

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

WILLIAM COWLES HAMILTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: August 1, 2003

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Southeast Asia, OIR (Office of Intelligence Research)	1951-1954
Far East division, INR	1954-1957
Political Officer, Rangoon, Burma	1957-1959
Mid-Career course	1959
Deputy special Assistant for International Affairs, SHAPE, NATO Supreme Headquarters	1960-1962
Chief of Political Section; Vientiane, Laos	1962-1964
Deputy Director, Far East Region, ISA; Pentagon	1964-1966
Country Director, Laos, Washington, DC	1966-1967
Political Counselor; Bangkok, Thailand	1967-1970
Senior Seminar	1970-1971
DCM; Manila, Philippines	1971-1973
Director of Research, East Asia and Pacific; INR	1973-1975
National War College, Ft. McNair	1975-1977
Office of Inspector General	1977-1980
DCM/Chargé; Stockholm	1980-1982
Continuity in Government Study	1982-1983
Director of Declassification Review	1983-1984
Retirement	June 30, 1984

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

Q: Today is the 1st of August, 2003. This is an interview with William C. Hamilton. It is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Bill, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

HAMILTON: I was born July 23, 1922, in New Briton, Connecticut.

Q: Let's start with your father's side of the family, then about your father and then we'll go to your mother's side.

HAMILTON: There's not much genealogy. My father's family was either English or Scotch. They're Hamiltons from both sides of that border. Of course, we were of Scot, or when I found out there were such things as Swedish Hamilton, a distinguished family, a titled family, but my grandfather reacted with horror because he saw Scots as like Kentucky mountaineers, so we were English. Another thing about my grandmother's background, I'm sure it was Anglo. He was a railroad YMCA secretary and executive, later lived in Chicago, Cleveland. My father was born in Chicago and the family lived in Cleveland for a number of years and then his final work was in New York and they lived in White Plains, or actually Elmsford in New York, which is adjacent to White Plains. He was a distinguished looking gentleman with pure white hair. When I came back from service in 1946 and my wife says, oh, your hair turned gray. It suddenly gave me hope that mine would go white like Edward Stettinius, that handsome white hair. Unfortunately it never happened.

Q: You were born in New Briton, Connecticut. Did you grow up there?

HAMILTON: No. My dad was also in YMCA work and he was at the time working in New Haven, but my mother's parents lived in a little town of Kensington and my mother went home to have her baby and the hospitals happened to be in New Briton. We lived in New Haven a couple of years and then moved to East Orange, New Jersey due to a change in my dad's Y assignment. He was in boys' work. We were there until I was about school age when we moved again to Worcester, Mass. and were there until he fell victim early on to multiple sclerosis. The family's limited resources were wiped out trying to find out what was the matter with him. Nobody knew in those days. So, one doctor said he was going to have a nervous breakdown so resources were used for him to go rest in Florida for a winter and that didn't help and some other doctor said, it's your teeth, go have them all out. That didn't help. Finally, concern developed about a brain tumor, so he managed to see the great Harvey Cushing in Boston and he said, you do not have a brain tumor, but I can tell you what the problem is and it was he who diagnosed MS. My father got, it was traced back to the time of his World War I service which was quite young for that, but he got affidavits from buddies he managed to stay in touch with or got in touch with to establish that he already suffered when he was in France. His

buddies said, well, Harold would always get so tired. We would have to let him ride in the truck and things like that. It was coming on even before his marriage. He went to Oberlin but did not quite finish school. After the armistice [November 1918] he studied at the University of _____ in France and got credit to get his Oberlin degree and then got into the Y.

The multiple sclerosis got worse and worse. He had to stop work in about 1930. I was about eight and there was a veterans' hospital in Central Connecticut pretty near where my maternal grandparents lived so the simplest thing to do was to seek haven near them. We didn't live with them, and so he then spent 18 years in the veterans' hospital before he died in 1951. He wrote a booklet called Five Years on the Shelf, which was an early expose on what it's like to come down with multiple sclerosis. He was near enough so he could do it. My mother wasn't very well. She suffered early arthritis and had a lot of pain which came from her having been struck down by a pickup truck while she was walking on the side of the road to our house where there was no sidewalk. She took the blow, she and I were walking home from the trolley line I guess and she had just moved me over to the outside position when this guy came. He was moving and apparently turned around to look at his load and veered off and struck my mother in the middle of the back. She suffered from arthritis and was in a lot of pain. She could never work. Could never drive. So the family buttoned down for Depression years and lived in very modest circumstances.

Q: You lived with your grandparents?

HAMILTON: No, we lived independently and it was because the VA (Veterans Affairs) found my father qualified for a full disability pension and he had a modest retirement allotment from the Y. He didn't have all that many years, but it was, getting through the Depression you didn't need a great deal.

We got along. My mother used to be embarrassed at Christmastime when the VFW ladies would come around and bring a big basket with a turkey and various things in it because we were impecunious. She didn't like, that was her situation, but she didn't like it. Given that history, New Briton was not the highest quality school system in Connecticut then or now I guess. The family found out about and investigated and managed to pry me into what was then Mount Herman School in Northwest Massachusetts, which is now part of Northfield Mount Herman. At that time there were two schools started by the 19th Century evangelist Lyman Moody. The girls' seminary started in 1879 and the boys' school across the Connecticut River up on another hill five miles away, Mount Herman in 1881. The schools have a serious non-denominational religious bent even in the late 1930s. When I went there we had five chapel services a week and a halftime course in bible or religion was required each year that you were there. Those provisions have been relaxed somewhat, but it's still, there is, there's no denominational affiliation. You're going to a school with important religious stuff, ties and there fine schools, heavy international representation. Get youngsters from virtually every state every year and from many foreign countries. Many offspring of missionary families. On my mother's side there had been a lot of missionary association. I don't know how

that started, but she remembers from her childhood the family entertaining missionaries back on sabbatical from mainly India and Japan. I don't hear much about China or other places and that continued. I knew some of the missionary families that way. I was very fortunate to be able to go. They got financial concession and I got a small scholarship from a well-endowed New Jersey woman known as Mother Munger who had I don't know probably 20 students gathered around in secondary school and college whom she was helping with funds. I guess I must have written her nice letters or something because she carried me on into the college years with the same small, but helpful stipend. My parents were consternated when it got time to go to college and I wanted to go to Oberlin just because my dad did and I knew it was a good school, but they said, oh, no, that's too far away. We'd never see you for four years. How times change.

I looked at their New England schools. I liked Bowdoin and several others. Connecticut Wesleyan and then I had a senior year teacher at Mount Herman in history who encouraged me to go to Harvard although he was getting his doctorate at Yale. I decided, I don't know how I sensed this, but I am so glad I didn't pursue the Harvard thing. I did apply to Yale and was offered a scholarship and in due course got admitted. The old fashioned college board exams, day after day of writing blue books. My family couldn't understand. They said, how can you do that? Well, my freshman year budget at Yale was \$1050 to \$1100. My family gave me \$10 a month plus major medical if I needed any and an occasional item of clothing. I managed to make it with a Yale scholarship and if you have one of those then you must accept a job and do some work which I was happy to do. Then I always had another job or two on the side and Mother Munger. I can't think of her first name. Miss Jessie Munger, lived in Plainfield, New Jersey.

Q: I wonder, could we go back to the Mount Herman time? What activities and studies did you particularly find you really enjoyed more?

HAMILTON: Almost by deliberate decision I enjoyed everything. I was a good student. I didn't have trouble. I was more interested in language and what would then be called social studies than in science. I didn't take biology. You had to take a couple of sciences. I took physics under a wonderful teacher. I enjoyed that very much. I got interested while I was there in international affairs. I was in the debating club and a number of others. I was very active on the campus. President of the church council, student advisory, president of what were called clubs, they weren't really fraternities, but they were groups that banded together with a purpose and the one I had was known as the good government club. I was in every singing organization there was, choir, glee club, the double quartet. I had a choral voice, not a solo voice. I never tried out for Gilbert and Sullivan leads because I didn't then or now have that kind of a voice, but I loved singing and still do. We have a singing seniors group here at Goodwin House and we just have a great time.

I was never athletically inclined. I played tennis somewhat. I was handicapped somewhat by always having to wear glasses. In the early years at Mount Herman you had to have athletics and in the fall it was soccer, so I went out for soccer, but I had to wear a mask to protect my eyes. I couldn't head the ball because it caused excruciating pain when it hit

the mask and so I wasn't a very effective soccer player. In the winter I would have done swimming except I was in those years having a lot of trouble with sinus and swimming didn't work. I like to swim, but it wasn't very good for me so I had to try basketball for which I was both too short and too inept to do anything useful. In the spring I played tennis. I guess my one achievement was there. Cross-country was a very popular sport and I could never do that. I didn't have the stamina.

But there was an event in the fall called the, well, it was a two mile race. It was called the pie race because as many students as possible were encouraged to run a two mile course and they awarded a freshly baked apple pie to the first 100 out of 500, the winners. I managed to win a pie. That was my main athletic achievement I think, but I played tennis. As a spectator I liked the sports, was glad to learn about lacrosse. I had a, not a roommate, but next door neighbor who was a good pole vaulter and he was a guy I admired in various ways, but partly for athletic prowess. My senior year roommate was a runner and he wasn't very good, he was a stocky built fellow, a son of a Methodist minister, Northampton, Mass., but he stubbornly, he had a role model who was a good half miler, so my roommate decided he was going to be a half-miler, but he wasn't very good at that. When he subsequently went to Oberlin he found out that his métier was in distance running and he ended up doing a very fine job, but didn't win, but was in the lead in an annual race from Oberlin to Canton, some road race of about 12 to 15 miles. That was what he could do. He couldn't go fast enough. Anyway, I used to watch athletic events and liked the people who could do it, but I wasn't very good at it. My eyes were pretty bad then.

Q: You graduated high school in 1940. During high school were you attuned to what was happening both in the Far East and in Europe?

HAMILTON: Yes, to some degree. Through the religious orientation in the school we engaged in some activity. It was a great interest in China relief after the Japanese invasion of 1937. I remember for example a one winter season, it was subject to popular vote, but it was decided that Sunday evening our supper, meal, would be limited to a bowl of rice, a dish of apple sauce and a glass of milk. That cost 11 cents, but the previous Sunday supper cost 35 cents times 550 students and donations were made week-by-week to China relief and through the family connections. I used to get the Sunday New York Times so I knew something. I was interested and in fact I knew in a vague way about the Foreign Service even when I was in school there and so I was interested in the international world, the Asia connection. It was mainly through these family missionary connections. I would say that's the main thing. I did have that orientation.

Q: You were at Yale from when to when?

HAMILTON: Well, from the fall of 1940 until February 1943 and because of an extra summer session I was able in that time to complete three years under an accelerated program. The advice of the university was sound, I think, a big rally on Pearl Harbor and everybody marched to the president's house to sort of I don't know what, complain or exult or what it was. The band turned out and we had a snake parade of all the campus.

The president was ill with the flu or something, but he came out on the front porch in his bathrobe and said, "What is important for you all to do is go back and study and get in some reserve program and stay in it until the government calls you and then go." That's what everybody did. A few had volunteered for the RCAF and gone away to Canada, but most everybody did as he advised. They had reserve programs, such as B-7 and ASTP [Ed: Army Specialized Training Program - An Army program on college campuses in such fields as engineering, foreign languages, and medicine during World War II to meet demands both for junior officers and soldiers with technical skills] and others, which operated on campus. I couldn't pass any eye test for anything except the enlisted reserve with I got into and which I was then called up in 1943, but I managed to finish my junior year. I came back in the fall of 1946 and we had a choice of Yale would give a one semester credit just for the fact of war service on the theory that you'd learned something, but I chose to take the full senior year because I was beginning to think about grad school and I didn't think of the idea was very good at graduating in January, which you do then. I took the full year and did significantly better work than I had. I had a good enough record to keep my scholarship and so on, but I ended up making Phi Beta Kappa on the basis of my senior year, a richer record.

Before the war, beginning in the sophomore and junior year I had a special privilege being assigned to a work program. It was 15 hours a week of bursary job, which one had to take, except if you had a scholarship, and which earned you board. I had a tuition scholarship, board through my work and then I had to make enough money to pay the room rent and incidentals. I was assigned as an assistant to the father of geopolitics in the United States, Nicholas Spykman, who emigrated from Holland; he was not a refugee. Spykman was in the tradition of German geopoliticians, but he had a more balanced view of the nature of power, multipurpose, multifaceted rather than just the sheer drive for maximization of a power. He had a professorship in the department of international relations at Yale when I was an undergraduate. I worked 15 hours of work for him a week and it was sort of, I would have sat at his feet in the old European pattern and let crumbs fall off his table. We didn't talk a great deal. My main job was hunting up books for him and he'd give me a topic that he was getting interested in and I'd go to the library and pull out all the books and bring them over and then sometimes he'd make comments or say, look further on this aspect. He had a post graduate research assistant, a nice woman, Helen Nickel and I myself and a secretary I guess. That was his shop. That was a very stimulating experience. Before I went into the service I really thought that the Foreign Service was what I wanted to do. Then I came back three years older, not necessarily wiser. I certainly didn't help or do anything to contribute to winning the war.

Q: What did you do?

HAMILTON: I was in aviation communications. I was in an aviation signal company and I got into cryptography, working with code machines. I developed a sub-skill that was not really cryptology, but I was better than most of them at handling the messages that got garbled in transmission and somehow breaking them out and what the meaning was. I did that both in the U.S. and finally overseas.

Q: Where overseas?

HAMILTON: India and very briefly China. I was mainly at the theater, combined British American air headquarters for Southeast Asia, or East Asia really, which was outside Calcutta. They had an American three star [Ed: Lieutenant General] and a British vice air marshal in joint command of that facility. It gave me a chance to explore an interest in Asia. I was frustrated because the Calcutta University was in an out-of-bounds part of the city that MPs didn't patrol and therefore, you couldn't go there. I didn't get as much as, I had thought I could do my senior thesis on my days off, but that didn't work. We looked around and I got interested in the culture and we used to go to the trouble of riding on the back of a six bike down to town on days off and poking around where one could go. I enjoyed it very much. It was filthy, smelly then as now.

Just at the end of the war they wanted a detachment from the group I was in to go over to Chunking to establish communications for what was to become General Wedemeyer's headquarters for an invasion of Southern China on the road to Japan. We flew over the low end of the hump, not the really bad part, to Chunking. On the very day the first A-bomb went off, so we set up the headquarters and then took it down again the war having ended. Quite a brief, but I had always wanted to go to China because of the earlier family experience. I finally got to Chunking for a few weeks. Up in the mountains on the way home we got shipped up to what had been a Flying Tiger base up in the hills in the Sichuan, nice piney woods, a little cooler, waiting for transportation is what we were doing there, idle. So I saw a little bit of country life in Western China, Southwest. I was focused on international affairs really from very early stages. I went back to Yale and I married when I got home from service and my wife supported me along with the GI bill through my senior year and three years of graduate study.

Q: What was the background of your wife and how did you meet?

HAMILTON: You've got time for all this, huh? It's a charming story and I'm happy to tell you. Her background is also in the YMCA family as I may have mentioned although our fathers had met, they said, at conventions, but they didn't really know each other. Jean's father had been a Marine in World War I in Washington. He didn't get overseas as my dad did. Then he stayed on briefly and then was posted to Morristown, New Jersey in the north and the family grew up there pretty much. Six children. Her mother came from a, they always said it was a German immigrant family who lived in Perth Amboy. I know now that that's not true. I met her grandfather and he was the image of a French gentleman and they said the name was Griner. Well, I haven't been able to prove this, but I know in my heart that that name got changed at the time of the Franco-Prussian War and the name really was Grinier. Reverse the vowels. He was totally unGermanic, a fine man.

Jean went to what was then Montclair Teachers College in New York. She was three years older than I, graduated in 1940 and started looking for a teaching job which there weren't much so she got into a child study department at the Orange Maplewood school system in North Jersey as a psychological examiner testing students. Our meeting was

really happenstance. We both, separately, had signed on for summer work in I guess 1939 and 1940. I started in 1941 going to one of the camps run by the New York Herald Tribune Fresh Air Fund. If you've ever heard of that they ran about a dozen camps mostly in the lower New York hills, some in Connecticut. Some youngsters were sent to farm families just in pairs. Both Jean and I happened to get assigned to one camp in the system which was a brother-sister camp for children out of the New York ghettos where the social workers who sent them felt that family circumstance was so disturbed that there needed to be a sibling instead of separating the kids. There were brothers and sisters from five to twelve, about 100. We had four boy counselors and four girl counselors to take care of them. Jean was one and as I say she had already had two seasons of this and I was there. How we met was at the opening of the camp season there was a conference at another camp, which was bigger where they had facilities of all the staff for the dozen camps. We all got together for a couple of days I guess of laying on of hands and getting acquainted and being given guidance and so on. When we left there to go to camp Guilds Farm, the camp director and his wife who, he came out of Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn and was the director there and his wife ran this camp, with two teenage daughters and a dog hanging along. They filled up their car with some of these counselors, they didn't all fit in, but it ended up I was heavier than some even at that time. I was given the middle seat in the back of the car and Jean was light and so she got to sit on my lap. That's how we met for about 35 miles as I recall.

Q: Well, then you came back from the service and you got married?

HAMILTON: I got back the end of March. We had been engaged before I went overseas. Each of us waited. We discussed whether to get married before I went overseas and we decided not to and then be separated and we decided to stay separated while we were still separate. That was concluded lying on the beach down at Atlantic Beach, North Carolina when we were visiting her next sister who was married to a Marine flyer at Cherry Point. I was posted at Goldsboro, North Carolina at the time and took a bus down and she came down from Jersey. We spent a nice weekend on the beach, at Atlantic Beach, North Carolina and that's when we decided that we would wait and did and wrote letters and are happy that we waited. When I got back we both felt we needed. I didn't know her really all that well. We'd had a few dates between Morristown, New Jersey and New Haven, Connecticut, but it wasn't very intensive. We got to know each other mainly through correspondence. We visited a lot more and reaffirmed our wish and got married in June, the end of June 1946. Then I went back to school in the fall. Jean got a job with a New Haven outfit called Vocational Counseling Service, which was helping veterans find out what they should do. She went on doing psychological testing, but working with adults rather than children. As I say, she and the GI bill allowed me to finish my senior year and since I had done better decided that I would like to go to grad school. Normally one goes to grad school in a different environment and should, so you work with different people, but there had been so many changeovers and changes in the faculty during the war years that I was able to stay at grad school there and work with almost entirely different people than I had known before. Since we were married and happily had a place to live which was not easy to do and Jean had a job, we just stayed on. I got rooted in New Haven and didn't leave until 1950 when I had finished my course work and had done quite a lot of

research toward my thesis, but even the research wasn't finished.

Q: What were you taking?

HAMILTON: International politics in grad school. My undergraduate major was international relations and I continued with that, a little more specialized, International Politics. I had work in international economics. In the beginnings of what was then known as psycho-cultural theory with people like Nathan Leites and Gabriel Almond, citing a new field in how peoples' behave or why they behave the way they do and either get along or don't get along. Arnold Wolfers was the great white father of the Yale program at that time. That was a very satisfying experience.

Q: I would think at that time that so many of the people that you're working with and yourself included were veterans and that this was a much more sophisticated and mature group of people.

HAMILTON: That's absolutely true. I'm sure my, well, my horizon was expanded. My knowledge was not greatly expanded because I had such a pedestrian job in the war, but our graduate study group included people with a variety of better, more useful experiences and specifically one of the first two groups of army officers that were sent for graduate study in international relations. A handful came to New Haven; another handful went to Princeton at the same time. We were there with that group and they had had lots of experience and had ideas. It was a rich environment. The group included, some of these names might be known to you, Ed Rowny, became a three star and was a SALT negotiator.

Then there was Roger Hilsman.

Q: OSS [Office of Special Services] and then later was Assistant Secretary of INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 1961-1963].

HAMILTON: That's right. That's correct. Also Assistant Secretary of East Asian and Pacific Bureau [Ed: 1963-1964]. His first after graduate school job was with the legislative reference service in the Library of Congress and he went from there to INR. I had Howard Wriggins who worked on the NSC (National Security Council) staff and became ambassador to Sri Lanka [1977-1979] and also the Maldives [1978-1979]. A couple of other military officers whose careers didn't make the New York Times I don't think, but it was a very stimulating group.

We palled around. We were older. There were some younger graduate students coming along. We worked hard and didn't want other Foreign Service, I don't know if you ever encountered Al Moscotti. He had been at Montclair and he and Jean had known each other from undergraduate school and went their different ways and he got into INR I guess a year, probably '50 [Ed: October 1949], a year ahead. Yes, he just took a masters [Ph.D.] at Yale and then went to work and then had a middling Foreign Service career, not dramatic. He's now a victim of Parkinson's and lives in Honolulu. I keep in touch still

with him. It was stimulating. I should talk in an even more excited way because Yale was just an incredible experience.

Q: What was sort of the focus of what you were doing, any countries or areas?

HAMILTON: No. I deliberately avoided an area specialization. Some of the people there were in area programs. There was a strong Far East Asian program spearheaded by David Nelson Rowe, an historian, and you might know Dixie Walker.

Q: He just died last week.

HAMILTON: That's correct. That's absolutely right; which was a blessing. He had been sick for quite a while and he had taken with him down to South Carolina when he set up the center there a fine, but less successful FSO Paul Kattenburg. Do you know him?

Q: I've interviewed him. He was very much involved in Vietnam.

HAMILTON: In Vietnam, right, but he was little too effervescent for the Foreign Service. He sort of capped at the rank of FSO-3 and retired, taught at FSI for a while and then Dixie Walker offered to take him down to Colombia when he was setting up the center down there. Kattenburg he might be, he's one of my best longtime friends since 1946. We visited back and forth. Philippines and Burma and Germany. There's lots of stimulus.

I deliberately avoided area language specialization, which may have been, because I was interested in process. International politics was what I was interested in, how things work. I always figured which turned out to be true, one can develop an area of specialty and that's what happened. I after I finished my residence, I took what was a half time job at then it was called the New Jersey College for Women in New Brunswick, teaching political science. We had a nice, an adequate wartime graduate student type apartment, they're like dormitories, no, they were like barracks buildings cut into apartments. I was supposed to finish my thesis in the other halftime, but since it was my first year of teaching experience and I had two different courses, one of which I had to develop from scratch that in the first year was full time rather than half time. The thesis hung on until Yale threatened to throw me off the roles. I finally finished it up in 1955 and got my degree and I'm glad I did although it didn't matter by that in terms of service after just one year of teaching 1950 to 1951 I went to Washington. I didn't care much at that time where I plowed this furrow of international politics whether in academia or the operational side. But because of the Korean War, there weren't jobs in academia. I found a slot in OIR [Ed: Office of Intelligence and Research] it was then and the opening happened to be on Southeast Asia.

Q: Well, go back just a bit.

HAMILTON: Sure.

Q: While you were doing your thesis, you were working on your dissertation and the preliminary studies and all the Cold War developed. Did this change your perception? How did the Cold War affect you all?

HAMILTON: It probably to some degree affected my choice of thesis topic. I had become very interested in this area of psycho cultural investigation that Gabriel Almond pioneered at Yale; subsequently he went to Princeton as most of them did He was my thesis advisor and the topic that I developed was the study of the development of foreign policy attitudes in American pressure groups. I focused on three. The American Farm Bureau Federation. The AF of L [Ed: American Federation of Labor] and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. I did a lot of interviews and read all of the publications over years and traced the evolution of their thinking and advocacy in the transition from post war to Cold War, so I was pretty familiar with all that. It was a study of group bureaucracy. They all had bureaucratic elements that ran things and the annual meetings ratified positions which staff had developed. I spent the most intensive; I spent a week literally in the Washington headquarters of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. They gave me a desk and opened up files and I made a study of how they had evolved their position on the Marshall Plan through staff papers and their publications and so on. That was a sort of case study within the dissertation.

Q: Did you feel at all either through its influence or you yourself or your faculty feel the bite of McCarthyism?

HAMILTON: Yes. I'll save my own pitch till the last, but there were two people in the OIR office, which now is INR. It was raised from an office of intelligence research under a man named Allen Evans in 1951 when I joined [Ed: July 1951], now this was a civil service position at the time, but the slot that I fell into was in the Far East-Southeast Asia branch. My first boss at State was a fellow named Jack Lydman. Do you know him?

Q: I've interviewed Jack, yes.

HAMILTON: What a good person to learn from. He was not all that older than I, but he'd had more valuable experience. I learned about Southeast Asia on the job. OIR became a bureau in about I can't be exact, I'm not sure. That of course is in the record. I think in the late 1950s [Ed: October 19, 1957], raised to bureau level and therefore headed by an assistant secretary. I was recruited at a time when the USIA [Ed: United States Information Service] function was within State. I was recruited to work on a staff that was forming up to do what grandly was called psychological intelligence and that's because his thesis was on public opinion. That's why I got that job. The vacancy was Southeast Asia.

Psychological intelligence never really developed much beyond public opinion analysis. I never tried to develop a theory, a corpus of knowledge that ought to be under that broader title. Public opinion analysis is what we did. I think it was useful to policymakers. Some of them who paid attention anyway. Then that was from the beginning in 1951. Then it was 1954, plus or minus, that USIS [Ed: United States Information Service] emigrated to

a separate agency and became USIA and those of us on this psychological intelligence staff had the option of staying in State and doing something or migrating to USIA. I chose the former because the Foreign Service had been on my mind since prep school days off and on. I pretty much gave it up when I went to grad school. I thought well the Foreign Service Officers joined in that time at age 22 when they got out of college. By the time I finished military service and three years grad school I thought I was too old for the Foreign Service so I should go do something else. That's laughable now when the A-100 classes have people up to age 50. But it was a different aura and ethos then.

I am completely content that I chose to stay with State because it was the track that I had been on and I remained in the Far East division there until well, through the process of Wristonization.

Q: This was 1954 or 1955?

HAMILTON: 1955. Yes. My transition was late 1955 and it caused no problem for me because it was realization of an old dream. My wife had never traveled outside the U.S., but she was game to give it a try. The only complication that we've had and this was, I never advertised it particularly, but it's nothing that we're ashamed of or was not known, my integration into the Foreign Service and ability to go overseas was complicated or at least delayed a bit because we were in the process of adoption. We now have since had two very wonderful children that are now in their 1940s and we were successful. We couldn't have children of our own, but the personnel system was very obliging and delayed us going somewhere enough so that we could carry through the adoption, the agency that we dealt with, a wonderful one, the Barker Foundation in Washington, insisted on follow up. You had to have interviews with a social worker periodically for the first six months or so and write a monthly report of what was going on in your relationship and how the child was doing. That worked all right the first time and then they wanted you to have a second child approximately two years later. So we went off on a two year tour to Burma. In those days I think the personnel office told you where to go or you could quit, but I was working on Burma and Thailand in INR in close coordination with the desk and I came to know that a second secretary's position was coming open in mid-1957 in Rangoon, so I asked for it and I'm sure there was no long line of applicants, so that's where we went for a first tour and it worked out just great.

Q: I'd like to go back just a bit. While you were in INR or OIR I was asking about McCarthyism. Did that hit?

HAMILTON: Yes, I'm sorry. Yes, well, there were a couple of people who had been there who really got hurt. One of the people in my office was a wonderful woman named Pat Barnett who was then, not now, wife of Robert W. Barnett and he got tarred by McCarthyism because I guess it was the Institute of Pacific Relations or one of those public organizations that was liberal and therefore, suspect. We heard stories about people who were caught up in loyalty checks. They didn't all get fired. I had no personal involvement except a dear aunt who lived then in retirement in North Carolina who liked to write letters. She was interested in knowing what was going on. One of the first letters

she wrote while I was in State showed the influence of McCarthyism because she ended up, one of her letters with family news and so on by saying, concluding, have they found any communists in your office yet? The tone quality, but that's the closest I came to. Then of course I found myself in the East German green book later as a.

Q: Who's Who in the CIA?

HAMILTON: Yes, right.

Q: I'm in there, too. Everybody in INR is in there.

HAMILTON: Right. That's all I can say about McCarthyism. I was fascinated by the hearings. Everybody else, Joe Welsh, one of my folk heroes ever since.

Q: You were working on Thailand and Burma?

HAMILTON: Yes, and I had a spell of working on Indochina partly because Kattenburg went on a study grant to go to Vietnam for six months or nine months, something like that. That was my first interagency experience to the Office of National Estimates. It was a time when the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) people and their analysts used to say that the most valuable incoming material they had was Foreign Service reporting. They maintained that over decades. When there would come an estimate requirement for whatever future Thailand or something, characteristically the CIA would prepare a draft and we would offer a draft. My experience was when the committee got together, the interagency working group, the State draft usually came out ahead. That was a beginning of my overwhelmingly positive relations with the agency unlike so many Foreign Service Officers who have a negative thing either in principal or because of a specific bad experience and there are such. I never had one and I had good professional relations in Washington and in the field and great personal friendships.

Most recently after my wife died, after the obituary was in the Post, one of the first notes I got was from a woman, wife of a CIA officer, with whom we had served 30 years ago and rarely seen since. She wrote and got in touch and wanted to know about the memorial service and wanted to be involved. That was because we had known each other at post and that was a post where we coordinated very well on reporting. We used to show each other drafts, perhaps not of everything. They have compartmented stuff, which I frankly am respectful. I know a little bit about how they work and the problems of sources and methods. A lot of fruitful, one used to query messages and in some posts the station people would bring information that they had gleamed but somehow didn't fit in with their list of requirements and say, is this of interest. They would give us whatever it was. That sort of thing.

Q: Now we're talking about your assignment in Burma starting in 1957, yes? What was it like?

HAMILTON: Burma was a curious, soft, troubled place afflicted with three different

kinds of, two different kinds of communist insurgents and several ethnic insurgencies. It was a country; this is my opinion, that was born into independence too soon after World War II. The Attlee government was divesting the colonies and when the Burmese revolutionary heroes, the ones who had been exiled in Japan during the war and then came back heroes, they organized the regime and said we want to be independent and the British said, fine, go. At that time the Burmese army was officered by either Brits or Anglo-Indians. The men, soldiers, were almost entirely from minority groups, the largest Burman group doesn't like being soldiers. They're rice paddy farmers. That wasn't a very unified entity. Agricultural land was owned by the Indians. Chinese dominated commerce. Most of the government bureaucracies were members of the Indian civil service and there hadn't been a Burmese civil service until almost the birth of independence. It was giving birth to after too short a pregnancy. We felt sorry for them and rebellions continued. If we wanted to take field trips during the time I got there, I was there; we always had to check with authorities as to whether what the situation was in such and such a district.

Q: This is a red flag white flag type thing.

HAMILTON: That's right, absolutely. That was the trouble. The early manifestation of Sino-Soviet competition for loyalty. I don't think in general that the Southeast Asian parties were ever creatures of the Chinese or the Soviets, but they were influenced by it and funded. They were not entirely indigenous either. The same was true of course in Vietnam. Vietnamese had minds of their own, but they. So, Burma was really in turmoil from the beginning and maybe the happiest period was while we were there under, for a long time, a fairly long time, Prime Minister U Nu. He was a gentle Buddhist and a compromiser and the sort of thing that they needed. The president of Burma was from the Shan minority and that was suitable, the union of Burma.

After we were there one year things weren't going well. The economy was running downhill. The civil war is continued and so on. The army under Ne Win, a youthful Ne Win then, took over and posed a military regime and promised law and order and to pull up our socks and so on. They did a lot of that. Cleaned up trash. The central market in Rangoon covered two city blocks and it was like one big garbage heap. It had thousands of stalls there where people were selling stuff, but it was a mess. Well, they just bulldozed it flat to the ground. They painted the trunks of the trees along the roads white up to this high and they spruced up the place and tried to send some bad people away. One year later they turned power back to U Nu and the civilian government again, a peaceful transition. The second Ne Win government wasn't nearly so benign as we all know and it got progressively worse because they dug themselves into a hole. The time we were there it was possible to have an optimistic view of the possibilities for slow development of a new nation.

