feel." Having that kind of reputation was very important.

Q: One of the things I've noticed with young Foreign Service officers in consular posts where I've been, particularly where there's a desire to get the hell out of the country and move to the United States and they'd use any means possible, visitors' visas, what have you to get to the US. Many of the young people had never had somebody look them in the eye and lie. You know, they just weren't used to- I mean, they'd gone through a system where, you know, lying was not, particularly blatant lying, was not an accepted thing. And all- and all of a sudden- And you know, I used to find I had to give sort of talks, don't take this personally, these are people, they want to get out and we've got some crazy regulations, not crazy but I mean we have these regulations. In their eyes all they have to do is get past this guy or gal and get a visa; my whole life is going to change. And I told them, you know; don't get too upset about the fact that they're trying to get around you. But it did bother them because I think people coming out of our system are inured to, you know, dealing with people who were lying. I mean, it's-

GNEHM: Oh, I think you're quite right about that. In fact, as you mention that, I think of my visit to Beijing. I went there specifically because of problems with new officers in the consular section. In the course of trying to communicate and deal with their concerns what I learned, which was a lesson that I then used elsewhere and when I was the Director General. One of the big problems that the consular officers were facing in Beijing had to do with Chinese-Americans who were at the window. Up would come the Chinese applicant, who would demand to see an American, refusing to talk to "that Chinese" on the other side of the window. I did not matter that the officer explained that he/she was an American of Chinese descent. Applicants refused to believe that, claiming that to the person was probably working for the Chinese government. They were insulting, also. And so the Chinese-Americans, I'm talking about now the American officers of Chinese descent, were really demoralized. What was missing was the failure on the part of the senior consular officers in the section to actually recognize this, listen to their problems and help them work through it -- just the thing you were talking about.

How do you deal with people who insult you or come up and lie to you? In this case it was a morale issue, too. And the mid-levels were just not understanding or sympathetic.

Q: This is a day in the consular ranks. This is always a problem. There's a general shifting; junior officers come and go in the consular section. We have the bright ones and the ones that aren't too bright and all but I mean basically it was bright ones but there's a falling off and also there's always been a certain movement from staff ranks, secretarial ranks or administrative ranks to become consular officers. And these often are, I mean, they're alright but I mean they're up against people who are probably literally the best and the brightest. And they resent it and the resentment shows through.

GNEHM: Yes, this is an issue that I had to deal with.

I would like to share with you something you wouldn't have thought to ask me about. There is an agreement, which still exists, between the CIA-State agreement that permits the Agency to place certain officers in our A-100 class for the purpose of providing those officers with better cover. Participating in the A100 course gives them an understanding of the State Department that they would not normally have when they go straight out of Langley on assignment without having had any common experience with the State Department. I was approached by my boss, who had been called in by the then Director General. The DG told my boss that the Deputy Secretary had ordered that we accept a CIA employee requiring deep cover into the next A100 class. Specifically, we would not be disclosing to other officers in the A100 class that the individual was from the CIA. This was a violation of the terms of our agreement with the CIA. The agreement that they could put people in the A-100 course also included their agreeing that we would identify these CIA people to the other members of the class. That was fair and reasonable. In this particular case I was told this officer would not be identified. I was furious and angry about it. After my objections had been heard over more than one occasion, I was told that I was not being asked but ordered to carry out the Deputy Secretary's decision. I was told that I had an option, which was to resign from my position, which I was not intending to do. I had made my argument and lost my case. The reason behind this exception was that the CIA was trying to place an officer in the embassy in Moscow under very deep cover.

No one could imagine what then happened. Now, this matter is all in the public domain so what I am going to discuss is no longer secret. So this officer joined the Foreign Service and assigned to the A-100 course. He was an extraordinarily popular figure who was well liked within the class. The Agency gave me a position at the embassy in Moscow in the Budget and Fiscal (B&F) Section, which I was to use to assign him there. And this is when the problems start. The first problem was assignments. We actually had another position in the embassy in Moscow for a junior officer in the same class. In the class there happened to be a tandem couple and one was going to be assigned to the State position. Collectively, the class decided that none of them would bid on the B&F position to enable both tandem officers to be able to serve in Moscow. What a mess! The CIA officer's name was Howard. He came to me to say he could not bid on CIA's B&F position since the entire class had reached the agreement that I have mentioned. And

since no one in the class knew anything about the arrangement, I could say nothing to the class. I had to go back to the CIA to explain the situation and they had to give me a second position to add to the list of vacancies that I was using to assign the class!

That turned out to be the least of my problems. Howard comes to me just after the end of A-100. He was in a panic and very nervous. He said to me, "Skip, you've got to help me; the Agency is after me. They're claiming I'm a spy and they are going to do something to me." I was taken aback. I had grown to like Howard as others had and this seemed so out of character -- not to mention bizarre. I said, "But, Howard, you know you are not my employee. I don't understand what's going on. And, you know, I can't intervene with the Agency." The next thing I know he disappears. It actually turns out that he was a spy and he next appears in Moscow requesting political asylum.

Now, it didn't end there because there was a fairly long gap between when he came to see me and when he disappeared. All of his classmates hear from him that he's being persecuted by the government. They have no idea about the Agency. They blame me for forcing him out for some reason and then not disclosing why and telling them. So they are all into this conspiracy theory. 'It could happen to me, you know, they won't even tell us anything. Where is the openness they are always talking about? You know, you knew all along, you were my friend and you talked to us and now you won't talk to us.' I was in a very difficult situation because I could not be honest with them. It was some time before the situation with Howard became public. Between that moment and when it actually came out in the press was about eight or nine months. I get a call-

Q: We had the A100 classes and then some training courses before officers left for posts?

GNEHM: That's right. And a group of new officers in this same class were assigned to Bogota. Tom Boyatt was the ambassador. Tom Boyatt called me to say, "Skip, you and I have a huge problem. I have a group of young vice consuls here, junior officers, who are livid with you because of the way you've treated one of their classmates. You've got to come down here because while they're not striking, they might as well be because they've got the whole embassy in a turmoil over this. You've got to come down here." I confided in Tom when I got down there in his office what the issue was. I couldn't tell them during that visit what I knew because it was not yet public. It was still highly classified. All I knew at the time was that he fled to somewhere in Arizona and disappeared and then he appeared in Moscow.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Since I could not tell them he was an agent, I had to just simply let them yell at me, scream at me, and tell them "Look, there were things in this particular case that they didn't know and that I was not in a position to tell them." I had to appeal to their understanding of me and how I was -- that if I could let them know, I would; but I couldn't then. It was, again, like eight months later or seven months later when it comes out that I was able then to communicate with those who'd been in the room. And I said "Now, if you read "The Washington Post" today you would know what was actually

going on and I opposed very much this assignment into the A100 class without informing them as they had been told would happen. I explained honestly that I was overruled.

Now, if I might, with your permission, I want to jump to when I'm Director General of the Foreign Service and it's 1997, late summer or fall. I get a memo from the Agency, through the liaison at State, asking for my approval to put into an A-100 class an officer without telling anyone in the class. I said not on your life. I've been through this. You don't remember?

Q: Of course in the government, you know, maybe there's a two-year historical memory and then it's gone.

GNEHM: Well, I did remember! The Agency asked State seniors for a meeting to present in private their reasons why they needed to do this. I was ready for that battle like I've never been ready for one before. I had my file with the previous e-mails to the classmates and other material as well. When I went into that room I just sat there with my file and I let them make the appeal. And I said, "Not on my watch, ever," and I opened the file. I said, "Here were my instructions and here was where I signed and, by the way, here's the page of "The Washington Post!" And, if you are interested, here are the troubles I had with others." The person with the Agency who had come to the meeting actually did know about the Howard case. Well, Howard's a turncoat so it was a name well known within the Agency as a mole. The CIA official just closed his file and the subject never came up again.

Q: Well, I've talked to at least one person who was in the class who talked about this but why was the Agency working so- what was there about this guy that made the Agency want to put him in a special slot? And what had motivated him to turn to the other side? I mean, what do you know about him?

GNEHM: I can't answer most of those questions because they didn't come, you know, to my attention in any way. What I was told at the time was that there was a very important mission that had to be done, very sensitive, and it needed to be done by someone who would not be, in any way, tainted or compromised or vulnerable to being known to be or suspected to be in any way from the CIA. And therefore they wanted him planted in a way that they didn't really-

Q: So of course of all people they pick for this was the most vulnerable that they could have or-

GNEHM: I do not know whether he was already working for the Russians, Soviets at that time, before he came in or whether it happened afterward. I do not know the sequencing of events at all. I have no idea what that is except that between the time they came to me, which would have been a few weeks before the A-100 course, to the end of the seven weeks and into this eighth week or ninth week in consular training or whatever, and that, what, two to three months period? It went from here's our guy that we picked that's going to be put in deep, deep cover to- we're chasing him because he's a spy. I don't

know what happened in that time that made them suspicious. All I can tell you is that in the class and with me he was the most likeable, open young guy, as nice a person. That's why he was enormously popular with the class. He fit in perfectly. There was no indication to me of anything that would have been off. So the Agency refused to talk about this for a long time until I think he surfaced in Moscow and it was then impossible not to address it. That was like eight months later or something.

Q: Well how did you feel about the A-100's training of foreign, young Foreign Service officers? Were you looking into make suggestions or hearing of weaknesses in it or strengths or what?

GNEHM: I think the A-100 training is excellent. I liked very much what they were doing in those days and I thought that, in terms of introducing new officers to the Department, the bonding of the class together through the different exercises and the off-sites was good. It instilled the esprit de corps and I think pumped them up for an exciting career.

Q: Which in a way was shown by their indignation over what they thought was a mishandling of one of their own.

GNEHM: Right, right. Exactly right.

Now, in looking back, again with my experiences that I've mentioned to you and then again when I was director general, they may not have spent enough time prepping these enthusiasts with what they might actually face in the office; routine work, drudgery, supervisors who could be antagonistic, not just bad administratively, but aggressively. And probably could have done more to sensitize them to what they might face. Again, another thing too, which I think only comes later on, is the drafting style of the State Department. It is simply unique.

Q: The what?

GNEHM: The drafting style. We write cables using certain words--things we don't say and the things we do say a certain way. Most of us learn those things over a period of time and we do so because the boss or the ambassador reads our writing, calls it to our attention, but that probably would be something that could have been taught a little bit better during A-100 training.

Q: We were talking about within the consular ranks the mid-level first supervisor level mediocrity of this group. Was this ever addressed about what can we do about it or was it sort of nothing we can do about it or what?

GNEHM: When I was in personnel in JO, I would say that I didn't see any way of dealing with this. I mean, it was a little bit above my position. As the Director General later, it was still an issue. I tried very hard to try to address it, working with the Consular Affairs Bureau and others; but the problem was really hard to get at because what people write in efficiency reports tends to be very glossy, never a critical remark of any sort for

different reasons. And that's what promotion boards and assignment panels have to use in making their decisions. They can't use the corridor reputation though you and I know that in terms of actually getting an assignment that corridor reputation is often determinant. The very nature of the personnel system requires you to place people; you're required to put them in jobs. The problem is just not just with consular officers. There are poor performers in other cones as well.

Q: No, I mean there are other ones but consular officers tend- consular sections tend to get people who are not doing terribly well somewhere else.

GNEHM: Yes, it's unfortunately been true. It is just very obvious at that middle management level when you combine it with the large number of new officers that that group supervises.

Q: And the mid-level has seen this so many-

GNEHM: The middle management in the Consular area was just too often bad.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: That's a big burden then on the section chief, who's usually very good, and the younger officers who are just whippersnappers and enthusiasts.

Q: Well, did-

GNEHM: And let me just add one more observation since we've talking a lot about consular sections. When I was in the Junior Officer division and speaking to classes, and when I was later Director General, I was always mentoring Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). I do it now in my job at the university with people going into the Foreign Service. I've always told FSOs that I totally am behind the requirement that everybody entering the Foreign Service must do consular work. I tell them that you will never, ever advance no matter how you go up in rank and position to a point where you're not asked a consular question. I remember going to a meeting with the king of Jordan. Before we got to any serious issues, he said, "My sister went to the embassy to get her visa. They told her no, she couldn't get a visa. What in the world is going on; she's my sister! Are you kidding?" Here I was, the ambassador, talking to the king of a country and he is asking me about his sister's visa. You've got to know something about visa regulations to be able to respond, whether it's the prime minister, a minister, a member of parliament, or whomever else. It will always be a part of your conversations. You need to know what you can say and what you can't say.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: And you only get the knowledge you need by having been through it. Once you've been through it, you know it. Got to love that. I have always said, suck it up if you

don't like it. Remember you are learning. You are learning something you're going to use the rest of your career.

Q: How did you feel, I mean we had tremendous pressure on us in the Foreign Service during this period and still do today, to get more representatives from particularly the African-American community? It's called "diversity" but the Hispanic and African-American are the two areas where we don't have much. There appears to be no problem recruiting Orientals. How did you feel the Department of State efforts were working at the junior officer level during this time?

GNEHM: It was weak; but there was definitely a focus on it. There were the court cases brought by women. I forgot her name.

Q: Alison Palmer.

GNEHM: Alison Palmer and some others at that time that had the Department under court orders to do certain things. We were making every attempt at recruiting women and minorities. It was very difficult at that point in time. We were bringing in some African-Americans as well as Asian-Americans but not at the numbers that we wanted. We are talking about the early 1980s. Yet this was still an important issue when I became director general 15 years later. Interestingly, by the time we reached '97 some of those court ordered restrictions had either been eased or passed because the numbers recruited and our processes had, over a period of 10 or 15 years, proven to the courts that we were in fact were dealing with it. So it was a much better environment dealing with those issues then than there was in the '80s.

Q: Well I have the impression that at a certain point, really at a time we're talking about and even before then the Department was trying so hard to get the numbers up that we were-

GNEHM: Ah, the mid-level-

Q: making exceptions. In other words, lowering the standards sort of to give people advantages to get in- And then once they came in not much attention was paid to them.

GNEHM: Ah, you may be talking about what was called the Mid-Level Entry Program which was, as I recollect, in existence at that time. This was an attempt to bring women and minorities in at the mid-level as opposed to the junior officer level. Because of our recruiting failures in previous years, we didn't have many at the mid-levels. The whole idea was that even if we succeeded in bringing in large numbers or reasonable numbers at the junior level, it was going to take five to 10 years, if not 15, to get them into middle management ranks and ultimately into senior management. And you are absolutely right; we had a program, an orientation program, a training program specifically related to mid-level entry.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Mid-level recruits were then assigned, not by me; I was not in that assignment process. I was on the assignment panel. We would stick them in the Dominican Republic as the section head for something or at another place and there was virtually no mentoring and no follow-up. It was, you know, you're on your own. We just taught you everything you need to know, go. And it didn't do well. We had mid-level entries, who had never worked in an embassy before or perhaps never worked abroad, supervising officers in their third tours. Not only were they individually unhappy; but posts were unhappy. It was a grueling process, so much so that a few years later the Department just abolished it. It did away with it entirely. I resurrected an idea of doing something like that when I was the Director General but specifically relating it to people in the U.S. Government and military who had actual experience -- some comprehension of international affairs. But the taste, the recollection of that little program from the '80s was so bad that the idea wasn't worth the fight.

Q: Well how did you, your office relate to the director general at the time who was in the personnel system? Did you find the personnel system flexible enough to deal with various problems? How did you find it?

GNEHM: During the time that I was head of the junior officer division, I found it pretty reasonable and that's partly because in the personnel system the junior officer division had enormous authority over the officers who were under its jurisdiction. We made all the first assignment. The only thing the central system did was give us the 30 or 100 positions for the class. We decided who would go where. You didn't have the intervention by the bureaus as you do in the so-called meat market mentality that exists today at the middle and seniors levels. Second assignments: we pretty much could make the assignments as we wanted. I could argue the pattern of assignments and how we needed to give them assignments that proved they were successful worldwide and versatile.

Q: Language, of course.

GNEHM: Language of course, where they served geographically. If they were serving in Latin America one time and the bureau wanted to keep them, I could easily say "no, we're not going to do it and there was nothing much the bureau could do to interfere with that decision. So there was far more discipline, I would say, in entering, assigning and training officers in that untenured period than there was subsequent to their being tenured. I mentioned earlier the one intervention from the director general's office that impacted on the JO assignment process. While I was in JO, the DG's office was very supportive.

Q: You know, I must, I have experience sitting on a panel and, you know, we were assigning people to, I think War College or something like that, and there was the one man who everybody respected and all, usually very quiet, and one name came up. And they said oh yes, fine record and all this and all of a sudden this deep growl, that son of a

bitch, you know, and of course the things which apparently were supported but it gets very personal.

GNEHM: Yes, the discussions in the assignment panels can be very direct. I must say, the panels are organized with representatives of both your seniors and your juniors as well as representatives of each of the cones and the regional bureaus. I found that there was a good give and take about things and I think it was fairly open. But the tendency of that kind of panel is to become rule enforcers and that leads, as I learned then, sometimes to decisions that just make you shake your head and say, “what?” What did you do? They would say “Well we couldn’t make an exception because if we make an exception here on this assignment, then everybody else will want the same exception.”

So when I became director general, I called met with the head of the FCA (the assignments division) and asked to have all the panel representatives to come as well. I actually said to them, “I want to make one thing clear. You are managers of the assignment process. There are rules and regulations that guide you in making those assignments, which I support, and you are to a certain extent the enforcers of those rules. But I’m asking you now, I’m telling you now, that you have to use some logic in applying these rules in individual cases. So let me put it this way. If you go home at night and you’re sitting at the dinner table with your wife and you say ‘Ah, what an awful day I had today. You wouldn’t believe the panel. There was this one case of so and so and whatever it was. Well we just put him there.’ If she looks at you and says ‘You did what?’ Then you need to go back and think about what you just did.” Maybe there’s a more logical option.

Now, again, I’m jumping out of sequence, but I will tell you one case that arose which is exactly what I’m talking about. I was the director general (so we’re talking about 1999, 2000 timeframe). A woman, who is locally hired into an OMS position (Office Management Specialist) at an embassy abroad, gets accepted to join the Foreign Service as an OMSer. So she’s got to come back to Washington for her orientation. She asks to be assigned back into the job that she’s been locally hired for because her husband is assigned in that post and has two more years on his assignment. The OMS section of personnel tells her, “You signed a statement that you were world-wide available; you can’t tell us where you’ll go and we’re not putting you there because we’ve got other priorities.” I got an appeal from her and her husband about this decision. I called up the people from the OMS section and I said “I’ve received this appeal. I said it does sound like an awfully reasonable appeal, since she’s filling a position at post. And they said, “She knew when she accepted the offer to join the Foreign Service that she had to be worldwide available. If we make an exception here, this will change everything. Once this rule is broken, we’ll never be able to enforce it again.” I said, “Wait a minute. Worldwide available is a principle for all people entering the Foreign Service and I strongly support it. But that’s for an entire career. Now, we do make it clear to new hires that they’re not going to tell us where they go. But just because you assign her back where she’s already living, working, and is with her husband doesn’t mean she’s not worldwide available the next time around. We also have a tandem policy by the way that we’re also trying to enforce. I want you to reconsider it.” Well they came back to me to

say they were not prepared to change their decision. I said “Fine; send me up the assignment order. I am going to reverse your decision and assign her to this post.” And I did.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Did it set a precedent? Did it? Am I aware of any lawsuits against the Department because I treated one person this way? No. It was the logical thing to do.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: It made sense. It did maintain the important rule, a very strict rule of worldwide available and that new hires don't tell us where they want to go.

Q: Yes. Tell me, did you get much, when you were with the junior officers, were you able to get much feedback from them once, so they went out to a post and their early experiences which of course are particularly important because they're seeing things with bright new eyes, which you don't get later on when we all get sort of jaded and this is the way we do it; we go along but make changes of our own. But these young people come in; I mean, were you able to use this source of really very good observation to pass on to your colleagues?

GNEHM: Absolutely. I was indeed able to glean good observations. The answer is 'yes' because again I am a very open person so lots of people visited when they came back to Washington but they also sent emails about things going on at post that I was able to use as examples or ways of approaching things. The officers who came in while I was head of junior officers stayed in touch with me throughout my entire Foreign Service career. Not every one of them, of course, but huge numbers of them. And I stayed in touch with them. When I saw them promoted, I sent a congratulatory message or when I saw they were going to a post, brand new people, I sent the post a message saying, “You know, so and so is being assigned to you and he's really good.” I think that kind of the networking in the Foreign Service is very positive.

Q: In a way the fact we're doing these oral histories, it's remarkable. I mean all the experiences and the talent we get. We're very fortunate.

Did you find that there were any particular areas that were particularly good in providing new officers? Were they the Ivy League colleges or the West Coast colleges or any other sources or was it pretty across the board?

GNEHM: It was pretty much across the board. I don't think there were any obvious places, such as the Ivy League schools that you're talking about. People were, even then, beginning to come from all over the US. And we had all age coming into the Service even in those years. Some had been in the military. There is a lot more of them coming into the Service now.

Q: Well then after this junior officer stint what did you do?

GNEHM: I was supposed, of course, to stay there for a full two year tour but I was curtailed because I got a call from the executive secretary, asking me to take the position of Director of the Line, S/SS as it was called in those days. So I moved up to the seventh floor. George Shultz was the Secretary of State and these were very interesting times to be there. Once again, I was working with a dedicated group of line. There were two elements about the job that come to mind rather immediately. Each line officer had responsibility for a geographic region and/or functional bureaus. That officer would receive all papers going to the Secretary. His task was to be certain the memo or paper was cleared appropriately around the Department and was in a format ready for the Secretary's action. Further when the principals came forward with requests, we were the office that tasked the bureaus for responses. Secondly, we supported the secretary during his travels. I would assign a line officer team, which is usually included an officer and a staff person to go to the country in advance to prepare for the secretary's arrival and . And that's a very important job because the line officer is the liaison between the secretary's office and the embassy.

I had good people working for me, very dedicated, hard workers, and long hours. It was an important experience for me. It allowed me to be part of the staff meetings on the seventh floor so that I could then direct my line in ways that the executive secretary and others wanted. I did assign myself as a line officer advance person on one of the Secretary's trips to Morocco simply because I wanted to go through the experience that I was sending my team to do. I had enough knowledge from them to have a general impression and I'd served in an embassy during a visit of the Secretary. So I knew about such visits from that angle. My advance for the Secretary in Morocco was an experience! The ambassador there was a political appointee.

Q: Reed or something?

GNEHM: Yes, Joseph Reed.

Q: He stands out because his telegrams, I think the only thing he talked about, "our king."

GNEHM: He was a very unique personality. He had flown his customized Cadillac out to post and he very much wanted to show me and anyone else about this special car. He would take rides in it and he took me in a ride around town to be able to show me the bar in the car and everything else in it. For the most part, we worked very well together -- though it was like walking on eggshells. He was determined to have things his way regardless of what the secretary wanted or what anyone else wanted. He was going to have it the way he wanted it. At one point, he really got angry with me. By the way, I later ran into him at the UN when I was US deputy permanent representative. Reed was the Secretary General's special ambassadorial envoy for international goodwill or something like that.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Referring back to the time he was angry with me, it was just a passing moment, but he was so angry that he stood in front of me in his office, fists clenched and shaking all over, jaw as tight as can be and he said, "I want you to know I'm taking you off my Christmas card list." And he dismissed me. We have had a good relationship since as it turned out. I don't even know whether he remembers being angry with me at that point. But yes, he was a very particular kind of personality.

Q: How did, what was your impression of Shultz?

GNEHM: He was a very serious person, very focused. When I dealt with him and when my team dealt with him, he had clear direction, things he wanted done, how he wanted them done. I don't mean to the point of every dot and T, but there was no doubt in anyone's mind about what he wanted to have happen and so that's what we did. He was extremely well read and he always read the memoranda and papers that were sent to him. He would have questions about them sometimes, which we would then correct or get supplemental information, but he knew his topics. When you were in a meeting with him, you knew that he knew what he was talking about. He was very clear and operational; if he knew something had to be done because he meant to achieve a certain end, he'd go after that. He had a clear strategy and approach to things. So he was very good to work for. I don't remember an instance of humor or of lightheartedness. As I said, he was a fairly serious person. I recall one moment on the plane flying from Morocco to Portugal. I was with my staff and a group of people in the staff section of the plane and I was acting out Ambassador Reed for a little bit of humor with the staff. In the middle of my play acting I realized that the Secretary had come up behind me. I saw the look on his face. He was not happy. I assumed it was because I was belittling an ambassador and he didn't think that was appropriate. He didn't say that; but that was my impression. I apologized. He turned and went back into his suite.