Thailand was different. That was basically a military dictatorship during those decades. It was weak. It was thought to be vulnerable. There were Chinese communist elements, but the main threat in the eyes of the Thai came from the Vietnamese minority that inhabited the Northeast within the Northeast portion of Thailand and which was directed by the

Viet Minh. That doesn't mean it was, they were entirely cells, but they were supported by and they followed guidance. Here was the least developed part of Thailand, vulnerable to subversion from without. That helps explain the direction of our aid efforts in those years when we built highways up through that region up to Nong Khai across from Vientiane, Laos and the Northeast has developed economically. Corn, which grows up there, because it's drier, has become the third export crop for Thailand. No, the Burmese still have, it's reduced now, they still have tremendous rice export capabilities.

Q: You were in INR dealing with this area though it wasn't particularly in your bailiwick during the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the peace accords at that time and the division of the Vietnam. How did you all feel about that?

HAMILTON: We did not, well, we did not believe and sent in estimates that the South Vietnamese regime was going to be stable. Ngô Đình Diệm was more or less an American creation. He had been discovered by an American professor Wesley Fishel who came from, if I'm right, Southern Illinois and was enough of a promoter so, he got Washington's attention focused on this patrician, but not royalist family, the Ngô family and helped, but Wesley I think was influential in the transition. There were hopeful signs. There were of course the migration south after the split, a million North Vietnamese moved south because they didn't like the political atmosphere. At least we think it was that because there wasn't starvation or economic deprivation. The Diệm regime was never strong. It was never free of corruption.

The younger brother, Ngô Đình Nhu, we know was a bad apple and his wife even worse. That was one of our early adventures while we were in Burma. That couple, Ngô Đình Nhu and his wife, came on an official visit to Burma at Christmastime in 1957. We got involved with the rest of the diplomatic corps in receptions and dinners. They were on the make. The Burmese were really standoffish and no great consequences from that. Madam Nhu was bad news, sort of a precursor of Imelda.

Q: Well, going back to the Philippines, I think, I mean we were looking for Magsaysay and South Vietnam, but we were really sort of thirsty for a leader and so I think we were almost trying to create one.

HAMILTON: Sure. That's right. We did, one after another. All the subsequent, well, I guess our role was the strongest in the emergence of Ngô Đình Diệm rather than later ones because then their army got stronger and there was tension and competition among the leading generals and even in the American generals began to have their favorites, but I don't know that story in detail. It's in Kattenburg's book or a lot of it is. A succession of the series of successors to go to Diệm, some worse than others.

Q: How did INR fit into the Department I mean with the desk and all that at the time you were dealing with it?

HAMILTON: I felt then and maybe even more so later when I was back in INR in the early 1970s I thought very well of INR's role in the Department. From the mid-1950s I

used to give or take turns, have one week a month or something like that, doing the morning briefing, for Park Armstrong the head of OIR who in turn went to the assistant secretary's meetings and would give a global brief. We had, well, I had a spell sitting as acting desk officer while desk officer Skippert Parnell was off doing something else. We had good relations. I think the desk officers in the main respected the path and knowledge that was there. We didn't try to change jobs. The focus of OIR's work was analysis, not prescription. I think it was very good then and it certainly was later when I was back jumping ahead 20 years to the early 1970s when I was director of then INR's REA, Research East Asia. I used to brief the assistant secretary every day and often talk to him and other times during the day they would raise questions. It was only once or twice where we got left out. One was the incident of the Mayaguez that cargo ship that was captured by the Cambodians right after the cessation of the war in Vietnam. That was just a crazy, mixed-up thing and it was a case where I don't know whether it was telephonic or cable communications, high level to the bureau, caused the Department to decide on a course of action without having cognizance of intelligence that we were having which indicated fairly clearly that the whole thing was a mistake. Phil Habib thought that this was a deliberate provocation and they were concerned after the fall of Vietnam that North Korea might get adventurous and that's why we basically decided to slap down the bad guys who captured the Mayaguez and that misfired because you may remember we lost a helicopter with a whole.

Q: Yes, we lost about 30 people.

HAMILTON: That's right.

Q: Well, we'll come to that at that time. You felt your product was being used by the desk and also within the intelligence community?

HAMILTON: Yes, I have recounted the fact that the CIA analysts knew what we were doing, not only what we were doing, but what the Foreign Service was doing and had high regard for it. I don't have insight into the extent to which, say Walter Robertson's decisions, on East Asia mattered.

Q: He was assistant secretary?

HAMILTON: Secretary for FE I guess it still was.

Q: Far Eastern affairs.

HAMILTON: But he used to call on us for example the first time I, I was pretty junior then, like about a 9 or going on 11 called in on a Saturday when there was a flap over a penetration of the Paracel Islands, southeast of Vietnam and what was going on. Well, that was unknown territory. I knew nothing about it. I had to come in on a Saturday afternoon and prepare a paper for Walter Robertson. I found the material in the files and then we began to bone up. So, here was a case where if they had have felt need on a subject that they didn't know anything about. Who did they call? They didn't call the

CIA. They called INR.

Q: Let's move to the time you went to Burma. You went to Burma; you were there from 1957 to 1959. Just two years.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

HAMILTON: Walter McConaughy. He's an old China hand.

Q: How did he operate and how did you find him there?

HAMILTON: I found him a wonderful; I had wonderful good luck to have him as a first tour integrated officer trying to learn by observation about how the Foreign Service works. His record suggests that Walter was one of our great ambassadors, but he was very surefooted. He was a serious, thorough professional. He had several tours in China. He started out as vice consul here and vice consul there in the pattern of those times. He was very good with his staff. For example, he unnecessarily wrote or made a contribution to the fitness reports of every officer even when he didn't have to. My report or evaluation was prepared by the chief of the political section, reviewed by the DCM, but he attached a paragraph which is one of my amusing memories, there were certain tensions at that time as you know about Wristonees and they were like National Guard or whatever. This did not diminish my almost affection for Walter McConaughy. He was very favorable, almost well I won't say flattery, but it was entirely positive evaluation. I had functioned as sort of a staff aid on one of his trips up North and involved such duty as getting a big tub of hot water for him in the morning so he can have a bath and that sort of thing. He wrote a favorable report and ended up saying: so Bill Hamilton is an example that shows that Wristonization can work.

Q: Well, Wristonization was a great deal, the almost forced joining together of the civil service and the Foreign Service because it took quite different cultures.

HAMILTON: I didn't feel apprehensive about this. I was so junior that I didn't think I threatened anybody. I felt sorry for those civil service people who integrated at senior levels. Some of them brought it off very well like Joe Yager who was a, he was their boss, but some others like Park Armstrong, head of OIR, stumbled. He went on to be DCM in Madrid and I know nothing about it except that there was an impression afterwards that he had messed up and what he got next was CG, maybe Toronto, anyway in Canada, a consulate general and then he left. He was competing with FSO-1s who had had 25 years of Foreign Service experience and I felt sorry for people who had that challenge. They didn't know anything about how to manage the general services staff and things of that sort. As I say, I didn't feel that people at my level were threatening to the regular, the career officers who were already there. I never felt any pressure or lack of acceptance or friendship. I think it's fortunate we were probably in Southeast Asia, which is a little more informal place. Those who went to Paris, London, the traditional European posts, life was much more stratified.

Q: A lot stuffier.

HAMILTON: Yes. Burma is a place that we went to, we went on one of their big spring festivals. It's called Thingyan. It's a water festival and they throw, everybody has a silver bowl and they throw water on each other and this is to encourage the onset of the rains. It's beastly hot and the ground is parched and all that. It's so democratic. One is expected, I remember pouring a bowl of water over the head of the wife of the prime minister, or the poor second secretary. It was a very democratic place. That wouldn't have worked in Thailand. They wouldn't have done that to the king.

Q: Let's talk about Burma, your impressions of Burma. What was the government of Burma like when you were there?

HAMILTON: Well, it was a parliamentary democracy under Prime Minister U Nu, Buddhist in orientation, but the clerics, the monks didn't run the country, civilians, lay Buddhists ran the country. There was some mixture of the various ethnic groups in the parliament. In the senior civil service there are some of the best. A few of the best civil servants were Arakanese, for example, from the far West next to what is now Bangladesh. They were Indian civil service careerists and I think they were accepted and as far as I know they gave their loyalty to this new entity. As I have already said, the problem with Burma is that it was born before it should have been. A little more vague, but it's something I have felt, I think there is lacking in the Burmese character a strong ability for organizing group human efforts. As individuals they have capable people in the professions, teaching, a few doctors; there weren't many. Some individual soldiers, but they have trouble putting it all together. That is, one could say a juvenile problem, of a growing nationhood, but I'm not sure that it has changed all that much and I suspect that that's why going down the road to a more authoritarian pattern.

Q: You were there, or were you there when the insurgency troubles were going on in Malaysia?

HAMILTON: Yes, well, partly, that got going while we were still in Washington.

Q: But I was wondering whether this had any repercussions in the area.

HAMILTON: I hadn't thought about that for a long time.

Q: Well, maybe there weren't many Chinese in Burma unlike in Malaysia.

HAMILTON: The Chinese in Burma stuck to their niche, which was commerce, and they were the entrepreneurs and businessmen and they didn't make trouble for anybody. I don't think there were any linkages. There were some linkages between Chinese in southern Thailand and Chinese in Malaysia, but I'm not aware of any of that in Burma. If anything there would have been envy because Malaya then, had not been damaged. Burma was a wreck after the war. The railroads were torn up. A lot of riverboats had been sunk. Then and for much later decades, Rangoon streets had what amounted to open

sewer lines that pre-war had been covered with flagstones so you could walk on them and so they were not unsightly. Well, many, many, of those flagstones were broken by the fighting. Fifteen years later nothing had been done to replace them. Burma was in a worse situation than before the war in terms of infrastructure. The oil production went down. The river transport system seemed to work. I took trips on the river into the Karen areas, along the Thai border and on the upper Irrawaddy. There was river transportation that worked. The union of Burma Airways was flying. Good thing they only flew C-47s because you can hardly cause them not to fly. One was apprehensive; UBA didn't have an excellent flying record and we were there with really a young child, so my wife and I decided that we would never travel together inside the country. She would go off on a trip with another couple or some other people and a few weeks later I would go off in the country someplace in a different direction, but internal communication was so bad we couldn't leave this young child. She had an adequate nanny who was a Christian Karen, but if anything happened, we didn't want to be upcountry because no one would have been able to get a hold of us.

Q: You were a political officer and a fairly junior member in the embassy, but who were your contacts within the Burmese government and how did this work?

HAMILTON: I had a special beat for labor affairs. I was not labor attaché, we didn't have one, but that was part of my responsibility and I worked pretty hard at that, developing contacts in the trade union leadership such as it was. It was in adolescence. I had relatively little contact with foreign office people because most of the contact was at a level that made it appropriate for the chief of the political section or the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) occasionally to do that. I got involved quite a bit with some of the newspaper editors.

I developed some interesting links into the Buddhist community. This was a time of a big celebration of 2500th anniversary of the Buddha and many special activities. So, when I would go traveling up country I would get a referral to some Buddhist leader on whom I could call. An example on the lower Chindwin River, this is up northwest of Mandalay, there had been built an absolutely spectacular pagoda, brand new sat out there on a plain, it covered an area about a half a mile square. It was sort of on the model of Borobudur which you're probably familiar with in Java. Square layers with bells and all kinds of decorations. This was the work of old _____ that would be like the bishop I guess. Although _____ was really a teacher, not an official, but he had lived there through the war and he made a deal with the Japanese in that area and the pagoda was already under construction. He made a deal that if the Japanese allowed him to continue work on this pagoda he would guarantee that the people of that area would not get subversive and attack the Japanese. This informal arrangement seemed to work. When I visited in, well, quite a bit later, probably 1958, maybe early 1959; this was absolutely resplendent and gold. There were 185,000 images of the Buddha. It was like a frieze on a Greek temple. Layers and layers. I had, I must have spent an hour and a half with this old monk who was 87 years of age or something like that. I don't remember the stories he told me, but he was amiable, open, accessible gentleman of high esteem in that area.

Q: When you were there were university students a prominent class within the society?

HAMILTON: The university students were a prominent class because of their facility in English. Many Burmese spoke English. Most of the teachers, the judges, most military officers had some English, but students were learning it. They had to learn to graduate and that sent them automatically into the elite, but that didn't keep them from being obstreperous. There were student strikes, I don't remember issues, the university was shut down briefly a couple of times while we were there. It was also the center of cultural activities that brought the students together with "farangs," the foreigners, a concert by Marian Anderson [Ed: which took place in the fall of 1957], for example, was open. The audience would be all mixed up. No assigned seating for students. Students and diplomats, everybody all jumbled together. I didn't have ____ if I remember, but did not keep in contact afterwards with a few university students.

I remember going to a couple of sort of discussions. That's getting pretty fuzzy. I had some; there again one was a little careful because the USIS staff had an ongoing focus on students.

Q: Well, I think we'll stop about here, but I was wondering what was our policy toward Burma and our interest in Burma at the time?

HAMILTON: It was to encourage the peaceful evolution of this multinational state with limited economic assistance on a project or sector basis because it was never a big program, but designed to have impact on such things as river transport, a development or really building of a highway from Rangoon to Mandalay, but there was a road. When we went there it would take two or three days to drive it and we turned it into a one day trip if you wanted to do that. That's an important contribution to nation building.

We had some assistance to the police for training and equipment. We did not have a MAG (Military Advisory Group) program. The attachés were good. They traveled a lot and had good relations with the military command. I think the purpose was to be supportive, to do what we could both in Bangkok and Rangoon to tamp down Burmese-Thai frictions when they develop, which they do periodically.

Q: This is tape two, side one, Bill, what other incidents come to mind?

HAMILTON: There were a couple of interesting episodes while I was there affecting Burma's foreign relations. There was a Soviet defection to us, a fellow from the Soviet Embassy. That may be an interesting story that I could go into in some further session.

There also was the defection of a Chinese military attaché that made life a little difficult for the Burmese government. He sought sanctuary in Burma. He was wounded as I recall in an attempt to escape. He was in a hospital and the Burmese had to protect his life. Then they had the problem of exfiltration, which we had with our Soviet defector. That I can talk to the Soviet case which was an American thing, it didn't involve the Chinese or anybody else, reason on the basis of a pretty clear memory because I was the action

officer on that.

Q: Let's talk about the Soviet defector. When did this happen and what happened?

HAMILTON: It happened approximately in the middle of my tour, but I can no longer put a month on it that puts it probably in the middle of 1958. There was somewhat of an embarrassment for us as it turned out because this officer at the Soviet Embassy was totally unknown to us. Unaware of his presence or any information about him it was obviously an embarrassment for the Soviet Embassy and its government, but it also was an embarrassment for the Burmese government, which was staying with a policy of neutrality and nonalignment and noninvolvement to the extent possible.

The reason I became the public figure in connection with this was the accident of my having to spend a lunch hour one day in the embassy drafting materials for the famous or infamous joint WEKA [Ed: Foreign Service slang for the weekly summary report to Washington] which was one of my tasks. Rangoon was a useful post. We had enough to do, but it was not hurried and people normally went home for lunch. This day I had brought a sandwich, etc. and was at my desk when the phone rang and it was the USIS (U.S. Information Service) librarian housed in a separate building about a third of a mile away from the chancery and saying that she had a man who said he was from the Soviet Embassy who wanted to change sides and would I come over and take him away from her library which should be as neutral as the Burmese government.

I was the only person, officer in the embassy, so I dropped everything and locked up the safe of course and trotted over to this building. The man identified himself to me verbally as Aleksandr Kaznacheev and said that he had been ordered. In the course of this and subsequent conversations, he said he was ordered home for his commission. He was kind of a probationer. This was his first assignment and he was afraid to go home because he was in the process of getting a divorce and he was afraid Soviet authorities would give him trouble over that. It might hold up his commissioning. It might hold up his ability to leave the country again.

Q: Did he speak English?

HAMILTON: Yes, oh, yes he spoke English very well and most interestingly he was the first product of a Soviet Burmese language and area training program. They had put him through paces akin to our good FSI training. He was the first product to be sent out to Burma. The value of him to us when we concluded this deal was that this defection had a considerable psychological impact all around Southeast Asia, which we were able to make the most of because here he was. The product of the best of the Soviet system, his father was a successful engineer. He had been to the university and had this specialized training. He had a promising future. His first assignment was to poor, underdeveloped Burma, struggling to consolidate its independence and he decided that life in the open relatively open society of Burma, deprived as it was, was better than what he knew in the Soviet system. He wanted to change sides.

I had never had a specific briefing on defector procedures. I was intelligent enough to know that it wasn't up to me to make any big decisions about this. So, I asked him to wait while I went to the embassy. He was very nervous about that. The reason he was at the USIS library was because he had his car insurance with a company that had offices in the same building with our library. He had an excuse to go to that building, but not to stay there indefinitely and he was afraid that his absence would be frowned upon. I got him to agree to stay long enough for me to dash back to the embassy by which time other officers of the embassy including the ambassador were back and could be consulted and after a brief conversation with the appropriate people I went back to convey the word that we would like to talk to him again. He said he wanted to set up a rendezvous of all places down on the Rangoon docks around 11:00 PM or midnight. That didn't sound very appealing to me and so what we had worked out was to request him or insist that he come again the next morning back to the USIS library at 9:00 in the morning and bring his passport. He reluctantly agreed to that. One of the advantages of Foreign Service in Southeast Asia is the time difference of 12 or in this case 11 hours which makes it possible to have most efficient communication with Washington. A report of this approach, request for asylum, was prepared and dispatched in the afternoon. It was on peoples' desks in Washington right after breakfast and gave the agencies involved all day to ponder this and to formulate an instruction which they sent out by the end of their day and we had it overnight. No time lost in this kind of a transaction. That worked many, many, times in my Southeast Asian post. A real advantage compared say with posts in Europe where there's always a stutter.

Anyway, we had consultations with the Burmese government and their position was, well, we wanted to, our instructions when they came back was we should exfiltrate him in an aircraft was put on standby at Clark Field to fly over to Rangoon to pick him up. The Burmese government insisted that they had to talk to him in a controlled environment, controlled by them and so when he came to the embassy the following morning we took him to a kind of a safe house which happened to be the residence of the defense and army attaché where members of the embassy staff talked to him for a couple of hours and then decided that yes, they knew assuming that he meant what he said and spoke the truth about his background that fits the prescription.

Washington apparently hadn't known, didn't have any record of his young chap either. I think he was 26 or something like that, but they recognized the potential of this defection not for intelligence purposes, but for PSYWAR (Psychological warfare) purposes and therefore, we had permission to accept him. Therefore, by signals back and forth we escorted him to the chancery building. Would you believe that at that very hour, the Soviet ambassador was paying his farewell call on Ambassador Walter McConaughy? Aleksandr and our officers escorting him including myself marched him up the steps where he was flashed to the ambassador's secretary and then he escorted the Soviet ambassador down the same front steps to his car in a friendly farewell, as friendly as one could be in 1958, after Sputnik and all that and we found not very elegant quarters, a room that could be made available for however long it was that this defector was going to be with us which turned out to be a couple of days while we worked out these arrangements with the Burmese and I believe it was two days later. No leak had occurred

when Ambassador McConaughy took Aleksandr with me tagging along to the headquarters of Burmese military intelligence. They had a committee of officers to interview the defector. We went through the exercise of turning him over to them. We retreated to an outer room. No, we didn't leave the building and the ambassador's car was still outside, but we gave custody over to the Burmese so they could satisfy themselves whether this was voluntary or contrived by us which is what their suspicion was it might have been. They wanted to build protective fences against the inevitable complaints from Moscow.

We sat there and cooled our heels I think for about an hour, an hour and a half maybe. It seemed long. One of the reasons for that was that the subject came up of whether he would make a public statement about what he was doing and he agreed. They brought in cameras and microphones and he delivered in what I was told was fluent Burmese a message to the people of Burma about why he was doing what he was doing. This satisfied the Burmese. It markedly satisfied us when we found out about it and this was used in translation all around other underdeveloped parts of the world I think to our advantage. Then the Burmese turned him back to us and by arrangement would you believe that C119, I think it was, was parked out at Mingaladon Airport. The six or seven mile route to the airport was lined by soldiers on both sides perhaps 50 yards apart; they weren't close together all the way to the airport.

We drove him with his worldly possessions, which consisted of a change of underwear and a shirt and shaving gear that we had given him in a flight bag. I went and escorted him through immigration to get him chopped. He had failed to bring his passport, which created a bit of a struggle, but we got around that. Ambassador McConaughy meanwhile drove in his limo around to the tarmac and waited for the two of us to emerge from the terminal building from immigration. We walked out and Walter got out of the car and they shook hands and this was about oh, I would say like 100 yards from the aircraft. The minute Ambassador McConaughy got out of the car and I came out with him the right outboard engine started up and then the next one and so on.

At that point I almost committed a terrible blunder because I had come, I had seen a lot of this young man and he was personable and I felt kind of sorry for him. Here he was taking off. It was sort of like going to the moon. He was going to a strange new world. His worldly possessions were in this little bag. He had no document except we gave him a travel document. My instinct was that he was a human being and I was going to escort him over to the ladder and introduce him to the captain. I caught myself just in time to freeze in space and say bon voyage because the entire Soviet Embassy staff was by this time up on the visitor gallery of the airport looking down on this scene and I used to for a little while, I got over it quickly, dream about the consequences had I acted like a human being instead of like a Foreign Service Officer and walked out with him. They would have said, oh, he's being spirited away and so on. That was avoided and as soon as he was aboard the engines revved up and off they went. That was the end of that tale.

Then we had a press conference. Art Hummel, later Ambassador Arthur Hummel was the PAO (Public Affairs Officer) at that time and he chaired a meeting with the press at the

embassy in which we described forthrightly what our role had been in this and expressed our pleasure at the Burmese government's understanding and agreement to this procedure. Publicity was generous in Burma and indeed we got clippings from Jakarta, Delhi and some other places, so we know there was an impact to this. I don't know the final outcome of this story. The interim outcome was that I saw him once in Washington with the, by arrangement with his masters who were putting him through an extended interrogation of course. I doubt that it would have taken very long to find out everything he knew that was of interest.

Q: He was basically a junior FSO.

HAMILTON: That's right. He was a first tour officer, but he was in their system a probationer. He didn't have his commission yet. The main value was, as I said, in the psychological arena. After, I can't remember the interval, we returned from Burma in September 1959 and when I got back I got in touch through channels and was able to find out that he was in the Washington area. A meeting was set up. He was still being taken care of. We had a pleasant chat, but I had no wish and he didn't evince any wish for a continuing relationship. He knew he was going to have a new identity and a new life and it wouldn't involve me. It was just a brief conversation and he seemed composed and tranquil at that time. I heard subsequently that he had continuing difficulty making the adjustment. For a while he talked about wanting to go back to Russia, but he got over that. He published a book and he contributed, I don't how much he wrote, but a book was published on this story which helped again with generating public interest in some key markets. I lost track of him. I don't know the final outcome, but my impression was his helpers were going to stick with him until, if at all possible, he made an adjustment and settled down here permanently in the U.S. I like to hope that happened and it may well have because as I recall an interval of at least a couple of years before that book appeared. I hope for the best, but I've never seen him again or tried to.

Q: That's very interesting. These things happen in our lives and we never find out the final outcome. Bill, you left Burma in 1959. Where did you go?

HAMILTON: I came back to Washington and I had a long temporary interval. I was assigned to what was then the mid-career course. At the time we left Burma my onward assignment was to Brussels to the one political slot in the Mission to the European Economic Community. Before we got back to Washington that had been changed to Paris, assigned at SHAPE NATO supreme headquarters, administratively attached to Embassy Paris, but not really to work there. Anyway, I just made the FSI French training, which I had been assigned to follow mid-career course equally useful.

Q: The mid-career course, how long had you been in the Foreign Service by that time?

HAMILTON: I've had only this one tour, but I had six years, well, I was a new style. In the meantime the Foreign Service underwent a change in grades. When I integrated from civil service I was given the old 05 grade when there were six grade. Then I reverted back to 06 when there were eight classes and I was immediately promoted back to 05 and then

I was promoted to 04.

Q: Well, then you would very definitely be in the mid-career.

HAMILTON: Yes. I was promoted to 03 following that Paris assignment.

Q: How was the mid-career course? What was the focus?

HAMILTON: It was either 12 or 16 weeks, I think 12. Those memories are a little hazy. Some of it was hands on. We had a week of refresher or training depending on your background of consular work. We had a pass at management issues. We had a segment on the Foreign Service-private sector relationship, i.e., support for businessmen overseas and things of that sort. We had a very limited amount of travel. Quite a bit of time spent with lecturers brought in. I think it was a quality course and in a sense a junior version or a mid-size version of the senior seminar, far less elaborate, shorter and less travel and less everything, but it was broad gauged and intended to be a combination of practical hands-on how to do learning and mind expanding exposure to other dimensions of life in the Foreign Service.

Q: Then you went to SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) from when to when?

HAMILTON: We arrived late summer of 1960, August I think, and left in just short of two years to mid-1962.

Q: Who was the head of SHAPE?

HAMILTON: The supreme allied commander, SACEUR in the vernacular, was the best from my perspective. Air Force General Lauris Norstad.

Q: Everybody has talked about him being intellectually outstanding.

HAMILTON: Yes, he was a brilliant officer I think. I'm not sure he would have made a great field commander. He wasn't an Eisenhower I don't think, but from our perspective it was wonderful. I say our, you probably know it from other interviews, there were two officers assigned there, one far senior to me when I first went that was Ray Thurston, subsequently become ambassador. He was there about a year and then succeeded by Walt Stoessel, Walter J. Stoessel who was one of our greatest, I think. I had a very fine two years there. I was a good deputy and frequently acting because when Norstad traveled quite regularly, and his special assistant for international affairs, which was Stoessel's title, went with him.

Our duties began daily with a briefing for Norstad or his deputy who was an American army four star, Jim Moore, on 24-hour development in the non-military world. We received global telegraphic traffic through Embassy Paris and had access therefore to the general flow of what was going on. Norstad was interested in the whole world. For

example, Laos which I subsequently served in. It was bubbly in those years. A civil war was on.

Q: Oh, very much so. You had Harriman going out, Kennedy making speeches with a map of Laos in front of him, the whole thing.

HAMILTON: Even though that was far outside the NATO area as defined, he had a personal interest in this and it was wonderful to relate to him because my impression. I knew over time there and a subsequent assignment in the Pentagon and in the War College and have known quite a number of our senior generals. He needed a POLAD (political advisor) less than anyone else I know, but the consequence of that was that he used us very heavily and relied on us. It was a very worthwhile assignment. Sometimes even exciting.

I remember one episode in mid-1961 at a time when the Soviets were putting the squeeze on us in Berlin on behalf of the East Germans. This was one of the cyclical periods of tensions and stress when the tactic that time was to choke off, first to reduce and then cut road traffic from the Helmstedt gateway up the highway to Berlin. This raised a specter of an earlier period when we had had to resort to airlifts and nobody wanted to go through that exercise again. The Soviet-East German moves were tentative in lock step, I think they think they were being cautious also and each step of the way the question was what do we do next. On one of these occasions when General Norstad, no, Norstad was there, but let's see, maybe it was in the turnover time between Thurston and Stoessel, oh, I don't recall. At any rate I was acting special assistant and doing the morning briefing. We talked about what the situation was on the ground in Germany and Norstad said, "Bill, what do you think we should do about this?" That question hadn't occurred to me. I was a briefing officer, not a policy officer. For a brief moment, I said, "Well, it seems to me that you should try to find a middle ground somewhere between provocation and acceptance which means respond to this latest act of provocation from the East with some measure, but something that would not alarm the East Germans, let alone the Soviets that we were about to attack." I made a suggestion I guess to move an armored squadron, a small unit, up to the entrance to the Helmstedt highway and accompany it with a closer in movement of an infantry unit and so on and increasing the aerial surveillance flights. Whatever I said, that's not a quote, it was never written down, something along those lines. Anyway, he said, without a word he picked up a green phone behind his desk and said, get me Lem. This was a General Lyman Lemnitzer who was chairman of the joint chiefs at the time and he hung up. It wasn't long before he got Lem, less than a minute I think before he got Lem on the line. He told him, he said, you've seen the overnight take. Of course this was really early in the morning in Washington and here's what I propose. Apparently, I don't know, Lemnitzer said, well, I'll call you back because Norstad hung up.

I went on with the briefing on what else was going on in the world and I certainly don't remember, but I'm sure it included Laos or Indochina. It wasn't, I don't know, it seemed like 15 or 20 minutes because the briefings are not interminable when the phone rang and Lemnitzer obviously said okay. That's what happened. This is an example of sort of a

heady experience.

Q: Well, talking about Berlin. Did you sense, I've talked to people who were in Berlin at the time when the Kennedy administration came in and they were very leery. I'm talking about our people in Berlin because as all administrations have got a bunch of young people running around and shooting their mouths off and making noises about let's diffuse this and all and things were so carefully honed in Berlin about how far you lower your tailgates and all that sort of stuff. They're afraid that the Kennedy people might give away the game. Did you get any sense of early on nervousness about the new administration?

HAMILTON: No, I can't say that I did, Stu. I remember having a vague feeling that not surprisingly, there were shades of difference in attitude and viewpoint between the civil and military authorities in Berlin for obvious reasons and legitimate reasons. The outlook was really different. No, I can't, it wasn't expressed in those terms to me.

Q: Did, I think shortly before you arrived, there was a U-2 incident toward the end of the Eisenhower period. Were there any repercussions of that?

HAMILTON: No, if there was it would have been in the interval between June I think is when the shoot down occurred and late August when we arrived. Whatever posturing or alerts and so on. I never became aware.

Q: Let's talk a bit about in SHAPE, your impression of the relationships between the various powers. I'm thinking about the French who were very much under de Gaulle at the time and then Germany which was beginning Adenauer was in, but was still the early days and the British and some of the others.

HAMILTON: Sure. One of the most obvious dominant impressions was the alliances' acceptance of a leading role for the U.S. SHAPE like other facilities was theoretically a bilingual place. Officers assigned to SHAPE by any of the 13 nations were supposed to have either English or French, but the result of that was that they all had English. Never in the two years, and when there was a conference, they would always have simultaneous translations. Never once in the two years was I in a multilateral meeting where anyone spoke anything but English or where anyone put on the earphones. In other words the government, the NATO government recognized that for their officers to be effective staff officers to be influential they had to have very good English and they did.

There was no sign at that time that I'm aware of what became heightening tension with the French. One of my closest friends was a lieutenant colonel, Michelle _____ who was French advisor to General Norstad. He had a position comparable to our Thurston or Stoessel and comparably he had access to General Ailleret who was, I won't be able to give you the precise title. He was like chairman of the joint chiefs in the French system, whatever that was, whatever the title was. In other words he could get him on the phone or get word to him or messages from Norstad. I thought the integrated headquarters worked quite well, but there was this American stance. For example, there was a small

exclusively U.S. officer group, which worked on strategic targeting. They had nothing to do with anybody else and nobody had anything to do with them.

Q: We're talking about nuclear weapons.

HAMILTON: Yes. Right. That did not even involve the British, which meant it was related to the PSYOP our strategic plan. I knew them pretty well. They were good officers. One of them, Colonel Charlie Corcoran when I knew him, later became Deputy CINCPAC (Commander in Chief, Pacific), but he eventually made a four star rank.

Q: I thought CINCPAC was a Navy billet, Oh, wait, Corcoran was Deputy CINCPAC.

HAMILTON: Right. No, he was not CINCPAC. I knew them quite well. Traditionally the public affairs advisor to the supreme allied commander was a British brigadier and I'm sure he served a liaison function to the British in the same way. He was, well, no, let's see, there was a, there was a three star British general who was. I guess he was third in line behind General Moore. The British were well represented. There was a French officer. The principal NATO powers had an officer at the three star ranking in one of the J3 or the J5 or something of that sort, German, French. Some of the other nations did not have anyone at that level.