There is one other thing I would like to tell you about. Now, I don't think this is documented anywhere. The Executive Secretary told me that the Secretary was really angry, upset, peeved at some of his colleagues in the cabinet. He was tired of getting calls from various secretaries who would say, "George, you know I brought this up in the cabinet meeting and the President didn't object." The Secretary would reply saying "Yes, and you know the President wasn't listening when you made your point." We are talking about President Reagan. Now I always sent one of my staff with the secretary to cabinet meetings. That person sat against the wall and took notes for the secretary.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: The Executive Secretary told me to instruct the staffer to annotate in the margins of the notes when the president was awake and when he's not. The Secretary can see the point in the meeting when the President was not attentive and when he was. He could then use that knowledge in responding to other who argued that "the President didn't object!" So, that's what we did.

Q: Did you see any of the warm, friendly relationship between George Shultz and Casper Weinberger, secretary of defense?

GNEHM: I didn't see it but I certainly heard about it. There was one luncheon of just the two of them where one of them stood up and heaved a biscuit at the other one. The relationship was very touchy, hostile, and they often sparked when they were together.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: It was like putting the two battery cords together that aren't supposed to touch and when they do, sparks fly. Yes, it was a difficult relationship. I heard it told that one time a plate of food went flying, but I don't know whether that was true. That was the lore anyway.

Q: Did you find being at the center of power that your colleagues would come to you to see if you could push something for them? I mean, you know, policy or what have you?

GNEHM: Oh sure, yes. In particular, the bureau that knew me the best but others did as well. They would ask things like, can't you move this one forward or can you put it on top of the stack. I never felt under the kind of pressure that if I didn't do it I was not going to get my next assignment or something like that. But yes, there were always special requests.

I was often asked if I was in the room when a particular issue came up. "Did you sense a positive or negative reaction?" They were looking for the kind of feedback that might not ever come back in writing but would be important in gauging reaction of the principal to something that had gone forward for action.

Q: Did you come away from this experience with almost a ranking of the various geographic bureaus?

GNEHM: Oh, definitely. Absolutely definitely. And that's where I learned that each of the geographic bureaus had a very unique persona. Not so different, I might add, from the persona of the people who lived in their region. I say that, realizing that I'm making very prejudicial remarks.

Q: Oh no, no, it's, but-

GNEHM: But the one bureau that stood out in those days apart from all others was the NEA bureau. Basically NEA's reputation was if you have a crisis, you want an NEA person involved because they were so often going through crises. They knew how to deal with fast moving events. They were cool under fire. They were levelheaded, solid, worked as a good team in a crisis. That's what you wanted.

The then-ARE bureau, Latin America bureau, was always considered the bureau that was hard to get them to respond in a timely way. It was as if time was on their hands and they didn't need to worry about things. I guess I am saying that they were often very laidback. And then a crisis came, ah, okay, no, we'll do it. No need to push.

And the African bureau, as I recollect, was always trying to kind of catch-up, always trying to get principals to look at their issues. And more often than not, they were so far down the stack that even if you got a piece of paper into the stack it didn't get the attention that it deserved.

Q: How about the Asian bureau?

GNEHM: My impression was that they were very methodical and dealt well with matters in a very sophisticated way. They didn't let a crisis throw them off a step. It was kind of the long view of history.

Q: Yes, 5,000 years of-

GNEHM: Yes, of course, what's new sort of a thing.

Q: As Confucius said.

GNEHM: Sort of.

Q: What about the European bureau?

GNEHM: The European bureau just always thought of itself and it came across in trying to deal with them as the only bureau that really mattered.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: They would say, "You mean to tell me that this meeting with the secretary is essential? You know, he ought to be in London, Paris, or Prague." And yes, you would often sense their disdain that they didn't need to be told how to do it. "We know how to do these sorts of things." "I'm sorry but the secretary wants them in this format." "Well, we've always been using the other format." That's the way my conversations would go with the EUR Bureau.

Q: Oral histories, this goes way back but one of, I think one of the funniest things was when they moved Cyprus, Turkey and Greece into the European bureau. And, you know, at one point they were very close to war and you could just feel sort of the people were talking about it, saying you know what, I had to go up and explain this to the head of the European bureau at the time and it was just sort of looking down their nose and what, what is this? I mean, NATO countries or European countries don't fight each anymore. I mean, we have crises but we deal with them diplomatically and here are these squabbling-

GNEHM: One invading another.

Q: Oh, God.

GNEHM: Oh, that's right, that's right. Whereas in NEA it was just another one of the many wars.

Q: Oh, absolutely.

Well okay then, you left the line and what-?

GNEHM: Yes, I wasn't there that long actually. NEA called to say that they were in desperate need for an Arabic speaking officer to go as deputy chief of mission in Amman, Jordan. The ambassador-designate was Paul Boeker, an economist, economic officer, a very good economist, I would add. In fact, when we were working with the Israeli government to try and strengthen their economic basis at a time when they were having some currency issues and deficits in funding, Paul worked that issue for the U.S. Government. He was very good and well known; but he had never served in the Arab world and didn't speak Arabic. NEA wanted to have a DCM who knew the region to support him. They had mentioned my name to him and he wanted to call and talk to me to see if I was at all interested. Well, given my Middle East background, I was definitely interested in being deputy chief of mission in Amman. And that's what developed.

Q: Boeker. What was his background and what was he like?

GNEHM: Paul was an economist, as I said. He was an expert on trade matters, budget issues and currency intricacies. His regional focus was Latin American, as I recall. He was a quiet person but a very serious. I do not want to sound negative because I liked him a great deal; but the Jordanians did not take to him easily. I think this was due to non-professional reasons -- basically personality. Arabs react wonderfully well to the individual who is very hospitable, warm, friendly, and personal. That's their culture. Whereas Paul tended to be a little aloof and sort of quiet. He just wasn't a warm, outgoing extrovert. And yet when they had to deal with him on certain issues as when they were having budget issues and financial issues, he was fantastic. He and the Jordanians worked very well together. I am simply saying that he often was criticized for his personality but never for his professional qualities.

Q: You were in Jordan from when to when?

GNEHM: Almost three years, from 1984 until 1987.

Q: When you arrived there in '84, what was the situation in Jordan and in the Middle East in general?

GNEHM: It was a period of some stability, relative of course to the Middle East. King Hussein was the monarch during the entire period that I was there. The big issue on the Arab-Palestinian question had to do with expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Another big issue, as I recollect, was our relationship with the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) at that point in time. We would not speak to the PLO and considered it a terrorist organization.

The Jordanians and Palestinians, and to some extent the Israelis, wanted to have elections for mayors in the West Bank cities, which are Arab cities, such as Hebron, Nablus, and others. Yet a number of the candidates were PLO-affiliated, which meant we couldn't talk to them. That made it very awkward to conduct any kind of business. The Jordanian government was pushing us on that matter; that was one of the issues that was on our plate. The king's relationship with Arafat was mixed. We are talking about '84. It had only been 10 years since the Black September with the PLO attempted to overthrow King Hussein and take over the country. People still talked about it as if it happened yesterday. And there was at one point where King Hussein actually put his reputation at stake by trying to convince Arafat to do the one thing we demanded, which was to recognize Israel's right to exist. I can tell you about that.

Then there was the Israeli lobby's opposition to our military relationship with Jordan. The military area was a constant aggravation if not outright embarrassment to us. Jordan was a moderate country in a turbulent region. We certainly wanted to provide for its security; but when we proposed to sell military hardware to Jordan, we often faced strong opposition from Israel and its lobbyists in Washington.

GNEHM: There was one particular event that I use it to this day in talking to my class about how decisions can have ramifications beyond what you expect. This had to do with the sale of F16 fighter planes to Jordan, F-16s. We had sold fighter planes to Jordan in the past -- F5s -- and now the US military and State, as well, agreed to provide a more sophisticated plane, the F16. There wasn't a large number. I can't remember whether it was 24 or 36 but we're not talking hundreds. There was enormous opposition by Jewish groups in the States, using their influence with Congress to sow congressional oppositions. There were lots of stories in newspapers, and the king saw the assurances from Washington that the sale was going to go ahead. Our instructions, which the ambassador delivered, were that we were serious and that we'd moved ahead in spite of the opposition in Congress.

I was taken aback when I learned that President Reagan, on a Sunday or a weekend for sure, had called the king himself. I was Charge at the time and only learned about the call from the Department. According to the Department's debrief, Reagan said to the King, "Your Majesty, I know you are hearing about all the trouble that we're having with the opposition to the fighter plane sale. I want you to know that I am solidly behind this sale. It will happen. Don't believe what you're reading in the newspapers." The king profusely thanked him for the call and his support for the sale.

The following Tuesday, I got instructions from the Department to go see the king to explain that given the politics and trouble in Washington, there was going to be a delay in moving the sale forward. I was told to assure the King that we remain committed to the sale; it just wouldn't occur right now. Okay? So I called the palace, the king said, "Yes, have him come over at 5:00 or 6:00," which was after dark. I went and met with him at his home, in his living room, just the two of us, two chairs, and a table in the middle. After pleasantries, I said to him, "Your majesty, I do have some instructions and that's why I did ask to see you today." I tried to present my instructions in the very best possible manner, stressing the continued commitment of the President for the sale. About halfway into my explanation he put his hand over on my knee, he said, "Skip, you're doing a great job. I know what this means. You don't have to keep going through this. I understand." And that was the end of that conversation.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: The reason why I remember this conversation so vividly was not only because I had to do it. I felt embarrassed because the President had called the King directly only two days before and there had been no reason for him to have done so, particularly if there was to be a delay in moving the sale forward. I think there would have been less fallout had my news not come starkly after the President's assurances.

Q: Oh yes.

GNEHM: I will tell you that to this moment, I believe that that was the night when the king decided he really couldn't count on the United States if there was trouble with Israel. Now you can harken back to other things but what that meant was he had to go elsewhere for his security. Because again, there were always troubles and threats around Jordan in the region. I believe that he concluded that, if the Israeli lobby was so strong that it could block the sale of critically needed fighter planes, the need of which had been validated by US-Jordanian security assessments that the air force modernization was needed for his national defense against threats from Syria and Iraq, then he could never count on the US for the military equipment necessary to protect his country. I think that's when he decided that he had to cozy up to Saddam Hussein. He had not done so before. Relations had been reasonable good, especially in economic matters and there, of course, had been innumerable visits by Iraqi officials and commercial agreements. I don't really believe King Hussein thought that Saddam would assist him militarily with any success if the Israelis invaded Jordan; but perhaps he thought that Israeli concern over possible Iraqi support would act as some deterrence.

So then when we get to 1990 and King Hussein comes out in support of Saddam Hussein or it appeared that way, I think it was back to this moment, our failure to follow through on a security commitment that we had made and validated.

Q: How did you feel about the Israeli influence in the United States? I mean, did you feel this was, I won't say abnormal but that's maybe the right term. I mean, here with a very small country, very much at odds with its neighbors, and we were finding ourselves supporting it to the hilt even when we probably shouldn't have.

GNEHM: Well, I guess I would respond to that by saying it was certainly a constant consideration on the part of the embassy. Whatever we were doing with Jordan to some extent was always going to be circumscribed or monitored by the Israelis and through their lobby group in Washington. We just accepted that as a given. The best way to move ahead for us was to try to come up with ideas that would support our interest in Jordan but would also be interpreted by Israel as in their interest or that there were reasons for wanting to do that.

Tom Pickering was ambassador in Israel at the time and there was one moment where he called me and he said, "Look, Skip, I think we have a great opportunity here to do something. If you can come in with a supporting cable, I'll send in one and we'll maybe get some energy going here between the two of them (meaning Israel and Jordan)." And we did that. Tom was a very active ambassador.

The issue of mayoral elections in the West Bank is illustrative of both US initiatives to advance peace between Israel and Jordan and the frustrations that come with such initiatives. We believed that having Arabs able to elect their mayors in West Bank towns would provide a certain governance situation that would be positive for the Israelis as well as for Palestinians. The US played an active role in moving all parties toward elections. Those elections were quite successful. There were multiple candidates and campaigning was vigorous. Voting was robust and prominent Palestinians were elected.

We at Embassy in Jordan looked forward to working with these mayors, all of whom visited Amman rather frequently. They had business with the Jordanian Government from which they often received financial support. Then came the wrench in machine! Most, if not all, the mayors declared their support for the PLO and the USG declared that, as a result, we could not talk to the mayors. That decision seemed a strange repudiation of all the support that we had given in getting the mayors elected. Nevertheless, we had our instructions. The only way I could interact with them was to find myself at the same social event, often a dinner. The Department's guidance on interacting at social events with representatives of countries or organizations like the PLO was to be polite but not initiate conversation. That guidance gave me some limited flexibility to talk, or at least to listen, to the visiting mayors. But again, it was really, really quite difficult if not most awkward.

There was an effort, and this is one on which Paul Boeker worked very hard. There was an interest on the part of Palestinians in the West Bank, to try to reopen the branches of Jordanian banks that had operated there before '67. Since the 1967 war there were no Arab banks in the West Bank. I give Paul credit for eventual success. He took the initiative with the Israelis, who because of their earlier experience with him, trusted him. He convinced them that opening banks in the West Bank would stabilize the economy with positive consequences for economic development and, hopefully, political moderation. Soon, however, we got into wrangling over details. For example, what kind of supervision would the Israeli banking system have in its federal reserve-type organization over Arab banks operating in the West Bank? Could they look into bank

records of an Arab bank that was registered in Jordan under Jordanian law which has privacy rules that were different from those in Israel? In the end Paul brokered an agreement in which actually allowed some of the bank branches to reopen so that banking could take place. This was a breakthrough. But again, that's a good example of where we had to convince the Israelis that the action that we were proposing and that the Arabs wanted to do was, in fact, advantageous to them as well.

Q: Well did you find that AIPAC was just American-

GNEHM: American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee.

Q: Yes. It was, you might say, was extreme and was going beyond what the Israelis really were pushing or was it pretty much a tool of the Israelis?

GNEHM: My impression in those days and the subsequent job I had at the Pentagon, which was in '87, '88, '89, was that AIPAC was pretty in tune to what the government in Israel wanted. I think in current terms, and this has been true now for a number of years, that they are more aligned with a political party in Israel than with the government. Now, that political party is in power so AIPAC is once again in step with the government. Again, I think in the 1980s it was pretty much in tune to what the government of Israel wanted.

I remember one negotiation when we were able to convince the Israeli government that a particular arms sale was not going to be threatening to Israeli security given other things that would be done for Israel. Subsequently AIPAC opposition on the Hill just evaporated. So it would indicate to me that AIPAC was very in sync, sensitive to what the Israeli government wanted.

Q: Well did you find yourself with the Jordanian government, were they throwing Israel in your face or did they sort of accept the fact it was there and our relationship to Israel and were willing to work around it and avoid this raised specter of Israeli influence all the time?

GNEHM: I think one has to make a distinction between the government and the population when you ask that question. The government understood the situation and was willing to work to try to find ways of doing what they and we wanted in a manner that didn't antagonize or create political problems in Washington for either of us. The popular view was pretty angry at the American policy for being very pro-Israeli and biased. I think the word "just" always comes up and it did in those days. You know, that we were not being fair, not being just. Additionally, I learned during this tour and again when I went back as ambassador some years later was that the Jordanians are very sophisticated. They are very attentive to what goes on in Israel. I learned quickly to keep my mouth shut when they started talking about Israeli politics because they knew so much more about it than I did. I would blunder into things; but they can mention every political party, who was the political mover, how they fought with each other, and their political views in ways I couldn't possibly do. And for good reasons.

They live up close. They watch Israeli television all the time. They have access, you know, to Israeli newspapers. They come across the bridge and they have all these Palestinians coming over all the time who were obviously living under Israeli occupation. They understand the politics even though they don't like it. I learned something else about Arab feelings. They can be angry and furious at US policy. I have had individuals grab me with both arms on my shoulders with gritted teeth and much emotion. You would think the next thing he is going to do is to slug you. When he does take his hands off, he looks at you and asks if you are able to come to his house tomorrow for lunch with friends. Or perhaps he tells you that he has to leave for the US in two days to take his sick mother to the Mayo Clinic or is taking his child to university in America. In other words, what I learned, and most Americans don't understand, is that people have conflicting emotions. At one point you're really angry but at another point you're actually in agreement. You oppose them on this but are with them on that. People are people after all. They can be totally angry with us over our policy but still recognize that we have good medical facilities and schools. In fact, Jordanians over and over would tell me, you know, if only Jordan were a bit more like America with the freedoms that you have.

Q: Well how did you view the Jordanian government at that time?

GNEHM: It's very interesting because the king had been on the throne since the early '50s. He'd served 30 years by then; so he wasn't new to the job or the issues around him. His governing technique was clear. He was king and ultimately he made decisions; but once he picked the prime minister and put him in place with his ministerial cabinet, the king tended to step back from it all. The prime minister ran the government. Foreign policy was usually the King's preserve as were important defense matters. On the other hand day-to-day affairs were left to the prime minister. When in his opinion the public anger or frustration with the Prime Minister reached a boiling point, the king stepped in, removed him and put somebody else in place. He was attentive; but by staying away from daily political issues and decisions, he let his prime minister and government take public heat for actions they did not like..

The king's technique was known to everyone. He would dismiss the prime minister or minister and then two years later, that person was back as the special advisor to the king or a special envoy to some UN conference and maybe even back as prime minister. One Prime Minister served five different times. There was a revolving door. You were never, ever out entirely. There was always an opportunity to come back. That's the way the king managed people.

I should mention that we had a modest AID program. It was ongoing but it was never as much as the king wanted. We did, in fact, sell a lot of military equipment to the Jordanians and we were still very much involved in training.

The one issue on the military side that I didn't mention before was the Jordanians need for an air defense system. In particular they wanted the Hawk missile system, which was the best we had at that point in time. The Israelis went berserk. The last thing they wanted

was Jordan to have an effective air defense system. The presumption by most of us who were watching this issue was that the Israelis didn't want the Jordanians to have any capability to limit Israeli overflights of Jordan either in wartime or peace. In the end, the Jordanians had to agree to accept significant restrictions on the deployment of the Hawk system. The batteries would be implanted in concrete. This decision, of course, undermined one of the system's important features -- the ability to move batteries around the country as needed.

It also meant that the Israelis knew exactly where batteries were at all times and they knew exactly their range and coverage so it was easy to know where or where not to fly. So did Jordan's other potential enemies such as Syria. Talk about humiliation! In the end, they decided they needed the defense system more than death so they swallowed it and accepted the conditions. I was there when issues came up over whether the Jordanians could move some of the batteries out of concrete or perhaps sell them some. At the time, we had some problems with Syria and Iraq and we felt that the Jordanians had a justification for a mobile air defense system. It never went through. It never succeeded because of Israeli objections.

One other incident that also occurred when I was the Chargé was over security. We had a really big security problem during the time I was in Amman. This was largely a threat from Syria. The Syrian government didn't always like what the king was doing and always threatened him. In fact, there was enough intelligence about agents being sent in from Syria to undertake terrorist attacks or spur civil unrest. Our embassy was, in those days, located right across from the Intercontinental Hotel, right on the main road going through town. The street in front of the embassy was a two lane road. Traffic was constant bumper to bumper if not completely stopped. The front door of our embassy was only three feet from the sidewalk, which was another three feet to the curb and so we had virtually no setback. The Department decided to re-enforce the embassy and it was just one humongous effort. They poured concrete into the walls of my office. The ambassador's office was re-enforced with steel, making the walls two feet thick instead of one foot thick. They hung steel mesh from the roof of the building to the ground that made it look like medieval armor. They piled sandbags up an eight or 10 feet wall between the front of the building and the sidewalk. It was awful. Necessary, but awful. Then winter came and so did the rain and the sandbags collapsed, blocking the entrance and the sidewalk.

There was yet another security story, this one involving the AID office. AID was located in one of the residential areas not far from the embassy. The USG brought in a variety of security items to place around the building, including drop barriers, concrete blocking barriers, etc. The AID director, Lou Reed, called me one day quite excited. "Skip, you won't believe what just happened." I said, "Calm down. What's wrong? Are you alright?" He said, "No, no, no, no. The city came and carted away all of our security material. Everything, the barriers, the concrete barriers and they carted them away." I said, "You've got to be kidding. Did you know it?" "No, they didn't even call us to tell us; they just came and carted it all away." Well, to be perfectly honest, that really made me angry too because of the high security threat we were facing. I asked Lou if I

remembered correctly that he had a meeting that afternoon with the Minister of Planning on our \$200 million AID program. “Yes,” he replied. I said, “Well, I’m ordering you not to go to that meeting. Cancel the meeting right now.” “Are you sure you want...,” he asked. I said, “Cancel the meeting right now.”

The Minister of Planning obviously called the prime minister, Zaid Rifai, immediately and told him that I had terminated, canceled this meeting on the AID program. Zaid Rifai called me. “Skip, what in the hell do you think you’re doing? You think you have this kind of authority to just cancel a meeting?” I said, “Zaid, calm down. Yes, I did cancel the meeting; I did it and I’m not reversing it.” “You better do it or you’re going to pay for it!” he said. “I’m going to call the President; I’m going to call the Secretary of State and I’m going to tell them what you’ve done and I don’t think you’re going to still be able to stay on in your position. I’m going to do that.” “Zaid,” I said, “fine. Just be sure that you tell the President that the reason why I did it was because your mayor came and removed all the security material around the building of the very organization that you’re asking to get \$200 million from. Make sure you’re clear about that.”

The next call I got within minutes was from the mayor himself, who by the way later became prime minister. He said, “You have just destroyed me. You have just destroyed me. I’m going to tell you right now. I’m going to kill you. I’m going to kill you for this. Do you hear me? You are a dead man, you are a dead man.” And he hung up.

Before the afternoon was over, all the security material had been returned to the AID offices and the meeting with the Minister of Planning took place the next day. The Ambassador, when he got back in country, came into my office. (I must say Paul was a wonderful person to work for. When he had first had gone out of country and left me as chargé, he said “Skip, let’s talk this through so that we’re on the same wave length. I want you to know how I feel about things. When I’m not here you’re in charge. You have to make the decisions if you think they’re the right decisions. I’m not going to come back and question what you did. We might have different views but you are the man on the spot. And you know how I feel about things and I’m trusting you to guide things in an appropriate way.”

So when he returned, this time, he said, “Skip, this business with AID and the mayor.” I said, “Yes, sir?” He said, “Well I’ve told you all along you have to make your own decisions. I’ll tell you right now, I probably would have handled it a little differently but what you did was okay.” And we laughed about it.

Well, in subsequent years, as I said the mayor became prime minister and we actually laughed about this up to and including when I saw him in the last two or three years. He said, “Well, I didn’t kill you, did I?” I said “no.” He added, “You know, I was really mad at you that day.” And I said, “I was really mad at you too that day.” The matter is long since over; but on reflection, there are just moments when you just have to do things in kind of a dramatic way.

Q: Well certainly. During the time you were there was Syria any threat?

GNEHM: Yes, absolutely. When I talked about our security situation, it was Syria that was the problem.

Q: Yes, they often are.

GNEHM: They were sending in people into Jordan. We had good intelligence that the US diplomatic mission was one of Syria's targets in Jordan. In fact, there were even threats against the king during this time.

Q: Well wasn't the king always under threats, really?

GNEHM: I would say, as a general comment, that's true. I remember seeing the king once, again at his house. This was when there were actually some threats and some concerns from intelligence that threats were real. They were actually going operational. He said, "You know, Abdullah is sleeping outside my bedroom door." This is the current king, his oldest son. He was in the military at the time. And I said, "Really?" And he said, "Yes, he's really worried, you know, that they're going to actually somehow get through the security I've got around me. I told Abdullah, you don't have to sleep outside my bedroom; but he won't go home. He won't go. He sleeps there."

In fact, it was in those years that I actually met Abdullah. Again, he was the eldest son of King Hussein. He wasn't a teenager then. He was an adult, but he was the young son who was often at the house when I went there. He never spoke or came in to tell his father something while I was there. He was always pleasant when we talked. Clearly there was a close bond between the two.

Q: We'll get to that.

GNEHM: Yes, but to just jump ahead for one point... I arrived in Jordan to take up my position as Ambassador at 6:30 on 9/10/2001. King Abdullah was in a plane off Nova Scotia headed for Houston when terrorists hit the Twin Trade Towers in New York. He called me from the plane to ask what he should do. It was because he knew me and I'd served there and he knew I knew his father well, that enabled us to talk candidly in the middle of a crisis without any hesitation.

Q: Well this is the good thing about coming back to areas where you have served previously.

GNEHM: That's right. One of the other things that I would tell you about King Hussein was that the king was a very short person and sensitive about his height. Things were done to compensate for his height; the chair at the dining room table had an extension on the legs so that if you looked at everyone sitting at the table he was just slightly taller than others. When he married Queen Noor, who was so much taller than he was, they stood on steps for the wedding pictures so that he was above her.