I think I had a window into the NATO world like General Norstad himself, my boss and I were two hatted. We did a business-like briefing for Norstad and other people on what was going on in our U.S. net, but we also played a NATO role. One of my specific assignments in that connection was to ride herd on exercise planning. The head of the exercise staff was a Turkish colonel, a nice enough man, but I managed somehow, despite not being very knowledgeable about Southeastern Europe history, to detect an effort to pull a fast one. He brought in an exercise plan one time for an airborne operation involving an airborne landing in Grecian Thrace. On checking a little bit, I somehow managed to discover that this exercise was going to take place on the anniversary of some time when the Turks beat up the Greeks about 400 years ago. It was sort of like the Kosovo precedent. So, we were able to make some changes in the scenario for that ostensibly. That was evidence that not everything was peaceful and light among the allies. So, that's hardly surprising that that kind of chivying went on. That's the most blatant example that I encountered in my two years.

I think generally relations were good in the dining hall. It was a really nice dining hall. Lunch groups would be mixed, not always. Sometimes there would be a group of Americans, but they might have something to talk about. Anyway, there was a considerable spirit. There were joint ceremonies of tattoo evening retreat ceremonies. Of course the tentacles reached out. Norstad had close relations. He was two hatted of course also. He had a U.S. role and a naval role. He was also U.S. CINCEUR in command of U.S. forces assigned in Europe. He had a deputy who was stationed at Sains Germaine who acted most of the time. Norstad didn't busy himself very much with U.S. business except when a major issue came up and then there'd be consultation and so on. I rarely had a window into any of that. I can't even be sure that how much my boss did because

he almost visibly changed his hat when he was switching from one role to another. We were special assistant to SACEUR, now there was a POLAD, Dick Finn, for one. Subordinated through the deputy CINCEUR deputy U.S. commander. We didn't mess with U.S. military business.

Q: How did you at the time view the Soviet threat?

HAMILTON: Well, I think I don't remember at any time any feeling of imminence, but I accepted that there was a threat, that communism what was the expression that it's a disease that grows until it withers and it has to not wither in order to not die and therefore, it will push communism or cause a vacuum despite other things. I accepted that general notion that there was a threat, Kennan and all the rest of it. As I say I had no sense on it, no reflection really of any sense of immense except on the focus on Berlin. When something tightened up there, then everyone would be puzzled what does this mean and is it the East Germans or is it the Soviets. In other words, we didn't assume that the East Germans were 100% obedient or just total puppets, but in general they were close to it.

Q: What about, I can't remember, but were the French going through any part of the agony of Algeria at the time?

HAMILTON: Yes, your memory is very sharp and that was another very robust moment. This was a sharp memory because it involved me in another pretty critical moment. Although it didn't lead to anything as dramatic as the Berlin episode I recounted, but it was a little bit embarrassing. The war in Algeria was unwinding and it led to the point where one Sunday night, I remember very clearly, because I had misbehaved. It was usually quiet on Sunday and I had been to a, my wife and I had been to a cocktail party at the residence of the editor of the newly established Paris New York Times. The Times tried to set up shop and compete with the Trib (International Tribune) for a while. I had more alcohol in my system than I should have as it turned out on that Sunday night. It didn't bother me because we were just going to walk home, which we did and went to bed. I was awakened by the phone only an hour or so later and asked to get over to SHAPE to the command center. It turned out that this was the night that the two French paratroop divisions were threatening to defect and attack France in effect. That raised a hypothetical question of dire significance, which was suppose they launch this parachute invasion if you will and sought to utilize a NATO base. I sat in that, Norstad was at home, he didn't come in. Again I don't remember whether my boss was in town or not or even I don't know exactly which one it was. There was a little gap between the two. Anyway, I was summoned and I spent the whole night sitting in the command center getting over my martinis and wishing that I had had better sense. Fortunately nothing happened. It was a false alarm, well a dry run. Norstad, I had no, I never got any indication that night of what his thinking was, whether he had issued contingent orders as to what the response would be. If that contingency happened it's a very interesting question and I wish I had at time found a moment to ask him because I think I could have asked the question. He might not have answered it, but I had a good enough relationship, a personal enough relationship that I wish now that I had put that. Either then or

subsequently back here I used to see him occasionally at the SHAPE reunions which I went to a few times. It was an annual event. I don't know whether, well, there must be a record somewhere because he must have made some contingent, given some contingent instructions. I was never privy to that.

Q: When you were sitting around waiting, you were waiting to see whether they'd taken off.

HAMILTON: That's right.

Q: Was this sort of, were you sitting in an American enclave, or a NATO enclave? How about the French liaison?

HAMILTON: No. Everyone was nervous, but we didn't talk about it. It was very touchy. As I remember, whether accurately or not, it was a very still, quiet night. There was apprehension about what the consequences would be, but Norstad, he undoubtedly, I don't know this, but undoubtedly summoned a few key people to his residence, to his quarters and did his planning there, whether it was on paper, I never saw it. I'm sorry, it's not really a very exciting tale.

Q: No, it doesn't need to be.

HAMILTON: Potentially it could have been.

Q: It does point out one of the problems one has with, in fact you pointed to the Greek Turkish problem which I remember when I was consul general in Naples and Admiral Crowe was CINCSOUTH there. I said, "How do the Turks and the Greeks do?" He said, "Well, you know, the main idea is to sort of keep them apart."

HAMILTON: At that time Cyprus must have been fairly quiet. I don't remember Greek or Turkish problems.

Q: Somehow I want to say around 1964.

HAMILTON: It was later.

Q: It blew up and then in 1974 was a major crisis, but well, then, you left how did you find living in Paris, you and your wife?

HAMILTON: We found it delightful since we didn't have to. I was still second secretary level for one year before I got promoted. If we had lived in Paris, worked at the embassy; we even had a fifth floor walkup. Since I was out at the baundlier we had what I call a petite chateau, a nice little house surrounded by a stone wall and iron gates, green grass for our young kids to play on, lots of snails crawling around and we planted flowers and tried to raise or grow some corn and lima beans and things like that in the backyard. We found the neighborhood unfriendly or non-friendly I should say. One of my wife's

amusing recollections always was about our next door neighbor on one side. It was in the fall. We found this house fairly soon, but were not settled into it until October when the leaves were falling and the first encounter we had with this one next door neighbor was one morning and I'd gone to work. There was a ring at the gate and the bell activated from the front gate and Jean went and found this next door neighbor who was in her bathrobe and she had come over. Jean was not fluent in French, but she understood enough and so she got the drift which was that some of the leaves off a tree in our yard had blown over into this woman's yard and we should please come over and clean them up. That was the introduction. Jean was smart enough to give the woman our landlord's telephone number and referred her to him. That was the end of our relationship with that neighbor.

In the second year we were there, our daughter went to a French kindergarten, which was happily situated only a block and a half down the street. That turned out to be a happy experience. The directress knew English and she told us that she would keep an eye out and would help Hillary if she ever got into trouble, but in the course of that one year Hillary came to speak near as I could tell flawless Parisian French. It wasn't terribly helpful. I had trouble talking with her because while she knew words for seven or eight different kinds of oak trees and could describe squirrels running up and down in graphic detail, she couldn't respond at all if I brought up something about the French socialist party or any of the subjects that I had been taught to try and pay attention to. It was about holy happy.

We had a mixed household. We had au pair girls in sequence who were French, Danish, and Dutch. All of whom spoke enough English to help our younger son who was just a baby. We took him at four months. He started life in effect in France. These young girls were from good families and the result was they didn't know anything about being household helpers and it amounted to a little more than having a built in babysitter when we needed to be outdoors in the evening, there was someone there to call the fire department if necessary or handle the children. As an example, the Danish au pair we had was the daughter of a scientist in Denmark and she had been, had gone to the science high school with honors, but she managed to burn out two radio phonographs that I remember and two or three flat irons by not getting or understanding the difference between a 110 socket and the 220 socket both of which we had on every wall. That was a very difficult lesson for her to learn. I think actually she left of her own accord and not because of those episodes. We were broad minded relatively.

The Dutch girl went with us on one long vacation trip that we took during our two years in France and that was by car in our little, the one Mercedes I ever owned was while we were in France and that's because I had ordered it when I thought we were going to Belgium where a Mercedes would be just fine. It was not such a great idea to have it in France, but we were stuck with it and we took it on a trip down through Southeastern France, through Switzerland, down to Italy and back up along the Mediterranean and back up the valley to Paris. We took the au pair girl along with us. She acted as though she was a member of the party. She would appear in the morning with her hair up in a bouffant hairdo and all dressed up. I remember when we got to one of the famous

chateaus, this was on a separate trip down the Loire Valley to one of the remains I wanted most to see and she as I stopped the car she immediately says, oh, I want to see this. She got out and I was left to watch the baby in the stroller while she toured the ruins. That was a minor problem. It was a happy experience.

I bought a very ancient Sunbeam car from a sergeant who was leaving SHAPE for as I recall \$200 or \$300 and it served as my commuting car back and forth to SHAPE which was a nice run through the town of Chateaux across the Seine at Bougival, a town known in history and up the hills and down and over the hills to Rocquencourt where SHAPE was located. It was a run of 15 minutes, very pleasant every morning. I left the Mercedes for Jean to do whatever she wanted to do. It worked out all right. I found there was a Mercedes, not a garage, but a mechanic who had retired from the Mercedes organization and was running a garage built into the cliff along the Seine. A hard place to find. Once I did the car had perfect maintenance for when it needed and there is not much the first two years with a Mercedes, but I used to run it down there. Nobody crashed into me just because I was driving this Teutonic vehicle. It was a small one and it cost, when I ordered it in early 1960 it cost a tad under \$2,000.

Q: Yes, I got one, too.

HAMILTON: Did you?

Q: Yes. I was in Dhahran and I came out and picked one up in Frankfurt, about that same price.

HAMILTON: This was hand driven.

Q: This was a 180 I think.

HAMILTON: Yes. That's right. This was hand driven from the factory in Stuttgart over to Paris and delivered for 19 and something and it lasted four years. We took it from there to Laos where there was no maintenance other than getting the oil changed once in a while and it did well and I sold it after four years for the same price I had paid for it which at that time we were under stern instructions not to make money on the sale of vehicles that had been occasioned by some egregious examples in Brazil and other places. I was quite content. The car cost next to nothing for four years.

Q: Well, then Bill you left SHAPE in 1962 and went directly to Laos?

HAMILTON: Yes, almost without home leave. I did get orders to go through the States. I said I had to have some consultation time. I've been away from Asia for two years. I have to go to Washington and I wanted to see family. I couldn't stay. It was because the second Geneva conference was coming to a close and American policy was going to do a 180 and shift from supporting the conservative, right-wing military dominant faction to supporting a neutralist solution under Prince Souvanna Phouma. As part of the adjustment to that the American Embassy was cleaned out of all the people who had been

doing their best to make sure that Souvanna Phouma lost. The only one left was, well, I had checked around when my assignment was coming up. I really didn't want to stay at SHAPE more than two years. It was a wonderful two years, but it was out of school. I'd had only one real Foreign Service assignment overseas and so I asked whatever the pattern was then, the famous April Fools Report I guess. I asked to stay in France with a change of assignment to the embassy or a consulate or something or if not to stay on at SHAPE until I could have a home leave and transfer and if we got a transfer then I would like to go back to Asia. Before I said that I looked at the old Foreign Service List very carefully because with these two young children and with, at that moment, the war in Laos that was the one post I really didn't want to go to in East Asia. So I looked very carefully and there was no name on the list of an officer with an end of tour date coming up in a position that made any sense at all for me to fill. So, it looked like I couldn't be assigned to Laos. Then I said, well, we'll go back to Southeast Asia. The next thing I knew we were going to Laos and that's because out of this change of policy and clearing out the mission and something I didn't know, I could have theoretically, the one person who was to be left behind was Phil Chadbourn who was spared as chief of the political section. What I didn't know was that he had been prompted to FS-02 and that meant moving him up to be DCM and that created a hole as chief of the political section which was exactly where I belonged and that's what they stuck me in. It worked out fine because the war came to an end. We had the Geneva settlement. The post had been for officers only, no families, but it reopened. We had a stutter because we packed for separation, because the family expected to live in Bangkok and the officers from Vientiane would visit once a weekend a month or something like that. The family was just going to hunker down and live a very modest life. We left a lot of stuff in storage.

While we were en route and with a brief period of leave in the States, Vientiane was reopened for families. We all ended up together after I went out ahead and the family came a month later and there was a house, which was adequate, and we had a very good tour. We didn't have a lot of our belongings that we would have had had we known we were going to live together in a house.

Q: You were in Laos from when to when?

HAMILTON: Well, I got there about the beginning of August 1962 and we were there just almost exactly two years until mid-1964. It was just as I say, this coalition government was forming up. One of the first events was just two or three weeks after I arrived was the wedding of the crown prince a significant event in Laos of course which was to take place in the royal capital of Luang Prabang an hour's C-47 flight north of Vientiane. The word was that any personnel of the diplomatic missions would be welcomed at these festivities if they could get there and arrange their own accommodations. Ambassadors of course were invited and the government provided them with quarters and had built in fact some bungalows to accommodate the diplomatic corps sort of. A car and driver and so on. I was advised by the desk officer to assume that I would be going to this wedding that I would have representational responsibility and have to use it to get acquainted. I stopped in Hong Kong on the way out to get myself outfitted with a morning coat and apparatus and all the proper uniform so that I could go

to this event. When it turned out, when I got there that yes, you would be welcomed in Luang Prabang, but the site of the actual wedding was such that there wasn't space for anyone except ambassadors. However, we were all invited to observe the festivities which extended all along into the evening and that was more modest black tie. Being in the American mission it wasn't hard to get up there. We had aircraft going all the time. I flew up on a C-47 with one other USIS member; the crew and the aircraft had the somewhat special load of a combination of gasoline drums and several cases of blasting caps. It was not my idea of a proper aircraft loading and it was all sitting right there where you could see it of course. It went so far as well, we arrived in Luang Prabang and just after a rainstorm so everything was wet including the steel planking of the airstrip. Indeed the plane did skid and sort of veered off in the direction of a whole line of aircraft along the side, but the pilot mastered that and it worked out fine.

I was met by a lieutenant colonel from the MAG detachment in Luang Prabang with a Jeep and taken to leave my small amount of gear at a MAG house where I was accommodated. Then I said, well, I want to go find the ambassador. The Ungers had traveled up separately [Ed: Career FSO Leonard Unger presented his credentials as ambassador to Laos on July 25, 1962 and served until December 1, 1964.]. I want to report in and see if I can be of help. I was driven up to the bungalow where he was quartered and reported in. When I asked if there was anything I could do to be of help right then he was, they were in the process of dressing for the actual wedding, he said, "Yes, there is."

Ambassador Unger introduced me to a cottage mate; the Indonesian ambassador in the same bungalow. The Indonesian ambassador had apparently expressed to Unger his anxiety over a problem which he had, namely that he the Indonesian ambassador was encumbered with a large carton or was it, a cube at least two feet on the side which represented the gift of Sukarno and the Indonesian people to the crown prince of Laos and his bride. On behalf of the Indonesian ambassador Unger instructed me to take it to the palace. Though fortunately the lieutenant colonel knew his way around enough to know that there was a back entrance to the palace, a side entrance to the palace, a kitchen entrance, up the stairs along the side of this, it was like a huge, huge bungalow all open construction with a big porch all across the front of the palace on the second floor. The stairway went up the side of the building and there I was left alone in my traveling clothes and open neck white shirt and a pair of khakis, a new arrival in Laos, with this box in my hand confronting a group of dignitaries in full court dress, epaulets of white pantaloons, lots of gold fray and so on. There were three or four of them and this turned out to be the royal committee on the reception of gifts. This disheveled American made a very brief and probably halting speech conveying the greetings of Sukarno with whom we were not on especially good terms and the Indonesian people to his royal highness and the princess. They graciously accepted the box. I retreated. I'm sure my face must have been seven shades of red back to safer ground.

It was a delightful evening. A long, long performance. The palace faces away from the river, the Mekong, and has a wide flat lawn, drive flanked by cathedral palm trees. On beyond across the highway, Route 1 of Laos there's a hill that rose rather steeply and at

the top of a hill there was naturally a pagoda and other buildings related to a religious center. The first, the start of the evening procession just at dusk was a procession of monks with torches in their hands winding down the path down this hillside and across the road onto the grounds of the royal palace. That was followed by traditional ceremonies, reading of Buddhist scripture, a chapter of monks did that and there was classical dancing. The Lao dancing was similar to classical Thai dancing that people in this country know or many do, but a little distinctive. The garments are enough different you could tell the difference if you need to.

It was quite nice and this went on I don't know how long because there was another interruption that involved me and not long after I arrived in black tie to observe what was going on. At some point I sought out Ambassador Unger, I either went to say hello to him or he sent for me I don't remember. There was another problem, which was that when he went to view the gifts for the royal couple, the Kennedy's gift was not there. Would you please, Mr. First Secretary, go find it. That represented a real challenge, but I had the good luck to encounter within a couple of minutes one of the few Lao I really knew at that time who was the deputy chief of protocol. He was very personable and didn't care whether he spoke French or English. He undertook to help me find that gift. So, we went and checked. It wasn't anywhere around the special hall where all the wedding gifts had been put. He started checking with other people. To make a long story not quite as long, it turned out that the Ungers, had offered the prime minister a ride on his plane which the prime minister, Souvanna Phouma, accepted and it turned out that the Kennedys' gift was on that plane naturally appropriately, but when the plane unloaded in Luang Prabang, somehow the Kennedys' gift got stuck in the trunk of the car that carried the prime minister away instead of the one that carried the Ungers away. That's how it disappeared. We finally found the car that had carried it. This mystery was resolved, but it would not have been resolved by me without the help of [name of the deputy chief of protocol] I can assure you. In due course I was able to observe the Kennedy gift on display with the elephant tusks and the model pagodas and the huge silver and gold bowls and all the other things. The Kennedys' gift to this young couple, I was so pleased to note, instead of the usual Steuben glass crystal used for all these such events, was a very handsome salad set of cherry wood, a beautiful deep red color, large salad bowl and tools and I don't know a dozen or so small individual size salad bowls, highly polished, not lacquered, just polished. It was really beautiful. I thought this is different and quite appropriate. It came out of some American forest. I give the White House credit for that.

Q: Let's talk about in this time you were in Laos from 1962 to 1964, you were the political counselor?

HAMILTON: Well, chief of the political section, I wasn't counselor.

Q: Okay, chief of the political section. What were the politics of this? How did you see this? How did you deal with this?

HAMILTON: Well, the first effort was to get acquainted with the officials in this newly formed tripartite government. The same conservative faction headed by General Phoumi

Nosavan that had been running the country and became discredited partly by defeat of its army at the hands of Lao and Vietnamese rebels and partly by ineptness, political ineptness and corruption. That was the one arm of the troika, a Russian term. In the center was Prince Souvanna Phouma. He was a royal prince, but a lesser one who had been head of the neutralist faction which was what they called themselves and had come to be supported by a General Kong Le who led an uprising against the right wing government in 1960 and succeeded in capturing Vientiane and came to represent the military arm of the middle faction.

On the left another prince, Souphanouvong, who in their terms outranked in royal lineage Souvanna Phouma. Souphanouvong was political leader of the Pathet Lao. They had their own hierarchy of military people and so on. This royal wedding to which I referred, what turned out to be I think the first time that the three leaders had sat together. I don't think they'd had a cabinet meeting. This was all very quickly after the Geneva Accords were signed. That was probably the first time they met. Our task was to get acquainted with these new people from cabinet level down into the small bureaucracy which was itself just in the process of forming up with a lot of dickering among the Lao factions as to who was going to have which portfolio. They did the same sort of thing that would happen here if the minister was a Pathet Lao the right wing would want to have the vice minister. It was at least a halfhearted effort to make this coalition work.

I remember the first time that Ambassador Unger invited and got an acceptance from the Red Prince, Souphanouvong. He came to dinner and very gingerly non-political conversation around a table of probably 16 at the residence. We were never very successful. These people really didn't want to have, to have relations with the Americans and we were subjected to some limitations such as this wasn't too much of a problem for us, but all correspondence, all notes and formal correspondence to the foreign ministry or the government had to be in French; fortunately not in Lao. We had two people whose language ability to write was much better than mine. One was Phil Chadbourn the DCM. He was bilingual as far as spoken language was concerned having grown up in France, but his writing I think was not very good. He made errors. Patricia Byrne, Pat Byrne, later ambassador several places, was there in my section and she had learned French in college and had really mastered it and she knew the grammar a lot better than Phil so he would draft communications and she would correct them. We got along okay.

It was gingerly because the Lao weren't feeling confident in their own situation. It didn't take long before the coalition began to fray at the seams and there were these three military components. Kong Le and his army supporting the center of the government, the prime minister, were up on the renowned Plain of Jars in the Northeast of Laos and encamped up there, but with posts and units up to what they called battalion size. A battalion size for them was 250 to 300 personnel and not the size of a U.S. battalion. Various around the country, mainly in the river towns, although the right wing, General Phoumi's army had all the southern river towns of Pakse, Salavan, Sekong and so on. In both Luang Prabang and the administrative capital Vientiane there were all three factions were represented. It used to be sort of interesting to when we were out in the evening which was regular going home in the dark or nearly dark we would drive along and

almost every house would have armed guards in the front. We were always confronting the mouth of the barrels of small arms and sometimes we knew who was behind which party was behind the gun and sometimes we didn't know who it was. It was gingerly for all of us, but from the beginning the Pathet Lao made it plain that they really didn't want to play this game. Their resistance was reflected in the inability to organize and make work the International Control Commission (ICC) established at the second Geneva conference with a troika representative, which consisted of a Polish chairman, an Indian chairman, and a Canadian. They were doing their own elbow pushing. Naturally the first Indian chief director was Ambassador Afta Singh the honorable professional diplomat, but lacked sufficient support at home to really assert the degree of weight that India ought to have been able to in that thing. So, the role of the Canadian became essential. We had close relations with the Canadian group within the ICC. The Poles were superficially amiable, but when it came to shall we go investigate an allegation of troops violation, they would always stonewall or dig in their heels so the investigation didn't really happen. We made gestures. I remember there was, I don't know who started it, but we had a volleyball match between the Polish ICC and the American Embassy which didn't do us any good politically. They were all six foot six and they spent their whole day playing volleyball because they didn't have anything else to do and we were quite washed in that endeavor. The ICC people, the Indians were administratively in charge of the compound. The ICC was billeted both for work and residences.

I remember an amusing experience once when I, Pat Byrne must have left the post because I went to call on the Canadian commissioner on some ICC business and while I was talking, I knew the person, I knew the Canadian quite well because it was a small diplomatic corps and everybody saw everybody every night. While I was talking to him about whatever the item of business was, he scribbled on a notepad and turned it around and passed it over to me. The note said, are you CIA? I scribbled on the notepad and tried to keep talking. Obviously the fact that he was doing this writing indicated that he assumed the worst, that his office might be budgeted, which was not at all unlikely. Lord knows by whom. I sent the note back to him and said, you'll have to ask my ambassador. That was the end of that discussion and he never asked Len Unger. It was an interesting phenomenon because that suspicion arose that, I guess I must have, I don't know what I did that made me look suspicious.

Q: Well, not only that, but later on the CIA just took over the whole place and kind of ran its own army and air force and everything else. What about Kong Le up in the Plain of Jars? He was quite the romantic figure for a while. I've never served there, but I think he was on the cover of Time magazine and all.

HAMILTON: I guess so, yes.

Q: Did you get up there. Where did he fit in?

HAMILTON: It was partly symbolic in the sense that Souvanna dealt with his, the other factional leaders with their knowing that Kong Le had this armed force up there. Kong Le on our estimation shared the view of our defense attaché that Kong Le was a pretty darn

good, had shown in the civil war, that he was a pretty good battalion, maybe regimental commander. He was small in stature physically and he was not a big man in any sense. He was the symbol of middle of the road, honorable, untainted, neutral, military power. I went along with the AID director on the first flight that we made up to the Plain of Jars after the cease fire which was around October and that was in a caribou aircraft made in Canada to deliver a load of blankets. We met Kong Le and several of his senior colonels. Some of them floated back and forth between Vientiane and the Plain of Jars and so we came to know some of the people at the colonel level fairly well and our defense attaché, an army colonel named Bill Law, who I think was a good soldier and he was effective, his assignment was a peculiarity.

Maybe I ought to digress in order to describe how that came about, but he developed a pretty good relationship with Kong Le. One of the first things he did was to procure a pair of high quality combat boots which were better than anybody else in the Lao military had and before we finished had made arrangements to, let's see, how did this come about? Somewhere or other we had come by one of the Soviet PT-76 tanks which is an amphibious tanks, one of the tanks that could swim, very good in a country with rivers. Somehow we got hold of one of them, whether it was in Vietnam or where I don't remember, but Colonel Law was able to give a tank to Kong Le. His standing was pretty good.

If you're interested let me tell you some of the background to Colonel Law. It goes back to the 1940s when he was the assistant army attaché in Bangkok in 1947 to 1948. During that time the Lao Red Prince, Souphanouvong, was living in Bangkok as a kind of refugee from Phoumi's army of the right and he one night he got shot out on the street. I don't know whether he might have been in a car, but anyway, he ended up on the street in Bangkok. It happened that Major, I suppose then, Bill Law came by, saw this wounded man whom he didn't know, took him for medical treatment and his impression was that Souphanouvong was not going to die, but apparently Souphanouvong credited Law with saving his life.

When the Geneva settlement was about to occur and the American mission was to be cleaned out, reconstituted in neutral fashion, the army discovered this history about Bill Law and Souphanouvong and assigned him as defense attaché and army attaché with a specific sub assignment of trying to develop a relationship with the Pathet Lao. A very sensible move. It wasn't Bill Law's fault in my judgment that it never got anywhere because they were resistant to being, they were not approachable, they weren't interested in us. The hard shell, it was a communist dominated movement and the party regulars are controlled behavior of some who might have had certain independent mindedness, but it was a closed faction. It didn't pay off, but it was a very sensible move and Bill Law worked very hard.

He had some problems. One of which was that not necessarily all his fault. I'm sure it wasn't all his fault. He had some bad relationships within the mission. He didn't get on very well with the AID director and he didn't get on very well with the DCM. The result was that I was caught in the middle I sort of had to run interference, handle relations

among this troika within the troika. It was kind of fun and beyond that it turned out that we were trying to work out our national strategy of how to deal with this regime, what to do about questions of aid and of our military assistance and so on and it turned out that I could write program planning telegrams that pleased both Unger and Washington better than Bill Law could. We developed a good, but very strange relationship in which he, based on his good contacts with the right wing military, did a lot of political reporting that was quite good. Had contacts on that side that we hadn't yet been able to develop. I wrote the military planning messages. This was kind of fun. Our relationship was excellent.

The other blemish I guess was that his French though it was workable and he worked on it, was far from impeccable. He entertained a lot. He had a nice house out on the river and his wife was quiet, but personable. She died just a few months ago. When he entertained he always would get ready for dinner by picking up his swagger stick. He would approach a glass-topped cocktail table when it was time to eat; everyone was having drinks. He would tap on the table and say very loudly, "madam maison me au table." End of wild tale. This was one of my vivid recollections which used to cause stifled grins around the room,

Q: Tell me, at that time how would you describe our policy towards Laos? Were we just trying to take it out of the game and neutralize it or were we looking to turn it, because at one point early on we were talking about dropping troops in there and making it a center, so this was before the Geneva Accords.

HAMILTON: Well, of course in 1961 we put some troops in Northeast Thailand and that was because partly as a warning, don't cross the Mekong, but partly because of concern about internal developments in Thailand, ferment among the Vietnamese refugee community which was heavily communist infiltrated, that was partly for Thailand reasons and partly for regional strategic objectives. The same objective led us to build a highway from all the way up to the Mekong River near Vientiane up to the Northeast, which was the most backward part of Thailand, relatively arid, not rice growing country. That highway opened up the whole Northeast before I left Thailand a decade later, corn was the third export crop in Thailand and people were riding up all around the Northeast on motorcycles instead of walking and bicycling. Building that strategic road which we did for military reasons was one of the most successful development projects that I encountered while in Southeast Asia. I was not aware of any consideration, serious consideration of putting U.S. military into Laos itself. Later on of course we did conduct air operations there and that's because the Pathet Lao didn't play the coalition game.

Our policy was, I believe sincerely and Len Unger believed it, was to do our best to apply the Harriman solution which was to put our support behind this coalition government and specifically behind the prime minister. He would get discouraged every once in a while. More than once he talked about resigning and we had to go prop him up psychologically. I remember once a junior member of his staff who was an unknown to us, cadet member of the royal family, came to me, came to my house and wanted to warn me that he was worried that Souvanna was going to quit. He had written out his resignation he said and I

said, well, what did he do with it? He said, well, it's in his desk whenever he decides to take it out. We sent in screaming telegrams and tried to think of things to do to back him off from this. My judgment was that two or three things kept him from ever doing this. One, I don't know how important this was, first or third, was our support which was renewed when necessary for him personally as well as for his government. The second was the fact that he was a Lao nationalist and he wouldn't abandon his country. The third was he was a proud man and he enjoyed the princely life of leadership. The ability to travel to Paris, to hobnob with royalty or sub-royalty in other countries, in Thailand, in Iran and so on, so that he never quite brought himself to jump ship so to speak or to abandon the cause. He had worked very hard. I think he was a very good, very fine man. We all sought to some extent, a bunch of us tried to learn to play what do you call it? Not contract bridge, the other kind.

Q: Auction bridge?

HAMILTON: No, no it's a kind where everybody at every table has the same cards. Anyway, he liked that and a bunch of us used to play Saturday night in French. I had never played duplicate bridge until then and the terms; I tried to learn some new terms. He was avid and we would play on until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning until all of us staggered home, the rest of us who had working lives. Then I came to know he just stayed up until there was enough light to go out and play tennis. Indefatigable. He was cultured and everybody who knew him I think liked him unless they were politically estranged. I think there was no ambiguity or anything under the table in our policy initially it became more and more bent toward discrimination in favor of Souvanna and to some extent a revival of right wing military capability because of the failure of the left to abide by the terms of the Geneva accord. It wasn't long before Pathet Lao military units began regrouping. It wasn't long before Vietnamese began infiltrating again up in the Northeast and down all along the panhandle to the South. It was only, it only lasted formally until April of 1963 when Souphanouvong and the other Pathet Lao cabinet members said that life had become intolerable in Vientiane because of the harassment of Phoumi's right wing and they went back up to the Plain of Jars and withdrew in effect from the coalition government. That led to in sequence to increased support by us to the Lao national army, but it was right wing dominated and it led to the initiation of aerial reconnaissance, which was not armed. It was entirely reconnaissance until early 1964, it started in 1963.

Now, we had tried other efforts to make this solution work. Soon after I think it was probably in September one of the first sallies I made after the wedding and before going to the Plain of Jars was down south in an area that was of real interest, a southern plateau area called the Bolaven, a flat plateau which had some military significance. It had some good terrain feature and who controlled the Bolaven sort of dominated South Laos. It was east of Pakse and stretched almost to the Vietnam border. If you commanded that, you commanded the South with artillery you could command the riverbank and you could command the Southern end of the Ho Chi Minh trail complex. I was sent down with one of the MAG officers, it must have been September because they all left 90 days after Geneva, to take a sounding and see what the country looked like and see what the people

talked like. What could we do? What kind of support if any could we bring within the context of the coalition government to achieve stability and begin to think about development in Southern Laos. We spent about three days down there, talked to everybody we could find, military and civil officials. I went back and I wrote the long telegram which in effect said yes, there is potential here to do this or that. There were plantation areas: rubber and coffee. There were residual guerrilla assets in the area, so this was an upbeat report and it found favor and led to some more money.