When there were CODELs or visits from the Pentagon or others the king always included the Ambassador and me in his small lunches; I'm talking about 12 to 16 people around a rectangular table. One of the people that he always liked to include at these events was Zaid bin Shakur, who was a cousin and then his chief of staff. He was a very close confidante. Bin Shakur was a frequent diner at the palace and the staff knew what he liked and what he didn't like. He and I were sitting together one day; I noticed that he didn't get the same dessert that everybody else did. They staff brought him a hot fudge sundae. So I said, "Hot fudge sundae! How much does it cost to get a hot fudge sundae?" He turned to the staff, "Ah, give me another hot fudge sundae." So out of the kitchen comes another hot fudge sundae which they placed in front of me. The king saw it out of the corner of his eye and he says, "Shakur, you're corrupting this young guy!"

So see, the king did have a sense of humor. The king did enjoy people and he was very, very hospitable and even when he was upset. I'm sure he was during the meeting that I described about the delay in providing F16s. He was probably hurt more than anything with Reagan's renege on his promise. But he was always a statesperson. He was always gentle. And Jordanian people knew that about him and that's why he was as beloved as he was even though he might have been criticized for some of the things he did or didn't do. He was very popular as a figure.

Q: What was your impression of the Jordanian military that you saw at this time?

GNEHM: Very professional and noticeably so in the region. Not large in number but disciplined. The training was good; the comradery was good. The military was based entirely on East Bank tribal recruitment, not Palestinian. The military is one of the main supports of the monarchy, that and the General Intelligence Directorate, GID. The military, in fact, was diligent in training on its equipment, a big contrast to most other militaries in the region. Most importantly, the Jordanian military bonded very, very well with U.S. military advisors. Many of them came to the States to train under the IMET program, International Military Educational Training.

Q: Were the Palestinians in Jordan an issue or a problem?

GNEHM: The entire Palestinian question in Jordan is a problem and it's always just below the surface. It impacts on almost every issue in some way. It is important to understand that there is a cleavage of sorts between the so-called East Bankers, Jordanians who trace their ancestry to the land east of the Jordan River, and Palestinians, Jordanians who come from territory that was the Palestine mandate under the British. East Bankers traditionally have perceived the Palestinian population as a threat to their supremacy, their dominance, in Jordan. That's partly because the number of Jordanians with roots in Palestine is larger than that of the East Bankers.

Perhaps a bit of background is worth mentioning. In 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel, Jordanian forces were in occupation of what became known as the West Bank and East Jerusalem, The king of Jordan extended citizenship to all the Palestinians living under his authority. That's not what the Egyptians did in Gaza. In fact no other

Arab state (Lebanon or Syria for example) gave citizenship to the Palestinian refugees in their countries. Jordan was the only country that gave citizenship to Palestinians, which meant they had a passports and could they vote in elections. From '48 to '67, the West Bank was represented in the Jordanian parliament. In 1967 Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem and in the 1980s Jordan renounced its legal authority over those territories. But Palestinians who remained in Jordan retained their citizenship and continue to participate in the political system as full citizens.

The second reason underlying East Banker concern is that the Palestinians were far more educated, historically, than the more tribal oriented East Bankers. Jordanian Palestinians were dominant in banking and business. East Bankers used to say they were the Jews of the Arab world. And they meant business, accounting, banking; it wasn't intended as a derogatory slur.

Q: Were the Palestinians in control/influential in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia?

GNEHM: They certainly were in Kuwait until 1991. When Saddam invaded Kuwait, Arafat endorsed the Iraqi claim to Kuwait. That led to a total reversal in Kuwaiti policy toward the PLO (and Palestinians). After liberation the Kuwaitis refused to allow Palestinians, many of whom had resided in Kuwait for decades, to return. Palestinians have never recovered their influential position in Kuwait. While there were large populations of Palestinians in other Arab countries, like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, they never had the dominance or influence that they had in Kuwait.

It is worth recalling that the Palestinians had created considerable animosity in Jordan, another factor that underlies East Banker distrust of Jordan's Palestinian citizens. It was the PLO attempt under Arafat to overthrow the Jordanian Government (the monarchy) in 1970, Black September. The PLO almost succeeded in taking over the country. It was the East Bank military that put them down, fought in the streets, and kicked them out of their country. Bin Shakur used to tell me about the terrible nights when they thought all was lost. At different times I have been in the car with both King Hussein and bin Shakur and, as we would pass certain places, they would point out, "That's where the PLO was that night when such and such occurred." That month of Black September remained and remains vivid in the minds of most Jordanians even as the years pass. It reminded me of southerners who recall the Civil War as though it had been occurred yesterday. People don't forget those kinds of things.

Q: No, no.

GNEHM: But back to the current situation in Jordan... The political system is gerrymandered. For example, even to this day, the voting districts are drawn in such a way as to minimize Palestinian representation in parliament and maximize the strength of non-Palestinians.

The Palestinians have tended to accept this. There has been something of acquiescence by both Palestinians and East Bankers that Palestinians dominate the economic realm and

the East Bankers the political system. Palestinian dominance in the economy was OK as long as they were not in the military, intelligence or controlling the parliament. By the time I returned to Jordan as Ambassador in 2001, this unspoken division of influence was shifting as East Bankers were becoming more prominent in the economic sector, in short more often competing with Palestinians than before. While there has been little outright violence between the two segments of the population, there have been flare-ups that underscore the cleavage.

Q: Was this one of your sort of, your top five alert things? I mean, in other words were you looking for indications that perhaps the Palestinians were getting out of hand or something like that?

GNEHM: Well, no. Not to the extent of getting out of hand. They were defeated militarily, as I said, in the '70s and most of the Palestinians were businessmen and educators, editors, or worked in ministries. We were, however, always were monitoring the frictions that could erupt and did erupt around the country from time to time between the two groups.

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

GNEHM: Wonderful. It was a great country for us as a family. Not only were our kids in elementary and junior high. They were in the American Community School, which was about 40 percent Jordanian. We had many excellent relationships with parents of kids. Jordanians were very hospitable, very open, welcoming. They'd invite us into their homes and they'd come to our place unlike in some of the other Arab countries.

Q: Which unlike so many Arab places where there really isn't an awful lot of mixing.

GNEHM: There is a lot of social interaction in Jordan. It was my custom then and when I was ambassador, that if there was a death in a family, I went to the funeral. If the family was Christian, I would go to the church or if they were Muslim, I'd call on the family in the condolence tent. My wife and I were often included in weddings and other family events. We developed some very close relationships in Jordan. We also noticed that Jordanians do not forget their friendships. For example, we left Jordan in '87 and had been back in the States for a while, yet when Jordanians came to the States, they'd pick up the phone and call. One time I ran into a Jordanian friend by coincidence in a mall and we ended up going out together. Jordanians never lost the connection; and they continued to maintain it, up to this day.

Q: Well you left Jordan when?

GNEHM: I left Jordan in April of '87 and that was a little ahead of my end of tour date which was in the summer. Richard Armitage, who was then Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs, wanted me to serve as his deputy for the Middle East - - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Near East and South Asia (NESA). There are several deputies that cover each of the major geographic regions in the world. Rich

asked that I curtail my tour so I could come immediately to fill an existing vacancy. Rich had met me during visits to Jordan and asked State if they would second me to be his deputy and State agreed. So I was curtailed by three months. My wife stayed on so the kids could finish their academic year.

Q: Yes, this is good. Okay, we'll pick it up next time in '87 when you were at the Defense Department.

GNEHM: For two years.

Q: We'll pick it up then. Great.

Q: Today is the 20th of August, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you've just moved, it's '87, to the, is it the Pentagon? Could you explain what the job was?

GNEHM: The position I went to at the Pentagon was in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, underneath the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Rich Armitage. He had under him regional Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense, DASDs, as we were called in short, for each geographic region. I was the DASD for the Near East and South Asia (NESAs). The office was responsible for U.S. military relations with countries from Morocco to Bangladesh. So my office covered North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

As an introduction, I'd like to say that this assignment was a tremendous opportunity to broaden my understanding of government and policy. This exposure to the military became critically important later. My year on the Hill gave me knowledge and insight on how Congress worked international affairs issues. The job in personnel really gave me an insider view of how the system operates for us as a profession. The job on the seventh floor with the Secretary of State gave me insight into how the leadership of the Department operates. Then I had this one, with the military.

These were the four building blocks in my career that were enormously important. Because of my experience at the Defense Department, I became a vocal advocate of more Foreign Service officers doing tours and assignments with the U.S. Military. I would be self-serving if I actually told you that I foresaw the enormous role the military would play in international affairs over the next two and a half decades. I didn't. I did understand, however, the importance of the Foreign Service understanding the military and being able to work with them and vice versa in order to bridge differences.

I often tell this story humorously but it has a solid basis in fact. When I went over to the Pentagon the first day to take up my new position, I was cautioned by my friends at State that people at the Pentagon were going to be suspicious of me since I was State. When I got there, everybody in the office was polite and nice. They took me around and they introduced me. We talked about the issues that were on each person's desk. I did sense a certain holding back -- keeping the discussion very broad and general without any details.

The funny thing was that I had trouble with my paycheck because this was a reimbursable detail. State was going to continue to pay me but there was some processing problem. So I went back over to State the following day to try to get my payroll fixed. I stopped by NEA and I felt like my NEA friends were being a little hesitant in the way they were speaking to me. So in the end I confronted both of them, both at State and at Defense. I said, "You know, this is ridiculous. Shall I move and occupy that concrete bench in the middle of Memorial Bridge and then just stay on the river, halfway here and halfway there? Is this the way?"

Q: Well were you able to sort of raise the issue and, I mean, on both sides?

GNEHM: Yes that's exactly what I did. I confronted my own people at State. I said, "Look, I'm no different today than I was yesterday and you should know me well." My staff at Defense was a combination of Civil Service and military officers. During my tour at Defense, there was always a sense that State somehow was always trying to block what the Pentagon wanted to do or there was this adversarial sort of relationship. On the other side of the coin, there was a perception at State that somehow Defense was a maverick, was uncontrollable, and had their own agenda that was undermining America's interests and policies. I worked with both sides to stress that we were all on the same team.

Once they had confidence in me that I wasn't taking everything that I heard at Defense and running over to State or rating on State at Defense, things worked smoothly.

Q: Did you find that the military had a different view of what the situation was in the ME and how to deal with it -- different from your view as a State Department?

GNEHM: Actually, I would say overall they had the same view; but there was a perception that it was different. They each had this sort of perception about the other. Now, it is true and it would be logical that my Defense Department team looked at the tools that we managed such as the Joint Military Commission meetings with 10 countries in the region (which I attended as a senior Defense Department person representing America if Rich Armitage did not go), military sales, relationships with other militaries, training, building comradery as instruments, all of these as key support for American interests in the region. State would see our military assistance programs and military-to-military relationships as only part of the picture. So, to some extent, there was a more narrow view. Yet when you talked about America's policy in Morocco, you would not find a great deal of difference between the office of the Secretary of Defense and the State Department.

Now, mentioning Morocco does lead me to the issue of US policy on the Western Sahara. That issue involved the Moroccan Government and the Polisario Front.

Q: The Polisario (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro).

GNEHM: When Spain decided to withdraw from its colony in Western Sahara, Morocco claimed it as Moroccan territory. They argued that Spain had forcefully taken the territory

from Morocco. At the same time the indigenous population of the Western Sahara desired independence. Morocco occupied the territory when the Spanish withdrew and that precipitated an armed confrontation with the Polisario Front, the group that represents the local population. The fighting has left Morocco in control of most of the territory and created a large refugee population in neighboring Algeria. In fact the Algerian Government has supported the Polisario Front leading to a hostile relationship with Morocco.

Anyway, the point here is that you could find State with a position on how the U.S. Government ought to deal with Morocco on the Sahara question and people at the Pentagon who might be concerned that State's approach would undercut what Defense viewed as an important military relationship. So you could have within the U.S. Government different perspectives on how one would approach a problem with a particular country.

Q: What about the key issue in this whole area? How did you find the military looked at Israel and Israel's policy?

GNEHM: That's a very good question because of course the US relationship with Israel was a big part of the office's portfolio. NESAs were responsible for military relationship and that included arms sales in particular.

I want to step back to talk about Rich Armitage for a moment because that helps me answer your question in a very specific way. Rich Armitage is without question a dynamic personality, a fantastic bureaucrat. He knows how to work the system. He would get into the office very, very early in the morning and by the time I got there at 7 or 7:15, he had already been there an hour or an hour and a half. He probably would have made anywhere from five to 12 phone calls to other people around the government to chat with them about what was going on that day or to find out what they thought about a "Washington Post" story or what we were going to do in Morocco. Whatever the topic, he was already way ahead of the rest of the world by the time the rest of the world came to work. He was a professional networker! He built relationships that he was able to use in multiple different ways. I admired him enormously for the way he managed his job and his position. He had much more influence within the government and in the Pentagon because of the way he operated and how he filled that job.

This leads me back to answer your question. I, of course, participated in virtually every meeting he had with anybody from the region that I covered. He routinely included his subordinates, his deputies, in those meetings. From the beginning I was struck by the directness and the honesty with which he dealt with visitors. He would say things that, and if not said in a certain way or was not with someone with whom he had established a good relationship, could have been offensive and led to misunderstandings and troubles. He could get away with it the way he did it. I watched him and I learned that you could be direct with people and that you should be direct with people. You come out better off in the long run. This was in some way a modification from the way I was at State. He was a person that influenced me a great deal for the rest of my career.

Going back to the Israelis, we know how they operate in Washington. They have multiple relationships at the highest level in the USG. Usually it is the prime minister with the president, vice president or secretary of state. They deal directly with members of. In the time that I was at the Pentagon, the Israelis recognized very clearly that Rich Armitage's views on things and his influence in the Washington circuit made him a very important player for them.

For example, they approached him early on for financial and technical support for what eventually became the Israeli Iron Dome and the Arrow air defense system. One sees reference to this system quite often now in newspapers; it is operative and effective. The Israelis now have the ability to shoot down incoming rockets. It's cutting edge technology and its development was very much due to US cooperation and support.

At that time, in 1987, there were questions as to whether one could ever really develop an effective system. It was going to cost lots of money and on that particular subject, as on others, Rich was very candid with them. He said, "You know, you're coming to me and asking me for hundreds of millions of dollars and do you believe that I think this is the last time you're going to come see me? No, of course not, you're going to be back. And I know why you're going to be back, because you have to have the money to carry this through to completion." In other words, you see how Rich could actually setup the next meeting and let them know he understood this was not just a one-time thing. He made it clear that we supported their developing an anti-missile defense capability; but also pointed out that they had to convince the technical people that this is really going to be workable. So we support the concept but let them understand the various issues that were going to have to be addressed. He laid that out for them.

Q: Was there a concern about giving sensitive technology to the Israelis? I've seen accounts, that this knowledge was sometimes used as bargaining chips with the Russians and with the Chinese?

GNEHM: Yes. This was always a concern within the Pentagon. You had offices in the Pentagon who had interest in that topic, either the intelligence people or those who were there to protect sensitive technology. The decision to transfer specific technology was always vetted carefully -- and often with some disagreement as to the final decision. Rich never shied away from bringing that up if he felt that it was necessary to remind them that they were asking us to give them technology that we give to no other country. He did not hesitate to stress that that technology has to be protected. "We do not want to see that technology appear in weapons systems in other countries," he would tell them. He didn't shy away from saying that to them but again, always in a way of a friend, an ally.

Q: Well did you trust the Israelis in dealing with this?

GNEHM: Well, I don't know that I like answering the question with the word "trust" in it. The officials with whom I worked at the Defense Department were all pragmatic about this and understood the complexities of our relationship with Israel. I think you can

conclude from my mentioning how this matter was raised repeatedly with the Israelis that technology transfer had been an issue in the past.

With every country we work with there are issues that have to be assessed, certain parameters that have to be imposed. Decisions are made based on everything from the sensitivity of a particular technology to our experiences with a given country. Much goes into the final decision.

Q: Did we have any essential relationship with the Indians?

GNEHM: Improvement of relations with India was one of the things Rich hoped to achieve. We did visit India. I'm trying to remember whether we actually went with the Secretary of Defense. I just can't remember whether we did or not. Rich was cognizant and conscious of the fact that our close relationship with Pakistan and, specifically, our military assistance programs, aggravated India and inhibited efforts to improve relations. Rich did look for ways that we could find cooperate to mutual advantage.

I remember one of the friction points with India was with U.S. Navy and the Indian Navy. The Indian government was quite hostile to the presence of the U.S. Navy in the Indian Ocean. They actually protested its presence several times. They liked to remind us that the body of water is called the Indian Ocean and that it was 'our' ocean and that they did not need world powers playing out their Cold War in their ocean.

Q: And Diego Garcia is right in the middle of 'their' ocean!.

GNEHM: That's right.

Q: And it is a major base, correct?

GNEHM: That's right. We were never sympathetic to the Indians on this issue. We never altered what the U.S. Navy did in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Navy kept making an issue of it and the Indian government tried making an issue of it, as I said. This was just an example of the frictions that we had with India.

Q: Did we have any sort of informal or any kind of arrangements with Iran at that time?

GNEHM: No, absolutely not. In fact, the '87 to '88 period was the last year of the Iraq-Iran war and that was also a period in which our military and the navy was actually engaged in military confrontations with the Iranians. In 1988 after an attack on one of our naval ships, the Administration ordered a retaliatory attack on Iranian assets. The ensuing naval battle was the largest since WWII.

Q: The Iranian airbus full of civilians.

GNEHM: In August 1988, several months after the naval battle I just mentioned, an Iranian Airbus, a civilian airliner, was shot down. I was my Pentagon position when this happened.

Q: The U.S.S. Vincennes.

GNEHM: Yes, the USS Vincennes. The plane took off from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: The investigation into the incident determined that the radar man, who was tracking the plane which was headed directly toward the ship, tried to identify the plane using 'friend and foe' messaging. The plane did not respond as would normally be the case with a civilian airliner. Given what had happened, the attacks on several other ships some with significant loss of life, people were really being extremely cautious about such threats. There was a point when the tracker had to make the decision as to whether you take the plane out or you don't, running the risk of being hit. Obviously, he made the decision to hit the plane. Then, of course, it was clear in the aftermath that it was a civilian aircraft and there was a huge loss of life. In my own opinion, the investigation provided an accurate description of events. This was not a deliberate shoot down of a civilian aircraft, it just wasn't.

Q: No. Well I mean there's no point in that.

GNEHM: Yes. It wasn't long after this incident that the then Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, actually reversed something he had said earlier, that he would never, ever agree to any sort of an agreement or compromise with Iraq until Saddam and his regime were gone. Yet now he called for an end to the war and said Iran was going to accept the UN resolution that called for a ceasefire. Many of us feel that the loss of life with the Airbus shoot down and, admittedly, some other factors were important in his deciding to reverse his position. Again, that is not in any way to say that we shot down that plane to accomplish that. Later, in negotiations with the Iranians, we agreed to provide payment to the families of the victims but we made clear it was not compensation or an acceptance of responsibility. That was the way it was phrased.

You ask what kind of relationship we had with Iran. It was characterized by intense hostility and suspicion. For example, the big obstacle to paying the money was that we refused to give it to the Iranian government to have them pay the families. We wanted to either do it directly or through a middleman because we didn't trust the Iranian government to do it properly. We also did not want them to get credit. No, we didn't have a very good relationship with them at this particular point in time. We had also, as you know, been tilting toward Iraq during its war with Iran.

Q: What was the feeling towards Iraq at the time you were there?

GNEHM: Well that's a very important question because when I returned to State as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Gulf region, I had to deal with the same issue just in a different time period.

When I arrived in 1987, a lot had already happened with the Iraqi relationship. There was a sense in the Pentagon (and elsewhere in the executive branch) that there were real opportunities to work with Baghdad. State shared the view that maybe we could moderate the Iraqi behavior. It was hoped that by working with the Iraqis Iraq might become a legitimate and respectable part of the family of nations. Saddam Hussein was the key figure and he had an ambition to be a leader, if not THE leader, of the region.

The Pentagon saw a chance to build a relationship with the Iraqi military, which they thought could help them have a backdoor influence on Saddam and the regime. In retrospect, that was not a good appreciation of how the Saddam regime operated. It was the other way around. Nevertheless, there was certainly an initiative on the part of some at the Pentagon to find programs that we could do with the Iraqi military. That idea went all the way to the NSC (National Security Council). The presidential determination is actually declassified now, in which the decision was made to do some things; but in the end they were very minor and non-lethal. What was agreed to was small compared to what some in the Pentagon had hope for. There was no military assistance, arms sales, or anything of that sort. We could open up a dialogue between our military medical people and Iraqi military medical people on the treatment of war wounds and things like that. So it was de minimis, if you will. There was some dissent, unhappiness, at the Pentagon in certain areas, particularly in DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) where there was a particularly strong advocacy for a more substantial approach.

Another issue that was going on as I took up my new position at Defense was consequences of the Iraqi attack on the U.S.S. Stark. On May 17, 1987, the pilot of an Iraqi F1 fired two Exocet missiles hitting the US naval vessel that was patrolling waters in the north of the Persian Gulf. Thirty-seven naval personnel were killed and 21 others wounded. The ship almost sunk. The Iraqi Government claimed it was a mistake -- that the pilot thought the ship was an Iranian oil tanker. At the time the missiles were launched the pilot had no visible view of the ship, according to the Iraqis. There were differing views in Washington. Some thought it was a signal from Saddam for US naval ships to stay away from the northern Gulf. Others were willing to accept that it was pilot error. Regardless the incident prompted a significant discussion with Saddam Hussein's government over their liabilities and responsibilities. While initially refusing to accept any responsibility, in the end they established a fund to cover the cost of the repair of the ship and some money to compensate families for loss of life and injury. They still refused to accept responsibility. The resolution of this incident was not unlike the solution we reached with Iran some months later for the shoot down of the Iranian civilian aircraft.

The incident also led to a U.S. Government decision to approach the Iraqis to try to establish an arrangement to 'deconflict' our forces. Our Navy ships were operating throughout the Gulf. Iraqi planes likewise were operating up and down the Gulf. Negotiations did lead to a deconfliction agreement.

In accordance with the agreement United States Government would notify the Iraqis the positions of our ships and our planes. Thus the Iraqis would be aware of which of the blips on their radars were ours. What that also told the Iraqis was that all the blips that weren't on our list were probably Iranian.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: So in fact we were providing target intelligence to them. This agreement is sometimes cited as proof of the US 'tilt' to Iraq; but the agreement was necessary to protect our ships and planes from attacks similar to what happened to the USS Stark.

Q: Well we also, weren't we also giving some overhead pictures or the equivalent to the Iraqis?

I mean, we really were giving them pretty good stuff.

GNEHM: We were. This was driven in part by US concern at one point in the Iraq-Iran war the possibility of an Iranian victory seemed real. The US policy, even if never stated so bluntly, was determined to thwart an Iranian victory. The precipitating event was the Iranian seizure of the al-Faw peninsula, the land located between the Shatt al-Arab and the Khor Abdullah. It meant that Iran now controlled all of Iraq's coastal area and threatened the fall of Basra, a key Iraqi city in southern Iraq. This gain also brought Iranian forces to the Kuwaiti border. Washington decided that it needed to do something to support the Iraqis. We began providing the Iraqis with intelligence information about where Iranian forces were located to enable them to be either prepared for the next attack or to respond to it. The Iraqis used the information that we provided -- not only to prepare for their defense but to plan offensive operations. Ultimately, the Iraqis retook the al-Faw peninsula and did so using gas which they had also been using elsewhere along the frontlines. Large number of Iranians were killed in the gas attacks.

There was one particularly contortion that I should mention in the decision to provide intelligence information to the Iraqis. Some officials wanted to provide the Iraqis with overhead photography but others in the USG concluded that for security reasons that could not be done. The work around was obtuse. Intelligence officers laid tissue paper over the photography and traced the Iranian deployments thus giving the Iraqis the next best thing to the original photos!

If you look at our relationship with Iraq from an Iranian point of view, you can understand why they would be angry with the United States and see us as a partisan on the Iraqi side during the war. I have mentioned Iraqi use of gas. The US (and other countries) failure to hold Iraq responsible for their use of gas. This failure on our part (and the international community) is still mentioned by Iranians when they cite hostile US policy toward Iran.

Q: How did Saddam view our support?

GNEHM: In hindsight we know that Saddam challenged his own military over use of the US intelligence. He thought we were providing information deliberately to place Iraqi forces in jeopardy. We failed to understand that, while we were trying to build a better relationship, he was actually extremely suspicious of the US. As I said, he wasn't sure the intelligence we were giving him was accurate. His military knew it was correct, but he didn't believe it. Let's be honest. He had reasons to be skeptical. Remember the so-called Irangate controversy. Around 1986, it came out publicly that we had approached the Iranians and had provided some military equipment. We did so in spite of the fact that we were aiding Iraq and were applying strong pressure on other countries not to provide any arms to Iran. The Israelis had brokered an arrangement in Lebanon through an Iranian intermediary, Manucher Ghorbanifar.

Q: Oh he had a very complex relationship with both of them which usually ends up by screwing things up.

GNEHM: The public revelation US arms to Iran was a disaster and greatly complicated a host of relationships. For two years the Reagan Administration had an initiative called publicly espoused an initiative called "Operation Staunch" led by Ambassador Richard Fairbanks. Under the initiative we put extreme and sometimes most undiplomatic pressure on all of our allies not to sell any equipment or provide any assistance to Iran. For example, we convinced the Italians not to sell helicopters. We convinced the Japanese to curtail economic aid because we were trying to cut off Iran from any external support. We were also telling our allies, the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and others, that we were in their camp -- totally opposed to the Islamic Revolutionary Government in Iran. And suddenly this all came out. So where is your credibility? What have you just said to everyone? The message was clear. You can't believe what we say.

And for Saddam, he had this experience with us as a duplicitous actor. So, one can understand a bit why he was skeptical of US military intelligence.

Q: Well were you sitting in this, as a subordinate but still, in the critical period aware that we were sending out all sorts of mixed signals to everybody in the whole area over this war?

GNEHM: Some of this that I just talked about came in a period just before I began my assignment at Defense. I was keenly aware of the Irangate fallout from having to deal with it in Jordan. When I got to the Pentagon, I was very much aware that we were working against a pretty severe credibility problem in the region. This came particularly from our allies, the Saudis, and the others with whom I met. It was an issue that came up in military commission meetings over the course of the next year or two. The Israeli role in Irangate convinced lots of people, including the Iraqis, that we were manipulated by the Israelis and that ultimately our relationship with Israel was stronger than other relationships. These were all things that you experience and learn to deal with.

I would say that in the end, the impact of our involvement in the Iraq-Iran war, especially the success of our naval presence, restored our credibility with the Saudis and the other Gulf states.

Q: This is essentially escorting tankers in the Persian Gulf, protecting them from Iranian or brash Iraqi missiles.

GNEHM: Right. In late '86 we learned from the US Maritime Commission that the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC), the agency of the Kuwaiti Government that owns and operates Kuwait's supertankers, had approached the Commission to ask what were the regulations for flagging vessels under the United States flag. The Commission notified State and others agencies that they had received this really peculiar inquiry. We ferreted it out. The then-Minister of Oil in Kuwait was Sheikh Ali Khalifa and he was concerned about Iranian threats to Kuwaiti tankers and thus to Kuwait's ability to export oil. In fact the Iranians had fired a missile into a Kuwaiti port and targeted Kuwaiti ships. It was clear to us from our intelligence and from our assessment that Kuwait was a focus of Iranian attacks. Why? As the Iraq-Iran war unfolded and all Iraqi Gulf ports were attacked by Iran, Kuwaiti and Saudi ports in the Gulf had become major transit points for material -- military and civilian -- going to Iraq. Technically one could argue that these states were co-belligerents as they were permitting material to Iraq to pass through their ports but not permitting the same for Iran. For the United States, Iran was a belligerent and a hostile power that might interrupt the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. Any such disruption was an absolute *sine qua non* of American policy since World War II in the Gulf. US policy for decades was clear that the US would not allow any hostile power to interfere with the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf.

In the fall of '86 into early '87, the United States procrastinated in giving an answer to the Kuwaitis. Ali Khalifa kept pushing. We learned that the Kuwaiti government had also approached the Soviet Union with the same request -- to reflag their tankers. In early 1987 Ali Khalifa called my predecessor in Kuwait, Ambassador Nat Howell, to inform him that he had just received a positive answer from Moscow. They would reflag all Kuwaiti tankers. Sh. Ali said he had not yet informed the foreign minister but he would be seeing him at 9:00 in the morning. "That's about how much time you have to give me the US answer yea or nay about our reflagging request." The answer came back to the Kuwaitis before the night was over. We would reflag the Kuwaiti tankers.

The foreign minister in the meeting the next morning said to Ali Khalifa, "This is great. We'll do half the tankers with the Russians and half the tankers with the U.S. and that gives us protection from both great super powers." When Ali Khalifa brought that back to Nat Howell and through Nat to Washington, the U.S. Government's response was that it was all or nothing. We would not tolerate the Russians reflagging half the tankers.

Now, the truth is that the Russians didn't have the naval capability to defend Kuwaiti shipping or to undertake any of the operations that we could do. The Russians saw this as a great opportunity to enhance their influence in the Persian Gulf -- exactly what the US opposed. The foreign minister's reaction, who by the way is now the emir, Sheikh Sabah,

had been foreign minister of Kuwait since independence in 1962. He looked upon the world more or less from a non-aligned point of view. The policy that he championed in the years after Kuwait's independence was basically to play both sides in the Cold War against the other to the advantage of Kuwait. His reaction that morning would have been quite obvious and quite understood by anyone who knew him then.

By the way, after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the U.S. liberation, Sheikh Sabah's view of things have changed entirely. So I don't want to leave anybody with the impression that today, as the emir, he feels as he did before 1990. The decision in Kuwait was ultimately reflag five supertankers with the US. The reflagging itself was very complicated. We had to get all sorts of waivers because we have very strict labor and safety laws and regulations. These ships were going to require enormous retrofitting to comply with U.S. regulations; but that would come with time.

Q: I know double hulling and . . .

GNEHM: Yes. And fire controls and alarm systems and all kinds of things that were required.

Q: Oil is such, after the Valdez incident, Exxon Valdez, we had very, very nervous-

GNEHM: There was a requirement that the captain had to be an American citizen. We waived them temporarily to permit the reflagging to go ahead. This became a problem. The Maritime Workers union went to the committee on the Hill that is responsible for their affairs to protest. They wanted to have the right to crew all the ships immediately. This was a great job opportunity for them professionally. The number of ships under US registry was rapidly in part because of all of these regulations. Most companies were flagging their ships in Liberia and Panama and other countries where they didn't face such strict requirements, including the use of very expensive American labor.

The significant point is that the United States had now taken on a far more serious commitment in the Gulf than it had ever had before. Obviously, when you reflag a ship with the American flag, under international law, which goes back hundreds of years, the country with the flag has the right as a sovereign state to protect that territory from hostile action. Once the Kuwaiti owned tankers were American ships, the United States Navy had a legitimate responsibility to protect them and could respond under international law to legally hostile threats. That is, of course, the precise reason why the Kuwaitis wanted them under a US flag. In the first action, the U.S. decided that we would escort the supertankers from the Strait of Hormuz--which is that narrow neck of water where the Persian Gulf enters the Arabian Sea--all the way up the Persian Gulf to the port in Kuwait. Unfortunately, during the very first escort operation one of the super tankers hit a mine. The pictures that surfaced after the incident showed the US navy escort vessel cruising in the wake of the hit tanker. The Kuwaitis were upset believing that the naval escort ship should have been in the lead. The Navy explained that a super tanker doesn't sink when it hits a mine but a destroyer does.

A few months later, another one of the five tankers was actually loading crude in the port in Kuwait when it was hit by an incoming, Iranian-fired Scud missile. These are missiles have no guidance system. They are simply shot into the air on a trajectory that may or may not hit something. This hit was a fluke; but being the second of five tankers to be hit had the Kuwaitis questioning US protection of their tankers.

As the war continued and the Iranians became more and more frustrated, the Iran began attacking vessels of other nationalities. Then we began to see mines in the Gulf. Initially we thought that the mines were left from the Iraq-Iran war and had broken loose from the Euphrates/Tigris and the Shatt al-Arab area. But we later caught Iranians in small boats throwing mines over the side. There was no doubt at this point where the mines were coming from and who was deploying them.

Secondly, the Iranians in fast motorboats began to board ships and actually rough up crews and threaten them. It began to occur in the sight of American naval vessels. In other words, the American vessels that were there could see it happening but couldn't intervene because the ship was not an American flagged vessel. The outrage from a humanitarian point of view rose soon intensified, both within the U.S. Navy and the American public. This led to the decision that, if the U.S. naval vessel was privy, meaning present and saw human rights violations, it could intervene. You see the beginning of an expanding policy.

The next step followed quickly. The U.S. was willing to convoy all the ships in and out of the Gulf. The initial consequence was a huge backlog of shipping waiting for escort. The Navy's view of convoying was the World War II operation in the North Atlantic. You gathered ships at one safe location. Once you had a sufficient number of ships, the convoy would proceed. So the Navy decided that all ships were to gather in the Gulf of Oman just outside of the Persian Gulf and wait until there were enough ships to be convoyed up the coast. As the convoy moved north, it would drop off ships at ports it passed starting in the Emirates, then on to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. The delay resulted in significant increases in demurrage charges. With some experience the Navy made adjustments and got it right. They learned that it was much better to post ships at intervals up the Gulf. Ships then entered the Gulf as they arrived. The US Navy noted their arrival and passed them off from one ship to another up the Gulf. The U.S. Navy didn't have to convoy them. It worked and was fantastic. It was only when there were some attacks on these ships that the U.S. decided, as I mentioned earlier, to take out some of the oil platforms that Iranian motorboats were using as bases. So the escort operation was a great success.

It was impressive and the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, the Emiratis and others saw that when we said we would do something and when we committed to their security, we actually deployed the assets needed and carried it out well. It restored a great deal of credibility.

Q: Well did the Kuwaitis, the Bahrainis, the United Emirates, have their own naval vessels? I assume patrol vessels with enough to at least cooperate with our navy?

GNEHM: The answer is yes, but in a limited way. They have more capability now, but the Saudis did have some naval vessels based on the coast of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf. The Kuwaitis navy was small. They did cooperate and we did handoff ships going into Saudi ports to the Saudi navy at a certain point. I should add that we attracted considerable support from other navies in the world. We weren't the only ones but were the principal force.

Q: Japan I would think. Maybe not.

GNEHM: Did Japan send naval vessels? I'm not sure that they did. Their constitution prohibits involvement in military action. We did twist their arms to finance a huge radar communications system in the Persian Gulf that enabled ships to communicate with each other in the Gulf. I know that the Dutch had a ship. The Danes I think did as did and certainly the British and the French. It's curious again, the way things happen. We proposed immediately that all naval ships in the Gulf be placed under the command of the senior US admiral or at least under his authority to co-ordinate activities. Governments refused on grounds that their naval vessels were sovereign territory. In the Gulf, however, the naval captains told our admiral that as far as they were concerned they were happy to coordinate their actions. And so the commanders in the Gulf worked it out!

Q: Did you get involved in these agreements or semi-agreements?

GNEHM: We were involved in the initial conversations with the governments over our first proposal; but it was the navy that worked it out with the ship captains in the Gulf and solved the practical problems.

Q: What was the Iranian response to all this?

GNEHM: Well the Iranians continued to accuse the United States and others of supporting Iraq and as being one-sided in the war. There were continued efforts to lay mines and they still tried some attacks, but the Iranians didn't have a capability to stop our efforts. When they did try, we sunk them. The Iranians had been faced with a dilemma in the war with Iraq. They knew that Iraq was continuing to get support that was actually helping them win. Iran's options to prevent Iraq from getting help weren't good. They could hit the pipeline that goes from Iraq through Turkey to the Mediterranean to stop oil exports and therefore, reduce revenue. This was problematic, however, because the Iranians had a reasonably good relationship with Turkey. They needed Turkey as an access point for the goods, military supplies, food, and everything else that they were importing. So that wasn't a viable option. There were other things they could have done that would have hurt their relationship with Russia. They didn't want to do that because again, the northern border with Russia was critically important for lots of different reasons. So that's why they ended up making the decision that they had to hit the ships that were going into the Saudi and Kuwaiti ports, which we had warned them against repeatedly.

Q: Were there any other areas that caused, from your perspective and your responsibility, I mean you had, in the first place you had a major war going on and anywhere else where there were troubles?

GNEHM: Well there were lots of other things going on which I would love to mention.

Q: Do.

GNEHM: The first that comes to mind is our military assistance with Pakistan. Zia al-Haq was then president, a military man who had seized power. There was a huge debate in Washington among members of Congress. There were those who didn't think we should be building a closer relationship with a military government and then those who believed Pakistan was important, particularly when looking at Iran and even at Afghanistan. They advocated building a relationship. The Pentagon and the Secretary of Defense, both Weinberger and Carlucci as well as my boss, Armitage, were strongly in support of building up and forming ties with the Pakistani military. Almost within weeks of my arrival in the job, there was a hearing on the Hill over the sale of AWACs or the Navy E3C to Pakistan. I did a lot of testifying on the Hill in my Defense position. Virtually every single U.S. arms sale was questioned. Any particular sale might involve four different hearings, two in each house before both foreign affairs and defense committees.

So I had to go almost immediately after my arrival at Defense to argue in favor of selling an intelligence surveillance aircraft to Pakistan, either the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) or the E3C, which was the Navy version of the AWACS. I knew nothing beyond the most basic facts about these two platforms, but I knew I had to be ready to talk about their capabilities in detail and explain the differences between the two. Then, of course, I had to be prepared to explain why we were going to sell it, which was a policy decision. I worked my tail off those few days trying to learn all the technical data about these two platforms. I went up there and, frankly, I did a lousy job. I didn't lose the case; but I didn't come across as really knowing what I was talking about that well.

Rich, who, as I mentioned, is a great networker, had already spoken to several committee members by the time I returned from the ill. He, of course, how I did and what was their reaction. They said, "Well, you know, we're not going to oppose this sale but your person today didn't do a great job." And so he called me up and really gave me the, you know, the shit hit the fan, sort of stuff about this. And he was right. That never happened again, at least in my opinion. I never ever had that problem again and I know I became a very good witness. Members often complimented me, but that was a bad start.

Rich and I ended up going to Pakistan for the joint military commission meeting. The problem we faced with Pakistan was our history with them. We had had a military sales program with Pakistan earlier which we had cut off in a political move.

Q: That was because of nuclear activity.

GNEHM: Yes and it was also linked to problems with their relationship with India. Our credibility convinced Zia al-Haq and the military that this time around was going to be different. Yet you could see doubts on faces during our conversations. They would look at you and they'd shake their heads and say, "Hey, please, please, you know." And Rich again, because he's the kind of guy he is, would speak right up, "I know exactly what you're thinking and know why you said what you said. It's because back then we cut off our aid. We're making a commitment to you."

Q: Did you have concerns about the fact that a Pakistani developing nuclear weapons and passing information to other countries?

GNEHM: Yes, this was an issue. This was a topic of concern to the U.S. Government. I don't remember myself ever participating in meetings in which that subject was addressed directly.

Q: The head of it, Khan was it? I think his name was A. Q. Khan.

GNEHM: Yes, the nuclear expert who led the program, I believe.

You asked about other things. The one other big thing that happened while I was in my position as DASD was a status of forces (SOFA) agreement with Israel. We didn't have an agreement. We had this relationship which is very close. We furnished them military assistance at various times as the result of wars. We had investments in technology and programs, not only in the Arrow and Iron Dome, but also naval programs, naval ships. There was, for example, a decision to permit the Israelis to purchase some fairly sophisticated naval vessels that would be built in Gulf of Mexico ports. This was an important sale to certain members of Congress. Yet with all these military programs, we did not have a status of forces agreement with them. The negotiations had been going on for some time. My predecessor had negotiated at some length but the talks had just not advanced. Rich Armitage said to me, "We're going to finish this, Skip. I want you to get this done." I was the lead negotiator on the U.S. side, with a team of some extraordinarily competent people including representatives of State and the military, the Navy and other parties involved. Over a period of time, I succeeded in negotiating a draft SOFA agreement. It was an amazing experience. It was a unique experience because while it is largely true that the Foreign Service and State Department are the main negotiators of agreements with countries, not very many Foreign Service officers actually end up negotiating. We often talk about policies, treaties, negotiating text, and sub-points and try to convince countries to vote at the UN as we would like. But actually negotiating an entire treaty, for that is what it was, was absolutely a fantastic experience for me because I had to know all the various aspects of a status of forces agreement, what mattered to the various military services, State's view, Defense's view, other equities within the U.S. Government. And then, I had to deal with a negotiating team of a foreign government and one that I knew, as we talked earlier, had access into the political system in Washington at all kinds of levels.

The Israeli negotiating team was headed by a lawyer, Elyakim Rubenstein, who went on to become minister in the government and a Justice on the Israeli Supreme Court. He had with him a counterpart team representing the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Defense, Foreign Ministry and other ministries. We rotated our meetings, holding negotiations both in Israel and in Washington. We sat at long table. Eli Rubenstein sat in the middle on one side; I sat in the middle on the other side with our teams next to us. I learned early on, and it was true to the very end, that the Israeli side was comprised of an extraordinarily competent, but litigious, group of people who could ask questions infinitum, posing the most extraordinary hypothetical question to try to find out what was meant under the terms which we were arguing. For example, one woman lawyer asked, "I just want to make it clear about this indemnity question, about when you cause damages and your responsibility. So, does this mean if you have an airplane that's flying over Israel from, let's say Greece, on its way to Kuwait and as it's flying over Israel one of the engines falls off, lands on a house and kills someone, does this agreement cover indemnity for this even though they didn't land in Israel?" I shook my head and said to her, "If an engine falls off the plane, the plane is probably going to fall down in Israeli territory. We're going to have both the house that the engine hit and plus the place where the plane crashed to deal with. It'll be on Israeli territory."

After a while this became so absurd that even Eli said to the woman who asked the question "Look, it doesn't matter. I think we understand that this is a pretty comprehensive indemnity section that involves American responsibility pretty much across the board and they're not trying to evade or be evasive about it."

It wasn't always easy to keep negotiations moving forward. We would work through Article I tortuously and, once we reached an informal agreement, we assumed that we would discuss the next article the following day, only to arrive at the next session to have someone raise an issue and ask for clarification about something in Article I. In the end, we stalled and Eli got a little upset. At one point one of the people raised an issue that had already been resolved. Eli looked across the table at me and mouthed "Forget it. Don't worry about this. Don't respond, I'll take care of this question." When the woman who was asking the question finished, Eli said, "Well thank you, but we've already agreed on that. We're going to move on." We eventually did reach an agreement.

Q: Well tell me, a status of forces agreements, deals with the American presence in a foreign country usually because we've got troops stationed there. What did we have in Israel that we wouldn't have in, Egypt or some other place? There are always soldiers coming in and out and all. What was so special about Israel and needing a SOFA?

GNEHM: The status of forces agreement is an agreement between us and another country that defines a military relationship and the way the host government will deal with our military presence in that country. We have them with NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries. The reason why they're so sensitive to most countries is that we insist that we maintain judicial jurisdiction over all active duty military personnel or personnel who are there under the auspices of the Defense Department. This is one of the reasons why we didn't keep troops in Iraq just a few years ago. The important reason for

this policy is the necessity of maintaining operational readiness. For example, you don't want your radar man in a unit being picked up and put in jail for an automobile accident or maybe even an allegation of wrongful death or corruption and become unavailable in the event of a crisis that requires his presence. There's always the concern that in certain countries, political situations have an impact on the operational capability of the unit that's based in the country. I'm in support of SOFAs. I think they are necessary when you have military abroad. But they are sensitive, especially in the Middle East. People remember the 'capitulation' agreements that western powers forced on the Ottoman Empire -- agreements that truly denigrated the country's sovereignty.

Why Israel? We have a constant ongoing U.S. military presence in Israel for different reasons. It could be that they're stationed there as part of the cooperative program of the Navy or for an exercise program. We hold fairly extensive exercise programs so we have units deployed in Israel, usually for a defined period of time. During that period of time, this status of forces agreement governs their status.

Also, the SOFA define a number of ways that make it easier for American military personnel entering a country. In Israel, they can enter on their military I.Ds. The military does not need a passport or visas because when the military deploys large numbers of troops to a country not all members will have passports. They travel abroad on their military I.D. Certainly the judicial jurisdiction is there but what Israel will provide in the way of support for the troops in a country as opposed to what the Americans would provide this is also defined.

I mentioned the indemnity question earlier. For example, if there is an automobile accident when a Humvee goes down a road, it is going to do a lot more damage to the automobile than to the Humvee. Under the status of forces agreement, if there are any injuries it's very clear that the U.S. Government is responsible if it's determined that it was a U.S. Military person or military equipment that caused the problem. We tried to set up the system so that there are no questions when things arise as to how it's going to be handled and it's worked beautifully.

An agreement like the SOFA requires approval of the Knesset. That occurred after I left the job and moved on. In fact, it didn't occur until the fall of 1990.

I made very close friends with the people who were on the negotiating team and with whom I worked. I learned how you negotiate. One of the really important things I learned is that there are moments in time when you sense hostility or even blockage to progress. At that point in time, a little bit of humor can sometimes relieve tension. I did that a few times and saw the expressions on people's faces. They were kind of shocked that I had taken this very serious issue and made a joke out of it, but then they broke into laughter and we moved on. You need be able to gauge the situation and establish confidence from the other side that you're being honest and that you're listening and attentive.

Q: Didn't we have the equivalent of about three or four SOFA agreements that we negotiated long and hard with other countries that we could pull off the shelf and present and say, take your pick to the Israelis?

GNEHM: This was part of the negotiating. As they wanted to eliminate or take out certain things, I had to say several different times to them that what they wanted removed was an integral part of the SOFA for U.S. national interest, policy and if it was not there, there is no agreement. I said, "If you look, it's in the German SOFA, it's in Italy's, etc." Yes, they did their research; these are all public documents. They would often pull out a document and say, "Well you use this language here but you didn't use this language there, why?" There is an office in the Pentagon that's responsible for status of forces agreements and they had a representative on my negotiating team. If anything, he was the policeman to make sure we didn't do anything that crossed over lines. He was invaluable in responding to questions about other SOFAs.

Q: Well this brings up a question. As I do these oral histories things are changing. It used to be that a team would go out somewhere and they'd operate pretty much on their own because communications are so lousy. Had you reached the point where people, somebody in the back row would have a cell phone and would be talking to the Pentagon?

GNEHM: No, not during these negotiations. I was fortunate in having almost every office with some interest in the topic on my team there at the table. I might ask for a recess, say that I need to have a caucus with my side on these issues before we go on any further, and we'd go off into another room or some other place. If we didn't have the knowledge we needed from someone there on the team, we would call back to Washington to find out the history of a certain phrase. Again, usually my person knew all about these things. So we rarely had to touch base with Washington.

My experience negotiating this agreement with Israel was very important in subsequent negotiations that I undertook specifically a number of agreements with Kuwait after its liberation in 1991.

Q: Was there a congressional input into your negotiating?

GNEHM: No. I always was aware, as was my party, that any agreement like this would be scrutinized by the Hill. As long as it was replicating other agreements and treaties that we had done before, even the pro-Israel members of Congress couldn't object to us requiring the same thing of Israel as we would require of other allies.

Q: Sure.

GNEHM: It was at least a good talking point and they usually backed off. They just said okay, okay, okay.

Q: Turning to another part of your area of responsibility -- Africa?

GNEHM: I covered North Africa. There were joint military commissions or similar type structures that we set up with almost every one of these countries where we had any sort of military relationship. They would meet either once or twice a year and we would alternate the meetings between the capital abroad and Washington. For the Moroccan joint military commission meeting, I'd go to Morocco and then the following session would be in Washington. We would have different representatives of the U.S. Government on the team. We would have someone from military sales from the Pentagon to deal with military sales. If there was a status of forces agreement, someone from that office in the Pentagon would attend in case there were SOFA issues. I would represent OSD, but we'd always have State represented, either political or military affairs bureau or both, depending on the issues. The agendas were set based on the issues with which we were dealing. There was invariably parts of the meeting where we would give an intelligence assessment and that they would then give an assessment from their perspective. There were always social events to reinforce personal relationships. These meetings with our counterparts went on over several years, so there was a comradery.

Q: How stood relations with Egypt at that time?

GNEHM: Egypt was a critically important relationship. It was an extremely good relationship during the period Mubarak was president. We had a joint military commission with Egypt that met twice a year. We had a large military supply and arms sale relationship. We also had an extensive exercised program. A large issue that I had to deal with was the initial sale of M1A1 tanks to Egypt. This was the first sale of an M1A1 tank, our most advanced tank, to a non-NATO country. I had to testify several times before Congress finally permitted this sale to go forward. Actually the Egyptians wanted to manufacture the M1A1 in Egypt. The transfer of sensitive technology to Egypt was one issue; but Israeli opposition to manufacturing the tank in Egypt was another. In the end we agreed that we would support them having an assembly plant for the M1A1s. We would furnish the kits and they would assemble them. They ultimately agreed to do that. There was a lot of skepticism on the Hill about selling this very sophisticated tank to Egypt. The Israeli concern about technology and capability and whether this was a threat to them all that had to be dealt with. In the end it was approved and we sold the first batch of kits to them and the plant ultimately began assembly. Further we also had a huge F-16 sale, an addition to their F-16 fleet.