Comparably I made another trip up to the far North, one of the traditional communist redoubt areas was the province of Phongsaly and the other one was Xam Neua. Phongsaly is the farthest North and it therefore shares a border with China rather than Vietnam and had for different reasons had some strategic significance. Charlie Mann, AID director and I again, Souvanna requested, asked Unger if we could do something to help his neutralist, but coalition, regional commander in Phongsaly in the North. Unger said, well, sure I'll go have a look. The two of us went up to the capital town, the provincial capital of Phongsaly in a light liaison plane with one of the contract pilots with whom I came to know and I would have flown with him anywhere he would fly and that was a good attitude to have in Laos because some trips were easier than others. No one had been up there that is on the ground for quite a while. The town of Phongsaly is on a high hill, a mountaintop if you will, and there's another mountain to the West of it about a mile away or not much more and there's a saddle in between the two. Before the latest hostilities, there had been a short dirt air strip across this saddle on which light liaison planes could land. I went up with this pilot whose name was Dutch Brondesmar because he was Dutch and he had never landed up there before. We flew up and he scouted this strip very carefully. He had to do it partly because there were some cattle grazing out there and the cattle tenders and their dogs, they had to be brushed off this air strip, but also, he was getting the lay of the land. Then because of the wind direction he had to land confronting a sheer cliff on the north side from the north as near as one could see vertical. At top of the vertical cliff was this flat strip. I don't know its length, but it was pretty short. What he did was fly below the level of the air strip therefore directly at the mountain until he got so close that I was sitting up front with him trying not to be co-pilot, until at the last possible moment he lifted the thing up causing it to lose speed and drop down on the very beginning of this strip and was able to stop before running off the other side. The other side was not a precipice, it was a more sloping hill and so he could take off from there later and he had an opportunity to drop in getting airborne to drop down a while after we left the strip into a valley while he picked up speed enough to climb. That's what we did, we made that.

At that time the Chinese had been reported in the area. We had confirmed this. They were building a highway from up in Yunnan down South to connect up to this provincial capital. The signs were of course that the communists are trying to take over North Laos, in this case not Vietnamese, but Chinese. The river to the east of Phongsaly was kind of the dividing line between Vietnamese influence in North Laos and Chinese influence to the West. While we walked up to the town and found plenty of evidence of where which way the wind was blowing there. There was a detachment of road construction crew really under the guidance of what was clearly a Chinese engineering officer. The biggest

building in Luang Prabang, the highest and largest, was the consulate general of China. He had a generator; it was the only one in town. So, he could wire up anybody that he wanted to have electricity. That gave a certain advantage to one end of the factional troika. It was clearly already under Chinese influence.

I tried to take a few pictures of the roadwork as we were going back to our aircraft because it was a good example of the lengths to which they would go. It looked like Yunnan in the early 20th Century, they were building this highway from China to Laos with no equipment except a wooden barrels and shovels that I saw and they were wearing Yunnanese costume, hats with little, what's that woman who used to be on television with the dangles around her hat? Anyway, very distinctive civilian garb under this military officer's leadership. He stopped me from taking a picture. Fortunately he did not take the camera, but I don't know where the pictures are. We went back. The general had not been there. They didn't know where he was. We went back and reported that this was not a very promising sight comparable to the Bolaven in the South, but sure we could try because quite clearly Souvanna is at a disadvantage up there. Those were early explorations in our effort to be sincere about applying the Harriman solution. I think that is why Unger believed that and we didn't have any disputes within the embassy and we had a pretty good country team operation there.

Q: Were events in Vietnam reflected in what you were doing or were you following it?

HAMILTON: No, only as they impacted on infiltration, no.

Q: When the Pathet Lao pulled out, they claimed they were being harassed. Was this, were they being harassed?

HAMILTON: I don't know in what way except they were being evaded. The government was functioning around them to the extent it functioned. We quickly were favoring back to early beginnings. We did some discriminatory things. For example, there was to be a parade up the main street of Vientiane. Another act in welcoming the formation of the tripartite government and Kong Le sent a company or so of soldiers down to participate in this parade. They hadn't had any military boots. This was a country army wearing flip flops or equivalent. So, our MAG, which was still there got them army boots, but they didn't get the right sizes. This was not the only misadventure we had with U.S. military supplies. In that parade the Lao had gone to the, I guess it was the Lao or it might have been Yusi I don't know, had sprayed tar on this main road which was dirt. They didn't really surface it, they sprayed oil on it and one consequence of that apart from settling the dust was that all the Kong Le soldiers lost their U.S. army boots because they stuck in the tar and their feet were so small they'd come right out. Quite a number of these shoes were left in the middle of Lang Xang Avenue on that occasion.

Another example of that is that we gave equipment to the Lao and they had parachute training for some of their people and that didn't work too well because our parachutes were made for American size bodies and the Lao probably averaged 100 pounds. They would jump out of the C47 and just float gradually if there was no wind down toward the

landing ground and they could just walk away. They never had to fall or anything. If there was a wind, they might miss the landing spot by quite a bit.

Q: Okay, I think this is a good place to stop Bill. Is there anything else we should talk about in Laos before we move on next time?

HAMILTON: I could comment briefly on how the diplomatic community reacted to what our relations were with the key members apart from the ICC business which I have described. Then we might want to pursue it a little further the development toward hostilities and the beginning of armed reconnaissance in 1964 and the loss of the first American pilots and things of that sort, briefly.

Q: In today's session I'd like to talk a little bit about the diplomatic community and its relations and relations with the ICC.

HAMILTON: Okay. Well, the diplomatic community reflected the three sided separation that was reflected in the politics of the country. There were the Western powers, there were the communist bloc states that had representation notably from 1962, the Russians and the Chinese and the, let's see the Vietnamese were not there at that time. Then there were neutral states, India chaired the ICC and Canada represented the good side and Poland represented the others. We had not friendly, but amiable relations with them. When I first went there in 1962 we did not have social contact with the Chinese, but we did to a limited extent with the Poles and in 1962 with the communist Pathet Lao the left wing of the tripartite government set up at the second Geneva conference.

The Poles were an interesting bunch; the most social activity we had with them was on the volleyball court when they challenged the embassy to a match. It was totally one sided in two respects. One is they were all about seven feet tall or seemed to be and the other was that they had nothing much to do so they practiced every day. We hadn't had anybody who played volleyball for years, but we took a sounding and said, who will go play the Poles in volleyball and we managed to scrounge up enough to constitute a team numerically, but it was a terrible defeat for the West. I think the score was like 15-0, 15-0. We never had, did not turn it into a home event, but it was a good thing because our policy was to try to make the Geneva settlement work to deal with all elements of the tripartite government and therefore with the three different elements of the diplomatic community.

At the time we went in 1962 the Indian chairman was a very capable career diplomat. I can't say his name right now; it may come to me. His successor before I left was equally amiable, but I think a less accomplished mediator, centerpiece, for the tripartite commission. The Canadians sent, they did not have an embassy, either the ICC commissioner doubled in _____ and was, their mission was quite successful. They generally sent a French speaking officer for the second position because there were many more Lao who knew French than knew English and that was suitable for them. I don't know what language the Poles talked to them. I don't think they frankly had much contact except with the party cadre of the Pathet Lao. They were not visible around town

in the way that the even to the limited extent that the Indians and the Canadians were.

The Canadian mission was quite small. They had a military member, but the staff could probably be counted on my one hand. I had one interesting encounter with the Canadian. I recall I probably said before, my position was chief of the political section and we did a lot of business with the Canadians. We traded information and up to a certain point texts of messages. I'm sure that if Indians knew that we could talk about it, but the commission met in a compound all together.

The primary U.S. embassy interlocutor with the ICC people was a wonderful Foreign Service Officer Pat Byrne, Patricia Mary Byrne, later ambassador to let's see Bamako, Burma and the UN Security Council. Now retired. I knew her since 1952 when I briefed her on going to Saigon. She ran back and forth to the ICC most everyday keeping the Canadians informed and to some extent the Indians on a more cautious basis.

I didn't go too often, but I used to see them socially. One day Ambassador Unger asked me to go call on the commissioner for some reason that I can't recall. I went up and sat across the desk from him as we sit today and while I was, before I had finished conveying the information that had caused me to go, he while listening took a little pad of paper and scribbled on it and turned it around so I could see that he had written, are you CIA? I thought that was a little strange, surprised in fact that he didn't in fact know who was who in our mission. I think a lot of people did. I tried to keep talking at a normal pace and took the pad and wrote back you'll have to ask my ambassador. I never knew whether he ever did or not. That was an interesting phenomenon. There was great confusion in Lao circles and I suspected in diplomatic circles about who was who within our mission. I'm probably getting a little out of line here at that time period, but during the period that I knew Laos there had been at various times, an agency presence and I came to know two of the station chiefs who served there, post-1962, very well and I know that there was some confusion. The Canadian ambassador or commissioner was not the only one who wasn't quite clear as to, they knew we were approximately at the same level and who was which. We managed to keep that mysterious while having within the mission very close relations.

If I start to repeat myself and you recognize it please stop it, but one of the features of life in Vientiane at that time was Ambassador Unger's leadership of the country team. He was very strong on the then relatively new concept of the country team. He made everybody work the problem. It was aided and abetted because of one of the weak spots in our embassy post 1962 was a DCM who was one of a breed; you would know some of them who were absolutely superb political officers reporting and representation. He was bilingual in French, got all around town socially and I think romantically he was single at the time. But, he was not a manager. He was not able to establish effective relations with several members of the country team. He had what turned out to be the felicitous habit of leaving the embassy at 3:30 or so in the afternoon to go play tennis, which he did well. As a result the people who didn't relate easily to him would save their telegrams until the latter part of the afternoon and bring them to me, such as the defense attaché or the AID director, both presuming authority that had never been given me, I used to use my own

judgment as to messages that I could clear or sign off for the embassy and those which I decided I would have to carry in to the ambassador and check and naturally there's a wish not to do that too many times every day, and it worked very well. I had good relations with each of the agency, I mean small 'a' agency chiefs. I stayed friends with them in after years. It worked very well. We got the business done. I think those were the main points that I would make.

I have never experienced a country team operation more effective than it was there and uneasy from the beginning and eventually difficult circumstances. That was caused by the rather rapid breakdown of the Geneva system. At the time of the 1962 settlement, the Pathet Lao leadership was mainly up in the woods in Xam Neua northeastern province except for the handful that Prince Souphanouvong came to Vientiane and two or three of his ministers as they called them. They were represented in the tripartite cabinet formed by neutralist Souvanna Phouma. We, meaning mainly Ambassador Unger, tried to get to know the Pathet Lao leaders. I remember the first dinner in which ambassador, excuse me, Prince Souphanouvong accepted an invitation, came to the American Embassy residence for an informal dinner. It was a little stiff, a little stilted, nothing untoward, but nothing profound naturally was said in the course of that evening. Unger thought that was part of his brief was to culminate a working relationship with each of these three components and he tried, but there was resistance from the very beginning. Prince Souvanna wanted us to expand limited contact with the neutralist faction and one interesting, to me, illustration of that was early in the fall of 1962, within three months say of the Geneva settlement. He had an opportunity with Souvanna's agreement to send a couple of officers up to the well-known Plaine des Jarres, Plain of Jars, which was west of the hill country of Xam Neua province, but still remote and mainly accessible by air and our AID director Charlie Mann and I had the opportunity to fly up there in a Caribou Canadian light-transport aircraft which was used to a limited extent for air drops as well as for passenger. The airfield, it was a short takeoff and landing aircraft relatively and the air strip at the Plain of Jars was smooth enough and long enough to accommodate this aircraft. We met General Kong Le and some of his officers and were treated to a feast of lord knows what, probably a wild pig or something that they had killed. We were trying to build relations with the neutralist center and Kong Le was very skittish at first because he had been in battle with, won his spurs fighting the right wing army of General Phoumi Nosavan whose government we had supported up to late 1962. Kong Le was, he was sort of a shrew, he was physically a very small man even by Lao standards. A professional soldier who probably and I think our attaché would agree was a good battalion commander. He had won fighting with the right wing army pre-1962 and became known internationally. He was a pleasant and cheerful little man and our attaché took sort of took a shine to him as well as feeling that he was a very important target. He did various things to cement his relationship. I remember early on when he got enough money from his budget to present Kong Le with a very handsome pair of high combat boots, shined with fine quality, leather combat boots. Kong Le had probably never seen anything like that. That was a nice thing to do.

Before 1964 when we left, it had reached the point where the attaché had presented Kong Le with a Russian amphibious tank well known from other places as a PT-76 which had

fallen into right wing military hands and I didn't know exactly how we got custody of it, but in the coalition days we presented this tank to Kong Le the neutralist commander. That was his flagship you might say up there in Plain of Jars and it was an amphibious tank that could swim. The Russians had used it I guess in Eastern Europe in World War II in the marshes or something of that sort. We already had 1962 sound relations with the right wing and had been supporting them. We worked hard and with some success on the neutralists. We had almost no success with the communist Pathet Lao. The belief was, I was included in that group, that both political and its military component were dominated by the Vietnamese, by Hanoi. Souphanouvong, Prince Souphanouvong's wife was Vietnamese and I think that had some political significance.

Prior to 1962 there had not been diplomatic representation as I recall from the Bloc countries certainly any Asian ones, but they set up shop and Unger and the rest of us tried to behave properly with them. His principal contacts were the British and French ambassadors, but he worked fairly hard on the Soviet ambassador on a more limited exchange and so on. That was the media in which our mission rated. Then some others tried to come along. The Koreans and then one day along came, well the Koreans didn't fair very well because Souvanna immediately accepted a mission from South Korea but then he turned around and accepted a mission from North Korea because he wanted balance.

So along came a counselor from the German Embassy in Bangkok who had been sent up to Vientiane not knowing what I just said. He was instructed to consult with us, but then he was supposed to set about seeking Souvanna's agreement to the establishment of a West German mission. I said, well, if you, I don't think you want to do that because I knew that Bonn's policy at the time was to break relations with any country that recognized East Germany - the Hallstein Doctrine. I said, if you ask Souvanna he will agree and you can have accreditation of the mission including whatever level you want. But, I said I know that the next step will be that East Berlin will be given representation and I think that I know that you will then withdraw. So, what's in it for you? He said, thanks very much. That was the end of that. It never went beyond the one visit.

Q: How did the two Koreas particularly the North Koreans weren't very charming people.

HAMILTON: No. I'm beginning to wonder; maybe I'm wrong. There were Vietnamese there, there were Czechs and the Poles. I think I better wipe that from my mind. I'm not sure about Korea. I better not stand by that.

Q: Well, did you notice in the swarm of diplomatic community relations between the Soviets and the Chinese because they were beginning to sour at this time at the upper levels. I wonder if you noticed any rifts?

HAMILTON: Not that I could, that would be a good question to put to Unger if we could, but I don't feel able to answer. Not visible to me. I think they were not warm and close. They wouldn't arrive at a party and rush up to each other, that sort of thing, but on

the other hand they behaved like friendly representatives. At first we had nothing to do with the Chinese and I think that was still the period when they were at a party we were supposed to depart, but that loosened a bit even before I left and we did not leave anymore, but we mainly sat at receptions, the sides would separate, the East Bloc dips would sit on one side of the room and especially their ladies and the Westerners would sit on the other side of the room. We tried, more with Lao than with the dips to mix up people of all stripes when we had informal dinners, but they had a terrible time getting to talk to each other.

Q: What about the beginning of armed reconnaissance and other military activity at that time.

HAMILTON: Well, the Geneva settlement broke down first politically. The Pathet Lao representative was obstructionist in cabinet and in their behavior around Vientiane, in propaganda and attempted political agitation and proselytizing. Both the right wing and Souvanna to his credit tried to stand by equal parties and the climate reached the point as early as spring 1963 I think April is correct when the Pathet Lao leadership declared that right wingers had made life intolerable and they withdrew from Vientiane and went back to Vieng Xai and Xam Neua. That was the beginning, the real beginning of the breakdown.

As I said, we traveled around the country to assess the situation. I think I mentioned one such trip to the South, in a strategic area far South of Laos, East of the town of Pakse which is on the Mekong River and it was called the Bolaven Plateau. It's a rain feature, not more than I suppose a couple of hundred feet in elevation above the plain, a few hundred feet at most, but an area quite level with scrub growth perhaps I recall maps would tell us 15 to 20 miles across and roughly circular. It was from a military point of view an interesting terrain feature much better to control it than to have somebody else control it. We were I went on that trip with a colonel from the MAG detachment. That shows it was early on because under the terms of the Geneva agreement and corollary arrangements, the MAG mission had to leave within 90 days of putting into effect of the Geneva Settlement and they did. That was our political point that the North Vietnamese didn't. Souvanna knew that and helped strengthen our relationship and diminish any influence that the left his reform would have had on him. We were sent down there to take a preliminary look and see whether there was any, if we could tell whether there was any prospect of reestablishing a kind of influence of one sort or another. We came back with a, I wrote a relatively optimistic telegram saying that I thought there were possibilities. They would have to begin very slowly and probably by a combination of open aid and not open means dealing as much as any with a minority people who are prevalent in that part of South Laos called by the Lao Kha, K-H-A. Now that's a pejorative term that means wild people or something like that. I cannot remember what their proper, what they called themselves. They were less developed politically and economically then and now the Hmong people, but well known from the Northern hills and did not prove very helpful in being capable of organization to help us with one minute. Even before we left and it continued through the early years of the Vietnam Indochina conflict. I don't know whether till the end or not. It was possible for a few

Americans to organize a series, several road watch teams from among these Kha people and they would by arrangement and with fairly in a way rudimentary, but effective communication, could keep in radio touch with each other and also with aircraft which would conduct reconnaissance overhead. They would take up positions on the tentacles of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which was not highly developed at that early stage, but there were alternate routes even then from North Vietnam to South through the Eastern panhandle of Laos. These Kha road watch teams were quite effective in calling in what at first was just a reconnaissance aircraft that could report.

Now, to back up or continue in responding at length to your question. The breakdown occurred first politically. Then we began because of evidence through human intelligence and to some extent radio could determine that the Vietnamese were still present and were messing around. That's when it was decided to start aerial reconnaissance. I can't say the month, but in 1963. That developed to the point where there was some anti-aircraft opposition and that led us to begin armed reconnaissance with rules of engagement that meant you could fire back if fired upon. But no initiation of hostile action and these were by aircraft operating out of South Vietnam. That armed reconnaissance was in place at least by early 1964 and I guess it was either late 1963 or 1964 that we lost the first American crewmember in a downed aircraft who became a prisoner. He was a civilian related to the supply operation. I never met him. He spent a number of years in Pathet Lao or Vietnamese captivity. I'm not sure we ever knew exactly who was holding him, but we did get reports that he was alive.

It was a gradual escalation. We were providing arms, not only this symbolic tank, but small arms and some artillery. To support both the right wing army and Phoumi Nosavan which had become not very effective after 1962. It had suffered a couple of defeats, Kong Le and the Vietnamese separately administered a couple of rather severe military setbacks in 1960, 1961 and early 1962, most notably with the forced evacuation and therefore communist capture of a Northern town on the Mekong named Nam Pouy it was close to the Thai border and therefore politically sensitive. General Phoumi sought to defend it, but failed. That was a significant factor really in the disintegration of the right wing government which was headed politically by the Sananikone clan, Phoumi Sananikone and militarily by General Phoumi Nosavan who was a professional soldier, but not a world leader and became a deputy prime minister in the coalition government. The return to violence was incremental, episodic, uneven, but steadily in the direction of greater violence and greater foreign involvement. I may have recounted, again, stop me if I did, in connection with our supply effort flying of rice mainly, but some other commodities to people who lacked food in the neutralist and a few right wing enclaves in the North.

One of the very exciting episodes came when the North Vietnamese responded to the supply activity by introducing whether it was Soviet pilots or North Vietnamese, we never knew. Some antique biplanes, yes. The AN-2 I think it was, probably leftover from World War I or early World War II I think which could be used for local reconnaissance, but they used it for supply drops and so on. We used to harass; they used to harass the supply flights both by fixed wing and helicopter of our contract group with Air America.

That's well publicized and written about. Later on there was another contract with Continental Air Services an American cargo enterprise. Another glamorous episode in this crazy land that was Laos was one time when one of these AN-2 or -3 biplanes, they were used to drop small bombs or sort of like World War I over the side on Kong Le's troops and so on. Anyway, one of these planes started to harass an American H-34 helicopter that was dropping supplies of small detachments up there. Harassment was such as interfering with navigation with the flight pattern, not shooting, but one of these contract pilots without any authorization shot down one of these AN-2s with a carbine out his window. It's a sort of a crazy place. Something happened darn near every day that make life interesting, amusing or distressing depending on which way it bent. Up to the time I left we did not have forces on the ground.

The Thai had introduced some artillery that was of significant battle along the main route Highway 1 which ran the length of Laos, but this was in the area between Vientiane and the royal capital of Luang Prabang. There was an important road junction there of Route 1 which ran north south sometimes along the Mekong, sometimes farther inland and an East West route which came from North Vietnam through Xam Neua and down to a junction with route one at a place called Phou Khoun. Mainly neutralists, the Vietnamese started to move west to cut north-south supplies. By Lao standards a significant battle took place there in the late spring I guess of 1964 with the participation of some Thai artillery which had been brought in. That was the apex of military activity up to the time I left in the end of July 1964.

Q: You departed post in July of 1964, where did you go?

HAMILTON: I returned to Washington and I was one of the early people, not sure it was quite the first detail from the bureau of political military affairs to the Pentagon, seconded if you will. It was my second such adventure because I think we talked I had been at SHAPE NATO headquarters from 1960 to 1962. Then I went to the war in Laos in its infancy and I came back and was assigned to what I call old ISA, International Security Affairs. This was in the time of people like Paul Nitze who headed it for a time and John McNaughton. My assignment, which was very interesting, was as deputy director, Far East Region in Secretary of Defense's Office of International Security Affairs. The director was a very genial, upper deck rear admiral who quickly got caught up in the development of the intensification of the fighting in Vietnam and then the introduction of American forces. I had the good fortune that he became so preoccupied with that and handling papers and went to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and so on, that he pretty much left me to run the rest of the Far East region which was Southeast Asia, Korea, and Japan, not much to do with China at that time. He had a mixed civil military staff of about a dozen people I think, colonel and captain level and the civilian equivalent including one career-long State civil servant, he was never Foreign Service I guess Donald Nepterline started, he was a scholarly sort. He's published books and had started as an Indonesia expert, but had expanded beyond that. It was a good group. We had a lot of people, a captain who had just come off commanding a nuclear submarine and one of the colonels who was head of the small Vietnam group did not become a leader, but he was a very effective staff person, served in Vietnam in a staff capacity. That was a very worthwhile two-year

detail.

I didn't get there I guess with a little home leave until September of 1964 and I left in the middle of 1966 back to State where I became country director for Laos.

Q: Did you get any feel for sort of the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and running things, his time there?

HAMILTON: Yes. Not really. John McNaughton was a principal collaborator of McNamara's until his untimely death in an air accident. The ISA I think was staffed with pretty capable people. The deputy and assistant secretaries were worthy, mostly civil service, career types. One or two were non-career, but I think ISA, I say old ISA, because I think it was a pretty organization at that time. I sat in McNamara's position only once and it had no significance. I was doing a briefing that occurred but was there and he spoke very little. He behaved the way one would expect and was decisive when he said thank you. He asked a few questions. My impression was favorable. I was in the great presence and nothing untoward happened.

Q: Did you have any feel for, was there concern, although you were dealing with sort of the rest. You were with the agency, commitment because this was when they introduced the marines into Da Nang and it was the beginning of this major buildup.

HAMILTON: That's right.

Q: How would you describe the attitude of the professional military and advisors who were dealing with this at that time?

HAMILTON: They collectively took the initiative to force the pace. My recollection of my impressions at the time were that the administration was led into this increasing commitment. The military behaved not insidiously or deviously, but the way military do. Once the first step as I recall was to put a hawk battery or two in Da Nang and the next thing was well, they were lonely and occasionally got shot at so you had to put in a little anti-aircraft.

Q: You mean a defensive?

HAMILTON: Defensive, yes. Then occasionally one of them got sick so you had to set up a little infirmary and medical detachment and then they were harassed by the Vietnamese and so you had to establish a perimeter, a protective perimeter and the whole series of joint staff papers up to the JCS, to the Secretary of Defense, add this, add that and it grew incrementally. I say there's nothing devious. The military was just behaving in a proper military way, but the White House and the civilian side weren't prepared for this kind of what they viewed as salami tactics, get a little more. I personally didn't interpret it that way, but I didn't work the Vietnam problem. I observed what was going on.

Q: You were in ISA during a very crucial time as regards Southeast Asia and that is the events in Indonesia. How did they, did you have anything to do with that?

HAMILTON: No. I don't remember that ISA got involved, I don't remember, I don't think there was involvement.

Q: It was really, I mean we were taking sort of the, we were observing.

HAMILTON: Yes, that's right.

Q: There was no military.

HAMILTON: No, the Indonesian coup of 1965, the dramatic events and it was. My impression is and there's a good book on this written by, well, there are really two, one by Masters and one by Paul Gardner on that period which I haven't read, but I didn't want to use that story. It's pretty well written now and available. It was a very dramatic time. The Indonesian communist party, the PKI tried to in affect to capture Sukarno and that led to a power push by the Indonesian army and there was a lot of bloodshed.

Q: What about South Vietnam during this time? I mean ISA must have been taking a very close look at this. It remains a troubled spot and certainly then it must have been.

HAMILTON: Yes, of course. It was the period that included the coup against Diem [November 1963] before that, but it was into the period of instability and relatively frequent changes of government as well as.

Q: I'm talking about, excuse me, Korea, South Korea. You had responsibility you were looking at Korea.

HAMILTON: Yes, I was in the area.

Q: I was wondering whether there was concern about something might happen there during that time. I can't remember whether the Blue House raid and the Pueblo happened at that time or not.

HAMILTON: No, it was later, the Pueblo was later. No, it was another area of tension and the general view at that time was that we have this really worldwide contest with the communist bloc, the Soviets and their allies and pseudo partners like the Chinese stretching around the whole rim land of Southeast Eurasia, from Korea around to the Baltic and through the Middle East. That was my view at any rate. In geopolitical terms and our effort was to and we succeeded pretty well in stabilizing most of that perimeter. Europe got stable with the formation of NATO. Korea was stable though tense even then, no nuclear business to worry about. Taiwan we were supporting and down through Southeast Asia that's when we started to get our active involvement with the Thai, which became, other than Vietnam, the centerpiece of our Southeast Asia program. We introduced our troops in a defensive way. We tried for a while to maintain the seeds of

validity of in the SEATO alliance and there were plans that have now been released of the sense at least, if not the text, of the SEATO plan five which was how to deal with communist aggression into mainly Southeast Asia, what should be done about that, which didn't happen? I think we were right to do that.

I have felt for decades that our effort initial effort to stabilize Vietnam was justified for the sake of all of Southeast Asia because the rest of the mainland countries were not strong enough or stable enough and had all of Vietnam gone I think that Laos would immediately have been gone and I think Thailand would have politically moved to a neutral position and be vulnerable. There was already Vietnamese refugee communist activity in Northeast Thailand and Chinese sponsored terrorism along the Malaysian border and so on. There was the indigenous communist party that was raiding and causing some small scale violence in Central Thailand. I think without our intervention in building the highway, an important step was building a modern highway that eventually reached from Bangkok to the Mekong River at Nong Kai near Vientiane. We built that highway for strategic reasons, but it had the effect of opening up the whole of the Thai Northeast to economic development and within a period of a few years, short of a decade, people up there who would have been riding bicycles were riding motorbikes and then cars and corn which grows up there in semi-arid conditions, it's not rice country. Corn became the third export crop of Thailand after rice and rubber within a very short period of time. What had been a frontier area of Thailand, a poor region became increasingly developed and prosperous. That highway, built for strategic reasons, would be able to move forces up to the Mekong River had a great deal to do with triggering the process of economic development. That was I think we did right. A disaster case would be if Thailand had turned neutralist or accommodating then Malaysia would have been vulnerable partly because of the ethnic problem, the Vietnamese minority, the Chinese minority, but Malaysia was partly Chinese, partly Malay, partly Indian nation, was not stable. The peninsula become stronger with the separation or the development of an independent Malaya and an independent Singapore. Malaya became Malaysia including the Eastern regions of Borneo and Sarawak. I think our effort in Southeast Asia was justified. We didn't succeed in it as everybody knows and how we might have whether we, there was a strategy or tactics to persuade the North Vietnamese to back off, I don't know. Throughout all the years, every time we tried harder by bombing or by developing the South Vietnamese army, the ARVN (Army of the Republic of South Vietnam), which became a respectable fighting corps before the end; every time the North Vietnamese simply increased the number of soldiers they sent South.

I remember an argument in the chambers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). We did a military exercise, a war game in which I was involved on that subject of what's going to happen in Vietnam. This would have been around late 1965 early 1966 I can't remember exactly the stage of our development, this was played at the staff level, military and civilian. I became the head of the Hanoi team, the leader. We went at it in three or four moves of play and counter play and the tactic of the red team was every time the blue team said, well, we'll intensify the bombing or we'll send some reconnaissance in Laos or whatever, they said, our response always was, well we'll mobilize some more troops and send some more South. It stalemated, short of the question of should we resort to

nukes, nobody took it seriously. The result of this war game we played was briefed to the JCS. Again, I was present to defend this literally to the then army chief of staff General Johnny Johnson who said, "well, this isn't really reasonable." He said, "you Hanoi people send troops down and we'll blast them. What do we do then?" I said, "well, we send more." He got angry. I mean he was polite, but he was upset. He said, that can't be, we won't let you do this.

Q: Did you find while you were working there, it was sort of the early days of State and Defense working together. Did you find that there were such different mindsets that it was hard to work there? I mean did Defense understand the State Department mindset and vice versa?

HAMILTON: No, well, there were disagreements, but I don't think it was different purposes, different objectives. I've worked that from the State side arguing with the Defense people. Later on I was country director for Laos and had to turn aside proposals, military proposals, to do more and do something, all kinds of things, too violent proposals. My office used to knock them down one after another. I had perfectly amiable relations in the Pentagon, military and civilian. I knew some of the senior people in the services, mainly the air force. There was an undersecretary in the air force whose name I also don't remember, whom I got to know quite well. I did not become chummy with John McNaughton, but he, I think the military recognized the value of this novel exchange program. At the same time of course they were sending staff officers over to State planning in designated billets and I think that I was in the first year of that program, but I might be wrong. Certainly we had to work out arrangements and as I say I would have been less effective if I was effective at all, had I not, had I had a different leadership. This admiral, I think, he would not have been a great theater commander, but he was a very bright and capable and certainly I was accepted in his shop which as I said was combined military and civilian although I was the first insurgent, a foreigner from across the Potomac. I don't remember being turned away if I needed to go get a clearance from somebody in the services or the joint staff. I don't remember any resistance that I would say because I was the striped pants boy and none of that stuff. I think it was a very important program and I think it worked quite well from the start and it was before I left in 1966 that the British having heard about it sent a team over to study this and subsequently adopted something similar integrating both civilian and military services with the people seconded for short tours. I enjoyed the two years over there very much. I never considered changing careers to the military, but I enjoyed the assignment at SHAPE earlier. I enjoyed that one and I very much enjoyed a subsequent assignment as number two on the directing staff at the National War College.

Q: Talking about working with the military. It was also an era where most people in the State Department had had military service from World War II or the Korean War, perhaps not as ranking officers, but most of us were male and most of us had had something to do with the military.

HAMILTON: Of course a lot of interaction. After all this program the State-Defense exchange was new, but Foreign Service Officers and a lot of military people were

familiar with attachés, with MAG groups, with liaison arrangements of all kinds and the military operate in a mixed military civilian world anyway. It's not surprising to me that this exchange program worked fairly well from the beginning.

Q: Well, then after your 1964 to 1966 Pentagon tour, you moved back to State to be Lao County Director, yes?

HAMILTON: Yes, not to brag, but it was another path finder experience 1966 was the year that they created the country director system. As country director for Laos I was supposed to be a leader of people civil and military throughout the foreign affairs community concerned with Laos. That worked better with some country directors than others. I think it was an advantage for me that I had been at the Pentagon for two years and when I set up interagency meetings I think they proceeded constructively. People had different viewpoints. This was the year the State turned down various requests of the military for approval to run deeper reconnaissance to run combat operations in Laos and we were trying to maintain a certain restraint. That annoyed them, they would cite military necessity and there were all kinds of proposals. For example, to insert ground forces to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail, to establish a fortress line clear across Laos to the Mekong River and the estimates were that that would take something like four divisions, U.S. divisions plus all the support apparatus. It would have to be a facility in Thailand to be expanded. This was not very appealing to us basically on the political side. It never got anywhere. That was a time of real policy disagreement and my little office with support of the East Asian bureau leadership. We had good support there and I thought the country director system worked well. When Ambassador Unger came back in the middle of that year to be Deputy Assistant Secretary, he again was my boss for the second time. When he arrived William Bundy was the Assistant Secretary [Ed: William Bundy was Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs from November 29, 1963 to March 14, 1964. He took up duties in the State Department as East Asia Assistant Secretary on March 16, 1964 and served until May 4, 1969].

We were asked to write an equivalent of an NIE (National Intelligence Estimate), an intelligence document, a policy paper on Laos, a country plan. I rounded up the people and decided the best way to have a good outcome would be to, you know the old school solution is to author the first draft and if you can get acceptance that's a good start. I managed to do that and we had really no difficulty with people in several agencies around the table and after two or three meetings agreeing on the paper which went upstairs and became for a time the basic policy document for Laos.

My impression is that there were, I can't give specific examples I don't think that the country director system had growing pains, some of the country directors had felicitous experiences, but no question with the expectation of interagency tensions. It doesn't mean that State and Defense were happy with each other then, any more than they are more recently. My impression is that the difference is and the way with which they are put forward and much greater last year than anything in my time.

Q: You're talking about Iraq.

HAMILTON: Iraq, yes.

Q: In 2003.

HAMILTON: Yes, that's the crunch, that's right.

Q: No, I think so. I think it's not really military, it's more civilian at the top direction rather than.

HAMILTON: I guess that's true. I can't really speak to this. I don't go to the State Department anymore. I have nothing to do with current policy so from what I read and what I hear I believe that the disagreement at the top did have a dampening effect on interagency cooperation from the period that I knew which was pretty happy and cooperative.

Q: Let me ask first. This policy option of putting a corps with four divisions, we're talking about 100,000 troops or so and with support troops it's probably more than that across the Ho Chi Minh trail. As it turned out, we lost the war because supplies kept coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail, so, why not do this. From your perspective from Laos, why wouldn't we want to do that?

HAMILTON: Well, I think the perspective was to the extent possible to limit rather than deliberately expand the war, either geographically or in ferocity. Plus the feeling was that it probably wouldn't work. We were not able, although the Ho Chi Minh trail was important, a second source of infiltration continued straight through the DMZ in Vietnam throughout the period of the war. We were never able to stop that, either U.S. or South Vietnamese forces. Furthermore, the terrain in Laos across that neck is pretty rough until you get close to the Mekong and then there are flat plains. It's limestone hills cut by rushing streams and so on, it's not friendly country as far as Mother Nature is concerned. But the mindset basically was I think that we tried to limit rather than to discourage expansion. I wish I knew whether. One of the most dramatic examples was I felt we had to consider sometimes standoff and sometimes agree to cross borderland operation. Then the question always was how much and what kind of air support will they need and what will be the mix of forces. Of course, we were always limited to our pooling the army conducting forays. Some of them didn't work well, so we had to decide whether American advisors, well we never in my time got to the point of seriously considering American military units participating in cross-border operations, but advise we did and we lost a few.

At that time the ARVN was not strong enough or cohesive enough to carry the day. It became much better, my impression was. To people in Vietnam toward the end the decay was much more political than military. The ARVN had become a more or less respectable fighting force and did have some well executed missions in the last years before the collapse. It was not in the mid-1960s. I think I will fall back on the most dramatic. I'll try to check, but note at a later session it would be a good illustration of

what I could call as a military inventiveness involving political repercussions and risk and where do you draw the balance, how do you decide what's the national interest which of course for us at that time more pointedly I think the military involve the considerations of other nations reactions to American policy. That certainly exercised restraint and some restraint on how we behaved in Vietnam.

Q: You mentioned the military, but Laos was kind of known as CIA country particularly later on. They were running their own war practically. How did you as country director of Laos how did the CIA play in this?

HAMILTON: That's probably I really can't get into because the CIA is not acknowledged its presence in that time.

Q: It might not acknowledge it, but.

HAMILTON: It's been covered in books.

Q: I'm not trying to pull stuff out that you don't feel you can talk about, but I was just wondering whether, did the CIA as far as you know pursue sort of its own policy or was it a CIA, State and Defense policy?

HAMILTON: Within Laos during the time I was there at which I did know it was coordinated with a lot of initiative from Vientiane. That was Unger's tactic, if the problem came up, don't report it. If I took a telegram or anybody else did, saying oh gosh this happened today, he wouldn't approve of it unless we said what we were going to do about it because he always figured what we could figure out there would probably work better than what would come back from Washington if we waited for them to tell us what to do. That's a typical and laudable ambassadorial stance as far as I'm concerned. I agree with it, but there were times that were difficult because it would seem to me urgent to inform Washington of what was happening. It wasn't always easy on the spur of the moment to decide what we should do about it. That was his instinct and as I say it was a laudable instinct that sometimes you can't help it.

I remember for example early on and this is political rather than military. It was one of several time when Souvanna Phouma got discouraged and I was at home one day in Laos. I can't put a time on this either, but late 1963 or late 1964 when a man I didn't know came and he described himself or identified himself as being like a staff aid or something to Souvanna. He talked to me at length about the fact that Souvanna was ready to quit and that he had composed his resignation letter and had put it in his desk for the moment, but he was really getting discouraged. I didn't think you could suppress information of that sort given the intensity of Washington's interest in Laos and people before and after Geneva, but what on earth could you say on the spur of the moment. So, what, what are we going to do about that?

This became a cycle that repeated itself several times and Souvanna would get discouraged because of opposition, this troika wasn't working, and his own people were

not cohesive, they're always not as capable as he was, various problems on the economic presses, he didn't like having to come to us and say I need more money or whatever. Of course you know he never did resign. He stuck it out for a long, long time. My view came to me even while I was there that this was not serious and we didn't have to take this and panic over the possibility. The reason for possible panic would be who would take his place. There was not a neutralist heir apparent who could have taken over the coalition leadership, with anything like the stature of Souvanna Phouma. I felt and I think this is still the explanation of why he lasted so long is first of all he was a Lao patriot and he wanted to serve his country. Secondly, he was a proud man, a prince and he should always uphold his position and not go under. Thirdly, he had a pretty good life. He could go off to France and consult from time to time and he enjoyed some of the good aspects anyway of that kind of life. His wife was not in Laos a good part of this period. He behaved properly as far as I know that is in the social sense, but I think there were disincentives that kept him short of going over the brink. Every time life got tough he would simply refuse to quit. I think that's what sustained his government and again with our help, his country for quite a while. In other words you could tell he was a sort of a man and I think he did a pretty good job.

Q: I want to ask about the CIA because we've talked about Defense. How did you find the CIA at the time in Laos? Were they pushing for dealing more, the military you say was trying to get more military action there. How was the CIA?

HAMILTON: Not specifically. I was thinking of Vietnam then and the military disposition was to go where the trouble was even if it meant across the border. I had in that year as country director the I do not recall the very active CIA role, they participated in this one policy paper which I've described and in which came out without dissent from them to reflect the view that we had prepared within State. I didn't, I don't know if any members, I can't remember whether the two officers who worked with me had very full reflection. I did not myself read much of the CIA daily material at that time. I saw their polished products and daily bulletin and so on, but not the real reports. So, I really can't answer that, I'm sorry.

Q: No problem. Well, I'm thinking maybe is there anything else we should talk about this time dealing with your two years as Laos Country Director before we move on? I thought we'd cut it off at this point. Is there anything that we should or if you want to think about it if there is something you want to cover?

HAMILTON: No, I have felt that what I could most usefully is what we've talked about, mainly the interagency intergovernmental and the ICC context and so on, plus what I consider still an early and very effective country team operation led by Unger. Actually, I was Country Director for only one year, 1966 to 1967. In the summer of 1967 Unger was appointed ambassador to Thailand and he took me with him to be his Political Counselor. So, we had to leave suddenly in 1967.

Q: Now, refresh me. I mean I know you'd had the sort of other Southeast Asian areas, but had you been to Thailand before?

HAMILTON: Only touristically.

Q: You served from, 1967 to 1970. What was the situation in Thailand, politically, when you got there in '67?

HAMILTON: It was a military dominated government and one of the challenges in the ensuing years was the development of the constitution and the holding of elections which led Thailand into one of its more democratic periods. It was not by totalitarian standards it was not very repressive. There was lots of individual freedom. There was some variety in newspaper points of view, but the government, it was dominated by Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and the first deputy prime minister was the head of the police internal security. It was a largely controlled system, but you didn't see heavy police presence, let alone military presence on the streets. People went around about their business in an easy way and we could see these people without much difficulty up to cabinet level. Even I, let alone Unger, became you could call it friends to a degree to up to really the level of deputy prime minister. I wouldn't say Thanom was ever a friend. So, it was a very pleasant society. We enjoyed every one of our Southeast Asian experiences. People were equally interesting and friendly. It was a long history, relatively long history of Thai-American association; it goes back to missionary times in the early part of the 19th Century. One of the events which is always quoted, was when the then king of Thailand offered to send some elephants to President Lincoln to help him with his kind of cavalry brigade which is symbolic of the fact that the world was surely round even in those days. There were some commercial interests there, but it had started out with a missionary presence and continued I suppose to today. I know that up to the time we were there and including, well, you may know, or know of, well, I know you know of Anna and the King of Siam as either a book or movie or whatever, a stage production.

Q: The King and I.

HAMILTON: The King and I, right. The author of that book was the wife of a Presbyterian I think, anyway, a Protestant missionary, Kenneth Landon, and his wife wrote that book. Ken went out there as, I think, a missionary. He rode beyond from his point of view beyond that specialty and for a while he peddled refrigerators or something of that sort and went into business. They stayed on through the war, World War II, he was back here and he was the primary American specialist on Thailand. The files on Thailand in the State Department were less than one file drawer at that time. The rest of it was in his head.

Q: Actually I think didn't he at one point was teaching at the FSI?

HAMILTON: Oh, indeed, yes. I guess, I think he was retired by that time. He was an interesting man, rather special. He was not the European ambassadorial type or out of that mold. The farthest he went as I recall on active duty was as director of what was then I think the Philippines and Southeast Asia part of the Far East bureau. Then I believe it was after he retired that he moved to FSI and he did teach there for a number of years.

Q: Am I correct that Thailand, following the Japanese, did declare war on the U.S., but we sort of ignored it and never treated it as an enemy, was that it?

HAMILTON: That's quite correct, right. Because we knew, I don't know how we knew, but we knew that the Thai didn't mean it. So, relations were restored very quickly at the end of the war and then there had been OSS operations in Southern Thailand as well as in Malaya and there was the Thai basically just sat down and grew rice and didn't bother anybody. There was not anything like the French resistance in their hearts, they never signed on. As a result they didn't suffer much. They weren't punished the way that the Javanese were and some others occupied people like Singapore and Java at that time.

Q: What was the dominant thing that we were interested in, particularly you while you were there?

HAMILTON: Well, my charter was somewhat more narrow than it had been in Laos. If this is an appropriate moment, I would be interested to talk a little bit about the organization and function in the Bangkok mission because it was quite different and it will illustrate what I did by putting it in that context at the time if I may. I say my charter was quite a bit more narrow and that's because it was a much bigger mission. We had operational programs there beyond the scope of anything that we had in Laos let alone Burma. So, in addition to the political counselor there was a political-military counselor with a combined Foreign Service and military staff section of about half a dozen officers. Because there was already a communist led and Vietnamese pushed insurgency in Northeast Thailand, Chinese communist party insurgencies spill over from Malaya in the South. We also had a counselor for I think it was called for counter insurgency. It was internal security and counter insurgency. That left the political counselor a more traditional scope of representation and reporting.

Thailand is one of the places where if I can mention a CIA presence because at the time I was there and before the chief of station was a red headed publicly known figure named Jansen, Red Jansen who was there near a decade I think. Apart from details the fact is I can at least acknowledge in the pattern that he had followed in Laos, Unger insisted on a cohesive country team operation and I had half of the officers who were identified as being political officers, belong to State Department and half of them didn't, but that caused some slight embarrassment. I don't know how many people, 11, well, what do they all do? I said, well, this is an interesting country, we all keep busy which was both, parts of that were true. Unger made them play the game. They were always a couple of station officers who came to my staff meetings and I could task them by discussion and agreement. I didn't see, I saw some of their traffic. We used to clear at Unger's direction most I would say most of our telegrams were coordinated with the appropriate station officer. This was an illustration of the kind of integrated mission that he favored.

My section had useful but limited relations with these other activities that spilled over into the political area: counter insurgency and political military affairs as well as let alone of course the AID mission which was fairly large. The mission included another entity

with political overtones of a regional character that had to do with the Mekong River development. The Mekong Valley development. I'm always having trouble with names now. People like Tom Niblock who had a Southeast Asian career in AID was involved in that. We had a special section in the embassy less integrated although my charter was to keep track of what a man named Lee St. Lawrence and his very small staff were doing. I kept track, but it was not really an integrated part. This is an idea that there was a bit of sprawl, but Unger was on top of everything.

The MAG was fairly large and there was a not only military assistance but there were military relations to the Thai command. That of course has this the early years of a second Indochina war as I call it, but with growing American involvement and Thailand was much involved in that both in the development of the naval port and accompanying air station at Sattahip down to the southeast of Bangkok and to the development and improvement of air bases in the Northeast which a significant segment of our air operations against Southern Laos and into Vietnam. The air base near the naval base of Sattahip was called U-Tapao, from which B-52s operated. They were bombing Vietnam and in the contentious campaign in Cambodia that Kissinger approved the intrusion. A very heavy bombing by the B-52s and that continued long after I was long gone, this buildup was just beginning at that time. We had some relations with Saigon, the mission there both military and the embassy.

My section and the officers whose work I closely supervised was informally divided into two parts, one concentrating on Thai internal affairs and the other on external meaning regional Thailand's and U.S. regional involvement in mainland Southeast Asia pretty much, not extending much beyond that. I had one officer, Frank Tatu, who had had some experience with Cambodia and he specialized on that. It was a tough time when Sihanouk was in or out and the Thai relationship waxed and waned. The border was closed for a time and Angkor Wat was inaccessible, but then it opened up again and there were refugee problems spilling over out of Cambodia, some even Vietnamese crossed all the way through, walked all the way through Cambodia to take refuge in Thailand. There was a Vietnamese community in the Northeast, which had been there well ever since at least the time of Dien Bien Phu and the first that I call the first Indochina war, the French one.

It was a complex mission and we had usual pattern of more visits from Washington. I remember I don't know which year, but one of them we had 20 CODELs (congressional delegations) between Thanksgiving and New Year's. It was a popular place.

Q: What were these CODELs doing?

HAMILTON: Some of them were very serious and some were buying Thai silk. We always provided as much briefing as visitors, CODELs or otherwise, would sit still for. I got caught up in that very soon and there was an embarrassing situation caused by the Counselor for Economic Affairs Robert Fluker and in the interval between ambassadors I suppose he was acting DCM because he was next senior after the DCM. He had sort of a world view and he caught me up probably not intentionally, but it was within a week or ten days after I arrived, brand new in the country, as I've told you earlier, Unger asked if

I would go to Thailand when he was selected to be ambassador and I agreed because we already liked Southeast Asia. I preceded him out by a few weeks and this caused, gave me a lot of attention within the mission. Everyone was curious what I was going to be like and I don't know. I don't think I took advantage of that. I tried to be helpful, but there did grow kind of an aura. I don't know I was Unger's man or something and it carried over digressing now, but I'll go back two years later when we went on home leave during which time there was an inspection. When I got back from home leave the senior inspector called me and said I've got to talk to you. He said I've been waiting for you to return. Every time I raise a question, people say, well, talk to Bill Hamilton when he gets back. It sounds as though I was trying to be the gauleiter, but I really wasn't. I was flabbergasted by that kind of a comment at the beginning all I was, as I say that aura that I was Unger's man, I tried not to perpetuate any such illusion.

Going back to this yarn about Bob Fluker who was in charge of a briefing for some visitors, not a CODEL, I don't remember the nature and I hadn't been there long, we really went out of our saddle bags and although I had some background on Thailand, it was limited, but I was not yet involved. Bob Fluker led off the briefing, and he did not only talk about economic situations, but he gave, as much as I could tell, a very accurate and comprehensive political briefing about the nature of the government and what the problems were and their personalities, the civil-military relations and all that and I sat there growing consternation because it ended up and I didn't really have anything to say that hadn't been covered. When my turn came, I stuck it to him and I said I hope politely, I said, "You know, Mr. Fluker, has given an absolutely thorough and fine briefing on matters that I know of them to the extent I do after a very short time here and I'm not going to repeat. I will come back for the question and answer session." I took off for a half hour and then came back. Bob Fluker never mentioned that to me. So, I guess he got the point. We had, he was a difficult person, his wife was quite nice, but he was difficult. We had a correct, but never close relationship. He had been at post since 1964 or earlier and left sort of in the middle of our time in Thailand [Ed: 1968] for Australia.

I have described the mission, unless you'd like to ask some further specific questions. What occurred to me in the course of the morning beyond whatever questions are on your mind, things that might be useful would be to talk about a little more on the impact of the development of the second Indochina war on Thailand and Thai U.S. relations and some reflections about the character and significance of the royal family. The Thai royal family is one of the few surviving monarchies, Thailand is very fortunate, has been and that's not to cast dispersions on the Norwegians or the Swedes or any of the others either recent or perhaps pending like Afghanistan.

Q: One question about the organization.

HAMILTON: Please.

Q: It would seem, I mean half of your political section was working for the CIA. I would think one of the problems I've heard from various people I have interviewed is that the CIA uses its cover to make contacts and then doesn't share, sort of this is our contact,

you stay away from that person because we're doing this. I mean there are problems with this sometimes, because sometimes the relationship can turn sour. I would think that in a country like Thailand where the CIA was sort of having a pretty free reign that you would find that your normal work would be hurt because some of your normal contacts would be sort of take away from you.

HAMILTON: I don't have any such feeling. I did not seek to be nor did I become privy to a lot of their contacts, but I think Unger got a pretty good picture. His interest was in having the mission cover the Thai. Therefore, Unger very specifically asked me to develop and provide him with a list of my political section and contacts so that he could monitor not only a duplication that could lead to unpleasantness, but also, he had served in Thailand before as DCM and he knew more about Thailand than I could ever catch up with. He wanted to make sure that somebody was in touch with all the individuals who he thought we ought to be in touch with. Coordination was achieved at the top and without any dictatorial business. The atmosphere was very good in that mission. Everybody liked Unger and it worked out okay. Specifically I was never asked to leave anybody alone, didn't happen.

Q: Let's then talk about the relations with, it was an Indochina war. How was this playing and what was your role in Thailand?

HAMILTON: Well, mine was limited to directing the reporting efforts. I encouraged the internal part of my section people to travel as much as money allowed, since the mood in rural areas was particularly focused on the provincial capitals and the areas surrounding the military facility bases that we were using. The Thai got progressively involved as I'm sure you know before it was over. It started even while we were there and ended up with a division, their division was about half the size of ours, but a division of combat troops. They acquitted themselves fairly well and were rewarded by access to the PX. We used to believe that every Thai soldier on rotation came home with a refrigerator which is probably a bit of an exaggeration, but not entirely so.

Q: I was consul general in Saigon in 1969 to 1970. I used to watch Thai troops march in by platoon into the PX and be told what to buy and they'd all come out with the same purchase while the provost marshal would sit there getting redder and redder in the face.

HAMILTON: I hadn't heard an eye witness story consistent with the impression that we had, but nevertheless, part of the impression was that they weren't tough tigers like the Koreans, but that it was well beyond a symbolic presence.

Q: Were there by the way Thai troops in Laos at that time while you were there?

HAMILTON: No, the Lao began with the tiny Lao air force flying bombing missions out of Northern Thai bases. Later on the Thai provided some pilots who flew the Lao planes or in effect to look like Lao and that's because the Thai government didn't want to face the political jarring notes of having Thai casualties who have to acknowledge that they were doing this. The Thai were involved in training some Lao ground units and then

later, long after I was there, they sent a fairly large artillery unit that was influential in combined operations that halted the Vietnamese advance starting South from Luang Prabang down the main highway toward Vientiane. That's been acknowledged, but that is not the extent of their involvement on the ground. There were no army units that fought in Laos.

Q: In the political sphere, how was all this, what were you picking up about their involvement in the war there?

HAMILTON: Well, the attitude of the population generally was one of passivity. Except for the residents of insurgent infested areas, there was not open opposition to the policy that the Thai government pursued. Its policy was one of slowly developing involvement and therefore commitment. There were no problems of insecurity around the bases that we used. We went farther than anywhere in Asia toward making these really Thai-American bases. They provided the real estate. We brought in the people and the equipment and we ran the air operations. But, there was always a Thai base commander. His role was meaningful. Two flags flew everywhere on the bases. I'm sure that I think that was an enlightened policy. This was long before we made the same step in the Philippines for example and I think that helped account for the absence of resistance to part of the Thai population to our presence or to what we were doing there. It must have been real noisy for some of them when the jet aircraft were taking off and screaming over the rice fields day and night.

There really was no overt and as far as we could tell, while I was there no significant underground muttering that didn't stem from the already preexisting insurgent activities stimulated as I said by Vietnamese in the Northeast and by heavy resident Chinese. I don't mean that Beijing was messing around. I don't think there was financial support, but the insurgency in the South fed off resident Chinese communities. The Chinese in South Thailand were less integrated than elsewhere in the country.

Perhaps a little digression about that, because one of the distinctive features of Thailand then and since is the success of the Thai policy toward its Chinese minority. One reason for that, several reasons and one is that's not new, it goes back a ways and the second important reason is that the population of Thailand runs from 100% Thai to 100% Chinese and all on the spectrum in between. The deputy prime minister for economic affairs [phonetic Phoui] when I was there was essentially Chinese. He wore a business suit, not a mandarin robe, but he was ethnically Chinese, but totally accepted by the Thai. Our number one colonel, not a colonel, was a Chinese woman, as Chinese as could be, I don't know what had happened to her husband and I never did find out. She had a girl, daughter who was growing up and went to one of the best secondary schools and went to Chulalongkorn University, the king's university. Certainly not from family resources. There was not only tolerance of, but there was absorption really of the Chinese by the Thai. They could learn Chinese in school. There were reasons to want to become more Thai like and most except in the inner city, down in some relatively isolated neighborhoods in Bangkok, you would probably have trouble finding English speakers, but through the country that was not true. There were Chinese in the police force. Ethnic

Chinese. I think it, well, other than the Swedish way of dealing with immigrants which is another subject, I think it's a most successful policy that I encountered. They took them in and they made them into Thai citizens successfully.

Q: What were the internal political movements, issues and all that you were monitoring?

HAMILTON: The main issue was the domination of the government by military and police authorities. There were pressures, there had been at one time a prime minister Thailand has gone back and forth from more authoritarian to less authoritarian over centuries as well as within the 20th Century. The leader of the main opposition party, that is political as distinct from insurgent opposition was the democratic party leader, a man named Khuang Aphaiwong, who was the prime minister at one time around World War II time, I don't know exactly. I can't figure the year. He tried to keep this party going. The Thai government had impulses within the society and there were expression of support and encouragement from Western powers to develop a new constitution. They elected a constituent assembly, spent quite a time writing a new constitution for Thailand and while we were there held a national election. The constitution had most of the protections that we think important with regard to individual rights, freedom of press and sanctity of individual property, the court system was not pure, but it functioned reasonably well.

I remember one, we ought to mention the king and the role of the royal family, but here is an illustration just to insert here without getting into the whole subject necessarily. When the constituent assembly produced this draft constitution, it was published and discussed and there was some opposition to it because people assumed, which turned out to be correct, that there was enough possibility for manipulation so that those who were in charge of the country would probably survive an election and remain in charge. After going through procedures to establish a new political party and to wage a campaign and the whole reasonably free elections. So, while this debate was going on, the king went to at my invitation or arrangement I don't know, not to Chulalongkorn, but another of the leading universities and gave a speech and talked to the students more as a father, that was his style. In the course of it he said, this is about a quote I think I can't give you the context in detail, but he said in more or less these words, "I have read the constitution and considered the history of its development and the discussions of it in the assembly. I have read the constitution and I find it good." That assured that it would be adopted. When the king spoke like that it wasn't like Anna and the King of Siam day. He didn't get down although he did actually and most of it in the presence of the king, they would kneel down. It assured acceptance of the constitution. [Ed: The new constitution was promulgated on 20 June 1968. A bicameral parliament was established, with an elected 219-member house and a royally appointed 164-member senate – Wikipedia.]

Q: On this constitution, did our mission play any role or were students coming back from the United State bringing American ideas back with them?

HAMILTON: We didn't have that I know of, a significant role, but I know we, I know the embassy was interested. Who had committed people who studied it, democratic

constitutions from around the world, and I think we helped provide copies of some other constitutions and I was not involved in any discussion of particular principles. I don't think anybody in the section made an input in the constitution. The Thai wouldn't like that. The reason the word "Thai" means free, underscore they are very proud of their independence and the fact that they didn't really kowtow to the Japanese and so on. That would not have been very productive for us to go around and try to help them refine the language.

Q: No, I was wondering, was there a significant number of Thais who had studied in the United States and returned?

HAMILTON: Indeed. Traditionally despite the long history that we had, most students who went abroad for university, went to the UK (United Kingdom). That changed pretty rapidly after World War II and by the late 1960s the number coming to the U.S. was far larger than what when to the UK anymore. By the late 1960s, there were hundreds of former students and to their credit most of them went home. They didn't settle down in the U.S. Some of them had to. If some of them went on a government scholarship, a Thai government scholarship, there was an obligation to return for service and that was part of their system. It was observed, but many others even those whose families paid their way, there's love of country and they mostly came back home. It must be something to do with Buddhist culture because it was true of Burma also. Very few Burmese, despite the poverty of that country, ever settled down in the U.S.

Q: I assume you were reporting on what was happening in the parliament?

HAMILTON: Yes. A Unicameral Assembly, yes. My officers tried to follow various parties. We talked to party leaders and reported on partly from the press, but also from contacts and from traveling around the country as much as we could divining the sentiment was among the people. One of the problems of Thai politics before and at this time put a phenomenon of what they called parachuting when there was an election. The main kind of voter fraud was from the sudden appearance in a town of people who hadn't been born there and would sign up. I don't know whether people voted twice or not, but if a district was in a tough situation from the standpoint of the dominant party there would be reinforcements show up. This happened in the February 1969 election. That election would stand muster with many of the elections that we have observed around the world in more recent decades in terms of the degree of openness, the Thai were not intimidated. They didn't fear either to not vote or fear of being forced to vote or forced how they should vote. I think there were deliberate efforts to influence and in some cases I think to mobilize. It was not the Thai way to be forceful. They are a gentle folk.

Q: What about China? Did it, what was the role of China while you were there?

HAMILTON: Very little directly because Chinese, well, at that time they were still pretty well occupied with internal problems.

Q: Cultural Revolution and all that.

HAMILTON: That's right. Their foreign relations were focused on us and Taiwan and Japan much more than Southeast Asia. The traditional connections you've heard I'm sure was in the context of Overseas Chinese. There were many Chinese and Thais who sent money to China, but mainly it was to family members who had remained behind, cousins and more distant relatives. There was great effort which we never, which we were never to be successful to find out what to what extent there was external Chinese influence to the insurgencies. It wouldn't have worked very well in the Northeast because I say that the external influence there was the Vietnamese. Then as now the Chinese and the Vietnamese didn't get along. In the South there probably was or may have been some financial aid. If so, it was funneled through Chinese communists and communists of Chinese culture in Yala Province; the border was not closed. You could travel across. The population in the very Southernmost Thai provinces has a substantially higher proportion of ethnic Chinese than in the rest of the country with the exception of Bangkok where the Chinese community is significant, though a minority and now it's even a much smaller number than it was then because of the Thai population increase and economic development focused on _____. We did not have evidence of say of arms or arm shipments to the rebels.

Financial resources, we did believe, flowed, probably through Malaya. Those were days when we didn't really talk to the Chinese. I have no recollection of communist Chinese, red Chinese. This of course was before our making peace with China in the 1970s before Nixon's trip and so on. We all knew the ambassador from Taiwan who was the ambassador of the Republic of China, the Thai recognized him as such. As I said and I stand by it, the Thai are very successful in dealing with the immigrant Chinese minority, but it is possible, could be, to stir them up and the Chinese ambassador was not a trouble maker. There were Chinese community associations and I'm sure that the embassy staff was busy cultivating them the same as we went to organized things like the Siam Society and organizations that were or whose external orientation was toward the West primarily. It was quiet and the problem of course was the insurgency. No diplomatic representatives in Bangkok wanted to be tainted by reminding the Thai that they were having two civil wars on their hands, each of which had external stimulus.

Q: What about the media there? Was it you were dominated by corruption or was each one represented a party or sensationalist?

HAMILTON: When parties got formed in connection with this election campaign, yes, each of them of course had an outlet. There were two English language papers published in Bangkok, one of which was Bangkok World, and both were respectable. I don't think there was corruption there and on the Thai side, the Thai press was very active. There must have been a dozen to 20 Thai language dailies at various times. Some would fold and new ones would appear. Some of them with a party association, others just the creation of one man who was editor and publisher and wanted to get his thoughts across. We had a very busy Thai employee who concentrated on the Thai press and he used to after he went through the morning papers, he would get together with the internal slice of my section and he would recount what's in the Thai press today and they would say, well,

here's what we would like to have translations of which he then did. We had the same thing with a Chinese translator who kept track of the Chinese press and it was mixed also in terms of orientation. I don't have knowledge of financing, though we thought it was a relatively free press. There were certain things you didn't do. You didn't make nasty remarks about the royal family. You didn't really openly denounce the government in power, but you could be positive and say we could do a better job and without reprisal. It was a good deal of freedom in that country at that time.

Q: You were mentioning the royal family and their role.

HAMILTON: It is primarily leadership by example, the king is especially, the king is revered. The queen, the present one in our time was beloved in a royal way, but more beloved than revered I would say. She was a strikingly beautiful woman with her until recently she is now elderly, as is the king. They were public figures. They appeared, each of them played a public role of a different sort. They usually traveled more times than not separately. The king had his interests and he would sally forth and go visit some part of the country and dedicate a school or review troops or whatever. The queen was interested; she had several development type projects: growing vegetables for example. One project on which they did collaborate, I mean there were different times, was in the far North and with our encouragement a campaign to eradicate opium growing and which were never entirely successful, but these respected or revered public personalities were involved in causes. That did nothing but perpetuate and perhaps increase the support for them as what made his, when he spoke like the example I gave in regard to the constitution, people listen.

The future of that family is now somewhere in doubt. The Thai have pretty thorough discussion among themselves about whether to amend what has been the historic pattern of male lineage of the royal family and the present king and queen had three children, two girls and the one son. For years there was concern because the first girl, senior princess, wasn't interested. She came over and went to Princeton and had a good life and is now perfectly honorably, but not interested in the succession; she's not eligible for it anyway. The second daughter was considered the bright star and those who wanted to try and amend the, it was not in the constitution, but in the Thai tradition that it's a male lineage monarchy. Many Thai wished that the second daughter would be eligible because in his early years the son was considered slow and of limited capacity. My impressions, this is getting off my beat, but more recently that's tempered somewhat. He has matured. He's done some military service in the pattern of previous generations. The prospect is not as bleak as it was thought to be when we were there to the point then that people wondered about the future of the monarchy. I suspect now that it will survive into the next generation and if so very likely beyond that. That's beyond my competence to talk about in detail.