The military's presence in the security area was huge in Egypt.

Q: Well what-

GNEHM: There were also exercises with Egypt that are worth mentioning.

Q: Well Egypt, okay with a tank, I mean, it would seem the logical use of the tank would be if things went bad with Israel. I mean, in other words Israel and Egypt are right on the front lines of each other and it's straight tank country. I would think that Congress would

be dead against giving the Egyptians anything that maybe gave them an equality with the Israelis.

GNEHM: The question of whether a particular sale jeopardized Israeli security was a given on every single sale of military equipment to countries in the ME. One had to convince Congress and Israel that the sale was not going to jeopardize their security. Often, as was the case in this tank sale, we had to assess what capabilities the Israelis have to defend themselves or what the Israelis needed to make sure that they had the weapons systems or the technology to counter the M1A1. That was the way you normally placated either Israel or the Washington lobby. I would add that the Libyan border was of concern to the Egyptians. And remember as well that Egypt and Israel had signed a peace treaty.

Q: Libya no contact or what?

GNEHM: In those days, Libya was a threatening state. Between Gaddafi's wacky ideas and his attempts to buy off different governments and even fund some opposition groups, Libya was a source of instability of the region.

I have mentioned several times the joint military commissions that we had with several of the countries in the NESAs region. We had a good relationship with Morocco and Tunisia and had joint military commissions with both. We had a fledgling relationship with Algeria in those days. I think I was the first person at my level at the Pentagon to go to Algeria and I did to indicate an interest in strengthening the military relationship with Algeria. I visited their military academy and spoke there. I was the first American to ever do that.

We have talked a lot about our relationship with Israel but I did not specifically mention the Joint Political Military Group (JPMG). It was the primary forum for our military to military talks. It met twice a year was very important in the bilateral relationship. We also had a joint military commission with Jordan. I already mentioned our commission with Pakistan.

Q: In Tunisia?

GNEHM: We had a joint commission. We met once or twice a year, I can't recall which it was; but we had good relations. All of these interactions -- the visits, the meetings and the personal relationships that I established -- really gave me a meaningful insight into the U.S. relationship with these countries and the importance of the Pentagon in those relationships. I think the only other item worth mentioning is the Israeli sale of these naval ships. We had been reluctant to get involved in these ships that were sort of destroyer frigate size vessels that would give the Israeli navy a much better naval capability with some important technology. It was also one that they said we'd pay for, I guess as part of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Again there was some concern within the U.S. Government about this financial detail that would later lead to further sales. In the end we did raise, there was one point where Rich Armitage and I simply went to bat

because someone should be doing something that gave them an important capability that they felt they needed for their security.

Q: Did Sudan, was that an issue at all when you were there?

GNEHM: Sudan was under the responsibility of the DASD for Africa. I don't remember when the attack on the so-called candy factory happened. Sudan was not a country with which the Pentagon had any relationship, I can assure you. We didn't go there and we didn't do anything there. I don't remember thinking very favorably about what the Sudanese were doing. That's my recollection.

Q: How about with India? Did you get involved- Was Diego Garcia an issue or, I mean, was it just a fait accompli?

GNEHM: It was a fait accompli and used extensively during those years of the Iraq-Iran war and later.

Q: Yes.

GNEHM: Again, the Indians didn't like the fact that we were militarizing anything in the Indian Ocean; but I don't remember that they made a big issue of Diego Garcia at this point in time.

I want to comment further on the first point that I made regarding suspicions and hence the relationship between Defense and State. You asked me about relationship between Schultz and Weinberger, and we've seen a similar situation with Rumsfeld and Powell in more recent times. I was the ongoing liaison with Central Command (CENTCOM), the command responsible for the ME then located in MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. It was the regional military command that was running the naval operations in the Persian Gulf, the reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers, and the escorting operation. CENTCOM always had a seat at the table at joint military commission meetings. I knew General Schwarzkopf personally and worked with him. Because of my position at the Pentagon, I often attended the deputy committee meetings at the NSC. Rich would be in the chair and I would sit behind him on Middle East issues. The person who chaired those meetings was the then deputy National Security advisor, Colin Powell, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time of the invasion of Kuwait. So he knew me and I knew him. The fact that I had those relationships from a Defense seat made all the difference in the world when I was named Ambassador-designate to Kuwait and Iraq occupied that country in 1990. They knew me personally and knew how I supported the military. They were confident of my views on the military's role in international relationships. These associations from my days as DASD at the Pentagon meant that their doors were wide open to me when we later get to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the military's role. I had access and was able to do things that no one else at State was able to do.

Q: Yes. Well that's one of the things that comes out of all these interviews. The personal connections usually through jobs that are often at a somewhat lower level really come back to pay off. And the more one gets into these joint operations the better it, you know, the better prepared you are to work on these really very complex issues.

What was your impression of your staff at the Pentagon, your relationship with them?

GNEHM: I had extraordinarily capable people working in the section. I felt I was blessed. I felt that those who were Civil Service who tended to stay in that office for a fairly long period of time knew their portfolios front to back. The military officers assigned to the office on two year tours brought genuine field knowledge to our considerations.

Q: Did you find the military rotation system, people were always trying to learn their job or not?

GNEHM: Yes. One of the things that I was able to do the longer I was in the job was to identify officers in our security assistance offices in embassies in the region who would be good candidates for assignment in NESAs. For example, I was able to ask the military to consider assigning Lt. Col. Mickey Baity, who worked with me in Jordan, to NESAs. He came in to be our Jordan desk officer. This was fantastic. The Jordanians were ecstatic; the guy they loved in Amman was now their person in the Pentagon in Washington. The military officers in the section maintained telephone and personal contacts with their counterparts, which I strongly supported and encouraged. It strengthened the desk's relationship in the region and in the Pentagon as well, making it easy to deal with problems when they arose.

Q: Well then you left this job when, in '89 was it?

GNEHM: I returned to State in '89.

Q: What job did you get?

GNEHM: I returned to the State Department as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asia (NEA). John Kelly was the just named new Assistant Secretary for NEA. He decided to change all the deputies in what came to be known as the midnight massacre in NEA. He called and asked if I would come back to State to be his deputy for the Persian Gulf region. Armitage agreed to release me to go back over to State.

Q: Well I'd like to, this is a good place to stop and I just want to put in, I'd like you to talk particularly about John Kelly because he was very controversial then.

GNEHM: Yes. My experience with him was not that good.

Q: Most people didn't have, I mean, I'd like to get behind some of your feelings about why this was.

GNEHM: I had lots of encounters.

Q: But we'll pick this up the next time.

GNEHM: It's an interesting period, too, because when I went back to State in '89 the policy toward Iraq and Saddam was still what we talked about earlier -- trying to reach out to him, bridge difference and build a better relationship. We had programs to do that. By the time I left the job, which is the following year when I was asked to be ambassador to Kuwait, that policy changed completely. This was the period in which I watched politics change in Washington. I watched these developments and John and I didn't always have the same opinions on certain things.

Q: Okay, well we'll pick all this up the next time.

Today is the 27th of August, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you've got some notes in front of you, which show some preparation. You went from Pentagon back to State. What was your job and when?

GNEHM: It was in early summer of '89. I went back to the Department of State as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East Affairs, working for John Kelly. I was responsible for the Persian Gulf region, the Arabian Peninsula.

Q: John Kelly was a controversial character in the Middle Eastern Affairs, particularly in the time you're talking about. What was his background and what was your initial impression of him?

GNEHM: I knew something of John previously because he'd served in NEA. He was our ambassador in Lebanon earlier. He had gained some notoriety at that point in time when it was later divulged that he had been aware of Ollie North and Admiral Pointdexter's negotiations with the Iranians and the Israeli go-between, but he had not informed the Secretary of State. This is the so-called "Irangate" affair.

Q: He was a career Foreign Service officer.

GNEHM: Yes, he was a career Foreign Service officer.

Q: But had almost political Machiavellian qualities to him, didn't he?

GNEHM: He did. He was, in my opinion, not very knowledgeable about the Middle East. He certainly didn't have any in-depth understanding of people and what drove the issues in the region.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about what you think you expected from a Middle Eastern hand?

GNEHM: Yes, given that we were just coming out of the Iraq-Iran War. That was an eight-year war that ended in '88.

Q: We weren't in it, but we were observers.

GNEHM: Yes. It was between Iran and Iraq, but the consequences in the Persian Gulf were such that we were entwined in the issue, particularly as it impacted on the free flow of oil out of the Persian Gulf to world markets. Keeping the Strait of Hormuz open for international shipping was critically important to the US. In '89 to '90, we had a huge naval presence in the Persian Gulf region; the United States was settling into a new level of presence in the region. We expected that the Iraqis and the Iranians would demobilize and that there would be some return to a relative sense of normalcy and stability in the region without hostile warfare, bombing of ships, etc. Therefore, I would have expected an Assistant Secretary in NEA to grasp that this was a unique transition point where we should try to create policies that lead the states in the region, as well as our own government, toward a new understanding and appreciation of the Gulf. It's important to remember that there were also other things going on in the ME at the time. There was still a serious situation in the occupied territories -- the Palestinian. Intifada was a word given to the Palestinian reaction to continued Israeli occupation and depravation. It led to really open hostilities, attacks, rock throwing and, in some cases, terrorist actions by our definitions. These actions were followed by Israeli retributions. It was an extremely delicate situation. During my time with John, I found that he did not comprehend the import of all of the developments in the region and that he didn't possess the necessary empathy. In fact, he had some very hard attitudes that drove him and made him intolerant of any views that were different from his own.

Q: Well, first place, how did he view Israel?

GNEHM: He was very, very pro-Israeli. He really felt that our relationship and alliance was important, which was US policy and a given. He didn't have any thoughts or thoughtful approaches to how to deal with the Intifada, which is a bit remarkable as someone who came out of Lebanon. I think examples of what I'm talking about will come out as I talk about my experiences during the next 12 months.

Q: Well, your job as a DAS was what?

GNEHM: The NEA front office is organized with the Assistant Secretary as its head. Jock Covey was the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. There were several other Deputy Assistant Secretaries each with responsibility for geographic sections of the NEA Bureau. So mine, again, was the Persian Gulf, Iraq, Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, and Yemen. These were all parts of the region with which I had some relationship given my job at the Pentagon and my tour in Yemen.

Q: How good was our knowledge of Iran at the time?

GNEHM Our knowledge of Iran was not good because we had no diplomatic representation in the country therefore no on-the-scene reporting. In fact, we had no presence in Iran whatsoever. The one thing that you learn in diplomatic life is that often, when you don't have relations with a country, you don't have the daily reporting coming out of that post -- reporting that becomes part of your morning take (cable traffic). Without that daily input, the country tends to fall off your radar. Absent our own reporting we had to rely on other countries to provide us perceptions and intelligence -- of course it would be their perceptions. We had a protecting power, the Swiss; but they only handled routine business and did not provide intelligence and analysis. Our intelligence and analysis often came from the British or Europeans, and, to be honest, from the Israelis. Having had an inexcusable experience with Israeli intelligence in Syria which I mentioned earlier, I was always a bit skeptical, somewhat jaundiced by intelligence that came through Israeli channels. I admit that this is true of all reporting by various countries but the Israelis seem to be much more intentional in what they provide. They had their motives and their own agendas intending to influence US policy. They did, however, have some access and they did have sources inside Iran. So I didn't dismiss it entirely, but I did look at it with a certain skepticism.

Q: Did you find the CIA very helpful?

GNEHM: Not particularly. They collected from as many sources as they could. Again, these were largely secondary sources. I'm not sure how to answer your question about whether we appreciated what was going on in Iran. In my opinion, we didn't. I remember the NSDD that was issued during this period of time, in the George H.W. Bush administration. The perception as it appears in the NSDD, which would have reflected the analysis of the time, was that the situation inside of Iran was very delicate and the Islamic regime potentially could collapse. There was an assessment that there could be significant internal disorder and that the Soviet Union was in a position, geographically and diplomatically, to take advantage of that situation, to our detriment. While it wasn't stated specifically in the NSDD, the concern was that there might be a very strongly Soviet influenced government in Iran, which would not be in our interest either in Afghanistan or in the Gulf.

Q: What were we picking up about Iraq? We had a presence there.

GNEHM: Yes, we did. We had reestablished diplomatic relations in 1984. We had a resident ambassador, David Newton. As I mentioned when discussing my time at the Pentagon, the United States during the Iraq-Iran War did tilt toward Iraq out of concern about an Iranian victory and domination of the Gulf. There were pressures in a number of different circles for us to expand our cooperation with the government of Iraq in the hopes of establishing a relationship that would encourage Saddam and the Ba'athi government to be more attentive to international law and to become an active and positive member of the family of nations. We entered the post Iran-Iraq War period essentially with an approach to try to do what we could to moderate the political views in

Iraq in order to bring them into a relationship with us, the Europeans, and with the globe that would not be a threat to the region. When I say that, we certainly had an appreciation of an Iraq that wasn't of that mode -- its use of chemical weapons, human rights abuses inside Iraq, particularly their treatment of Kurds and Shia and its nuclear program. We were quite aware of what this regime was; we just hoped that in the aftermath of the war, we might be able to bring about change. Regarding the Kurds, we were aware of the massive displacement and movement of large numbers of Kurds to the south and the mass execution. We were also aware of the Sunni Ba'athi regime's treatment of Shia in the south and the regime's fear of Iranian influence with its Shia population. We certainly had knowledge of Iranian efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, and this included not just chemical but biological weapons but nuclear capabilities as well. You recall that the Israelis had bombed the Osiraq nuclear site in '83.

These were areas of US concern. Our policy objective was to influence Saddam -- moderate his policies -- by expanding our bilateral relationship in areas that could be considered positive. The period from the summer of '89 to the summer of '90 represents a very dramatic transition in our policy toward Iraq. There was a great deal of halting, faltering and even missteps as we debated within the government whether our actions were working or not. We were moving from a view in the summer of '89 that we were on the right track to the starkly different view by the summer of '90 that we were not on the right track and that things had to change. That's what I was deeply engaged in during this entire period.

Q: Well, let's say this change in attitude, what was their original attitude when you got there -- ?

GNEHM: The general assessment in Washington was that we had succeeded diplomatically with Iraq. Iraq had accepted UN Security Council resolution for a peaceful resolution of the Iran-Iraq War. In fact Iraq had been willing to accept a settlement with Iran even in '88. We had some successful programs with Iraq such, as the Commodity Import Program, the CIP. Under that program we were selling agricultural commodities, especially wheat, at concessional rates. We were also having reasonably satisfactory discussions with Iraq on some general issues in the region. *But* we had some serious issues with Iraq that we had to deal with, such as the nuclear programs, weapons of mass destruction programs, their human rights record, and also their general attitudes towards peace in the region, Arab-Israel issue in particular. So that's where we started.

Where we end was a realization that none of that worked. We didn't change Saddam's attitude whatsoever. It's very interesting to watch what happens in the time between the end of the Iraq-Iran War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Two things came to my, to the administration's, and to the State Department's attention very quickly. The first was that Saddam did not demobilize his military. He had a huge standing army at the end of the war; a large percentage of the population was mobilized. We did not see units disbanded. We did not see a reversion to the size of the military as it was a decade earlier. Secondly, it was very, very clear from indicators and from our knowledge that the financial and economic situation in Iraq was desperate and deteriorating. Saddam during the Iraq-Iran

War had decided to shield his population from the impact of war to the maximum extent possible. He continued subsidy programs for food, electricity, water, gas, etc. He ran up huge bills. There was a tremendous drop in Iraq's foreign reserves. The reserves were somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 to 32 billion dollars at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War and were single digits by the end of the war. In fact, the Iraqis began defaulting on payments to a variety of different donors, institutions, and companies, because they didn't have the wherewithal to pay their bills.

Getting Iraqi oil back on the market was of course a top priority for the Iraqis and for us. It was slow in coming, however, due to the damage to the oil fields, particularly to the offshore buoys in the upper end of the Gulf. It would take time to repair. Then the Iraqis began to raise concerns about the price of oil. They argued that the price of oil was too low and needed to be raised. Their complaints were often addressed toward the policies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and the other OPEC countries. Iraqi public comments migrated into much more serious accusations by 1990, insinuating that these countries were keeping the price of oil low to some extent to control Iraq. The economists, as I recollect, assessed that every dollar on a barrel of oil, represented about a billion dollars in annual revenue to Iraq. So you could see the importance of this issue to Iraq. The price of oil was nowhere near what it is today; but it was quite low at this point in time, relative of course.

I am talking about the progression of events and the change in US policy toward Iraq during the period 1988 to 1990. We were operating under National Security Directive 26 issued on October 2, 1989. It was an important document that defined our military presence in the Persian Gulf. It iterated a policy of engagement with Iraq (as I have mentioned), and directed that we be prepared for a normal relationship with Iran under certain stated conditions.

Now, let me jump to February of 1990. It was in December of '89 after Christmas and before New Years that I received word that I had been selected to be the next ambassador to Kuwait. I accepted and that started a process that we all go through, which includes background checks, moving ultimately toward a formal nomination to the Senate. That didn't occur until May. So I remained in my job in NEA at this point in time. In February of 1990, John Kelly noted that he really didn't know the Gulf. That was true; he'd never been there. He wanted to make a trip to the Persian Gulf and he wanted me to travel with him since I did know it and was his deputy for that region. We organized that trip for February. We began in Oman in the south and progressed geographically northward to the UAE, to Doha, Qatar, to Bahrain, to Kuwait, and then ultimately to Baghdad. Several things happened on that trip that I have remembered in quite vivid terms, because they seemed to presage developments that later unfolded. When we got to Doha, we met with the Emir of Qatar. At one point in the conversation the Emir of Qatar raised a rhetorical question with John. He said, "I assume you all are very concerned with Iraq and Iraq's behavior."

John was very diplomatic and very careful at the beginning. He said, "Well, we are trying to develop our relationship. We have relations that we certainly hope will improve -- will

continue to improve.” “Yes,” said the Amir, “but, but you must be alarmed at ... (mentioning a number of recent Iraqi actions)” John replied that we have discussions with Iraq about a variety of different subjects where we have some slightly different views. But overall he stressed that we were working for a much better relationship.

And the third time the Emir said, “Well, I can’t imagine that you’re not really quite worried about their projection of power, you know, their continued mobilization and the size of their armed forces. You must think they’re a threat to the stability in the region.” At that point John let his caution down. “Well, to be honest with you. Yes, we are concerned about their military, the size of their military and the potential for threatening moves. But we are working with them.”

I mention this because when we get to Baghdad, it came up in conversations that we had been badmouthing them in the Gulf. We know from intelligence sources that before we had even left Doha, the Emir of Qatar had called Saddam Hussein and told him that John Kelly had told him in the conversation how upset we were about Iraq and saw them as a threat in the region.

Now, why would he have done that? Why would he set up John? Well, this goes back to one’s assessment of Qatar and its approach and role in the Gulf, which we’re frankly seeing even now in 2015. Qatar is always trying to play above its size, above its status, often in great competition with other countries in the Gulf. It is almost an inferiority complex in some ways. In this case, the Emir clearly wanted to be on the good side of Saddam -- to cultivate a relationship with Saddam in case Iraq did develop in a bad way, vis-à-vis countries in the Gulf. And of course, the Emir was trying to make himself look important. All to our detriment, OK?

Q: At this time, the time of this trip, what was our evaluation of Saddam?

GNEHM: Well, by February we were still focused on bringing him around. There was rising concern that it wasn't working. That was part of what Kelly was to discuss in Baghdad. He was to reassure Saddam that we were working with him and desired a good relationship. I realize at this point with your question, I should drop back chronologically and describe a meeting between then Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Iraq Tariq Aziz and Secretary Baker in Washington in the previous October. It is important background to Kelly’s visit to Baghdad.

Q: Tariq Aziz is a major figure during this time, spoke English, he was a Christian, wasn't he?

GNEHM: He was a Christian. He spoke superb English. He was an extraordinarily personable individual. He was clearly one that we enjoyed engaging with because you could have a logical, rational conversation -- which is not true with a lot of Iraqis. He was not an ideologue, at least in his interface with us. I say, ideologue, because if you talked to others, you would only get Ba’athi rhetoric. He didn’t tend to do that. This meeting with Baker was a dramatic moment that relates importantly to your question what we

were thinking about Saddam. This meeting was definitely one of the percipient moments in our beginning to worry and be anxious about him.

Tariq Aziz entered the office and was greeted warmly. John Kelly was there. I was there as the note taker. Tariq Aziz had barely seated himself when he began, "Mr. Secretary, I need to get right to a basic point. My president has asked me to ask you why are you trying to assassinate him?" Baker said, "*What?*"

He repeated, "My president wants to know why you're trying to kill him."

Baker astonished looked at John, then at me. He said, "I don't understand. We are not trying to kill Saddam. We, in fact, are trying to build up a relationship."

"Well, the president believes that you are actually trying to remove him from power. Maybe there are things going on in your government that you don't know about," said Aziz.

Baker was really angered by that last remark. "I assure you. I am in all the meetings with the President. I'm in the meetings with the National Security Council. These gentlemen in the room here will bear witness. I've never had a conversation like that with *anybody* in my government. That's simply not true."

"Well, the president wanted me to make sure that I asked you that question."

Then we went on to talk about other matters, concerns and issues, but that opening really blew the meeting out of the water, if you will. When Tariq Aziz left, the Secretary turned to us and said, "What in the hell was that all about?" (*laughs*). John and I said, "I have no idea where that came from, *none whatsoever!*" Baker said, "Well, that's absolutely outrageous. You know, good grief, what we're dealing with out there with these people is just incredible."

But it did lead to instructions or guidance to John that when he gets to Baghdad on his trip, he is to reassure the Iraqis of our intent to build good relations with Iraq and to try, without saying it explicitly, to convince Saddam (if such a meeting occurs) that we are not trying to kill him. So let me go back to the trip.

Q: I was just wondering though, did you sit and think about who in Saddam's entourage might be coming up with this idea?

GNEHM: My own view? This is Saddam Hussein's paranoia -- nothing more. This is an indication of his way of interpreting and understanding what is going on in the region.

Q: Yeah.

GNEHM: It's also a technique that he often used -- to put you on the defensive. Then he thinks he is in control of the situation making it more difficult for the visitor to raise other troubling issues.

Well, we get to Kuwait. We see the Emir of Kuwait. The Emir of Kuwait had actually been to Baghdad the previous fall. He was given a magnificent reception by Saddam Hussein. He awarded the very highest decoration that the Iraqis can give anyone in a great ceremony covered on national television. It is hard to imagine a better visit. So when we ask the Amir about any concerns he might have or any issues that we should raise in Baghdad, he tells us that everything is just fine, not to worry. There's no need to be concerned. I just was there and have a good relationship with Saddam Hussein. The Amir refused to acknowledge that there were any concerns on his part.

Q: Any talk about oil fields? Claims to oil fields?

GNEHM: I don't remember specifically whether that came up in the meeting with the emir. It did come up in our meeting with Minister of Oil, Ali Khalifa. He's the same person with whom we had worked so closely on the reflagging of Kuwaiti oil tankers. He is western oriented, Western educated speaks impeccable English. John Kelly, Nat Howell, the US Ambassador, and I called on him. He was more than a little concerned about the rhetoric coming out of Iraq. He mentioned the ongoing controversy over the Rumaila oil field, an oil field shared by both countries on the northern border. He said there was no reason why these things couldn't be reconciled, but he was concerned that the Iraqis kept talking about the price of oil and the need to raise it, which the Kuwaitis were not interested in doing. He basically acknowledged that there were some big issues that they had to face with the Iraqis, many in the oil sector.

Now Ali can be mischievous. Ali was sitting in one chair and John and the ambassador were on a couch to his right. I was on a chair facing him. At one point during the conversation, Ali looks straight at me and he says, "You know, I understand that you're changing ambassadors this year. I sure hope the next ambassador is a really good person and knows this region." He's looking straight at me and not at John or Nat.

GNEHM: There still had been no announcement, but he clearly knew that I was entraining to come. I just sat there and looked him straight without batting an eye. And John didn't say anything at all. So I finally said, "You know, I think he's going to be really terrific."

He never acknowledged that it was me nor did I; but he knew I ended up working with Ali Khalifa very closely over the next several years given the invasion and massive destruction of the oil fields and oil fires.