The role was one of influence by virtue of the historic tradition that they were monarchs plus the individual character and behavior of the present king and queen.

Q: You were there during the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. How did that play out in

Thailand? I mean was there any reaction to it?

HAMILTON: Not dramatic and I think that's because the situation was reversed, I mean, I'm more aware of what Westerners thought. My impression is that there was hardly time for the kind of reaction that could have suggested who is going to win and so on. Doubts about the American capacity, or the Western capacity to be more generous, came only later among the Thai as among us, with a few exceptions. Some individuals of ours who opposed the war all along. I don't recall, I know a dramatic shudder that could have happened and if the Vietnamese and U.S. forces hadn't rallied quickly, with visible suppression, it might well have been a very significant event.

Q: Was Burma much of a problem while you were there?

HAMILTON: No, not really. It's always a problem. The Thai and the Burmese don't get along. They argued about delineation of the border. There are still a few disputed spots. The Thai are concerned about refugee flows every time the Burmese army tries to suppress or eliminate one of the ethnic insurgencies most notably among the Karen people who live along parts of their common border, the Thai officially were concerned about the flow of narcotics out of the Shan state in Burma and they had a right to be. There were some Thai who were involved in trafficking in that time. We had I've forgotten when we changed the name to DEA, but anyway we had narcotics attachés there as long as I remember. The official policy of the Thai government was against opium culture and against trafficking. But there were some Thai we believe including some police officials who were involved at least to protect and probably benefit financially for protection of drug smugglers. There was flow out of Burma and out of Laos into Thailand and to it toward the West and the Middle East. A lot of it at that time, the flow really ran through the Middle East, to the Mediterranean, into Europe and the U.S. that way rather than transpacific. As late as right after Thailand, I became DCM in the Philippines and when we were there we could not find evidence of drug smuggling routes from mainland Southeast Asia through the Philippines. There was some involvement of; there was some drugs there, some sailors at Subic Bay who got caught up in Vietnam. The main route was down toward Singapore beyond and off to Europe at the time we're talking about.

Q: During our break you said you were taking a couple of hours, or a couple of half hours of Thai a week and this turned into actually opening a door to Thai politics. Could you explain what that was?

HAMILTON: It's not really much more than that. My tutor, whose name I don't remember now, would talk about contemporary events. He was my tutor and that was his part time job. His job was in the prime minister's office as a young aide of some sort. He was probably in his late 20s or possibly 30 no more than that at the time. He was not a significant official except where he sat and the papers that flowed across his desk. So, the day after a cabinet meeting he would know more or less what had happened and we didn't need him because there were other means by which we used to get feedback from what went on in the cabinet. We would chat about if there was

an issue I won't be able to be specific about this, but there weren't debates in the Thai cabinet. The prime minister would sit on top and say here's what we're going to do this week. There were discussions and some degree of difference of opinion, a degree of collegiality, so everybody knew who was on top and who was not. He was an informed observer and we could talk a little bit about whatever issue was up, whether it was the assembly or pass a question of new economic development project. Their interests, the cabinet, at that time, was heavily concerned about and involved in counter insurgency program and that of course limited the extent to which I or my people followed up on this because I said we had another counselor whose job was to liaise with the officials who were dealing with internal security, both police and the ministry. Socially we could know them and we did, but I just I didn't need to be told not to try to become, well, to have serious business discussions and exchanges with the head of the counter insurgency command who was very personable general whom we all knew. I didn't do my business with him and he knew that. That's what I meant by saying my role was much more circumscribed in a way. It was on a broader playing field, a more important playing field than Laos, but it was a narrower role.

Q: It's a big country with many interests there. How did you find dealing with the Thai? Was it a pleasure, easy, difficult?

HAMILTON: In my personal experience always pleasant. Sometimes difficult. One of my principle contacts was the chef de cabinet to the foreign minister. The foreign minister then and for long periods before and after was Thanat Khoman, a very estimable gentleman. He had been here in Washington as ambassador and held various positions in the Thai government. He was a colonel, but he was not "a military type." I mean he had been a colonel. At the time I was there his chef de cabinet was a man named Birabhongse Kasemsri. It's a well-known family called, his nickname was Bira. His life was spent in diplomacy. Right then he was helping Thanat as a chef de cabinet [Ed: 1969 to 1973], but subsequently he served as ambassador here and ambassador to the UN, to London. He was at the lowest rung of the royal family. He was a Mom Rajawongse, which is about fourth generation separated from the king. His wife was the next rung up the ladder. She was wealthy. Let's see, she also had a title. They were a very friendly couple. His English was British English and I think it had been learned both in Thailand and in the UK [Ed: BA in Jurisprudence, and MA Christ Church College, Oxford University, 1954-1957], but he had a graduate degree [Ed: MA and MALD, and PhD] from Tufts University, Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy (1958-1964). He was probably the only one who had been there and had the benefit of that fine program.

I used to do my reading of the newspapers and other things while riding in the car to the foreign ministry and back. It was about 40 minutes each way with traffic then. It must be two hours now. I saved Ambassador Unger from having to pester the foreign minister more often. Unger could see Thanat anytime he wanted to and they spoke on the phone. They had a very good and strong relationship, but I took a lot of our business to Bira. I'll give one example, which is an important one that had to do with the Indochina war. The foreign ministry was very interested in that and when I was there it was the beginning of peace talks.

Q: These are the ones in Paris?

HAMILTON: Yes, right. I used to go down and discuss what we were reading in the traffic pretty frankly with them. We didn't exchange documents, but talked about what was going on. They always thought that this was a point of some difficulty because Bira probably on behalf of his boss, always felt that he used to make plain that he felt that we were not completely leveling with him. He would say, "Now, where's the rest of the stuff. There must be, what about the private talks?" I know now that there were channels of communication, which we didn't get, but we had repeat messages of pretty sensitive. We used to get pretty full accounts of the meetings in Paris and everything that we got we shared through that channel. We didn't hold back what we knew and of course we didn't know what we didn't know.

Q: No. This was Kissinger, too.

HAMILTON: That's right. We had pretty sensitive key word telegrams that didn't get general distribution and that's because the Thai were involved on the ground as well as politically in the UN and so on. It was a good solid relationship. We didn't keep in touch often, but we had reunions. When I visited back in Thailand when Bira was here, as ambassador we used to see them. He was probably my best Thai friend despite the fact that there was a degree of contention because that was his job to press for everything he could get. That's a leading example that I could give. The Thai are easy to get to know. They are interested, the ones who have had education, if they don't know English, they want to learn it. If they know it, they want to polish it. This is true of course of a hundred countries around the world, but it is specifically true there and as I said the pattern of.

Q: This is tape five, side one with Bill Hamilton. Yes? You were just saying English has become the lingua franca of the world and so people seek us out if for no other reason than to practice.

HAMILTON: I don't really know. I know what accounts for the fact, which I mentioned earlier that there was a shift in the pattern for Thais going abroad for university training undergraduate and graduate from traditional concentration in the UK to overwhelming concentration in the U.S. In recent years we've maintained an education attaché at the counselor level at the embassy who liaises with the Thai student community. They've had that for decades. That pattern, I don't know what it looked like in Washington, but I'm sure it was much the same because the students. There are other, Thai go a lot of places. Some to Germany, not to the extent that's true in some other countries. Whether it is more at that time a scientific field, the Thai come to the U.S. to cross the academic spectrum. Liberal arts, science and engineering, medicine and many in medicine. Not as many Thai nurses as Filipinos, but doctors. By division a reputable medical school in Thailand was then, but there was a preference to come to go elsewhere and some still went to the UK, more came to the U.S. Out in the countryside I didn't get to travel as much as I would have liked and in the countryside a lack of some kind of language ability was handicapping. No question about it. You couldn't get very far out into the country until

you could find the English speakers: a judge, a teacher now and then. But not so much the provincial police officials who might not know English. Contact work was not easy, but I had two pretty good language officers.

Q: Who were they, do you remember?

HAMILTON: Well, Phil Valdes was one. Well, I mentioned Frank Tatu, he worked on the external side in regional affairs. One interesting man and this is a story and I'm happy to regale is there was a fellow named Maurice "Mack" Tanner. He was a great hulk of a man, even taller than you I think. He wasn't gargantuan, but a really big man. He worked in the internal section and he was supposed to get out and beat the bushes and talk to people. He learned about a phenomenon that in the Thai army called Metropop. It was an organization of Thai paratroops who would sally forth to provincial affairs and when the harvest was over and there would be a fair in the center of the provincial capital. Every weekend they were out entertaining the village folk by an airdrop into the fairgrounds and they collected money somehow or other and built village schools, Metropop Foundation had built more than 1,000 rural schools in Thailand when I was there. Mack learned about this program and he said that this would be a great way to save on travel money, but to get out and so on. For one thing they respect, it was a fairly good relationship which the army had in rural areas, not an occupation force. He took parachute training with the Thai army to the extent of jumping off a tower and whatever they required of him he did. He was going to become or be a presence through these weekend excursions, which of course was on his own time.

Misfortune struck and the first time he made what would be called an operational jump, these were fairly low level and the Thai are mostly small. I used to watch them in Laos and thought the same phenomenon. They'd come down so gently they'd basically walk away; they'd land standing up and never even fell down. They'd just walk away. Mack Tanner couldn't do that and furthermore, he had the misfortune to come down on a rather steep slope, it was an embankment between the paddy fields and the rural highway. He hit at an angle with his 250 pounds or something and broke his hip. He was laid up in the hospital for quite a while and the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital in Bangkok. Then getting therapy. It was a delicious experience of getting your doctor's prescription to go get a Thai massage. I never asked him what he made out of that opportunity. But it was an approved. He could visit the Thai massage parlor without getting in trouble with Ambassador Unger or presumably with his wife.

Q: Did you have any speaking of that, did you have any problems in Bangkok, which now is and I don't know how it was then, was sort of the sex capital. Did this cause any problems with you as the section chief?

HAMILTON: No. It caused some problems for the military command because mainly because of illness. Sexually transmitted diseases are common in Thailand and they've got varieties that nobody ever heard of. I remember back as far as World War II, actually it was in India, not Thailand where an American navy, this was after the war, after the Japanese surrendered and everybody was waiting to go home. A major came down with

one of these diseases which nobody knew how to do anything about and he shot himself rather than go home to his family. That sort of thing. The military had somewhat of a problem because of prostitution and the interaction between them and the drug trade. It was not a problem for people going about their business in most parts of the town. I don't remember any embarrassment or being approached by streetwalkers or anything of that sort. Then as subsequently professional or amateur sex was easy to get if you were so minded, but there was no problem. I don't remember seeing a single problem case or otherwise what I would call within the embassy family.

Q: Well speaking of the embassy family, often a problem can occur with kids particularly in high school age there, both drugs and sex. Was this?

HAMILTON: Not that I'm aware of. It probably has been more since. This was still the 1960s; modern times were just beginning, so to speak. No. A lot of Americans children were in scouting. You probably know from the Vietnam days, Dick Stillwell, he was in Thailand while we were there some of the time and he was an avid scout.

Q: Yes, Dick Stillwell was in Korea when I was there.

HAMILTON: Right. There were good influences. There may have been cases that I didn't hear about. I never asked that question.

Q: It wasn't a matter of concern at sort of the country team?

HAMILTON: No. I don't remember it being among the wives much more later in the Philippines a lot of chatter about those problems. We lived physically closer in Manila, the DCM's house, I always said it was carefully balanced between, not the Catholic Church, but more particularly it was a training school for the nuns. On the other side there was a house of easy convenience apartments. They could look; they even looked down on people who arrived at our parties. The girls would be up on the third floor balcony and so on. Nothing, they never called or anything. Nothing bothers them. That's the Philippines in 1971 to 1973.

Later visiting Thailand I remember being accosted by women out in the street out walking at night which a lot of people would do. But I stayed by choice, I think I mentioned the Erawan Hotel and to me it was an easy walk from the embassy, rather than taking a tuk-tuk [Ed: motorized tricycle], bicycle or rickshaw. I would just walk. If it was in the evening I was approached. It never bothered me. It did happen occasionally.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss about Thailand?

HAMILTON: I think we've done pretty well. I came with things on my mind that we've covered. The mission, the pattern of the mission and how it worked and the impact of second Indochina war and the interesting institution of the royal family. Those I think are as meaningful. Let me just say in Foreign Service terms it was a wonderful post. People were receptive enough. It was desirable. There were possible health problems, and we

had good facilities. The one problem I had myself, I never got any dental care while I was there and I've paid for it since. There were dentists. Our daughter got orthodontics while we were there. There were facilities if you had time and the inclination to take care of them. It was a pretty happy community. We had good recreational facilities; military were there so we had a PX. People had good housing. We could afford servants on Foreign Service salaries and they were good quality whether they were Thai or. Our household was mixed as I mentioned. There was a Chinese woman. Our other servants including my driver, our driver for our own car and I didn't have an embassy car at that time, they were all Thai, ethnic Thai. There were problems already with traffic. Some people lived miles away because there was newer housing and better housing, but it meant it was a long ride to the international school for many of them. Parents had to take turns monitoring the buses. I'd take off from work once in a while to do that, but mainly Jean caught in the rotation when it was our turn she did it. Our children had about 40-45 minutes each way because of traffic. I dread to think what it must be now.

Q: Yes, I was talking to someone who was saying it was a major, major concern. Well, then in 1970, whither?

HAMILTON: Senior seminar, summer 1970 to 1971.

Q: How did you find the senior seminar?

HAMILTON: Just absolutely fabulous and I am so critical of the recent decision to abolish it. I haven't written a letter to the editor of the Foreign Service Journal, but I think it is a significant mistake. There's nothing wrong with what they've cooked up as a substitute which is short term few days or a week of expanding, trying to expand your horizons a little bit, but I used to say and have said ever since that year in the senior seminar that I don't know anybody in this country including the president who after a year or nine months of that is better able to represent the United States abroad than the products of the senior seminar. We had fabulous people coming in to lecture, specialists from around the whole East Coast, the mid-West, Washingtonians. We had at that time one week field trip every month. We visited each region of the country. New England, a week in New York City, a week in the South, New Orleans, and a couple other stops down there, a week in San Francisco, a week in Seattle and Alaska, a two week trip to put on with an Air Force plane being contributed. We spent one week touring around the United States Air Force from the historical museum in Ohio to Sandia labs. We visited every command except TAC (Tactical Air Command) at Langley field so they sent a briefing team out to brief us while we were at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. While there we made an excursion into a tunnel which was where they were going to have a nuclear explosion pretty soon. One of my sons and I's favorite artifacts is a piece of limestone. Just a hunk of limestone about the size of a baseball which I picked up on the floor of this tunnel as we were walking into see the face where they had holes and they were going to set off a nuclear explosion soon. I just picked it up for the heck of it and I brought it back and gave it to my then 10 year old son. I said, "This was going to disappear." He still has the rock.

It was fun, but it was serious fun. We listened to, we met with newspaper editors, we met with Mayor (Dianne) Feinstein, now a senator and other city officials. We met in Chicago with the mayor. We spent an evening, this was optional, but most of us did it, riding around in a police patrol car. That was a real life experience. We tooled through one of these well-known infamous high rise apartments which are just rabbit warrens of sin and inequity and murder and all that because they're occupied by people who came up from the South unprepared for city living. They live suddenly from the farm to like rats in a cage. It's very, very terrible; I don't know what it is now, probably torn down.

Q: I think that most of those high rises from the 1950s and 1960s have been torn down.

HAMILTON: Yes, it was an insight into what life of a city cop is like. We pulled up there and I said, "Well, do you go in these?" I think they had a report of something happening in one of the buildings. I said, "Are you going to go in there?" He said, "Heck, no. We're not going in there." We made a stop at a bar where there had been a fight and they started getting out of the car to go into this bar and I said, "Good luck" or something like that. They said, "Aren't you coming with us?" I said, "Well, I don't want to be in the way." They said, "It's not safe to sit out here." This was sort of dramatic.

But we got to another dramatic moment. The World Trade Center was up about three stories from the top and we went up in a wooden cable elevator and stood on the wood floor with no railing, 107 stories or something above Manhattan. We got briefings on the problems of putting up a structure like this and its relation to urban planning. It wasn't just amusement. We went to Cape Canaveral. All kinds of things. As I say the Air Force took us to every major command, McChord, Nellis, Sack, Omaha and a week in Alaska with this airplane chasing moose at tree top level, going to visit the University of Fairbanks where tuition is much cheaper for out of state students because they want to make it cosmopolitan instead of just Alaskans up to the North slope. We saw the caribou walking along under the pipeline. The geese mating.

We learned about what the public opinion had forced the oil companies to do by way of protecting the environment. It was really very impressive. It wouldn't have been done if there hadn't have been pressure, I'm sure of that, but it was done. For example, the people working up there, they used to fly them back to civilization on weekends where some of them had families. There was a multistory barracks what amounted to where everybody lived while they were up there, workers and to one of the environmental protection devices where they had strung a pipeline collecting all waste and ran it ten miles out into the Arctic Ocean by which time it was cool to ocean temperature and was all purified in the meantime. It had been processed long enough, so you could have drunk what came out of that pipe. They went to that length to avoid killing sea lions or something of that sort.

We went over to Barrow and watched how Eskimos lived, specifically from one security check to the next one. There were two supermarkets in Barrow and what do you call it, frozen dessert? Sally, I never buy it, but I used to go to the supermarket and buy frozen desserts. Houses. They would go out and hunt ducks at the right time of the year, throw

them up on the roof of their hut and then when you got hungry you would pull one down. All the bones littered the streets and so on. We saw American, and I don't minimize the value of the president traveling around the country, but he doesn't have time to stop and listen the way we did. It's an irreplaceable experience and particularly in our business. As I say I think we were better able to represent the United States to meet with Time magazine and New York Times editors and so on, than anybody. [Ed: Other State officers who also attended the 13th Senior Seminar and have oral histories on file with ADST are Horace G. Dawson, Jr. (USIA) and William P. Stedman, Jr. (State).]

Q: Then 1971 you went where?

HAMILTON: Manila. From 1971 to 1973. Just two years. Short tour. I thought surely we'd be extended, but it didn't happen.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

HAMILTON: Hank Byroade. Henry A. Byroade [Ed: Byroade served in the Philippines from August 29, 1969 to May 25, 1973. He has an oral history on file with ADST]. That was his fifth or sixth embassy I guess.

Q: Yes. What was the situation in the Philippines when you got there in '71?

HAMILTON: Disorganized. We had one year 1971 to 1972 before Martial law descended on the land and one year afterwards. Marcos gave up on the democratic process for a while. The national assembly was run by, dominated by, opposition people so it was fractious and troublesome. There were even more newspapers in Manila than there were in Bangkok. The Philippines enjoyed the electoral process. Their participatory rate is as far as voting is concerned is higher than ours. It was a very lively scene and was going downhill. There was corruption. There was political controversy. There was the, well, the assassination didn't occur while we were there, but the leading opposition figure was Ninoy Aquino, leader of the liberal party and then there were regional leaders, governors and others who dominated a particular island or piece of an island, you know archipelagic nation. It's multiethnic, so the government was running then and it continued a campaign to turn well, to make Tagalog the national language instead of English. English was really lingua franca of the Philippines. That of course is a credit to us. It's another case like Burma where the nation of diversity and with besetting economic problems was turned loose before they were ready for it. Independence, we promised them that in order to maintain Filipino support during the war and we carried through with that pledge. They became independent immediately. Its political history has been painful and they have avoided revolutions and coups, although there have been revolts with the communist insurgency and so on. Muslim separatism in the South, both of those were real in these two years that we were there. Life in Manila was as of it was in a cocoon. These problems of internal insecurity didn't spill over into the capital and didn't need any police escort riding around the greater Manila area. I had an embassy driver there, but for our own car we had a Filipino driver and used to take the children to the riding club or visit friends of whatever. It was not a problem.

The first year was increasing troublesome. There were incidents. There was a grenade throwing at a political rally that killed a few people and maimed one of the opposition figures from Cebu who was up in Manila at the time. That was one of the factors that contributed to the declaration of Martial law. The assembly was causing trouble. Marcos couldn't control it. There was increasing lawlessness. There was a shoot 'em up episode in the lobby of the Intercontinental Hotel. Things of that sort. Public order began to break down. Martial law was declared so that the press could be circumscribed. Public manifestations could be controlled and as happened the succession assured with a so-called election. The first year of Martial law was almost like a breath of relief. American businessmen were euphoric because there were no more break-ins or thefts of goods on the highways or disorder, threats to public order and they thought it was just great. We were not that thrilled because it was a suppression of the democratic process, but it had some good effect. It was a decree that to collect loose firearms only the military forces and police should keep their weapons. They did. They rounded up several hundred thousand ranging all the way to pistols to one landowner down on Mindoro Island who had a private tank on his estate and all the way in between. They cleaned up the streets and it was spit and polish. Everybody was, except the baddies, were happier and it was, it took a while before the limitations on free expression which were not the tightest and not like iron curtain countries, but before that began to manifest itself and people got upset. They never did succeed and haven't yet in suppressing the separatist tendencies which are understandable.

The Filipinos' dominant group are Malay people that migrated long ago and they had shared certain characteristics with the Malays and at least the Javanese in Indonesia. They suffered and partly in some ways benefited from 400 years of Spanish rule. Spanish did some good things for them, but they didn't encourage that we did subsequently general public education; it was much more a colonial enterprise. They had a better mix between benefited limitations under American colonial rule, but that lasted only less than 50 years which wasn't time enough as it turned out. It turned them into a thriving modern democracy, but one thing the American occupation did do thanks again to missionaries as much as government policy was to make it a dominantly English speaking nation. To some extent while we were there the government was trying to promote Tagalog which was a language on Luzon, the main island, but unknown in the Southern islands, to turn that into the national language. They call it Filipino, but it is basically Tagalog. They did it by such devices as progressively increasing the hours of television broadcasting in Filipino per week starting with mostly all English to begin with at least around Manila. I don't know what it was in the provinces. Gradually they would increase by decree the minimum number of hours in what was to become the national language. After a couple of generations, everybody will probably be bilingual. There was some surviving Spanish influence, a few families mainly in the central islands where Spanish influence, culturally survives.

I was invited once to lunch at the Spanish Club in Manila, which was a special privilege. This membership was very exclusive. They were mostly elderly men, a men's organization. You could just see them as hacienda owners or they were, the elite of once

Spanish society and proud of preserving their cultural heritage, but it was nowhere in the Philippines in our time where one had to know Spanish in order to communicate. It had virtually disappeared among the Filipino people. These were, these gentlemen were all descendants of Spanish planters or officials. I think that it makes sense. Indonesia was less successful and we see now that they been under greater threat of fragmentation than the Philippines. Language has something to do with that.

Q: What was our reading when you got there on Marcos and also his wife, Imelda?

HAMILTON: Yes. The policy was that we were supporting the government and he had a strong, he was a capable individual. My own personal opinion and this was through times at long periods as chargé and I had dealings with him. I respected him. I didn't agree with the martial law decision, but I think I understood. Even in that period we could do business effectively with him. He never went back on anything he said. If he said he would do something, he never went back on that. It was straightforward, a good relationship. Imelda is something else. As I've said many times out loud, not in print, that I wouldn't trust, I danced with her and used to do what people did, but I wouldn't trust her out of my sight at the time. She did some good things. A complex person. Of course she was power hungry. Came from a family that was in decline and she was trying to preserve some semblance of the kind of tradition that she wished she'd grown up in and her family had been a little more successful.

She did some good things. For example, she extorted money from the business community to build a national cultural center right on Manila Bay, a handsome building. I'm sure it's partly inspired by and somewhat similar to the Kennedy Center with capacity for multicultural activities. It had a large auditorium. It had smaller facilities for dramatic presentations and so on. There were two symphony orchestras in Manila and there were enough good musicians, they could have had one pretty darn good symphony orchestra. Neither of the two was first class, but enjoyable. We went to both concert series that they had. Another nice little touch in this cultural center, the auditorium, where it was held, Imelda had several rows in the balcony reserved for students and they got to come and hear good music regardless of family resources, how they were selected I don't know, probably by their teachers. She started community project, a health center, something of that sort every once in a while, always with publicity and going about in her finery in her latest pair of shoes. It was a mixed bag. She wasn't an evil woman. She had covetous instincts is what I think came from this family background of a proud tradition, but withering away.

Q: As DCM, you're basically the executive officer of the embassy. Were you concerned about sort of the embrace of Filipino society on particularly the officer corps or not? I'm thinking, you know, I mean Filipino society, these were well to do people and all and sometimes they can give a skewed influence on an embassy if it gets sort of in the social swing of things.

HAMILTON: Byroade's life at the time it was the second or third, Jitka Byroade, a woman I still see occasionally. She is a widow who lives here in Washington and she's a

nice lady, she Czech in origin and he took her away from an AID officer in Pakistan or she took him away from whatever, anyway. He was in between. She liked the high society life in Manila and she had her own program, ran around with the Malacañang ladies and was just fine. As a result of that, my Jean, the DCM's wife, could do whatever she wanted to. She never said do this or come here or anything of that sort. She had pretty much a life that she enjoyed and it wasn't bad for the totality there were so many American business wives share in that kind of activity and it was good to have somebody paying attention in those days. It wasn't difficult until the second year with martial law, then of course frictions developed and we had to be more careful about openness in association with the regime. I had good relations with, and I respected Marcos, correct with her. He was a good politician and a good national leader. I blame Imelda as much as anything for his finally reaching out and getting involved with corrupt practices as defense minister and others.

The regime went sour including Marcos himself, no question about that. They were very different. He came from a poor family up in the far North and he changes the kind of outlook. He was nouveau riche with all the problems that that represents and fitting into the Philippine system. We had relations across the spectrum with anyone who wasn't in an insurgency.

One of our main problems there that affected not only an able consul general, but to me anyway, was the problems of Filipinos seeking visas for relatives who didn't deserve them or qualify for them. Our consul general, Laurie Lawrence, who was just fine in the Philippine environment. He understood it. He had joined the rotary club. There were about 15 rotary clubs in the Manila area, but this was THE Manila rotary club, old time big business people. He came to me very early on and urged me to join the rotary club. Byroade had refused and I think that was correct for him. I thought Laurie talked me into it and it was a good association. I met; I didn't do much. I'd been political this and political that and I put a lot of stress on the Philippines on paying attention to the economic function and the people who were involved in that. The rotary seemed like a good thing.

Well, we'd go to lunch and Laurie couldn't even get in the door before Filipinos would be coming up. It started to come to me. I'd get telephone calls from former presidents of the Philippines, some relative who just really needed to go to the States and couldn't I help him. I had a wonderful relationship with Laurie Lawrence. As far as I know he abided by our compact and the compact was that I would never tempt to influence anything to do with his business, but if somebody came to me with special pleading, and I thought it was worthwhile in the position of the pleader, I would call Laurie and I'd say I would like you to review the case of so and so. You make a determination whether the finding was correct, the decision was correct. I told him and I adhered to it that if he told me the finding was correct, that that was it and I would go back to former President Macapagal and say, I've looked into this as you requested. I've discussed it with our consul general. I had him personally review the file and he tells me that by our law the decision was correct. I said now I don't have a consular exequatur. I know of no position to tell him what he must do.

Q: Even the ambassador does not have consular exequatur.

HAMILTON: That's right. So, I'm sorry. He stayed, we weren't close, but we were friendly. I never lost a Filipino friend that I know of when I had to say I'm sorry. I have to assume that Laurie did know.

Q: Laurie left with a very good reputation. I have to say that two of his I think successors got into trouble. I mean there is a very tricky thing. I had a bit of that as consul general in Seoul. You know, I mean, you can hardly go anywhere. You always try to be in a circular room if you could so no one can corner you.

HAMILTON: Run into the roundhouse Nellie!

Q: It's a major problem. How did you find the, how did Ambassador Henry Byroade run the embassy when he was there?

HAMILTON: Unevenly. He was very effective. He was very good at some things and he was very uninterested in other things. I had to learn that pattern. My view of the role of the DCM and in a sense was that the ambassador and the DCM are like a Chinese round puzzle with various pieces that fit together and the ambassador does whatever with regard to mission leadership and management that he wants to. The DCM damn well better do everything else. That's the way I tried to play it. For example, if the administrative counselor came in with plans for a house that he wanted to lease and he wanted to show me the plans and the plumbing and all that, I said, don't waste your time Murray, go right into the ambassador out of his West Point engineer's background. He was intensely interested in real estate and he would look at the wiring diagrams and everything else. That was the kind of pattern that I pursued. We used to coordinate our social schedules. We would often many times be invited to the same six or seven parties every evening. I would find out where he wanted to go and Jean and I would go to the other ones. Sometimes we both went, depending if it was a cabinet level.

We were entirely different personalities, but we got on amiably. It wasn't close. Our children were never invited to come and swim in the residence pool for example. Amiably he was perfectly honorable. His evaluations were, he liked, every once in a while he would wake up in the middle of the night and worry about some problems and would sit and draft a telegram. I learned very quickly that it wasn't worth trying to smooth out some of his expression, which to me were a little awkward, but I never tried to smooth it out. These were all opinions. Here is how I see the situation. I'd say that's his business. I just. We were not as close as some DCMs get to their ambassadors in terms of affecting the substance of what the ambassador did. He was very experienced. He'd been through that job several times and despite the personality differences, he was busy, what was he working on then, his car, or a boat? He loved to tinker. He repaired an old Rolls Royce and bothered admin counselors around Asia. Can you find me a gasket number so and so? That sort of thing. We were really very different, but I think it was an effective relationship. He was interested in staff to a reasonable degree. It was a huge

mission. The inner embassy family was something like on the country team level was 400 and some people. We had a guard. Our security officer ran a guard battalion of 500 Filipinos internal security for our various facilities. All of whom were English speaking college graduates.

Q: How did you find Byroade, I mean what would you say the relation was to the Marcos?

HAMILTON: Reasonably close I think. Marcos talked quite openly with him and he at least up to martial law felt I think, he never said this, but I think he felt that Marcos was as good for that country as that country was likely to get, with flaws in the system. He left six months after martial law and I'm not, he hadn't been well and I don't know exactly why he left right then, it left a gap for some months, but he never turned away from him that I know. [Ed: Ambassador William Sullivan succeeded Byroade and presented his credential on August 6, 1973. Hamilton would have been chargé d'affaires in this interim] I guess that's about all I can say.

Q: Did you have any contact with what was it Benigno Aquino?

HAMILTON: I didn't, but Frank Maestrone who was political counselor did and one of his junior officers John Forbes even more intensely. Byroade, he never told me not to talk to him, but Byroade was not encouraging the opposition and so I used to say hello to Aquino if I would see him every once in a while. I never tried to do any business with him, but the embassy did.

Q: How did the Ambassador handle the Country Team? Was it a smooth operation?

HAMILTON: I really attach importance to the functioning of the country team there in part because it was such a turnover in mid-1971 and within two weeks in July there arrived not only myself, but new political and economic and admin counselors and General Grimsley the MAG chief. There's a pretty significant component of the country team. Fortunately I had gotten to know the Foreign Service people in Washington before we went out. They all came out of the National War College. My wife, Jean and I had couples for dinner in our house in Arlington to get acquainted before we even arrived in Manila and that was helpful. But Byroade partly I'm sure because he really wasn't well, accepted this new team as really ready to function. On the day of our arrival for example, we were driven from the airport to our house, which was already staffed and so on. It was a nice house. He had turned out the whole country team to go to the airport at 5:00 in the morning to welcome the new DCM. I felt badly about that. That's not a good way for me to start off getting acquainted with them.