The Kuwaitis offered to fly us in one of their planes to Basra in Iraq, where the Iraqis picked us up and took us on to Baghdad. We made a side stop in Babylon, by the way, which was very nice. April Glaspie was our ambassador in Baghdad at the time. We stayed at her house. The Iraqi government told us that we were to be received by Saddam Hussein, so there would in fact be a meeting. Another event on the same evening was a

dinner hosted by the Legal Advisor of the Foreign Ministry, Riad al-Qaisi. John, April and I attended the meeting with Saddam Hussein. I was number three in rank on the American side. Others may have their recollection of this meeting; but I am going to be describing it as I interpreted it.

First let me just read one thing out of Secretary Baker's book, The Politics of Diplomacy. It's very interesting. On page 268 he says, "Saddam's increasingly outrageous public behavior," -- now this is written after, well after the fact, right? "Saddam's increasingly outrageous public behavior, however, contrasted with his private diplomacy, which was considerably more conciliatory. On February 12th, Kelly and April Glaspie met for 90 minutes with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. (This is the meeting I'm talking about.) By all accounts, it was a friendly meeting." Now I am going to tell you that it wasn't entirely friendly and tell you why. "Saddam said that with the Soviet Union a declining world power, the United States had an opportunity to help stabilize the Middle East. The thrust of his message was that he preferred peace to war in the Middle East, but doubted the United States would exert sufficient pressure on Israel to move the peace process forward. For his part, Kelly reiterated that the president was committed to what he paraphrased as, 'warm and true friendship' for our mutual benefit, and that was his instructions. However, Kelly also informed Saddam that the State Department's annual report on human rights to be issued in a fortnight would be sharply critical of the Baghdad regime."

The reason why I read that section from Baker's book is because my recollection of the meeting goes a little bit beyond that description. As I said, it wasn't an entirely friendly meeting. It wasn't *unfriendly*, but Saddam did lay out a marker that I considered ominous, and I'll tell you about it. So first of all, Kelly did in fact begin the meeting by reaffirming the words that are in quotes here of our desire for warm and friendly relations and assuring Saddam that, even if he heard things to the contrary, they were not true. (That's a reference specifically to what came up in the Tariq Aziz-Baker meeting.) And that we would continue to look for ways of cooperating together. But we have these problems and he mentioned the human rights report coming out as a way of touching that issue without emphasizing it. But in response to Kelly's emphasis on our desire to have better warm and friendly relations, Saddam said well, he hoped that was true, he wanted peace, not war, in the region as Baker mentions in his book. But then he did a very curious thing. He said, "But you know, I do have my doubts or my concerns." At that point he looks above us to a window which I will say faces south, because this is the implication. And he starts a very interesting monologue with himself in which he poses rhetorical questions which he then answers them. I have no doubt that this was deliberate and planned and had an important motive. He said, "You know, I do have my concerns. The Iran-Iraq War has been over now for almost a year; but, when I look south, when I look to the Gulf, what, what do I see? Well, I see lots of ships. I ask myself what kinds of ships are these? Well, my goodness, they're military ships. Well, I ask myself, whose ships are these that are there in the Gulf? They're American ships! They're American Navy ships. Well, I ask myself, *why* when there's no war does the United States keep so many ships in the Gulf? Could it be me? Could it be they think I'm a threat? No! They

tell me that they don't consider me a threat. But if so, then there's no reason to have so many ships there. They should go home."

I interrupted at that point -- it's not documented -- to say, "Your Excellency, with all due respect to you, I have to tell you that the United States Navy has been in the Persian Gulf since the end of World War II. And my prediction, sir, is that they are going to be in the Gulf long after you and I are gone." There was a sort of silence and pause and the subject shifted.

Well, after the meeting, Kelly *reamed* me out. "What in the hell did you say that for? What were you doing? Who do you think you are going saying that kind of thing in front of me? You know, it's...."

April spoke up, "But John, do you know what he's saying? He was actually demanding that, if we really were trying to have better relations, we would demonstrate it by removing the US Navy from the Gulf. I mean that would significantly reduce our ability to act if we had to!"

Q: Mm-hmm.

GNEHM: And I said, "Yeah, that's why I said something. I was not being impolite. I said 'with all due respect'." John was not placated. "You had -- you know, you had no -- you should *never* have spoken up like that and kind of confronted him. We're trying to convince him that we want better relations." April said to me later, "Where in the hell is John coming from on this? This is pretty serious remark."

Anyway, so that's one thing, right? And again, I interpreted Saddam's remarks then as an indication that he was planning something. It would have been better for Saddam if our fleet was much smaller, for what he intended to do -- and I think that he actually already was considering his military action that occurs in August of 1990, six months later. And it was affirmed, in my opinion, by what happened at dinner that tonight. The dinner was hosted by the Foreign Ministry, but not by the foreign minister, I don't know why, I don't know whether he was even in country, but by the legal advisor to the ministry, Riad al Qaisi. He was a very formidable individual, a tremendous scholar in international law. As with Tariq Aziz, he was a good English speaker, a good interlocutor, not a bellicose person by any stretch of the imagination. At one point during the meal, however, he posed a very interesting question raising a delicate issue with Kuwait. Now the setting had the Iraqi guests or Iraqi participants were on one side of the table and John, April and me on the other side of the table. He looks across at John and says, "Tell me John, I don't understand why the Kuwaitis are so obstreperous and so stubborn. That's what they are; they're just stubborn and so lacking in any kind of appreciation about the importance to us of these two islands, Warba and Bubiyan." Warba and Bubiyan are two small islands that sit just south of the Iraqi estuary, the Khor Abdullah, which is the little waterway on which there is a small port. He continues, "You know, we have this very, very narrow neck of, of land, access to the Gulf, and we need these islands and the Kuwaitis just get

upset and refuse to even discuss it. I mean this is outrageous. Can you explain to me why they are so stubborn?"

John said, "Well, you have to ask the Kuwaitis that question."

And I said – not having learned my lesson from earlier in the day -- I said, "Well, Riad," (I knew him from visits to New York and Washington.) I said, "Riad, I'll take a stab at answering your question. I think it's just simply a matter of nationalism. I don't think any country wants to part with any of its territory and there's always possessiveness about territory. Kuwait's not a very large country. Those two islands are not really economically important to them, but it is a matter of nationalism and I think that's the whole cause."

April Glaspie chimed in and said, "I agree with Skip entirely, you know, it's just not a big political issue, it's just..." Riad interrupted, "Well, they need to learn their lesson. They need to know how important this is to us. And it would behoove them to deal with us on this question."

Well, when we got out of the meeting, the first thing that happened was that John Kelly reamed me out again. He said, "I'm not ever taking you into another meeting. This is the second time today that you intervened. You should not have spoken like that. You had no right to do that, and you just spoiled the entire dinner." Once again April took issue with him and supported me, said, "John, Riad was outrageous. Do you know what they were saying? That was a threatening remark and we could not let it go unchallenged."

Even more importantly, I said to John, "John, Arabs don't raise their issues with other Arab countries with Westerners or outsiders. In fact, they deny to us -- like the Emir of Kuwait did -- that there are any problems. Like the, the Emir of Kuwait, they don't admit to anything because they don't want us involved; but tonight he actually raised a major issue between them. And he raise it in a way that said they better do it or else." John was dismissive and furious. He left the room and slammed the door of his bedroom -- out for the night.

April and I sat there pondering and concluded that they were using us to convey a message, both to Washington and to the Kuwaitis. April did a reporting cable to Nat Howell in Kuwait reporting this conversation. Nat was alarmed and immediately briefed the Kuwaitis. The response he got from some of the Kuwaitis was deep concern that the Iraqis were making the islands such an issue. So once again, I found John's responses completely inappropriate and frankly unprofessional. He was unwilling to at least address what he was hearing from the Iraqis; but secondly attacking both April and me belittling our concerns totally was simply an emotional response. These were some of the issues that we had had to face later.

Baker's next paragraph after the one I read, again on page 268, is relevant. "As Saddam's mischief intensified we expressed our concerns more aggressively. On February 27th" (that would have been two weeks after we met with Saddam in Baghdad.) "Brent

Scowcroft, who was National Security Advisor, made clear to the Iraqi ambassador the President's unhappiness with Saddam's recent criticisms of the United States. Three days later the State Department sent a strong demarche to our embassies in Arab capitals instructing our ambassadors to make clear our," quote, "fundamental differences," unquote, "with Iraq on nuclear proliferation, chemical weapons, scud deployments, and human rights. On March 3rd, Kelly's deputy, Skip Gnehm, told the Iraqi ambassador that Saddam's statements were," quote, "atrocious," unquote.

The reference to my meeting with the Iraqi ambassador on March 3rd is interesting. I did indeed take the initiative to call the Iraqi ambassador, who I knew extremely well, to ask him to come in to see me. I told him that we needed to talk. What I called him in for was not exactly what Baker emphasizes here, "atrocious remarks," but it was in fact my concern in broad terms that things happening in Baghdad like use of chemical weapons against their own people and human rights issues, and, yes, also charged statements against the US, were undercutting the president's ability to continue a policy of trying to engage with Iraq positively. I cautioned him saying, "This is a very friendly conversation. I'm just telling you that when harsh statements are made or when you use chemical weapons, it creates political problems for the administration. Members of Congress will begin to attack the president for his policies that you know we're trying to pursue. You need to tell Baghdad to be aware that what they say and what they do make it more and more difficult for the president to continue to do what we want to do." Following my conversation, I write up a short mem-com, memorandum of conversation, documenting what I said to him.

I sent it to John Kelly to make sure John is aware of what I've done. I sent it through Jock Covey, as is customary. I know when John got it -- saw it for the first time. My office was in an adjacent suite but connected by a small corridor; but even given the distance from John's office, I heard him yell: "*What in the hell is this? Skip Gnehm, get your ass in here right away!*" When I arrived, he *threw* the mem-con at me and he said, "Who in the world instructed you to call in the Ambassador? What in the hell are you doing? Do you realize that you're destroying our ability to pursue the policies that we have toward Iraq? If the Secretary sees this mem-con and understands that you undercut the President, you may be out of your job. Do you understand that? You'll be out of your job. And I'm not going to defend you."

I said, "John, read what I said. A) I didn't threaten. B) I wasn't accusative. I just tried to explain how things that they do undercut the *President's* efforts to do what you say is our policy."

"Well, you had no basis for doing that. And I'm warning you right now, if the secretary ever, ever hears about this, it may be the end of your career. Well, truth is the secretary later uses my meeting as, as one of the defense, if you will, about the way he and the administration were approaching Iraq at the time. So again, it's just an indication of John just not getting it. I can't explain his logic.

Q: Was this personality trait coming out in staff meetings or at other times?

GNEHM: You mean towards me or the kinds of the comments he made?

Q: Well, I mean addressing you?

GNEHM: No, it never came --

Q: -- toward others?

GNEHM: He had a way in staff meetings of exploding on people or shouting when he thought they had done things that he didn't think was right.

Q: Well, how'd you react? I mean did you sort of hunker down or --

GNEHM: I had been through so many of these experiences with him. I wasn't overly bothered. I felt I had done the right thing the right way. I wouldn't hesitate to stand up in front of a television camera or The Washington Post, and explain myself. In government we always talked about The Washington Post test. "Will this be The Washington Post?" Meaning, how would this come across if this were in the public domain. I had no problem with that. I figured I could defend myself if ever it went to the Secretary. I hasten to add, however, that I did not confront John in front of others, except with his PDAS, Jock Covey.

Q: Well, did you feel implicitly or otherwise that Secretary Baker was on the Kelly's side?

GNEHM: No. And your question leads me to make a point. Except for the Tariq Aziz meeting, which then resulted in instructions which NEA drafted for John Kelly to use with Saddam in Baghdad, the Secretary was not deeply engaged in what was going on in the Gulf for a very good reason. We are talking about the spring of 1990. Think what was happening in Europe -- the end of the Soviet Union, the complete dis-assembling of the Soviet Bloc in Eastern Europe, and the newly independent states. That's where the Secretary and the President were focused during this period of time. In fact, after the invasion of Kuwait in August of '90 and all that we went through, when people wanted to get at Baker to criticize him, they accused him of not paying attention to what was going on. I believe that Secretary Baker's inclusion of the paragraphs in his book that I quoted was really defensive. He wanted to make clear that, while he was looking at Europe, his department had not lost sight of events in the Persian Gulf. I mention this because it does tell you that Kelly was not where he should have been on several issues.

Q: Well, were you the only one, or was he sort of picking or criticizing others on his staff at various times?

GNEHM: It wasn't just me. He would often blow up or spout off at other people for other things.

Q: There seemed to be a consistency in what you're describing at blowing off at you. I mean this wasn't just bad temper.

GNEHM: Impulsive is a word that comes to mind. He had a bad temper, and that is not a great attribute in terms of interpersonal skills or leadership.

Q: No.

GNEHM: It isn't. That's why I think he lost the respect of almost everyone that worked around him. I must add that, while I have described some altercations with John, as there were others later, we actually did many things together. It wasn't as if we never talked or ever agreed. That would not have been true of our relationship.

But back to the issues in the Gulf... Things really did begin to deteriorate during the spring of 1990. I pick up where Baker mentions in his book that Brent Scowcroft called in the Iraqi Ambassador to talk. It was only at the end of the month when we had met with him in Baghdad (February) that Saddam made some really outrageous remarks about the United States and about Israel. There was an Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) meeting in Amman in late February. Saddam put together the ACC as counter group to the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was the six Arab states of the Persian Gulf, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The ACC included Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen. Saddam convinced Mubarak of Egypt to join and to attend the Amman meeting. At that meeting Saddam delivered a very savage attack on the United States. He noted the collapse of the Soviet Union. He said that meant that the only super power left in the world was the United States and it was trying to dominate the region. He called on the U.S. to withdraw its naval forces from the Gulf. Remember his monologue to Kelly two weeks before? He called on all Arab states to withdraw investment funds from all U.S. banks and corporations. Mubarak was outraged at this statement. He had gotten a commitment from Saddam that, if he came, this meeting would not be a forum to politically attack the United States. The meeting was supposed to focus on Arab issues. Mubarak walked out of the meeting, returned to Cairo, and called us. He disassociated himself with everything Saddam had said about the US. He said Egypt was not a part of the Arab Cooperation Council. He said Saddam had violated their understanding when he accepted Saddam's invitation to attend and he was outraged by what Saddam had said. It was Saddam's remarks in Amman that Baker was referring to that led Scowcroft to call in the Iraqi Ambassador.

In April of, of that spring, '90, Saddam Hussein announced he had binary chemical weapons and he warned that, if Israel attacked Iraq, he'd burn half of Israel in retaliation. Well, you can imagine what alarm that set off in Washington in terms of politics and in terms of the pro-Israeli members of Congress. Given Israeli concern for their security, they activated their lobby groups to press the administration on its policy toward Saddam. It had been only a few weeks before, in March, that British and U.S. customs had confiscated sophisticated electronic devices and steel tubes destined to Iraq through Jordan. It seemed to confirm reports that a long-range super gun was under design and

also that he was working once again on a nuclear capability. So, you see how things were beginning to deteriorate.

Q: Were you getting anything from Iraqi sources saying our boss is running out of control?

GNEHM: No. Not at all. The kind of control that Saddam had over the system, his history of executing anyone he ever thought was ever likely to be in the opposition, even if they weren't, was, as you know, correctly called the reign of terror. You might remember, too, that at various times, including during the Iraq-Iran War, Saddam would have some commanders or political figures actually execute Iranian POWs (prisoner of war) or other Iraqis that he had labeled traitors. Saddam would video them, including not just the execution itself, but the people who were watching it, because he knew that implicated them in the execution, which was a war crime. Saddam calculated that they would be so fearful of what might happen to them that they would not join any opposition.

So the relationship was deteriorating throughout the spring; but there were several mixed signals from Washington that fed Saddam's paranoia about US intentions. As I have noted previously, US policy at the beginning of the year was to try to convince Saddam that he would be an influential leader in the region if he could be made to moderate his views and actions.

There was a consensus in the Department (and the Administration) that any move to isolate Iraq diplomatically – which was an alternative policy to the one we were following - would be counterproductive.

Q: Why?

GNEHM: Saddam had succeeded in establishing himself as an important Arab leader. He had fought the hated Persian. He had taken on the mantle of the Palestinian cause. He was popular with the Arab public. Those in Washington supporting our approach to Saddam pointed out that he had accepted the UN Security Council resolutions on ending the Iraq-Iran War. Some even argued that he was not quite as bad on human rights as some were saying (sic). Again, this is in the January period; this is early on. Even then there were differences both within the administration and in Washington political circles over our efforts to 'cozy up' to Saddam. At the time opponents to this policy accused the Bush administration of appeasing Saddam. In fact, we now know that Saddam saw our actions as part of a conspiracy to encircle and destroy Iraq and him. That goes back again to that December conversation, paranoia on the part of Saddam.

But I mentioned some mixed signals from Washington that need to be known. In February of '90, this is after John Kelly's trip but before the Amman statements. There was a VOA (Voice of America) editorial. It was broadcast in Arabic to Iraq. It reminded Arab listeners that the tide of history was running against dictators. It already swept aside several such as Ceausescu in Romania. Saddam interpreted the editorial as a deliberate threat to him personally, accusing him of being a dictator and that he would go the way of

Ceausescu. In Romania, as you remember, crowds ran in the street and overthrew him and Saddam saw the editorial as a call for that kind of action inside Iraq.

The truth of the matter is that it shocked us all at the State Department. We had no knowledge of this until after the broadcast. We went to VOA demanding an explanation. There is an understanding between the Voice of America and the Department of State. We recognized VOA was an independent broadcasting company even though it is government funded and operated. They did their own programming. But editorials are different. All editorials by the Voice of America had to be approved in an inner-government, inner-agency process because they would be representing American policy. This one was never discussed with anyone. It was written by a Palestinian worked for the VOA, and broadcast without any approval. So that's one thing.

We had several members of Congress calling openly for a reduction in American ties and for reducing our support for Saddam Hussein and his government. At the same time, the administration was under criticism by that group, we had several members of Congress who were pushing the United States to intensify the relationship. And who were they? They were primarily senators representing agricultural states, especially wheat producers. And why? An important initiative in our new relationship was the Commodity Import Program, which I mentioned previously. The CIP led to large sales of agricultural products, wheat being one of the largest in quantity. The senators wanted to support their constituents and they could argue that there was a humanitarian aspect to the program. Now the interesting thing about this goes back to the financial issue that I mentioned to you earlier. The interesting thing here is that we knew from intelligence and from other governments that slowly but steadily the Iraqi government was in fact renegeing on payment of debts for their aid and assistance. United States law is clear that if a country (and this is my recollection) goes in arrears in payment beyond a certain number of months (I think it's three or something), then the program must be terminated. There was no option; it is terminated. Saddam knew that. We had told him. What we saw was that by April, we were the only country in the world that the Iraqi government was actually meeting its payments schedule. So what happens? Senator Dole leads a delegation of senators to Baghdad that includes Senator Metzenbaum, as well as other senators from wheat producing states. They try to reassure Saddam that in fact the United States government is working for better relations. They assure him that nothing is going to happen to the CIP program. The pressure they later apply on the administration makes it almost impossible to use termination of that program as reassurance to influence Saddam's behavior.

When Saddam in that meeting points to all of the hostile press coverage that he's getting, Metzenbaum steps in to try to explain to him how the U.S. media works. They're not government run; they're not government planted stories. Saddam is clearly skeptical and he responds, "I just don't believe that. I just don't accept that." And why would he say that? Because in his country, nothing like that would appear in the media that wouldn't have had his approval. And he doesn't understand how things work in more open societies. See; this is one of the problems that becomes more and more apparent as we get further into '90 -- the occupation of Kuwait and trying to convince him to leave Kuwait.

Saddam was a superb expert on Iraqi domestic affairs and how you control the state of Iraq and its people. He had absolutely no understanding or experience with dealing with the outside world. And so he made some critical miscalculations and made some very significant errors of judgment in this period of time and going on forward, which I will get to.

I think it was the same month that the senators were in Baghdad that the State Department issued its human rights report on Iraq. It was devastating. Then Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights was Pat Darien, an ideologue when it came to human rights. Her report was not an incorrect description of Saddam's human rights abuses; but it was another 'indicator' to Saddam that he was being lied to when officials said they wanted good relations with him.

The next thing that happens is on June 4th. U.S. News and World Report runs Saddam's picture on the cover of his magazine, and they call him, "the most dangerous man in the world". Of course, again, Saddam interprets this as placed by the administration, a clear signal. The report discusses concerns about nuclear and chemical capabilities, as well as development of ballistic missile systems, and a super gun. There are reports once again reaching Baghdad that the U.S. military is telling Arab Gulf state that Iraq is a major threat to regional security. So you just see events and the relationship just deteriorates. So that by the time we reach June the policy's no longer to try and deal with Saddam and bring him around. The general view is that that policy failed and now we have a big problem on our hands. We are still going to try to work the relationship diplomatically, but we recognized Saddam was a big problem -- and, yes, a threat to our interests in the region.

Q: Did talk ever get around to what do we do after Saddam, the idea that maybe his people would get rid of him?

GNEHM: No, at this point in time we're still talking about how you manage him and how you; but now we're also thinking seriously about how we protect our interest if he does something extreme? We don't have a lot of success in conversations with regional states. They're still operating on traditional views -- of us as a great power, foreign involvement in the region, and nationalism in the street -- all views that led states in the region not to want to be seen as too close to the US. And so, when we tried to talk to them about what we might do together to counter Saddam, they were just hesitant, if not actually negative, about going down that road with us. It is when we get into the summer that things really begin to deteriorate quite rapidly.

On July 16th Tariq Aziz sent a letter to the Arab League and in this letter he accused the Gulf States of holding down oil prices to undermine the Iraqi economy. He denounced Kuwait for stealing oil from the Rumaila field and demanded \$2.4 billion in compensation. He demanded that the Arab states forgive Iraq's \$30 billion debt. Now, remember that goes back to the Iran-Iraq War when certainly Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE loaned Iraq enormous sums of money to enable Iraq to continue the war. The letter called for a Marshall plan to reconstruct Iraq and demanded OPEC support a rise in

the price of oil to \$25 a barrel. The following day, 17th of July - Iraq national day, Saddam himself in his speech attacked both Kuwait and the UAE. He accused them of conspiring with Americans and Zionists, and here is an important quote from those remarks. "If words fail to afford us protection, then we will have no choice but to resort to effective action to put things right and ensure the restitution of our rights." That was in his public remarks on Iraq national day.

Q: How did we interpret it at the time?

GNEHM: Well, as alarming. But the argument within the government was whether he was really serious or bluffing -- perhaps using this threat to get the Arab governments to forgive the debts or to raise the price of oil. In other words, he had legitimate concerns about the economy, which we understood, that were driving him, but the demands were outrageous and they were definitely threatening. Yet the assessment within the government was that he really did not intend to do anything militarily -- that this was all part of a diplomatic squeeze. In my opinion Saddam's actions during this first six months really caught us off guard. I wrote down these words at the time, "intense irrational insecurity." I think Saddam was insecure and he did see a lot of the things that I have mentioned as directed toward him when they really weren't. The problem for some of the other oil producing states at this time was that they began to lose market share. So raising the price of oil meant they would lose more sales. They were in fact producing in excess of the OPEC quotas. Oil prices in this time had dropped in 1990 from 22 dollars in January to 16 dollars by June, a six-dollar decrease, which is almost 25%. Again, I mentioned earlier that each one dollar decrease cost Iraq a billion dollars in annual revenue.

Q: Yeah.

GNEHM: This is significant.

Q: Each dollar --

GNEHM: If the price of a barrel of oil dropped \$1, it cost Iraq a billion dollars in annual revenue. This is looking at their production. A new economic situation existed which is often not understood by many people. Oil producing states, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, had begun to invest large sums of money in western economies. Today all of these countries have large sovereign wealth funds but Kuwait had established a Fund for Future Generations, which required that a percent of all oil revenue go into this fund to be invested for the future. It was invested. This development changed the way these governments thought about the price of oil and levels of production. Unlike in 1973 when the Arabs imposed a boycott on the US, they now had to be concerned about the welfare of the western economies and thus their investments! Now, these countries had investments in companies, banks, bonds, and securities. Raising oil prices might well undercut the economic development or stability of the industrial world. If so, it would impact negatively on their investments. In such a situation the oil producing countries would lose both market share and investments. So there was no incentive on the part of

these countries to destabilize the global economy by raising the price of oil as the Iraqis were demanding. This obviously made no sense and was of no importance to Saddam. But what did happen is that the day after this speech of Saddam Hussein on the 17th, he moved 30,000 troops to the Kuwaiti border. This immediately intensified the debate within the administration as to Saddam's real intentions.

Q: Had he done this before?

GNEHM: No. Well, Iraq had moved troops to the Kuwaiti border in some incidents years before before, but not --

Q: This was way back when the British sent in troops after the Iraqis threatened to absorb Kuwait?

GNEHM: Yes. This is in the early '60s when they threatened Kuwait right after independence. Qasim, a later dictator, had also threatened military action.

Q: I mean this was a standard operating menacing procedure -- used previously by Iraqi governments?

GNEHM: This is true. And that point was made at the time by a number of analysts. And as I said, the most obvious interpretation, that most observers gave, was that Saddam's actions were to intimidate the Kuwaitis.

Q: What were you getting from INR on all this?

GNEHM: I don't remember exactly. I only remember that the CIA's assessment was generally accepted at State. It is true that INR has a very independent and often well thought out view of these kinds of things and are at variance often with other branches of the intelligence community. And they've proven right many, many times. But we did demand clarification of Iraq's intentions, and we didn't get anything more than just a, well, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia need to understand our concern and respond positively to our problems, which wasn't terribly helpful. Because Saddam attacked Kuwait and the UAE specifically as working with Zionists and the imperialist United States, the UAE proposed on the 21st of July that there be some joint U.S.-UAE military maneuver. This was a first for them. And so two days later we actually did do a joint exercise with them. It was a modest -- but highly symbolic -- exercise. The UAE Air Force was flying American produced fighter planes. We deployed our refueling tankers over the UAE and the UAE Air Force practiced refueling. So while it was a very modest exercise, it signaled to Saddam that we did have relationship with the UAE that was important and that we would stand aside our allies. We asked the Kuwaitis at the same time whether they would like a similar demonstration -- a joint exercise. We suggested perhaps a port visit by one of the naval ships. The Kuwaitis refused.

Q: Do you feel that they were misinterpreting this all along?

GNEHM: They were -- yes. I think they were underestimating the threat. They were also still operating under the third-world mentality that we are non-aligned; therefore, we don't permit naval war ship visits of great powers. While this mentality was a factor in their rejecting our proposal, they were also a fearful that it might provoke Iraq. And they do something else a few days later. They actually stood down their entire military. In other words, they had forward deployed them and called up their reserves, as I recollect. They actually sent them all home -- pulled everything back -- tanks back on their bases -- all to indicate to the Iraqis that they were not belligerent or provocative. The important point I want to make is that the exercise with the UAE was the only action that we took in these last few days of July and early August. We did nothing, *nothing*, to prepare for the worst contingencies at all.

In fact, one night fairly late in the evening I was concerned about the ongoing Iraqi military build-up north of Kuwait. I was really quite struck by the fact that we had taken no actions, no naval deployments, no movement. These are things that we had done in the '80s which I was quite familiar with from my Pentagon days. I went to Jock Covey's office and said, "Jacques, I really need to talk to John, but I'd like you to be there to hear it because I don't want to do it one-on-one." So he and I went in to see John. And I said, "John, excuse me for interrupting but all of us have been operating up to now on the premise that for all the threatening, movement of troops, everything else that Saddam is doing, one thing he won't do is invade another Arab country. I agree that historically Arab countries skirmish on their borders and there have been proxy wars; but never has one Arab country occupied another. What if we are wrong? What if this time Saddam is going to do it?"

John responded sharply, "Don't be an idiot. What do you think? Do you think we're going to go to war over them? Are you kidding? Go to war for these pipsqueaks people, who don't even know their left hand from their right hand? Get out, get out. I'm not even going to ... I don't even have time to talk to you about this sort of sh..t."

Q: He wasn't willing to sort of sit and sort of walk through the possibility.

GNEHM: That's all I wanted to do. I think I said even to him, "Look, I'm still with the general belief that he won't actually invade Kuwait. I don't expect it, but we haven't even talked about what if we're wrong? What if they do cross the border? What if we're totally unprepared? We haven't moved a single ship, we have" --

And his comment was, "You don't think we're going to go to war over Kuwait, do you?"

So Jock and I left his office. I just shrugged and I said, "I think we're in some real trouble." Here it is -- the 24th of July with thousands of Iraqi troops on Kuwait's border. Margaret Tutwiler, the spokesperson for Department of State, was asked about the Iraqi build-up and asked about the U.S. response. She said (and this is in the official transcript of the press briefing), "Let me just confirm the U.S. has no defense agreements with Kuwait." Now, she did add that there was no room in this new world order that Bush had espoused in his speeches for coercive diplomacy. But the very fact that she affirmed that

we had no defense agreement with Kuwait was to basically tell Saddam that he need not worry about the US if he was intending to invade Kuwait. I am totally convinced Saddam had every intention of invading and that intention went back several months earlier. And I say that jumping way ahead to a helicopter ride I took with General Schwarzkopf after we liberated Kuwait. We're flying over Southern Iraq, in the Safwan area south of Euphrates River, and he's pointing out huge catchments of ammunition. The Iraqis built sand berm rectangular revetments into which they stacked huge volumes of ammunition. And he said, "You know what you're seeing out there, Skip?"

I said, "Yeah, I know what I'm seeing that there's a lot of stuff out here in the desert."

He says, "There is more ammunition in this area south of the Euphrates and north of the Kuwaiti border than all of NATO's stocks in Germany today." I said, "You're kidding me. "That's right," he said. "In the months before his troops moved into Kuwait, he prepositioned more ammunition than all of NATO stocks in Germany."

So I have no trouble answering a question that I often get. "Do you really think Saddam planned to move further and attack Saudi Arabia?" To me it is evident that he had those intentions. First of all, Saddam knew that he didn't that much ammunition to take Kuwait. He occupied the entire country in a few hours.

Q: Yeah, and no real expenditure of ammunition practically.

GNEHM: Right. Why would he put that much ammunition that close to the Kuwaiti border? Because he intended to use it to go further.

Q: Did we know what these catchments were -- perhaps from satellite coverage?

GNEHM: We, we were definitely looking at the area from overhead; but in these days we were not overlying Iraq with the same frequency that we can do today. And drones didn't exist at this point in time.

Q: But what about our military analysts? I mean were they pointing out this accumulation of ammunition?

GNEHM: In general terms they were reporting the fact that Iraqi forces had been deployed and they had a good estimate of the numbers; but I don't remember reporting specifically on the quantity of munitions that had been prepositioned.

But let me continue with the description of events that were unfolding. On July 24th, Mubarak went to Kuwait and he went to Baghdad to try to smooth over, to dissipate the heated rhetoric and he believed he had received assurances from Saddam that war wasn't imminent. He reported this back to us. And Saddam agreed that he would send a representative to a mini Arab Summit in Jeddah on August 4th. Now, that gets us to July 25th, next day. Two things happened that day that are really important. One is the very infamous meeting of April Glaspie with Saddam Hussein. The second is my hearing

before the subcommittee, Middle East Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations, my confirmation hearings. We'll take the bigger one first.

Saddam asked to see April. April had not had the experience of being asked to a meeting by the President. She says this in her comments. Saddam just didn't do that. So it was unusual. She had some instructions but they were a bit dated at this point. After the meeting, the Iraqis issue a transcript of the meeting, their memorandum of the conversation. They quote her as saying, quote, "The U.S. has no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait." People, such as reporters here in the United States, members of Congress, and some leaders in the region, interpreted those words as somehow giving a green light to Saddam to move militarily. April testified in March 1991 after the liberation of Kuwait that she told Saddam Hussein that the U.S. did not consider border disputes its business, but that she made it very clear in fact that (and these are her words) "it was emphatically our business that they reach a settlement in a non-violent way."

In other words, they reach an agreement in diplomatic terms. I believe April in her description of this conversation. It was very deliberate that the Iraqis issued their own mem-con the way they did, for deliberate reasons. They wanted to sow the idea that somehow we were giving them the green light. They knew it would create dissension in Washington and that it would undermine our credibility with our allies in the. That's my view, and it has been all along.

The second thing that I wanted to mention was my confirmation hearing. It was both remarkable and humorous in retrospect but it wasn't funny at the time. As you know, every presidential nominee for an ambassadorial assignment has to be confirmed by the United States Senate. That process begins with the appropriate geographic subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The subcommittee holds a hearing in which they interview the candidate to determine whether they agree or disagree with the nomination. On the assumption that they agree, its recommendation goes to the full committee at a business meeting. If the full committee agrees, the nomination goes to the full Senate for their final action. OK?

This particular day my hearing was scheduled for late in the afternoon, around 4:00 or 5:00. In any case I think by the time the hearing began it was closer to five than four. The chairman of the ME Subcommittee was Senator Moynihan of New York. To be very honest, it was quite well known in Washington that Senator Moynihan loved his tea, meaning his cocktails, and that by late afternoon that was apparent. So this is true on the day of my hearing. The Senator comes in through the door behind the raised seats that are

above the table where the candidate sits. I was the only nominee that day and Moynihan was the only senator who showed up. He came down, greeted me warmly, and greeted my family as well. And as one would suspect, in a very normal way I could smell his breath but that was not my business, I thought at that moment. The Senator took his place as Chairman in the center seat above me. He gavelled the hearing open and made very flattering remarks about me and the need to have someone like me in Kuwait. He asked me not read my statement but enter it in the record, which is a fairly routine request. In the course of his saying nice things about me, he stops looking at me and the crowd in the room and seems to focus over our heads on the clock on the wall at the far end of the room. He goes from talking about me and the importance of the region to say astonishingly, "You know, those Kuwaitis are really *awful*. They're just terrible people. I mean they are just...; they didn't support us when we had the attack on the USS Stark. They're always going on and on saying things about their non-alignment. They're really awful." Then to make matters even worse he said, "I know how we can solve this problem. We should just divide Kuwait, give half to the Iraqis and half to the Saudis. That's what we should do. That's the way we'll solve it."

All I can think is, "What are you saying? This is the 25th of July and we have got 30,000 plus Iraqi troops on the border." I'm thinking to myself; my mind is in a whirl. These are all like split instant moments. I mean my telling you takes longer than my thought process at that moment. I'm thinking, "I cannot let that stand."

Look who is in the room -- the Iraqi news agency, members of the Iraqi embassy, Kuwait news agency, and Kuwaiti embassy people. If I just sit here and say nothing the Kuwaitis are going to wonder, "Why didn't you defend us?" And the Iraqis are all out there writing their reports about the Senator saying to divide up Kuwait.

Again my mind is spinning. If I do say something and I offend the Senator, he could well decide against my confirmation. If I don't say anything, I have no credibility with the Kuwaitis -- not even thinking what Saddam might now decide to do!

I have to tell you -- there at that moment I prayed to God, "God, please give me the words to say." And I said, "Senator, Senator, Senator." It took a moment for him to realize I was trying to get his attention.

And he said, "Uh-uh-uh, uh yes, yes, yes, Skip. What? What?"

And I said, "Senator, if you do what you just said. I don't have a country to be an ambassador to."

Moynihan: "Oh. Bad idea, bad idea. Confirmed."

Several days after the Iraqi invasion, The Washington Post actually ran an inside page, story, "Who gave the green light?" They recalled Senator Moynihan's remarks made on

the 25th of July, during which he talked about dividing Kuwait between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. I only mention this episode because it was a rather trying moment.

I wanted to add one final note about the meeting between April and Saddam. Saddam excuses himself at one point during the meeting to take a phone call. When he returns, he tells April that it was President Mubarak calling and that he assured Mubarak that everything is going to be OK, it will develop fine, not to worry. April then asks, "Do you mean that it's OK for me to leave on my trip?" (She needed to travel for medical reasons.) "And nothing's going to happen while I'm gone?" He said, "You don't need to worry about it," or something to that effect.

So April left the meeting with the impression that there would not be military action while she was away. And we know the phone conversation between Saddam and Mubarak took place because Mubarak picked up the phone almost instantaneously after hanging up with Saddam and called Washington. He confirmed what Saddam has told him, that there won't be action. So April does leave Baghdad. Now, there's an OPEC meeting in Geneva from the 26th to the 27th of July. The Kuwaitis do agree to support an increase in the price of oil from 18 to 21 dollars a barrel and to cut their own production by 25%. Saddam puts more troops on the border and by the end of July there are 100,000 troops on the border. On the 29th of July, Iraqi Air Defense systems are put on a wartime footing. The CIA changes its analysis around the 25th of July, on the day of April's meeting and my hearings, to say assess that Saddam is not bluffing.

Q: What?

GNEHM: Not bluffing.

Q: Ah-ha.

GNEHM: The CIA now assessed that Saddam intends to make a military move. They don't know whether that means just a border occupation of the northern oilfields or something more. There was still a view that Saddam was trying to intimidate Kuwait to get further concessions -- perhaps on the debt issue. I don't think there was any intimation of a full occupation of the entire state of Kuwait. But again, no one -- and I wrote this down in my notes at the time -- no one in a position of responsibility to my knowledge seems to have considered the possibility that Saddam was going to overrun all of Kuwait. There wasn't even a consensus that Saddam intended to invade at all. Even though the CIA had changed their assessment, there were others who still said an invasion was ridiculous. Remember that both Mubarak and King Fahd had reassured Bush that the Iraqis would not attack. On August 1 the planned meeting opened in Jeddah. The talks collapsed almost immediately; the Kuwaitis refused to forgive the loans, refused to pay Saddam for oil they had taken from the Rumaila oil field, or to lease to Iraq the two islands, Bubiyan and Warba, that the Iraqis were demanding. Remember the dinner that we had in Baghdad back in February. All the issues raised then were on the table in Jidda. And the talks collapsed and that's probably a very good stopping point because --

Q: This is fascinating.

GNEHM: Oh, it was fascinating. Because the next thing that happens is on August 1, at 11 or 11:30 that night. My son, who is watching TV downstairs, comes running up to my bedroom yelling, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, the Iraqis have invaded Kuwait."

I said, "OK Ted, I understand, thank you, thank you." And I turn the light off because I'm thinking what he heard on the news was that everybody is fearful that Iraq is going to attack Kuwait. I figured he didn't quite get the verb tense right. I put my head on the pillow, sat back up, turned the light on, and called the Op Center.

And they said, "We've been trying to reach you. The Iraqis have invaded. Get down here immediately." And that is where I will pick in our next session. I should note an obvious confession. I should give my son more credit!

Q: You might pick up -- take a look at -- I can't think of the name right now, but he was the, I think the chief analyst in INR for that area. We can -- I'll find it and get it to you. But I have a -- he's, he was convinced that this thing was done, Saddam sort of said on his own. I mean this was not, you know, this was done almost on impulse. I mean, you know, everything was set but he, he didn't think that this was as thought out a plan as you might expect. I mean there were -- certainly the troops that went in didn't seem to be particularly well prepared.

GNEHM: Ah, but there's another explanation for that.

Q: But that may be just --

GNEHM: That we overestimated throughout this period Iraqi military capabilities -- in fact Iraqi capabilities in general.

Q: OK, well we'll pick this up next time.

Today is the 9th of September 2014 with Skip Gnehm. You've been selected to be ambassador to Kuwait, but circumstances have precluded you from assuming the office immediately.

GNEHM: I'll just give a date or two. I actually learned of my selection by the D Committee, which is the committee headed by the Deputy Secretary, in December of 1989. I learned when I was traveling in Bahrain with Assistant Secretary John Kelly in February 1990 that the President had approved that recommendation. The agreement from the Government of Kuwait was requested on May 7th and they replied positively on May 15th, so it took about a week. Then I was actually announced by the White House on June 19th. My nomination went to the Senate for confirmation on the very same day. My hearings before the ME Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that I mentioned earlier were on the 25th of July. The invasion of Kuwait occurred early

morning on August 2nd Kuwait time, which would have been on the evening of the 1st in Washington. This is why you sometimes get a discrepancy when people talk about the date of the Iraqi invasion.

The Senate decided the following day to move my nomination to the floor urgently so that I could get to post. They confirmed me the next day. Events, of course, did not unfold in that direction.

Q: Before the invasion, while you were getting briefed, did you ever think that there was a possibility that Iraq would move into Kuwait or not. Was that on the table?

GNEHM: I would say it was haunting my thoughts. We could tell from overhead photography that the Iraqis were deploying large numbers of troops, over 100,000, to the Kuwaiti border. Interestingly enough about a week and a half before my hearing, INR (the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State) organized a one-day set of briefings for me where they brought in experts on Kuwait. The briefers did not focus on a potential Iraqi military threat. It was not what the various briefers focused on. In fact I don't think it even came up.

They were talking about the economic situation in Kuwait -- petroleum and the rentier society in an oil revenue dependent country that was providing extensive benefits to its population. The briefers talked about the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship during the Iran-Iraq War and other things that I actually knew from my earlier jobs. While references to Iraq's historical claims on Kuwait were indeed noted, it was more a statement of fact and not a concern.

Q: Just to get a little feel for the situation, had the Saudis made any particular claim on Kuwait, or was that not an issue?

GNEHM: That was not an issue. There had been an agreement reached under British auspices while the British were still running foreign affairs for Kuwait that defined the border between the two countries. In fact, the British gave up to the Saudis about two-thirds of territory that the Kuwaiti Emir claimed at the time. They also created two neutral zones.

There was a diamond shape piece of territory between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Then there was kind of a rectangle territory on the coast between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. That was Kuwaiti-Saudi neutral zone. Subsequent to Kuwaiti independence, there was an agreement negotiated between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia that partitioned that area. It was called the partition zone and the part that remained in Kuwait on the map is kind of a rectangle at the south of Kuwait along the sea. The Saudis retained 50% rights to the petroleum extraction and the revenue. They also set up a joint arrangement, a Kuwaiti oil company for Kuwait and a Saudi contractor, Saudi Chevron working for the Kingdom.

Q: I'm not sure where I heard this, but when the pundits were talking about the situation, it was expected that the Iraqis might move in to the oil fields to the north and stake out some claims there. Was that at all mentioned?

GNEHM: Well, yes, in the conversations about possible scenarios. Again, I would emphasize that a large number of government officials in various branches, Defense, State, White House, continued to believe that Iraqi troop movements were to intimidate Kuwait into making concessions and that there wasn't even going to be an invasion. Such concessions might include raising the price of a barrel of oil to improve the revenue stream for Iraq or cutting production, which would have the same result. Kuwait had loaned billions of dollars to Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War, as had Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Saddam wanted these debts forgiven. Kuwait (and the other Arab states) had refused. It was believed that Iraqi troops would not enter Kuwait beyond the oil fields on the border. Again, the generally held assessment was the Saddam was intimidating Kuwait to get those concessions. The oil field that you mentioned was not a significant factor in either country's oil production; but it was a good propaganda issue for Saddam. Also as I mentioned before, Iraq wanted to either use or have transferred to their sovereignty the two little mud islands on the coastline, Warba and Bubiyan. And Kuwait had refused that demand as well.

It was only when we got to the last few days of July that the CIA actually changed its predictions, its estimates. It was the first time they came out and said, "Our conclusion is that Saddam intends to invade." Yet even the CIA remained uncertain how far would he go. Many people pointed out that there have been troubles on the border before and that there have always been arguments about the border demarcation between Iraq and Kuwait. So assessments often said Saddam might well occupy the northern part of Kuwait in the hopes of intimidating them and then either getting what he wanted from them in return for withdrawal. He might even use his stronger position to argue that the border had to be moved south where he thought it should be, or at least where Iraq historically alleged it to be. Very few people believed he was going to occupy the entire country.

Q: There had been a crisis earlier on where the British had moved in their aircraft carrier and brought troops in. When did that happen and what had that been about?

GNEHM: Immediately after Kuwaiti independence in 1962. When Kuwait became independent, the Government of Iraq (GOI) said it would not recognize Kuwait's independence because, in fact, Kuwait was a part of Iraq and had been stolen by the British from them at an earlier point of time. The GOI mobilized troops and threatened to invade Kuwait. Kuwait called on the treaty arrangement that they had recently signed with the British, that they would come to Kuwait's aid if threatened, and the British responded by deploying forces to Kuwait. That led to a really interesting development in the Arab world. Nasser, the President of Egypt, was in his rise to becoming the nationalist leader of the Arab world. The United Arab Republic of Syria and Egypt, which had existed from '58 to '61, had just collapsed. Nevertheless, he immediately accused Kuwait of bringing the imperial power, Britain, back into the region. Nasser had only enmity for

Britain. Remember the 1956, French-British invasion of Egypt and occupation of the Suez Canal along with Israel's assistance. The idea that an Arab government would bring Britain back into the region to protect it was an anathema to him. He called an Arab League meeting and there was a split within the Arab world about it. Some supported Kuwait defending itself in the way it did, and others didn't. The compromise they devised was to create an Arab League Force to go to Kuwait to replace the British, and the British would withdraw. That ultimately is what happened. The Arab force remained in Kuwait until the Iraqis backed down. That's the precedent you were asking about.

Q: Again, I'm setting the background. What was the feeling within the Arab world just prior to the Saddam Hussein move on Kuwait towards Kuwait? And what was our feeling towards Kuwait? I mean, these were not very popular people.

GNEHM: No. In fact, just simply as a political observer I would say that the Kuwaitis made some miscalculations and that by the time we reach 1990, they had really antagonized all three of their big neighbors. That's not good, smart diplomacy.

Q: Yeah.

GNEHM: They did it for different reasons. The Iraqis we've talked about, but in fact, with both the Iranians and the Saudis there was overproduction by the Kuwaitis and disagreements about overall production and how to approach OPEC and OPEC's issues. The Kuwaitis remained very adamant. Some of my Arab friends, subsequent to the invasion, described Kuwaitis as arrogant, self-confident, and saw themselves as better than the other Gulf Arabs. Saddam, on the other hand, had promoted himself as a leader of the Arab world. With the war against Iran, Shia, Persian, Arab, Sunni, all those dimensions were at play. In the early part of 1990 he began to verbally attack Israel and its role. He also made statements about the United States now being the only super power, the Soviet Union having collapsed, in which he stated that we were manipulating, extorting, abusing our power in the Arab world to dominate and control. He called on Arab governments to divest from investments in the United States. That propaganda didn't influence leaders, but it did resonate with the general population. So Saddam was certainly seen by the masses at least as more popular than Kuwaitis.

Q: Prior to the invasion, as you were getting ready to go to Kuwait, what did you see as being your main goals as far as dealing with American-Kuwaiti relations?

GNEHM: The relations weren't bad, but they certainly weren't particularly close. I would say they were tolerantly OK. We were generally unhappy with Kuwait's active participation in the non-aligned movement and their support for resolutions that were against America's actions in various parts of the world. In terms of strict bilateral relations, we didn't have that many issues. It was just their support, and even active advocacy, for positions hostile to the US that rubbed us wrong. They were not interested in having any American military relationship at all, up to and including allowing any U.S. naval vessel to call in port simply to get water and food. They told us basically, "You can do that down south in other countries, your other friends in the Gulf." There was one

incident during the Iraq-Iran War when an Iraqi plane hit the USS Stark with an Exocet missile. There were deaths and many wounded. The ship almost sank. Of course we needed to respond immediately with medical support and to save the ship.

We asked the Kuwaitis for permission to fly the helicopters from Kuwait out to the ship and back given Kuwait's geographic proximity to the incident site. The Kuwaitis refused, they said "You have the navy in Bahrain, you can fly helicopters from Bahrain." That infuriated some Senators, and one of them that I later had an encounter with as a friend was Fritz Hollings of South Carolina. He was chairman of the Budget Committee, and he reminded me later of the Kuwaiti behavior. Moynihan at my hearing, as I noted previously, also didn't have very nice things to say about the Kuwaitis.

Q: What do you think -- I mean why were the Kuwaitis so beastly, particularly towards us? What was in it for them?

GNEHM: The Arabs would tell you that the Kuwaitis saw themselves as the third power in the world and that they were a little upset that the rest of the world didn't recognize that there was America, the Soviet Union, and Kuwait.

Q: (laughs)

GNEHM: This is what other Arabs would tell you -- that the Kuwaitis acted that way. Again, they just acted arrogantly toward others. I think it was due in part to the fact that the Kuwaitis were the first of the small Gulf States to become independent -- not only politically but also economically with their early success in exploiting their oil reserves. So they were richer than the others early on and developed earlier on. They missed the fact that the rest of the Gulf had found oil and developed and modernized rapidly. When Kuwaitis were exile, they discovered the paradises of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Doha, and a few other places. Again the Kuwaitis saw themselves before 1990 as being able to play a major role in the world through the non-aligned movement. So they were espousing non-aligned policies and also supporting non-aligned member regimes, Cuba for example.

Q: Did you have any feel for the effectiveness of the Kuwaiti diplomatic corps and diplomatic policy?

GNEHM: Not particularly, no. In the earlier days I was certainly aware, and became more so after going to Kuwait, that the Foreign Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber al-Sabah, had been Foreign Minister since the country's independence. We're talking about from 1962 until 1990. That's a long time.

Q: Yeah.

GNEHM: He was the architect of the policy that brought the first Soviet embassy into the Persian Gulf region -- in Kuwait. It angered the Saudis. Their policy was very hostile to the Soviet Union and its communist ideology. They wanted to keep the Soviets out of the

Persian Gulf. I want to add immediately that Sheikh Sabah is now the Emir of Kuwait and the invasion and U.S.-led liberation of Kuwait changed his and others' minds dramatically. Kuwaitis, including Sheikh Sabah, are deeply appreciative of the US role in liberating Kuwait and in the ongoing US commitment to Kuwait's security. What we've just been talking about is history.