Then the word came that the Byroades would like Jean and myself to come for lunch. We found that this inherited cook could take care of our children for lunch and off we went to the residence, which was pleasant and talked not about embassy business. At the end of it Byroade said, I'm sick. I'm not going back to the embassy today. You go down and take over. So, I got into the car and went down and walked in the front door and introduced

myself to the marine and went upstairs and introduced myself to two secretaries and said I quoted what Byroade had said. I had to do the embassy's business before I could even think about unpacking. That was a vote of confidence and Byroade gave an even greater one when within about three weeks is the best I can recall at a country team meeting I hadn't, he hadn't signaled it to me. He suddenly announced, "I'm going on home leave." I think it was partly because he didn't feel well and he needed to get away. Anyway, they took off. The next country team meeting I opened by saying, you know, the Ambassador has paid us the greatest compliment I can imagine. We've all just arrived coming from various previous incarnations. He hasn't had a chance to do more than get superficially acquainted with us, but he had confidence that he can take off and leave his mission, which is an important one in the United States foreign relations in our collective hands. So, we're going to show him that we can do it. The country team melded together quite well. He was a senior commander. His army background helped enable him to do with what you have. You can't do it, you try something else. As I know I said before, he and I were very different personalities. We're not chummy at all. I was able to maintain a good working relationship and do what DCMs are supposed to do namely whatever there is that the ambassador doesn't want to handle himself. He got very nice. He was friendly.

A year after we were there I succumbed to what was a longstanding back, lower back, problem and it got so bad that I couldn't work. I couldn't walk at all. I was sick several days. I had to crawl from bed to the bathroom on hands and knees literally and then I was flown by helicopter up to Clark Field because I couldn't stand the road trip. I was in the hospital and after bed rest didn't work and an intravenous called a myelogram which tracks where the, they could probably find out where the problem was by inserting I guess a radioactive substance that they can see. A surgeon came in one day and he said, well, you've been here resting for two weeks, whatever it was. He says, either get up and go back to work or I will operate. I said, well, I can't go back to work, so go ahead and it was done. This is mid-1972. It happened at a very bad time. Mother Nature misbehaved and in an unusual event two typhoons developed, one coming west from the mid Pacific islands, one coming up from the South and they conjoined over Luzon Island and whirled around in a circle stationary for a month. In 30 days 180 inches of rain fell on Luzon Island. Six inches a day average. I was lying in Clark Field Hospital. Central Luzon was flooded. They said it was possible, this is a slight exaggeration, not much, that one could have driven a long tail boat from Manila Bay to Lingayen Gulf. The course of rivers was changed. Clark Field was pretty isolated. I didn't see my family after this surgery. As soon as it was possible, in fact they were cut off. The embassy had to send groceries into them in a high wheeled vehicle because the water up to our house was so deep the sedans couldn't handle it.

Byroade came out to see me while I was in the hospital and he probably brought some stuff or whatever. I think essentially he came up to see me and I was deeply grateful for that. He had despite our different natures, he had human qualities and I appreciated them. That flood was really a terrible disaster. The Philippines is buffeted by nature. They've got volcanoes, they have typhoons. If they don't have a flood, they have a drought. Either their corn crop is ruined or something else. Mother Nature is not kind, but it recovers quickly. The land recovers quickly from whatever it is.

I talked about the Mindanao adventure and Joe O'Neill. Just one other quick thing and this is no more than a footnote, but one of the events in the Philippines annually which is worth recalling is the anniversary of the American landing in Leyte, MacArthur's return to the Philippines. You've seen the pictures of MacArthur striding ashore in knee deep water and there was General Romulo on his right, a couple of steps behind as they made the landing. Well, this is a major event in the Philippines. They celebrate not only good times like that, but the bad times. It was interesting to me that there were major celebrations each year that I was there of the fall of Corregidor and the fall of Bataan and we would all ride over on the presidential yacht. Then they'd have a ceremony and for the Filipinos I decided what it meant. You didn't hear words like this, they are mine. They celebrated, they were not bemoaning these defeats, they were celebrating and I took it to mean because World War II had finished the formation of the Philippine nation, brought it together. They suffered together and so the Philippine nation was annealed by fire and for them it was celebrations. Not so happy from our point of view especially the second year when for the first time they invited the Japanese ambassador to come along for the Bataan celebration and that was one of the times I, few times, I regretted being a chargé because I really couldn't stand up tall to the Japanese ambassador who was a very nice man and his remarks were appropriate in a detached, looking at from a detached point of view, but that was sort of an awkward moment. I had gotten along with German submarine skippers without difficulty, that is subsequently attachés where we served, but I had more trouble personally with the Japanese and I guess that's because of family, not my personal experiences and making the adjustment was a little more difficult. It passed. I didn't have to take Tums to get over it, but that was an event with a difference when the Japanese ambassador and I had to join in celebrating the fall of Bataan. Enough.

Q: Today is the 28th of January, 2004. Bill, in the Philippines, how were relations with the military at that time; of course we're still in the middle of the Vietnam War. We were drawing down, but how did that play out where you were?

HAMILTON: There were several, there were three commands if you will. There was JUSMAG, Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group, in Manila and spread throughout the country. That was headed by an army officer and I wanted to say a little more about how Ambassador Byroade put the country team together and this is an element of it. There was due to be a rotation of the MAG chief in mid-1971 and that has always been a pre-retirement major general, which everybody knew it meant you didn't get the cream of the crop. Byroade requested and carried the day to downgrade the position to a one star brigadier general and he did it primarily for the reason that he wanted the MAG chief to be able to talk to the Philippine service commanders at high levels and the Filipinos had not engaged in grade creep to the extent of some governments, so that the chiefs of the army, navy, etc. were one star. Byroade wanted to look at them at eye level. Well, he got the army to agree with that and the result was that this instead of being a pre-retirement job was a good job for a one star and he sent a fine officer, Brigadier General Jim Grimsley who had an excellent standing there. He served on the Army General staff before retiring in 1975. In retirement he went on to be commandant of The Citadel [Ed: 1980-1989]. I've forgotten if he retired at two or three stars, but he got promoted after

that job. He is a very fine man. We're still in touch on a personal basis. He and his wife, retired now in South Carolina. I think he was a good manager. I know that he had good relations with the Philippine services. They of course looked to us. His job was to justify requests for military assistance to Washington and hopefully win and then handle the receipt and distribution of it. It was a job that the Filipinos wanted.

They also wanted the other position at the time we were there, they wanted the other positions. The 13th air force at Clark Air Force Base. That was headed by an air force major general and the troubles over at Clark had not set in at that time. There had been questions as you probably know back earlier in the Vietnam War period or Indochina war as I call the period over the use of Clark Air Force Base to launch direct strikes on Indochina territory. That upset the Filipinos for a while, but they accepted it. It bothered them a little to have B52s taking off from the Philippines and bombing Vietnam and Cambodia.

Then of course there was the navy centered at Subic Bay. There were actually two commands there. There was COMNAVPHIL, Commander of Naval Forces in the Philippines and there was CINCPACREPPHIL. They were combined in the same person who was a rear admiral. There was one two-star and one one-star who was two hatted at both these positions. I think relations were very good. There were social problems that related to the navy. It was a wide open sailor town and all the problems that go with that, but the Filipinos were relatively tolerant. We did have problems with the occasional commission of crimes by servicemen against Filipinos. Arguments over jurisdiction and who would try the case arose. I may have mentioned in an earlier session that the embassy staff included an air force legal officer, major level, who spent full time dealing with the Philippine court and the justice department officials on matters related to the adjudication of cases involving American servicemen. That was a full time job and in some cases aroused quite a bit of feeling, but the Status of Forces Agreement worked there with continued effort. It took effort all the time. It was a multifaceted military presence welcomed up to then by the Filipinos.

After Vietnam it made less sense and as you know thanks to Mother Nature the departure from Clark field was hastened. A volcano blew up.

Q: Pinatubo.

HAMILTON: Right. It covered Clark Air Force Base with a heavy layer of gray silt from the volcano and because of the political strategic changes with Vietnam winding down, the services concluded it was not worth the cost of salvaging it, the base and there was no realistic question of finding a new location with a comparable amount of real estate and starting a new base elsewhere. It was just given up.

Q: Was there an insurgency going on while you were there?

HAMILTON: Yes.

Q: How did we view that?

HAMILTON: As bad. There were two, one was communist led in the Northern part of Luzon, mainly disaffected youth. It was not large, but they made mischief, raided police stations, caused casualties and were an annoyance. The battle against them was waged largely by the Philippine constabulary, which is something between the state police and National Guard in character. Like a national police rather than the army. The other insurgency was in the South in Muslim areas and was inspired with unknown degree of support either through insertion of leaders or money and in Mindanao stirring up trouble there. There were some areas mainly in the hinterland of that big island which were very unstable.

One of the points I should mention was the activities of an ambitious consular officer in Cebu. That was the only other consulate through that period. We had a USIS post in Davao for a while, but the consul in Cebu was energetic. A fellow named Dan Sullivan and his vice consul was even more adventurous, Joe O'Neill. [Ed: Sullivan and O'Neil has oral histories on file with ADST.] He was a rough it in the countryside type. We had known him in Laos, he was a communicator then and in Thailand he was in a country post, Phitsanulok, I think was with USIA at that time. He kept moving along in the service and got commissioned as vice consul in Cebu along in probably late 1972. We received a proposal that O'Neill take a trip to Mindanao and visit various places and to take soundings, public mood and that sort of thing. In Mindanao there are American economic interests. Dole Pineapple and its competitor, the other one and this was checked with the embassy and proved, but Joe O'Neill was a backwoods type. Once he got out there in the hinterland, he went beyond what had been agreed and we learned that he had visited places far into what the station folks there believed was very dangerous territory. Fortunately he got himself back and the main complication was what to do about efficiency reports, both his and Dan Sullivan's. Fortunately nothing bad happened.

At that time, once Vietnam was over, then Philippine attitudes toward the American military presence and activities shifted. The Philippine nationalism asserted itself and although they still wanted to get military aid, I'm off beyond my time frame now, they still wanted to get military aid, but were less interested in or didn't see the need for the combat presence that the air force had represented. So that went away.

Q: Were we giving much aid to the Philippines at that time?

HAMILTON: You're taxing me now. It was relatively modest. It was tailored. There was economic aid, which was more substantial than the military. The military aid, the MAG group was about and in personnel my recollection is that it was not more than 60 to 75 total of all services and handling in shipments and so on. That's not a big mission. It could get very involved. Just to back up a minute and I'll return to this while I talk about the naval presence and eventually Subic and Olongapo disappeared. We had another place in Manila Bay, Sangley Point that was halfway between Corregidor at the time and Manila on the Southside of Manila Bay. One of the first significant acts that I committed there was to sign an agreement which transferred all the property at Sangley Point to the

Philippines and with an inventory that was 100 or so pages long on the fire hydrants and telephone poles and miles of wire and spare toilets and everything else. It was all inventoried. The agreement had been reached to do this prior, but the implementation of it was done around August or September of 1971 and then we were out of Manila Bay. The only other military or quasi-military presence was a signal station at San Miguel on the West Coast of Luzon Island, a communications facility.

Now back to aid. The focus well you know the earlier history about the great aid that we were not only to the Philippines, but to all rice growing areas through the workers assigned this at Los Baños Agricultural Research Institute. They developed a new strain of rice, which produced more rice with less fertilizer, and less water and was faster growing. They would enable people in other countries and Southeast Asia as well to double crop where it hadn't existed before.

Q: It's part of the green revolution wasn't it?

HAMILTON: Yes. A very significant development and with a benefit in Thailand, well, almost everywhere. Since then there has been developments of many new strains adapted to particular soils and altitudes and moisture levels and so on for other countries, but this was the beginning. One interesting thing, the Philippines at that time was the only Catholic country, I'm pretty sure I can say, which had any tolerance for family planning and they did. USAID was able to mount a project of assistance. It was on a selective basis, but we visited a clinic down in the central islands where nuns were handing out birth control materials, contrary to anything the Vatican ever said they could do, but they did. The Philippine birth rate dropped to a more tolerable level for a while. It's now I think creeping back a little bit. It was agriculture, mainly rural development, that was the emphasis of the AID program. A good director, Tom Niblock, who had a lot of Southeast Asia experience.

Q: What was your impression of sort of the Philippine society and political life?

HAMILTON: Well, it was stratified. I've talked about the Malacañang ladies that Jitka Byroade used to pal around with and there were comparable groups in the other cities. I also mentioned the residue of the Spanish presence and there were clubs and small groups of people whose bloodline was pretty straight Spanish and who prized a cultural heritage. They mixed in varying degrees, but in some cases, really not very much. Some of the sugar plantations in the mid-islands were owned and managed by Spanish landlords or companies. As in any agriculture country in that part of the world, the gap between landowners and those who plant and harvest rice is socially pretty great. I think it may be less so in the Philippines because of the universality of education. There are no illiterate rice planters or harvesters. They made a big difference.

The political stratification was in sort of our standard terms. Marcos' party was relatively conservative, nationalist conservative and the opposition, main opposition, the liberal party, favored looser controls and greater allowance for local initiatives and giving heed to pressures that built up in the countryside. The election process was difficult, not

always peaceful. There was the assassination that you know about. What was it called? Grenades thrown during a political rally at the name of the park or square is what's missing from my mind. A number of opposition leaders were injured in that, one was disabled by it.

Q: Did you feel much pressure or anything like from the equivalent to a Philippine lobby back in the United States as we've got China lobbies and other groups? People had the ears of certain members of Congress and that sort of thing.

HAMILTON: Not that I'm aware of. There were already then enough Filipinos in the U.S. so that they were becoming politically active in some localities, California, the Southwest generally and some of the urban centers. There's an ethnic minority, but of course in this country they blended in better than people from some other parts of the world and I think the majority of Filipinos who came to this country were not very political. For example, a significant percentage, though I don't know the percentage, were medical personnel. Nurses, especially, but a lot of doctors also. They essentially were just interested in their careers. I'm not aware of a lobby that hit in Washington with any effect. We never got any complaints or any echoes of that sort of thing.

The pressures in the Philippines existed. One of the embarrassing political movements while we were there was called 51st State Movement and it was started by a group of Filipinos, not top people. These were professional level, but not top political. They were anti-Marcos. The platform of the 51st State Movement was: we must work to perfect Philippine democracy overcoming all its present evil or words to that effect or failing that, join the United States as the 51st state. They went around and collected more than a million pesos selling memberships for one peso which meant a million people were card carrying members of this movement. We used to get delegations coming to the embassy. It was entirely peaceful, but they'd bring a few thousand people would come along and want to harangue us with their demands. There wasn't much we could do about that, but it would have been, it struck a chord. Loads of Filipinos, they were applying for visas every day. That was one way to get to the U.S. If you couldn't do that, then you could either get on a family member basis for when somebody got a visa or this was another idea.

I guess I can say this, it was a really funny episode in the 1970s, way in advance of our 1976 bicentennial. It was the 4th of July, 1972 or 1973. All embassies around the world received a multicolored certificate or plaque saying to the citizens of wherever, the United States is going to observe our bicentennial in 1976 and you're all invited. We were supposed to present this at the appropriately high level. I took it and I had to preside at the July 4th reception. We did it that modestly, just a reception for the diplomatic corps and former secretaries of state and the Papal Nuncio. A small crowd. We had an American picnic. I took this paper, I've forgotten what to call it. It was like a certificate, but it amounted to an invitation and I took it and showed it to the Philippine representative, General Romulo. He never came to national days. On our national day he always sent a big bouquet of roses. I got a nice note, it said, "Bill, you know I can't go to national days, even yours." In guilt he sent a big bouquet of roses. The undersecretary

Jose Ingliss was representing the Philippine government at that 4th of July reception. I took the certificate along and I took him aside. I have a photo which USIS or somebody took in which I'm showing this thing to him and we're both laughing. I said, "You know, if we print this in the paper there will be a line at our visa office 50 miles long." It was like when Lyndon Johnson went to Pakistan and told the camel driver. He said, y'all come. Well, that was the purport of this and even Jose Ingliss just doubled over laughing looking at this thing. I never let it out of my sight.

Q: When you left there in July 1973. Whither? What did you do?

HAMILTON: My departure from there was occasioned by Vice President Agnew's unhappiness over that of his associate Mike Dutton with the handling of that four hour visit. Have I mentioned this?

Q: What happened, you didn't talk about this?

HAMILTON: I didn't? I'll explain how I got back to Washington then. My expectation had been two years, home leave and return which would have been mid-1973. Back in around January 1973 a telegram came in on a Friday and, no it wasn't a telegram, but news on the AP ticker, reported that the president had commissioned Vice President Agnew to make a tour through Asia and explained to our allies and friends why it was correct that we were making peace in Vietnam and going to withdraw. Agnew was going to go to Seoul, Tokyo, Taipei, Saigon, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, period. That came in on Friday on the ticker. I kept silent until Sunday morning waiting for the follow up telegram, which never came. I sent an immediate precedence cable delivered 8:00 AM recounting it. I said, we hear from the news that this is going to happen. The omission of Burma and the Philippines from this itinerary may not be painful in Rangoon, but it is going to hurt like hell here, request guidance. I'm very glad I sent that because on Monday morning I got a call to come see the foreign secretary, General Romulo. When I thought I had said this before and misspoke about getting a call from his niece I think it was who served as his secretary, but actually it was a call, summons came from the chief of protocol. It was very formal. So I knew immediately that this was front and center. It was to come see the general in an hour which I did and he sat me down and talked for about 40 minutes about how he was known elsewhere in Asia as an American mouthpiece who was expected to be to know what we were up to and why we were doing it and his words were supposed to be supportive most of the time. He said, I'm about to go off next week to a meeting at the ASEAN foreign ministers. What am I supposed to say about my standing and what it is that's going on? He spoke on this for about 40 minutes and when he stopped I said, "General; I thank you for what you have said. In the first place it shows that you accept me as representative of the United States even though we don't have an ambassador here or you wouldn't have talked like that and I thank you for it. Secondly, you have confirmed very thoroughly what I predicted in a message to Washington yesterday and have documented it more fully than I possibly could have. So, I am really quite grateful to you and I shall report this conversation as fully as I can reconstruct it." I went back and did that.

The reporting message may not have been caused so much trouble, but then I exceeded my charter as it turned out and sent another cable with a restricted distribution caption suggesting that one way to work through this problem of the terrible reaction there would be if Agnew did not come to Manila, that it might come about if the timing should be right that the prisoners would be coming home from Vietnam about the time of this trip. They were going to come to Clark field in the Philippines as an initial reentry point and so that would work out wonderfully well for the Vice President to be here for that and to round out his visit, the mission of his visit. Well, that was a bad thing to say. For one thing, the president wanted to come out to be on hand when the troops returned to Clark Field and they whoever that might have been wouldn't let him. He wasn't about to let Agnew do the honors. In the event Admiral Gayler, who was CINCPAC at that time was the U.S. representative at the ceremony of the return of the prisoners. The other bad part of it was that unbeknownst to us of course at the end of that tour of Agnew which the last stop was Kuala Lumpur, he was going to fly straight to Washington in time for a speaking engagement which must have been important. He didn't want to stop in Manila on the way back, but my screaming raised enough dust so that somebody decided that he should by golly come to Manila. He did a wonderful job. He was on the ground four hours and it was time enough to bring him to the embassy, get in a briefing of what he told. I followed up taking him to Malacañang and giving him a couple of cautions about things we hoped wouldn't come up such as the South China Sea Islands. [Ed: the Agnew trip was from January 28 to February 10, 1973]

Q: Spratly?

HAMILTON: Spratly and Paracel, yes and some other little reefs. Then after a coke or something, off we went to Malacañang and he was ushered in right into Marcos' office so fast that I got left behind. Somebody stopped me to say hello and so they had to send a courier off to bring me into the audience. I was of course relieved that that happened. He and Marcos had a talk for about half an hour, which was innocuous, and Marcos did indeed bring up the island debt. Agnew I don't know what he was going to say, but it seemed that he hadn't really heard me. So, I said, I intruded and said, well, "Mr. Vice President, I'm sure you know that the U.S. government does not take a position on this issue. We are aware of conflicting claims, multiple claims to those territories and we simply stand aside." He didn't get a chance to say that if he knew to say it. I didn't dare run the risk of anything different being said.

Then there was a luncheon. This was what I thought I remember saying. Marcos had a table arranged in a hollow U with the honorees in the middle of the base of the U, Marcos and Agnew and his wife was there, too and cabinet members, a couple of ambassadors all around the rest. I was at the end of the base and I could see what was going on. They served a nice lunch. It was a TV event of the day for Marcos. The microphones were set up in the pit of the U so they could pan around this distinguished group. Agnew got up and gave a five minute talk which was absolutely excellent, talking about America's continuing security interest in the region and how he was pleased to travel around just as if it had always intended to come to Manila. Marcos responded appropriately and I took

him back to his airplane and they flew away. I wrote a laudatory telegram about how successful this had been, but somebody didn't like it and it was a month or so later I got a message, a telephone message that woke me up in the middle of the night which was the executive director in EA I guess it was by then, we're pulling you out. That was his opener. That didn't happen until July, but I said, what for. He said, well, that became necessary because of a recent visitor. That was all he told me. Then I got confirmation of that when I got back. It was either Agnew or it was General Mike Dutton who lowered the ax. I never knew why. I know he didn't want to do it, but he got back to give his speech and he did a good job in the Philippines and he was the Vice President of the United States and it served our national interests. Our national interests would have been disserved had he over flown Manila. [Ed: VP Agnew was critical of Hamilton and singled him out in a negative comment in his briefing to President Nixon, see the Foreign Relations of the U.S. 1969-1976, Volume E-12, Documents on East Asia, 1973-1976, or on-line at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve12/d1>]

I have no regrets except that my career had been moving fairly well and then it stopped. I came back to Washington in 1973 to what was an honorable assignment, but it wasn't what I think I was pointed toward, namely the director of research in INR for East Asia and the Pacific. It was an honorable FSO-1 position, but I had spent enough years in INR before that it wasn't charming. It turned out to be the worst two years of my life, 1973 to 1975, that is, my career life, because I was unable to build a positive relationship or useful one with the head of INR who was Bill Hyland who Kissinger brought with him from the NSC staff when Kissinger moved over to be Secretary. [Ed: Hyland served as Assistant Secretary for INR from January 21, 1974 to November 24, 1975. His predecessor was Ray Cline who left in November 1973.] Bill Hyland is a very qualified, able Soviet specialist, was, at the time. He neither knew nor cared anything about China, let alone the rest of East Asia and we couldn't get his ear. I had some problems with staff in my section; it was uneven. I had some excellent people who turned out excellent work, most notably my deputy was Evelyn Colbert, a lifelong civil servant.

Q: This is tape six, side one with Bill Hamilton. You mentioned Evelyn Colbert?

HAMILTON: Correct. She had been an analyst and an editor in the Far East part of INR, but now deputy of this office. She was just fine and went onto greater glories. Even while I was still there she got appointed to be in NIO, national intelligence officer for Southeast Asia and the Pacific and went over to the DCI's office for a couple of years. Subsequently she came back as deputy assistant secretary in the East Asia bureau. A fine woman whom I see several times a year.

Q: She lives here?

HAMILTON: She lives now in Collington, in a retirement place, east of the city where quite a number of Foreign Service and State Department people are. Her husband had died young, rather prematurely, Jim Colbert. He was also was in State and in the European bureau I think mainly on East-West trade matters. The other staff in this office was a mix of mostly Foreign Service people, but a couple of other civil service which

was the INR pattern and I support that idea. There ought to be frequent in bureau and specialists from outside and a couple of really fine ones came along. A fellow who started as bottom level, a China hand that rose up to be on the NSC staff and had a fine career, but there were a couple of people who came along who couldn't be productive and so it was a time of pressure. The first time that I had to work in a situation in which my work was not appreciated. There wasn't enough interest in it and therefore, I wasn't supported in any meaningful way. That was the low time for me despite pleasant associations within my own shop.

Q: Well, Bill just to go back a bit. When you returned from the Philippines, did you get any more feeling for why you were pulled out and also why Agnew was not scheduled for the Philippines in the first place? It would strike me that someone would talk.

HAMILTON: On the latter, no, I didn't get any insight and I didn't get an answer on the question of the disposition of Bill Hamilton. What I got confirmation of, I was supposed to have, what is the term, is it condescending or something like that? Then I got a specific statement confirming my hunch that the supposition that the impetus had come from the vice president's office. Then knowing that such requests went to the executive area, secretary, I talked directly to Ted Elliott, the incumbent and he recalled and he said, oh, I never pass that on. I have a suspicion as to who might have, in his office, but I have no evidence and I am not going to fight a, I've sat on that all this time and I'm going to continue to. It was a case of, I think, of an officer who wanted the Manila job and therefore, it would be good for me not to have two plus two. If that's true, he didn't get it. Nobody won I guess except whatever satisfaction whether it was Agnew's office or having got rid of another. He was pretty good at that. He had Chuck Cross, both out of Malaysia, Singapore and Malaysia. Chuck Cross survived. I mean he went on to better things. My belief is that I was doing well enough so that that episode cost me momentum from which I never really rallied.

Q: This of course happens. Not too long thereafter Agnew himself got the shove.

HAMILTON: He went to jail for his errors. I at least didn't do that.

Q: I would have thought the Asian part of INR would have been bubbling because of the opening of China and all that.

HAMILTON: Well, nobody was interested. Yes, that's right. I had a useful role. I used to brief with special materials the assistant secretary every day. If I wasn't there, Evelyn Colbert would and the desk officers were in touch with the country desk officers in the bureau, so I mean we were doing things, but the written product was not satisfying. It was not of interest. If I projected to Hyland that this China analyst his name was Williams, was starting out on a major project or something, he'd say, well who cares about that. That's not a quote. I got that kind of a reaction. He was just a Eurocentric and was not interested in Asia. We did some things.

I have a minor comment about Kissinger whom I didn't get to know personally, but he is

so widely known to have been rough on people and no doubt about that, but he had engaging trait or two also. One of the phenomena of his time was that the various offices in INR were asked to put together on Friday a collection of things for “weekend reading” and Kissinger’s staff would put it all in a suitcase and he’d take it home and usually he didn’t know so what, but in a couple of cases, when a short intelligence note by one of my staff members was included in the weekend reading and it would come back from Kissinger. “HAK interesting.” It might have a question mark on some paragraph, why do you think this, explain more which shows the openness of or the breadth of his mind and that he read all kinds of things. I give him credit for that and for commenting down. He was very good for a FSO-6 at that time to get a note from the Secretary who read his little paper. That was the best part of life in INR in 1973 to 1975.

Q: What was your impression of the intelligence I mean out of the CIA at that time on your part?

HAMILTON: I personally did not see enough of it. I don’t think I can answer that. The analysts did, but I didn’t have time to read. I had to be almost buried in the special intelligence materials and so I just can’t answer that.

Q: Well, does this show that in a way that the CIA was kind of doing its thing and you all were doing your thing and there wasn’t either time or interest in trying to put things together?

HAMILTON: There was interest, but I think that the aura at that time was to give special credence to the special intelligence materials, the code word stuff that requires a separate in brief.. There is some reason for that; most of it is something other than hearsay. It meant that the more or less traditional CIA field reporting operated under a handicap and if there was a discrepancy there was something that had the appearance of being a genuine product from the field, it got the nod.

Q: You were trained to be a little bit discreet. Any sophisticated reader knows we’re really talking about intercept and photographic materials. Such materials may seem sexy but it is also dangerous because you only are taking small little tidbits in time and place. It is determining where trends are going, which can be more important.

HAMILTON: The INR analysts in my experience, it would be very rare that a single incoming piece of intelligence would lead to a product, no. What you looked for, you immediately start looking for collateral. That’s the way it should be.

Q: With the opening to China and the establishment of the Liaison Office, I assume we were getting good stuff out of Beijing, but weren’t we still relying pretty heavily on what came out of Hong Kong and the analysis from there.

HAMILTON: That’s quite true.

Q: Because our people who went to China were in the initial stages of developing

contacts whereas our Hong Kong people had multiple and broad sources just in the refugees and the newspapers and all that.

HAMILTON: What you've said is quite true. At this time we were just beginning to set up shop in China and people had to make contacts and in that environment apparently, well, is not hostile, at least not a friendly regime, takes time. It's not surprising that the experience and not only our officers in Hong Kong, but the local staff that had a leg up on anything that was coming out of mainland China other than of course the INR people read all the open radio broadcasts and things of that sort.

Q: FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service).

HAMILTON: FBIS, yes, they read that for 10 or 15 years and you can glean quite a lot of insight from it, through all the propaganda. The same in the Soviet case, the analysts track variations in language, the stronger word to a less strong one, what does that mean? So, those open sources were not without significance, far from it, especially when it's an otherwise closed society.

Q: You were in INR from 1973 to 1975; then what did you do?

HAMILTON: Let's see, I don't trust my mind much anymore. In 1975 I was invited to comment on the prospect that I would be assigned to the National War College, Ft. McNair in a two hatted position as it turned out. It took time to evolve. It was just at the time when the National Defense University was being formed up. Consequent to that the commandants of the two service war colleges, the War College and Industrial College were downgraded from three stars to two. State decided it was inappropriate to have an ambassador as what amounts to second command to this two star commandant. That position at each college was downgraded to an FSO-1 slot and I was invited to fill it and was happy to accept. I'd had the experience at SHAPE, experience at the Pentagon for two years, I got on well with our military friends, had many friends, so it was fine. It was a very good assignment. The first year was more satisfying than the second, which I will briefly explain. The commandant, the first year, a man named Jim Murphy was a major, an air force major general whom I can believe was a superb wing commander. He was totally unqualified to associate with, as he called them, a bunch of academicians. He had as much trouble with that word as our president (Bush) does with nuclear. Occasionally it was embarrassing. He was a fine commandant from the standpoint of the students. He got to know every one of them on a first name basis. He was a good leader and they all liked him, but he was not qualified to run a college. The result of that was that he leaned very hard on me and I used to spend a good part of each day sitting on the couch in his office being asked about this and asked about that. I did a lot of things that he might have done had he chosen, introducing even quite distinguished speakers when they were down. Being asked, it was a competition between me and the executive officer, an army colonel who thought he should be the number two in the college, but the commandant without any pressure on my part gave me the number two office, a great huge office on the end of the building, windows on two sides and so on. He definitely treated me as the number two at the college.

Collaterally I was chairman of the Department of International Studies which meant I was supposed to direct and plan the future program for a staff of 11 mixed military and civilian officers including one Foreign Service Officer who just died a couple of months ago, Bill Witt, a Middle East type and he had been there and had retired from the Foreign Service and was taken on as a Defense Department civilian. Most of the teaching was done by my staff. I only gave less than a handful of lectures of auditorium lectures while I was there. I was so busy I didn't have time to prepare them. I did a couple of times and I gave an occasional presentation in one of the elective the afternoon of courses smaller groups. I fought with the State Department to maintain this representation. It was an economy move to reduce the number of State people, Foreign Service and civil service. It would have meant that there would be fewer than one State representative for each 10 student discussion groups. I went to the mat with Carol Liaise who was then Director General and with Cy Weiss in PM to say that the input from the Foreign Service is so important and in the discussions that are held in these committees that it is absolutely essential that we keep our representation and managed to get acceptance of that proposition.

One of the responsibilities of international studies department was to manage the field trips. There was a big battle over that because the Nation War College is funded out of the army budget. That was a decision for convenience sake the controllers divided up. I don't know who funds ICAF (Industrial College of the Armed Forces), but army wanted to cut back on the travel funds and they did. We ended up instead of a glorious three week trip with a special aircraft and medics and baggage handlers and so on, we ended up with a two week trip without any of the pertinences. There was a navy captain who did most of the work of planning, but I did the oversight of the sort of I was in charge of the program, though he did the spade work and I give him full marks. He could do that better than I, I think. We increased the amount of the number of preparatory sessions so the students did more work learning about Africa or the Near East than had been the custom because they were going to have less time on the spot. We emphasized the before and then the after with their trip reports, I think we made it at least as valuable a component of the curriculum as it had ever been, but that took a lot of discussion.

Q: Oh, I'm sure it did.