Q: OK. Well, let's pick up chronologically.

GNEHM: It was on the night of August first. I was at home in Maryland. I already described how my son alerted me to the Iraqi invasion. As I mentioned, I called the Op Center at the State Department and they confirmed the invasion and asked that I come into the Department immediately. I dressed and went to the Department of State where I pretty much lived for the next few weeks. I went directly to the Op Center and, frankly, took over the crisis team that had been quickly organized. This is standard procedure when there is a crisis.

Q: Up to that moment, there wasn't a crisis team, was there?

GNEHM: No. No, it was organized that night.

Q: But this is a foregone conclusion that there would be.

GNEHM: Whenever there's a crisis like this, there's a standard operating procedure in the manuals of the Operations Center that a task force team is set up immediately. The manual defines the task force and who composes it. There is always someone from the relevant geographic bureau, always someone from the Consular Affairs Bureau because of the American citizen interest and certainly a representative from Diplomatic Security. You also always have INR, the person who follows the country; present there and probably a military liaison officer to handle contacts with the Pentagon. There was a cluster that gathered, including administrative support, for it. We became engaged very quickly. As early as 9:15 in the morning of August second, John Kelly, the Assistant Secretary for the Middle East, came back from the National Security Council meeting at the White House to debrief us on that meeting. He was talking about early actions at the UN and at the Arab League. It was a very brief meeting because there wasn't much information.

In fact, the first information that we got that Iraqi forces had crossed the border came, curiously enough, came from an American who was atop an oil derrick near the border. He was at the top and with his mobile phone called his office in Kuwait City, who patched it through to Washington. "There are all these tanks going by my derrick here and they all seem to be headed toward Kuwait City. And they don't look like they're Kuwaiti, I think they're Iraqi." That was how we actually learned that the Iraqis had crossed the border. During the day, what little information we gleaned did not tell us for sure how just how far they were going to go. We were getting reports of Iraqi presence in different places. We soon realized it was a total occupation. It was uncertain whether Iraqi forces were going to leave because there were some conversations that seemed to

indicate they might be leaving. The embassy in Kuwait City, while it had hunkered down because there were Iraqi tanks in the streets, still was able to move around during the first couple of days and so we were getting some information. There were constant meetings in the National Security Council and immediate calls with some of our allies about the situation. The first thing that we were trying to find out that morning was what the Arab League was doing, what they'd agreed to do, and all the implications of the occupation on oil and finances. There was immediate concern about cutting off any kind of advantage that the Iraqis might gain from the occupation. There was a demarche made that very day in Saudi Arabia and in the UAE about oil production, urging them to expand to the maximum extent possible their production to make up for what we anticipated would be the loss of Kuwaiti production. We were concerned about that. The President said he was going to call King Fahd when he got to Aspen. He was on his way out to Colorado where he met British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. We sent Ambassador Freeman back to Saudi Arabia. I make these points because it tells you where we were at that early moment. 'Chas' Freeman was our ambassador in Riyadh. He was ordered to go back to Saudi Arabia immediately, but via Kuwait. In other words, there was even at that moment in the morning an expectation that the Kuwaiti government was still there. Of course, it didn't happen. Breaking relations with Iraq was discussed, but the decision was made that it might be better not to do anything like that right away. Again, we were uncertain about Iraq's ultimate intentions and didn't want to sever our ability to converse in Baghdad. And we had lots of Americans in Iraq working on many programs, as well as our embassy. Interestingly enough, in this very early meeting the president told the military to be ready to go in, particularly if Americans were in any sort of danger.

Q: Was there any reference at that time to people who had long memories of the -- was it late '50s -- about when the king was deposed in Iraq and street mobs and, you know, in Iraq. I mean the Iraqis were considered to be rather a dangerous people.

GNEHM: Violent in response to situations, yes.

Q: Mobs, yeah.

GNEHM: There was concern about that. There was a great deal of concern about Americans in both Baghdad and Kuwait early on. Large numbers of Americans were in Kuwait and a smaller number in Baghdad, but still significant for different reasons. It was just simply unclear who was in charge and what might happen to them. It does develop in the negative direction over some time. There was great discussion immediately about drawdowns in the post and whether those should take place. The President called Mubarak and King Hussein of Jordan that very day and instructed the State Department to go out with a worldwide demarche calling on the Iraqis to withdraw. The message to Yemen actually on that very first day was to rap their knuckles about their slackness. In other words, Ali Abdullah Saleh, the President, had not come out strongly against the invasion.

Q: You might point out the role of Yemen, which was sort of at odds with most of the rest of the Arab world at the time.

GNEHM: True. Yemen is down in the corner of the peninsula. They are a mountainous people, very independent minded and had ongoing difficult relations with the Saudis due to the constant Saudi interference in Yemen's domestic affairs. The Saudis gave the Yemeni tribes money, paying off one tribe against the other. They were accused at least of being behind the assassination of at least one of the previous two presidents. They were at odds, so to some degree with Ali Abdullah Saleh's relationship with Saddam Hussein. Certainly one factor in that relationship was simply geography. Iraq sat on the other side of Saudi Arabia -- therefore was an obvious ally. Saddam also knew how to handle these kinds of relationships, and that was with money. The Yemenis are not rich and are in fact, very poor. Someone like Ali Abdullah Saleh knew and understood that you rule Yemen by dole outs to the tribal leaders. To make things work, you need money, and Saddam provided that for them. In fact, there are allegations that King Hussein of Jordan was also getting hefty sums of money from Saddam.

Interestingly enough, the question of Israel and its possible reaction came up the very first day. That of course proved to be an important issue as the next few months passed. A demarche was made in Tel Aviv to inquire what they were doing and urge them to be calm and wait to see what the facts were. There was a teleconference later in the morning. The president said he was going to call Hosni Mubarak on his way out to Colorado. He approved the freeze of U.S. assistance to Iraq. Now remember, there were still some programs going on, particularly the food program, and the sale of, of wheat on concessional terms in particular. There was a memo to all heads of departments and agencies effective immediately stating that all financial loans and any export licenses were to be canceled to complete the circle of closing out any advantages that Iraq might have. That all occurred within the first few hours. Now, there was another very important thing that happened on that day (and this became again a very important development in the months ahead): Robert Kimmitt, the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, was delegated to lead an interagency team composed of representatives of all agencies, such as Energy, Defense, Commerce, and all the branches and departments of the Department of State to coordinate the US Government's response to the invasion. This team met on a regular basis, virtually every day for quite some time. Subgroups worked on specific issues, and we reported back on a conference call in the middle of the day.

Q: This was completely aside from his nuclear responsibilities? I mean this was centered on the crisis in Kuwait.

GNEHM: That's right. It was centered entirely on that. The reason why I mention it and stress it is that there was amazingly successful coordination within the U.S. government in this administration during these times. Certainly I give credit to the president, secretary, and others but Bob Kimmitt was a jewel.

Kimmit ran the day-to-day operations, pulling it all together. If there was ever a difference at one level or another on a particular topic, it was worked out in this group,

and then it went back up the chain as resolved or whatever. It was amazing, because there was not any doubt about what people were doing and who was doing what. It was just excellent.

Q: What were your responsibilities at the beginning?

GNEHM: The role of a crisis task force was to be the hub or command center for the crisis. I essentially became its director. During the first hours that night and early morning the task force was receiving all the communications coming in from the field. By opening of business I had spoken to our embassy in Kuwait and Ambassador Glaspie in London. I was getting full debriefs on the meetings. Based on all the information we were receiving, we produced to do sit-reps (situation reports) on a regular basis for principals. These reports kept all persons informed. Generally the task force served a crucial coordinating role for Undersecretary Kimmitt. The task force was a pivot point. Consequently, I had one of the better insights into all that was going on because I was getting debriefed every time there was a meeting at the White House or development abroad.

Q: When you arrived within the first couple of days did you envisage a massive American military presence there? What was your feeling?

GNEHM: Personally my initial feeling was this crisis was likely going to take a long time to resolve. I had lost any kind of confidence that Saddam could be worked with. I saw him as very aggressive and uncompromising. I even thought he might have had some really serious psychological issue in terms of power.

Q: Bully too.

GNEHM: He was definitely a bully, absolutely. If we get into the conversations when Wilson, our Charge in Baghdad, actually meets with him, you see that he merely repeated what he said earlier to others. Interestingly enough, I just assumed my role in the Op Center. I was never designated that formally. In fact, John Kelly, who I've mentioned several times, asked me in the course of either the first or second day, "Who gave you the authority to be up here and doing this?" He complained to Kimmitt that as Assistant Secretary he should be the one to designate the person who heads up the task force. Kennett actually told him that the Secretary liked me and will not agree to a change.

Q: Do you think that that reflected the feelings of others besides yourself as far as his effectiveness and knowledge?

GNEHM: We have already talked a lot about John Kelly. There were many people who had difficulties with him and found his general reactions to events in the region as bizarre. John continued to be dismissive about major US military action to confront Saddam; I took seriously what I was hearing from the White House meetings, which was that the president was not going to let this occupation of Kuwait stand.

Q: Mm-hmm.

GNEHM: I doubted very much in these early days that sanctions and diplomatic action would work, but I knew they had to be tried. I knew we had to go down that road. I also heard the word 'military' used even on the first day. Outside the government circles that wouldn't have gone over with the American public that wasn't prepared for war or for any deployment like we were talking about. However, I thought we would end up having to deploy forces. I thought we might somehow be able to force him out.

Q: Well, did you sense the normal reluctance of the military to get involved right at the beginning? Who was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time?

GNEHM: General Colin Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Q: Yes. But Crowe was on TV talking about staying out of the crisis -- not to get involved militarily.

GNEHM: Yes, he was and that didn't go over very well in the administration.

Q: Could you talk a bit about the initial reactions of Russia? Was there a push to impose sanctions because it's cleaner, neater, and doesn't involve people, or what?

GNEHM: Well, there's definitely that aspect. I think that the concern early on that made us focus immediately on sanctions was that we wanted to make certain that Saddam did not reap the benefits for his seizure of Kuwait. Sanctions meant that he didn't have access to the investments that the Kuwait Investment Authority had globally and that he couldn't sell oil from Kuwait. It was more to deny him benefits because we knew if he got those assets they would enable him to pursue his aggression. Remember, at this point in time, we're not certain what his ultimate objectives were. We weren't sure whether it was just to get concessions or whether he intended to go on to Saudi Arabia. We weren't sure he intended to annex Kuwait or just occupy it temporarily. We soon knew it was the former.

Q: Was there any talk about Saddam's oil producing capacity? My understanding is we found that Saddam had really neglected his infrastructure in order to support his big military presence. That included electricity, but also oil field development. Was that a concern or thinking point?

GNEHM: It was a given. I mean INR and others wrote about where Iraq was economically and politically. These points were all there. Still, we were one of the major purchasers of Iraqi oil, as we were later during the Clinton administration when we ultimately allowed them to start selling oil.

Q: As we were considering our policy were we taking into account that we were a major purchaser of Iraqi oil? I mean did we see ourselves having to suffer because it was taken out of the equation?

GNEHM: That was part of the reason for the demarche to the Saudis and the UAE. We expected we were not going to be continuing to buy the Iraqi oil or Kuwaiti oil for that matter. In fact, we were going to move toward trying to stop them from selling any oil. There was a recognition early on that we should get UN action. Ambassador Thomas Pickering was our very capable ambassador to the UN where the US focused its initial diplomatic initiatives. Early the day of the invasion the Security Council met in emergency session and passed a resolution condemning the invasion and calling for Iraq's withdrawal. This resolution was the first of many that placed the UN firmly united against the invasion and fully in support of Kuwait. The second resolution was the one that imposed economic sanctions on Iraq.

Q: In a way, given where Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil is concerned, we could certainly cut off a great majority of exporting any of that oil by just declaring a blockade or what have you, because it was almost all ship born, wasn't it?

GNEHM: Iraqi oil was largely exported from offshore buoys located in the northern end of the Persian Gulf. There were two pipelines, one from the north through Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea and a second that had been built in recent years across Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea. We had conversations with both of these governments in the next few days requesting them to close those pipelines, which they did. That would have left only one route for exporting oil -- overland by truck through Jordan to Aqaba. Obviously the quantity of oil exported in this manner would not be significant.

Q: So in a way the Kuwait-Iraqi oil complex was quite vulnerable to outside forces?

GNEHM: Yes.

Q: So what happened next?

GNEHM: One of the first things that happened that morning was the call from April Glaspie in London. She had gone there for medical reasons. She was calling the Department to speak with the Secretary. I had been told in an earlier meeting by Kimmitt that the Secretary would not take a phone call from her. In fact, Under Secretary Kimmitt told me that the Secretary decided that no person in the Department of State would talk to her except for me. I would be the only person.

Q: Why was that? I mean was she persona-non-grata?

GNEHM: Yes. This was particularly a consequence of the conversation that she had with Saddam.

Q: How did we all feel about Ambassador Glaspie's reputation at the time? Do we feel that this was Secretary Baker or was it generally felt that she had done the wrong thing?

GNEHM: People who knew and worked with April well, including me, certainly never believed that she gave Saddam the green light to invade Kuwait. April was a professional

and an Arabist who knew the region and understood completely US interest in the Gulf. And I had worked very closely with her. I mentioned earlier that I stayed in her house during the trip in February. I mentioned how she and I had similar reactions and concerns over what we were hearing during that visit from the Iraqis. I knew her from her previous assignments in Washington when she headed the Office of Arabian Affairs in NEA. I was at Defense at the time. I knew her very well. I knew that she was a very headstrong personality, a very driven officer and that she had very strong feelings about issues. In this particular case she was an advocate of working with Saddam in ways that would bring him around to be part of the family of nations. That was the policy of the administration; so her remarks to Saddam were not contrary to overall US policy. In my own view, however, she did not understand or grasp the changing view in Washington toward Saddam as he made speeches, like the one in Amman attacking the United States and Israel. Washington was growing more and more negative toward Saddam. While this was happening, she was still out there using all of her energy and all of her abilities to try to alter Iraqi behavior. By the way, she never received instructions that altered ones she had been operating on thus far -- to try to bring Saddam around.

It is worth remembering the context in which she was operating in those few days before she met with Saddam. Iraqi troops were being moved and threats made. Yet the Saudis and others, like Mubarak, were trying to mediate and moderate Iraqi threats. Mubarak went to Baghdad and other people were attempting to reduce tension. A meeting was scheduled for Jidda to bring the parties together and then that fell apart! That was the regional scene that she was working in to try to get Saddam to change his bellicose behavior. As I've mentioned to you before, April made it very clear that we don't get involved in issues between countries over borders in the region, which is exactly what her instructions from an earlier period said. These instructions were still probably valid; but, as she testifies later on the Hill, she had said such border disputes should be dealt with peacefully, not by use of force. Saddam gave her assurances that nothing would happen during her absence, and she could go and not worry or be concerned. He had told President Mubarak the same thing. As I think I mentioned previously, Saddam left the room during his meeting with April to take a phone call. When he came back in, he said "That was Mubarak, and he asked the same question you're asking, Madame Ambassador. I told him the same thing I told you. We're going to participate in this meeting in Jeddah." We have logs at the White House. Mubarak called President Bush within minutes of that call to tell him he just spoke to Saddam Hussein and had received assurances that he would work to resolve the crisis diplomatically. What Mubarak told the president was no different from what April Glaspie told the U.S. government as a result of those meetings on the 25th. No, I think the Iraqis were very intentional in releasing their version of the conversation; they were very good at propaganda.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling that Secretary Baker, who'd been in Mongolia when this happened, was using April Glaspie as a scapegoat or that maybe there was a coterie around Baker trying to protect him. I mean do you think that sort of thing was happening?

GNEHM: It's a fair question to ask. I'm going to answer it as honestly as I can, but I would like to preface my remarks by saying that I'm very fond of Secretary Baker and I feel like he was a fantastic Secretary of State during this period. This lead in was not the best moment for him. There is no doubt about the fact that the administration was focused on the collapse of the Soviet Union and all of the political developments unfolding in Eastern Europe.

One country after another started moving in different ways, with the United States trying to respond. There's no doubt about that being the focus, and I think to some extent Baker felt like he was blindsided by NEA and perhaps April being his ambassador in Iraq. I have a couple of other examples that will come up later, where people were definitely trying to protect him from criticism at different points in time. April came out on the wrong side. She was insisting that morning that she be allowed to go back to Baghdad certain that she could convince Saddam to change his mind and withdraw from Kuwait. Then everything would be fine. The very fact that she promoted that as a course of action flew in the face of where everybody else was at that point in time. It was immediately interpreted as unrealistic. I was told to tell her in no uncertain terms that she was not going back. She was not authorized to go back to Baghdad. If she traveled anywhere at all, it would be to Washington. I wasn't told to order her back at that time because she had medical reasons for being in London; but I did tell her that orders would be forthcoming for her return to Washington. April was very unhappy and remained convinced that she could make a difference if allowed to return to Baghdad.

Q: Did you talk to her?

GNEHM: I'm the one that talked to her. She was very upset.

Q: Did she have the feeling that she was being set up, or was it different, not personal grounds but other grounds?

GNEHM: I don't think she thought that at the time. I think she believed so much in her capabilities to do things that she wanted the opportunity to try. I took that at face value. I just told her that, like almost all others in Washington, I didn't agree with her that Saddam could be turned around. In any case, the politics in Washington after the invasion wouldn't sustain her going back. It was just impossible.

Q: Within a day or two after the invasion, did we feel that this wasn't just Iraqi forces coming in, messing around a little bit and saying, "See what we can do," then going back and then take a hunk of the oil fields? Or did we feel that they really were in Kuwait to stay?

GNEHM: During this first day we didn't know enough about what was going on to be too sure about that. When I arrived at 3:00 in the morning in the Op Center, the issues that we were dealing with at that moment were the Iraqi Occupation Forces. We were asking whether there was security in Kuwait, what the security situation was going to be, and, if we were going to evacuate Americans, how that could be done. We were told by the

embassy in Kuwait that Iraqi “guards” were now at the embassy. There was some resistance in Kuwait City, and the fighting was expanding. There was now artillery fire in parts of the city. That was different from the first day when people had started to go to work that morning in Kuwait City and ran into tanks and troops moving in the city. Everyone was shocked and surprised. Some went on to work and were sent home by Iraqi troops. Others went back home immediately. By the second day again there was some fighting. The President spoke with King Fahd for about a half hour the night before. I called Ambassador Howell, our Ambassador in Kuwait.

He was in the embassy, and the embassy was still fully staffed at that point. There had been no draw down at that point of dependents or officers. We told them to stand fast until there was any decision or authority on draw downs. We considered what his recommendations might be. We asked him if he intended to move dependents into the compound, which would increase numbers significantly. He said he was trying to watch the situation and not sure of the situation. For the moment at least families seemed to be OK in their homes and so he was having them stand fast. He said the Iraqis had to disarm the Kuwait National Guard. There was scattered urban resistance, but also reports that the Iraqis had begun detaining people. It was the first indication he had that the Iraqis might be separating out Europeans and Americans from Kuwaitis. He talked about a joint approach with other governments to the Iraqis about the security situation of Kuwait since the Iraqi forces seemed to be in charge. He reported his understanding that the Kuwaiti airbase had fallen early the morning of the invasion but that many of the planes that were on that base had managed to escape and flown either to Saudi Arabia or Bahrain.

Q: I am told that there was a guard at the gate who put up his hand and told an Iraqi armored column to stop. Since the Iraqis didn't have orders to force their way into the base, they hesitated enabling the planes to take off. There's this one guard standing there holding off this armored column until the Iraqis got orders of what to do. I don't know if that's true or not.

GNEHM: The Kuwaiti Air Force chief told me the same story. So I accept it as true. The guard said, “I need to see your authorization.” And of course that disconcerted the Iraqi who didn't have anything to show him. He wasn't sure what he was supposed to do at that point, and in the time it took to check the instructions, the planes took off and left.

Ambassador Howell talked about more Iraqi convoys arriving and where they were located. He lost contact with the British. A little while later in the morning there was a call from Ed Djerejian. I think Ed was in Jordan, but I've forgotten where he was actually. The Swedish ambassador was telling him that it was a possible that Iraqi troops were moving into Jordan as well. That turned out not to be correct. I mention it only in that we were getting information about things happening in the region that didn't bear out in fact.

Q: Was there any talk about the interaction of the expatriate Palestinian-Jordanian community in Kuwait? Apparently at least the majority were supportive of the Iraqis coming in.

GNEHM: Not early on. Again, I think people were so surprised by the move that in these first few days this did not come up. There was an interesting conversation as early as this second day in Damascus with Farouk Al Sharaa, the acting foreign minister and close ally to Assad. We pushed hard for the Syrians to condemn the Iraqi invasion and to call for immediate and unconditional withdrawal. The Syrian government actually was strongly supportive of doing that and said they had no intentions to recognize this puppet government that seems to have surfaced in the course of the day. The Syrians said, "We are pushing hard for an extraordinary Arab Summit meeting to reconfirm the condemnation and call for withdrawal." The Syrians asked us to support a call for an Arab Summit. Our contacts with our Arab friends indicated there was no danger on the Syrian-Iraq border. The Syrian Government was watching it closely because they considered Saddam unpredictable. The United States urged the Syrians to deploy forces to the border because we hoped that would force Saddam to redeploy his own forces, fearing the Syrians might in fact cross the border. It's just interesting to me that early on we find that the Syrians were actually on board opposing Saddam's actions.

Q: Were there any contacts or discussions with Iran at all, informal or otherwise?

GNEHM: I will get to that, because there were in fact some informal contacts. April Glaspie called me again later in the morning. She had been in touch with a UK MFA to discuss the resolutions under consideration at the UN. Again, she asked to be able to go back to Baghdad. I told her the situation had not changed. She asked if I would go back to the Secretary again. I said, "That much I can promise you, but I don't think you should anticipate any change in that." She said if I were there, I could probably have a lot of influence and change things around. She pointed out that King Fahd had met with the Iraqi vice president to try to convince Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

The Turks agreed to close the pipeline if NATO requested it. That was the word back. We had a report from our Dhahran Consulate that 48 Kuwaiti fighter jets in fact were now at the Dhahran Airport, confirming their successful escape from Kuwait. I called Joe Wilson in Baghdad to ask him whether or not he had had any response from the Iraqis about evacuations and security for the Americans in Baghdad. He said he had repeated the demarche four or five times to different people. The British were making the same demarche, but that they had not gotten a response either. Again, this was very early in the morning Washington time on the second day. There was an NSC meeting early in the morning and a debrief. Saud Nasser al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador in Washington, called to brief me on the conversation that he had just had with the Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. Remember, at this point in time Saud Nasser had no contact with his government. He wasn't even sure where the emir was. The emir later surfaced in Dhahran with some of his government. They had fled overland across the desert to evade Iraqi forces, but at this point in time Saud is really acting on his own. We told him to do whatever he thought was suitable and feasible with the Iranians. He reported that the

Iranians were very cordial. They were very concerned about the Iraqi action and that they would like to stay in touch with him about how things would develop. The Iranian dialogue was not with us directly, but we were getting feedback through a good intermediary that the Iranians were concerned about the Iraqi action.

The embassy in Kuwait reported that the oil facilities, the refinery, the export buoys, and the fields were now under complete Iraqi control. They got that information from Kuwaiti oil workers who were working in the field. In terms of the ruling family, the embassy was not sure where they were. They understood from other Kuwaitis that most of the al-Sabah family had fled and left the country overland, but they couldn't confirm at that point where they were.

Deputy Secretary Larry Eagleburger came back from the White House about 11:30 in the morning to debrief on the National Security Council meeting. He reported that the president was hard over and tough when he talked of "the consequences of Iraqis screwing around with American citizen," the words I wrote down. The President said we must be careful and not leave the American citizen issue as the only red line. He was concerned about a hostile power occupying another country, particularly one with that much oil. John Kelly was told to call in the Iraqi ambassador. Eagleburger was going to call Nizar Hamdoon, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iraq. He had been a popular Iraqi ambassador in Washington in the '80s. Eagleburger reported that the sense of the NSC meeting was a growing recognition that this was a very serious issue with strategic consequences and that Cheney, Brady, Scowcroft and the President all felt the same way. Kimmitt agreed. We saw more Iraqi mechanized armored units moving into Kuwait and a group of them within eight kilometers of the Saudi border. This heightened concerns in Washington. That intelligence forced decision-making. According to Kimmitt, "We have to now move in the direction of taking forceful action. We're not there yet, but we're moving in that direction clearly."

Q: I think this might be a good point to stop so we'll move to the questions.