HAMILTON: This commandant, Jim Murphy, immediately fell out of favor with Admiral Duke Bayne who was president of NDU (National Defense University). He had moved up from being the National War College commandant and that was justified. Murphy really just wasn't up to the task. He went to California and I'll bet he was a fine wing commander. The commandant in the second year was also an air force officer. He went by his initial H. Lobdell and he had excellent qualifications to be commandant of the National War College. He had scholarly interests. He was a fine officer. He wasn't an academic, but he was qualified to lead the War College. Less personable, but the students got along with him all right. He gave direction to a degree that his predecessor could not. The result of that was that he didn't need me sitting in his office half the day and giving him advice about this and that. So, my role diminished and made it a somewhat less

satisfying second year than the first, but that's because the first had really been extraordinary. It remains a fine assignment for Foreign Service Officers at that level and I enjoyed the second year, but not as much, so I think that's about all.

Q: How did you find the melding of the various components of the War College student body?

HAMILTON: Oh, they do very well because they get into well, for one thing, they know that most of them will go from the War College to a joint staff assignment, so they'd better get used to it if they weren't already. So many of them had been in interservice situations before. I certainly didn't observe any cliquism along service lines. They compete with ICAP in athletics, half a dozen sports and they look for the best players, whether they're a marine or coast guard or what. The study groups are mixed by administrative action. It's not voluntary. The students don't pick. It doesn't make a difference. They study the same curriculum, but the group assignments are handled administratively to make sure that there is interservice representation including civilian components. Civilians, at the time I was there, there were 160 students. Forty army, 40 air force, 40 navy and marines and coast guard and I think one coast guard officer and two or three marines out of the 40 and 40 civilians representing State and civilians. CIA and then a smatter of AID, FBI and then there'd be one or two from agriculture or GAO, treasury, a melding pot in the 40 civilians. My wife and I entertained, had dinner parties for all of the 40 civilians each year. We didn't entertain all the 120 military, but it was easy to get to know them. I think there was a good collegial spirit at Ft. McNair. People ate lunch together. They went jogging together without regard of what uniforms they wore. They didn't always wear uniforms. Some days they I don't know how they arranged this, but they were partly, sometimes they'd look civilian, sometimes they'd look military. There was a respect of everybody with a degree of marshal color to the atmosphere and this fellow Bill Witt whom I mentioned a dyed in the wool civilian, but a long association, he was very, he was older than I. He had retired from Foreign Service though I don't know his age exactly, but he was in his 60s before I was. He was very conscious of being older and of being a civilian and so he would square his shoulders and he did. When he met a student in the corridor, the students, their lieutenant colonel and commander, they'd always say, "good morning Mr. Witt how are you?" His response always was "never better." I remembered that and sometimes I had occasion to tell it and so I say I have to amend that when people ask me how are you, I'd say, I'll never be better.

Q: Let's see this was '75 to '77? Then what, where did you go Bill?

HAMILTON: It was normal that that was a two year tour. I would not have welcomed a third. There's enough repetition that that would really become boring and not good for the college. I then without resistance, I don't remember, we didn't even have the bid system then I don't think.

Q: I don't think so, no. No, we didn't.

HAMILTON: I always waited for personnel to tell me where I should go. With some discussion I was talked to about it before a decision was made. I joined the Inspector General staff and that turned into a three year assignment. I was so used to two years, never more, that it was a delight to stick with one apparatus for a little bit longer. I count it a fine experience. I wish I could have had it earlier, because you learn a lot about mission management. An analogy I use is you see the mission staff is a building with hierarchical floors, because our service is organized that way. The inspectors sort of come in a side window and can look up and down. I found it a very meaningful experience. I think I was able over time to save two or three careers that were to be lost and which I've followed and it turned out that they were well worth saving. I had the necessity of accelerating a couple of departures, but literally a couple, not many.

You've heard I'm sure, this probably apocryphal story about the arrival of the inspection team at a mission and by arrangement there is a staff meeting that everyone is there and the ambassador gets up to introduce the inspection team and says this is a story about the world's greatest two liars. The ambassador gets up and says, "We're glad you came" and then the chief inspector gets up and says, "We're here to help you." I used to repeat this story in initial group sessions and say, if my team does its job right, both of those people spoke the truth. I believed it was a constructive process, not a punitive one.

Q: Tell me, in this 1977 to 1980 time frame, what was the inspection process like. There's been a change in the inspection process of the one we kind of grew up with to the one that was implanted by congress because it was more sort of the junkyard dog type so-called. Where was it at this time?

HAMILTON: It was in between. It was not, the reason it was not quite what we all remember from earlier days was that the Department across the board was in a period of giving much greater emphasis to program management. It was the PARM (policy and resource management) and the GORM period of budgeting and program management.

Q: There were zero based budgets and all that.

HAMILTON: Yes. In my period the inspection process turned to emphasis examining whether the resources available to a mission were suitable to its mission. If not, were there either overages or underages, both in terms of personnel and of budget. Program with other agencies. We had very limited mandate to look at other agencies. We don't inspect their personnel, but we've talked with each of them and in terms of are you comfortable in your country team role and do you get adequate joint administrative support or not and so we did talk to the agency representatives of all components of the mission. The emphasis, as I say, was on management of resources, but it also included at that time individual evaluations of officers in three categories of foreign service rank. Officers who were FSO-6 going on 05 and I guess there were FSO-3 going on 02 and FSO-2 going on 01. Officers at a post at those levels received an individual evaluation by one member of the inspection team and then there were a few odd special evaluations, if problems. There was a feud going on. The ambassador didn't like somebody who felt depressed and you could always do one with the ambassador knowing and put it in the

mix. That was the pattern and it was after I left indeed after I retired that the emphasis came along with the increased infusion of people from the GAO (Government Accounting Office).

Q: Auditors.

HAMILTON: Right. A greatly increased emphasis on financial management rather than program management. It was after my time. I had thought my experience was so satisfying that I felt that we did do good. That I had hoped maybe to go back after retirement as some people did as WAEs (when actual engaged- i.e. part-time retirees), a few are taken on to resume inspection, but by the time I retired I didn't want to do it anymore.

Q: Well, Bill, can you relate any sort of illustrative episodes or things that happened in some places?

HAMILTON: Sure. Absolutely. I had quite a variety of assignments. The first one was here in Washington. My training was with Ambassador Nancy Rawls doing individual evaluations of people who were out at school. Foreign Service Officers who were working a Treasury or Commerce or the Pentagon or the National Science Foundation or anywhere. That was instructive. One learned how to do interviews if you didn't know already. Then I went on the next spring I went as a member of a team to Northern Latin America, the regular post inspection of Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama. Then to my surprise I became a senior inspector and was given a team to do 10 countries of West Africa in 10 weeks. That's about three weeks preparation in Washington and interviews of people concerned across agency lines. Then a post a week in West Africa, many people who knew that already said, you can't do it. I had taken a War College study group to three countries in Africa the year before and so I knew a little bit and I was smart enough to plan our itinerary to focus on Dakar. It is somewhat of an air hub and it happens to have pleasant facilities. A nice hotel, a beach not far away, some good restaurants and so our procedure was to sally forth either Monday morning or Sunday night depending on air schedules to one of the small posts and do the inspection in a week except Dakar which took two weeks because of its size and then back to Dakar for the weekend. I managed; a couple of the fellows got slightly sick, but nobody lost a day's work. Through that 10 weeks every airplane flew within a couple of hours of when it was supposed to. We completed the inspection on schedule, which I had been flatly told would be impossible and I think with satisfying results. Satisfying to me and I believe to the system.

I had some other unusual adventures. I had some major posts countries were given to me. Mexico, 10 constituent posts, Germany 10 posts, Soviet Union when that meant Moscow and Leningrad and a short visit to Kiev where we were getting ready to open the consulate. That inspection involved some special attributes. It was in the fall of 1979, the year before the Olympics and there were tussles over many aspects of what the head of the Soviet Olympics committee was the mayor of Moscow. A real Soviet rascal and all kinds of difficulties arose. One for example, amusing to Americans is that they picked,

they had agreed to the selection of McDonalds to provide food service and then they met to discuss the specifics and the Soviets didn't put up much of a beef, pardon the expression, when McDonalds said they would have to bring the hamburger. Then McDonalds said, we'll bring our potatoes. This Soviet I've forgotten his name, said, Nyet. You can have the beef and the rolls I guess. If there's one thing we Russians can do, we can grow potatoes. McDonalds was unwilling to yield. Idahos or whatever they use are better they thought. The only way they could assure quality control is their way. The Soviets created some problems for themselves by planning probably of necessity disbursal so that their Olympic events were scheduled for 15 or 20 cities, hockey in one place and wrestling somewhere else and so on. All the travel was by train. This was planning. It hadn't happened yet. That was the planning. All travel would be by train. Foreigners who wanted to come as spectators were assigned to what events they would see. It didn't matter whether you were interested in soccer or not, if they gave you soccer, you would go to Kiev and if they gave you fencing, you would go to some other place and that was it.

There were these tussles and it was in the time we were there inspecting. The inspector of rail travel that the Russians lost the train. This got into the press and it was widely publicized for a long time. It just disappeared and the last I knew they never did find any, I suppose the kind of bookkeeping error or something, but it was just gone. The press had quite a field day over that.

In Soviet times it was interesting. Well, in the event, Kiev was involved in this because the Russians were dying to open a consulate general in New York which they didn't have so that they could issue visas to all the Americans who wanted to go to spend their dollars in the Soviet Union. We were having trouble with Soviet authorities on matters related to the development of the buildings and space for our consulate general in Kiev, which was the counterpart for New York. The Russians were pressing and I argued strongly let's not cave in on New York until they fix up these apartment blocks so we can put some people in Kiev. That was an argument that was going on in Washington, a tussle when the invasion of Afghanistan occurred and Jimmy Carter canceled American participation in the Olympics.

Q: The Olympics of 1979.

HAMILTON: Yes, so it all blew over. That was an interesting adventure. One of the other experiences and one of the most satisfying was I was assigned to the first ever inspection of the medical department and the question was what could be the scope, we had to sort of write the program because there was no previous experience. Well, we decided that our focus was to look at what should be the medical facilities available at the end of the 20th Century for a worldwide disbursed family involved service rotating frequently. What do we need? So, we looked at specific questions such as should the clinic continue to operate in the Department in Washington with staff doctors or is that something that could be farmed out, contracted to a commercial laboratory set up? They were just starting to have overseas deployment of psychiatrists. At that time there were three. We ended up recommending doubling that on the basis of evidence as we found as

where there was need and that the three were being whipsawed by demands of come here and go there and so on. They seemed to be fine individuals. I didn't get to know them all, but I did get to know quite a few because of the medical personnel because our inspection period included a week in which the medical department was running an in-service training program for all the doctors and nurses in the Pacific area. All across the Pacific and into South Asia. As far as India because that's where one of the psychiatrists was based and held it in Honolulu.

I took two other members of my team and we went out to Honolulu for the period of this refresher training and got to know every one of those nurses and physicians. We talked to them about their problems and what their ideas were about the service. This was a fortuitous opportunity which I was quick to seize on and Bob Brewster, the IG at the time was understanding, gave us travel money to go to the beach in Honolulu for a few days.

The other thing, the main element for which I take some credit was obviously we couldn't go look at medical records. That's privileged and so on. We arranged to get on contract a public health doctor as medical advisor member of my team and we got a fellow named Dick Nell who was had been medical director of the Peace Corps, knew something about the Foreign Service. He had a lot of experience with trade union medical programs and he was at the time a professor at Boston University. We got him to come down and work with the team. He was extremely helpful to us in plotting our moves in general and what sort of things we should look at on the basis of his experience? Some problem developed about some case, which raised the question why didn't this person get a medical discharge? He could go read the file and then he could come back and make a recommendation as to what the team posture should be and so on. He established enough of our confidence so that we took his advice; he was cautious, if nothing, there was nothing dogmatic about it. But that worked out extremely well and I'm glad to be able to contribute to that.

The last inspection I had was a bit of a novelty and I don't think it was the most successful. We were sent to do what was said to be a management survey, a management audit of the Kampuchea Relief Program. So, we went to Geneva and talked to the headquarters of the AID agencies, UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) and so on and went to Rome and talked to FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization) and other people who had interest. Then we went out to Bangkok and I holed up in the bureau there of one hotel and the embassy had a special section working on Kampuchea relief. We traveled up to the border. I had one of the members on the team who was a GAO transplant. He was an FSR-2 at the time, a respected experienced officer and I remember we were about halfway into the field part of the inspection when at our daily morning meeting Byron Hollingsworth spoke up and said, "It is not possible to do an audit of this program." He expanded on that a little bit. I began to feel panic, but you can't, a senior inspector cannot really panic, so I said, "Byron, we were charged to come out here and do a management audit of this program. I look to you and two other guys to do whatever you can in that direction setting down questions that you can't resolve, where the gaps are, so on. The result is going to be called a management audit. It may not be what you know needs to be done and you can say why, but that's what we're charged

to do and by golly that's what we're going to do." I don't know quite how good or bad the outcome was because while we were working back in Washington I got three-week orders to go to Sweden and I wasn't there to quite wind up the report. I'm prepared to stop. Now, on inspections of course I'll respond to your questions, but those are really my main remembrances.

Q: Inspections uncover a number of issues, I assume, sexual harassment, alcohol, problems of supervisors and subordinates and the relationship. but just how these cases could be treated and also about people whom you felt really were should no longer be employed by the State Department. So, we'll discuss those. Great.

HAMILTON: Fine. This is sort of a summary I hope of problem areas to which I had some exposure or at least learned about in the course of my inspection experiences. The inspection experience is just a wonderful one. It's a great management training in place if you will. I had been DCM in Manila, a great big post, a few years before and I went to Stockholm as chargé afterwards and I know I was a significantly better manager, leader of a mission after the three years of observation as I think I did say looking in the side window of a mission and windows open and doors open to you. You mentioned such societal problems as drugs and alcohol. My impression is that the Foreign Service is no worse and probably a little better off than the general American population where we say 10% of people are alcoholics. I can't come close to any figure like that. I had a direct connection with well, in one case with a necessary sudden repatriation of an officer from overseas who had been undiscovered until it was where evacuation, departure was the only solution. It had to be done suddenly because after the inspection of the officer's apartment and all the evidence of months of heavy drinking I don't remember how many equivalent cases of empties there were cluttering up his apartment. The ambassador ordered me I think on a Wednesday to get the officer out before the weekend. It required in persuading him to submit to a physical exam before orders could be issued, lab tests and so on and we did get him packed up and on a plane on Saturday and he is a now many years recovering alcoholic. He went through the detox program under Department stimulus and has been gainfully employed, served in more senior positions than he had occupied before retiring. I think he may be on disability because he is not cured any more than such people are.

I had another officer who worked for me in Washington and who had not been diagnosed I guess at his previous post and I had with management help in the Department to nudge him into the detoxification and rehab program which even decades ago was pretty enlightened in terms of the allowance made, the adjusting the status of a person to take account of what was recognized as a disease with which the individual couldn't cope by him or herself.

Q: We're talking about this particular time 1977 to 1980. . What authority did you have or the ambassador have in real terms, not in theoretical terms, but in real terms?

HAMILTON: Yes, sure. Well, I should make clear before responding that the instances I spoke of just now were not during my inspection experience, but one well, in both cases

before. The inspectors can do such things as arrange for a regional medical officer to visit the post on an accelerated basis. They can report the circumstances to the inspector general on a privileged channel, which can then be taken up with the medical department, or executive directors or whoever is. In other words, inspectors can be instrumental in causing status changes, but they are not the final authority. They have ample capacity to recommend and I know from other kinds of experiences that the cables about problems get attention in the inspector general's office or from the inspector general personally. We are not without means, but we are not the decision makers. The ambassador is still in charge of his post. Now, I have no experience where a case where if there had there been such where the sitting ambassador was the victim. All I can say is that the privileged communication link would still be there, but there's not much other than you can try, one could try to talk out the problem, see whether there is recognition of a problem in which case who knows maybe a leave of absence could be made appealing. I have no such experience, however.

Q: I was wondering whether not just your experience, but during the time there, were there cases where you, the inspector general was notified, there is a real problem, country X, well, let's say the ambassador or maybe the ambassador's wife has got a real problem which is causing great problems at the post and to send a special team out and take a look at this?

HAMILTON: It's certainly possible. I think some other steps might appeal first. For one thing there's a team there, what's the virtue of sending another one except to send a person or a couple of persons with special professional skills that diagnose this and maybe after jawboning. Certainly the power to recommend is there and in a case I'll come to on another subject, I had cases where the inspector general came down to take a look at the post while it was still in the inspection, during the inspection and stayed longer than he would have, but for signals that I had sent. It can extend to a chief of mission. Not the closest, talking about alcohol, that I came was a major mission where the ambassador was not being very good for other reasons, unrelated to alcohol, but his wife was an alcoholic and she because of having to be either visible or sick was to a degree an embarrassment to the United States government unable to do all of the things an ambassador's lady is normally looked to do. I did not become aware that this phenomenon caused a problem within the mission. I don't think she infected other members of the staff by her bad habit, which of course she was unable to control. The ambassador's difficulties were of a different order, which I'll come to in another topic.

Q: What about sexual harassment or inappropriate conjunction of superiors or subordinates or anything like that. This is still a period where this was not as high a visibility. I think about a decade later, sexual harassment was almost the number one subject of problems, but what was your experience?

HAMILTON: None, really either as an officer, serving officer or including the inspection years. I heard stories that related to individuals over a career span, but not necessarily, but even and from my contemporary and contemporaneous observation, I was never, never saw misbehavior, harassment otherwise visible or becoming a problem that required

administrative action. I think my impression would be that the problem grew, as I'm sure it was there just hidden, probably missed some, but any you know an inspection team will set up an individual interview with each person on the staff, so there's opportunity for complaint without resorting to dissent channel or any of the other mechanisms that an aggrieved employee can use. I had no such experience in the three years. I'm sorry that's disappointing.

Q: Oh, no, I'm not after this. How about poor management?

HAMILTON: Yes there were cases of that. I have had cases of having to intervene because of the inadequacy of principal officers at subordinate posts on two occasions one of which I don't, I'm sure I was not the only actor, but I instigated actions which when my observations obviously must have been supported by others. In one case the officer was removed from post and put in a special training program. In another case, pressure was laid on to encourage retirement for which the officer was thoroughly eligible and it was, he had been a competent career officer in the consular cone, but he had reached the point where he should have retired quite apart from any misbehavior. That's across inspecting 45 posts. People, well, since I inspected in the Soviet Union, and we know alcohol is a big problem in the Soviet Union. I did not run across, I heard stories about it, but I didn't have to take any action regarding any individual person then at post in the Soviet Union at any of our three posts.

Q: How about the dealings of sometimes relations between a superior and a subordinate are not good. I mean, it may be chemistry or something and often the subordinate is in a position to really be hurt whereas it's perhaps probably not his or her particular fault and this is trying to save careers. Did you find yourself picking up these things and doing anything about them?

HAMILTON: Rarely, but yes. My own view was that the inspection process should be directed toward nourishing the human capital of our service. We spend a lot of money recruiting and training people and it's not healthy to lose a lot of themselves. The question of recently used to be in that period, we were charged with looking carefully at the resources available to a post and whether they were adequate or not or too much. That bears on morale and therefore it relates to nourishing or preserving the human capital of the service. The case I mentioned of having to participate in and not make the decision in nudging an officer into retirement involved just such a problem. It was a three person post and the other two were first tour officers and one of whom was a woman and he sent her out on any number of rather dangerous accident vulnerable missions chasing a, looking after crashed drug courier airplanes and searching for crew members and that sort of thing and never in her tour had either the other male or the presiding consul been on a single one of these. That was to my mind a case of discrimination and she was set to resign at the end of her tour. I took such action as I mentioned with regard to the principal officer and by encouraging or making sure that the embassy was aware of the problem and got interested in monitoring what was happening very closely, she was saved for the service and has had a fine career in her cone. That's an example, but it's almost the case history. In other words, it was not common in my experience.

Q: With the inauguration somewhat later of the new inspection system a great deal of emphasis has been placed on fraud.

HAMILTON: Waste, fraud and mismanagement.

Q: Waste, fraud and mismanagement. I've often felt that obviously you have to worry about people essentially stealing or taking advantage of the system, but considering the small amounts of money compared to many other places, it seems like sort of an undue concentration of bookkeepers on a relatively small number of people. What was your impression?

HAMILTON: No, but every inspection team, no, not every, you've got tiny posts, but most inspection teams will include one or more audit qualified inspectors and they go over financial accounts and so on. Cases of malfeasance or misfeasance usually surface in due course. One reads about them periodically in the press or in the Foreign Service Journal and I had to deal with the aftermath of one post and it was a problem that had occurred before I arrived, but it involved the misuse, the well intentioned misuse of some money to expand the language at post program. Some money was diverted from a pocket that had more money in it than it needed to and so on. It violated a regulation and contributed to the person who did it being transferred ahead of schedule. Again these things were very rare. That's the principal one that I recall and it was and at another post there was a problem involving gosh, my memory is a little vague on this. It involved questions about the size of expenditures for medical supplies.

They had posts where for isolation reasons the post through the regional medical officer had authority to provide medications. Again, there was a case of inadequate management of an approved program, but not to the point, there was no accusation of money going into personal pockets, but just a misuse of funds according to the regulations. I'm glad I was not, never had to function as an audit qualified inspector because it's very technical. They've got a big manual to be familiar with. It's much easier to talk about political reporting and all than it is to inspect the books. Sure, that's any universe of persons if you want to talk about not excluding the Foreign Service has a few bad apples in the basket. Sometimes they are discovered only after serious cases. I guess I have a better impression of the Service because I was not involved in any major, particularly in an abuse, which was lining the pockets of an individual serving officer. I never had such an experience. We know of some, but.

Q: I assume you looking at inter-agency relations, say between the ambassador and the station chief of the CIA or interaction with other agencies at post, the FBI for example?

HAMILTON: Usually I worked on them to the extent one can. The inspectors, of course, do not have license to inspect other agency activities whether its attachés or Treasury or whoever. However, they do have license and encouragement to look at the function of the country team of the mission as a whole and I always I usually handled most of those contacts with non-State, non-AID, non-USIA elements myself rather than the members of

the team and I would have an interview with the head of that agency and that was devoted to finding out to the extent that the agency rep wanted to talk about it, the state of his relations with the chief of mission. whether he was comfortable, whether he had access, his relations with the administrative team, whether he was satisfied or she is satisfied or dissatisfied with a shared administrative cost formula and so on. In the inspection experience, I found by then relations were pretty good. As an officer I had the benefit as I recounted of working under ambassadors who were very mission minded and who made sure that other elements of the mission got their due and got their hearing and were indeed pressured to participate in life of the mission rather than just plowing a narrow furrow and so on, but respecting always the fact that an agency representative reports to his or her headquarters. Ambassadors have to respect that, that channel.

My first experience really was when the country team concept was articulated was way back in Laos and there was a lot of stress on that. Prior to that, I can't really say how it worked in Embassy Paris because I was an outlander if you recall out at SHAPE headquarters. Burma, we had mission wide staff meetings. There wasn't anything comparable to a country team at that time. That was way back in the 1950s and the concept hadn't been articulated. So, I think that the country team system has worked in most places. A lot of credit or blame if it's not working falls on the DCM. My own view was and it was the way I operated in Manila, was that all mission activities and interests were like a puzzle and that the ambassador and the DCM need to make sure that all the pieces fit together. Within that the ambassador does whatever he or she likes to do and chooses to do, traveling around doing public relations, reading outgoing dispatches or whatever it is or I think I mentioned the case of Henry Byroade who with his West Point engineering background was deeply interested in the acquisition of embassy property, that is leases and so on. He would pour over the electric wiring and plumbing blue prints for the property and ask more questions than the admin counselor could possibly answer. Some other aspects of mission leadership and so on he didn't care much about so that's what I tried to do. That's my view of the way it should work.

The non-career ambassador under whom I served in Stockholm was a very nice man and he was very good at public relations. He was a publisher and had been in that business all his life. He was elderly. He knew a lot of Swedes. He was of Swedish descent, knew Swedish, speak apparently fairly well conversationally and he liked to travel around and had friends of his relatives coming out of the villages to greet him. At least in the months of our overlap had not really come to understand how an embassy operates and I tried to lead him into that and share with him whatever he responded and showed an interest in and then take care of the rest of it. I think that's the way it should work. That I think is about it.

One problem which you mentioned earlier being interested in is not only alcohol, but drugs, that of course is a threat, but is something even harder to uncover at post than alcoholism. You can, people are gregarious and go to parties and drink too much it becomes known. They become quite visible. Drug abuse is more insidious, just as dangerous. I have no idea how many problems were missed during my service as inspector or at post. One of the most notable ones, well I had two incidents that were

painful involving the first case the old BNDD organization, Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. This goes back to Vientiane days in Laos. The representatives of BNDD were sort of cowboy types, sheriff types running around and almost.

This was Vientiane and BNDD had arranged a buy from the dealer whom they didn't know, but turned out to be the king if you will of one of the main minority peoples in Laos and when they turned the buy into a sting it could very well have ended in a shootout. Fortunately it did not. Nobody died. The king went back to his normal range of businesses, but that was a close call. There was another one involving DEA. This case is pretty well known I think. A near human tragedy. I was actually very proud of how that worked out. The number two in the DEA staff came to me as DCM in Manila one day and he said provocatively, "There are two big drug problems and I know you're not going to do anything about it." One of the allegations had to do with a son of the station chief and the other was a child of the ambassador. I said you're wrong. I said, I will take care of the first problem, looking into it. The second one is between you and the ambassador and I will get you an appointment. I never knew what came out of that, but with regard to the first problem, I knew the station chief personally. He had served in Laos part of the time I was there. It was our second tour together. We had been good family friends and so on. I asked him to stop up to the office right after this interview with the DEA fellow and I said, this has been told to me that your child is addicted to heroin. That was the allegation. Note this is not dilly dallying around. He is a regular user and helpless. I recounted this to the station chief and he responded as I suspected he would. He put the child through a rigorous regime of having a urinalysis every day and a thorough medical exam and got him more or less under control. He tested pure for more than 30 days which was conclusive that he was not a heroin addict or he would have been in a bad state, obviously suffering from withdrawal.

I had to do two things. One was to try and make peace with the station chief and his family. I was reduced to tears because what I had done was to threaten the father-child relationship and could have destroyed that, but everybody handled it all right and that didn't happen. The other thing I did was to call the number two from the DEA contingent in and recount to him what I had done about this and what the outcome was and I said, I will never forget or forgive you for what you've caused me to do to threaten the solidarity of a family. Be very careful before you come to me with another flat allegation that I now know you can't prove. Needless to say I did not ask to have him sent home. His boss was understanding. He came to know the whole story and he was a senior experienced I've forgotten what they call it, director I guess in the field. That was the end of that story, but I've never forgotten it. So, he went up to be executive assistant to DCI later on and he was very successful in his career, an agency officer. I've never been able to until recently the former station chief died a number of years ago. His widow I used to see occasionally until very recently. They were very forgiving and I was able to keep my relationship with them despite having inflicted this grievous wound. That's overly dramatic and out of all the years that's the worst and there aren't many. I personally don't think that the service is as infected with these problems of alcohol and drugs as the general population and that's amazing since we serve in all kinds of out of the way places where supplies are readily available and so on. Temptations are sometimes especially great. It's another

cause to be proud of our service.

Q: Well, then Bill, maybe we should turn to Sweden, or is there anything else we should cover?

HAMILTON: Well, there are a couple of other sort of systemic problems in the service, which I could comment on more briefly.

One which will reveal my own puritan antecedents I suppose is the difficulty that I have had accepting the fact of wife abandonment, wife and mother abandonment by a serving officer and particularly to the point of having some difficulty in my continuing relations with the abandoner. My own as I say puritan view is that sure, a man can get tempted, but we accept service discipline and we should accept self-discipline. You can have fun to the extent that that's tolerable within your family, but abandonment of a family I just thought I'm unforgiving of that and I've had several brushes with it. The risks are there, the temptations, but it's a character weakness that I have trouble accepting. Enough of that. Let's see, we talked about, yes, business of funds and so on.

The other one to come back and I mentioned before, involved the medical service. I don't know how it happened except it was natural to me as an inspector to look at the health situation at post when I became known in the inspector general's office as being more attentive to that aspect of mission life than most other senior inspectors to the point that before I finished I was given the assignment of conducting the first ever inspection of the medical department. I came to know most of the serving medical officers through a conference in Honolulu, a five day session and through inspection activities. In most cases I had pretty high regard for them. They worked for below salaries in the Foreign Service despite a special allotment. They got something above their class, but not anything comparable to what persons of their quality could have made in the private sector. Obviously they did it because they enjoyed living overseas or whatever and that was generally true, but there was one exception, a regional medical officer, who was very, well, he had it was in Africa and he had I think at least a dozen missions that he visited. Something, maybe 15. He was quite diligent about traveling around and visiting these places, but he was a controversial figure among the staff of several embassies on my inspection round so that I came to know and have contact and I always asked the members of my team to include talking about medical problems, Africa is a risky place, in all their interviews so that we got a picture. It turned out that this regional medical officer was controversial because his upbringing was in Spanish or Hispanic tradition and ethos and he was intolerant of people who had a low pain threshold. The people who didn't like him were people to whom he had refused to prescribe medications when they said they had a pain. He would tell them to go home and pat their tummy or something or other. It was a different approach to practice. In some respects, people who had had problems that he did diagnose and so on, felt that he had given a good diagnosis, whether it was treatment or evacuation order or whatever, so it was very controversial. I concluded on the basis of what the team members brought back to me that he wasn't right for our deployed worldwide service and I sent a long special privileged channel telegram to the inspector general. The whole medical set up at that regional hub post was very bad.

The nurse was an American. The American nurse was elderly, should have been retired and that had to be accelerated. The technician, the one grace note in this medical unit and that was a local nurse who was just angelic. That's the only thing that saved the whole enterprise.

Well, this telegram had probably a lot to do with my later on being asked to look at the whole medical department. I found that very stimulating and worthwhile and enjoyed working on it. That's again, that's an aberration with a person unsuited to the work that he was doing. He I think left either maybe, well, I know his contract was not renewed whether his departure was ahead of schedule I'm not clear.

Q: Shall we move on? Now we come to 1980, what happened?

HAMILTON: When I was finishing up the Washington report writing for the inspection of the Kampuchea relief program and an opening came up in Stockholm because the ambassador had left all of a sudden [Ed: Non-career Ambassador Rodney O'Gliasain Kennedy-Minott departed post September 26, 1980.] and the DCM [Ed: Paul Canney] was to rotate out and the admin counselor was leaving, etc. They needed someone, there were some problems within the mission and so they wanted a management type quickly and senior inspectors looked like management types and can be sprung loose fairly quickly. As I mentioned earlier in this interview we were given two weeks to go to Stockholm. I said, well, I have two children in school and two cars that are not suitable and a house to rent. How about three weeks to which the Department graciously agreed. My wife and I got to Stockholm in time for a 48 hour turnover with the departing DCM/chargé. This was in September of 1980 and our tour as Chargé lasted until the arrival of a new ambassador [Ed: Non-career appointee Franklin Forsberg presented his credentials on January 14, 1982 as the first Reagan Administration appointment to Sweden] and his not too rapid selection of a DCM whom he wanted and so I stayed until July of 1982, 21 months.

Both of us would have been very happy to stay on longer, but it had been a wonderful final tour. It was our final overseas experience and just a great one. The Swedes are very, in their quiet way somewhat reticent, very hospitable. They have a special fondness for the United States because so many of their ancestors are over here now and have been since the famine of the mid-19th Century when about a third of the population of Sweden departed. Because of business links and because this was 1980 to 1982, i.e., the Cold War and Sweden felt the hot breath blowing from the East, they were interested in balancing and maintaining strong relations with the United States specifically and with Western Europe in general. The Swedes are considered not to be very outgoing and they talked about this themselves. I don't know how many conversations I had with Swedes who would say this is amalgamation of the language of several people when I was getting acquainted with them. They would say, "Well, you know, you Americans are so good about reaching out to meet people and you like to do that and you're good at it. I wish we Swedes were like that, too, but we're not." That's quite true. I had that conversation over and over.

Q: We've gone through a very difficult patch with the Swedes during the Vietnam War.

HAMILTON: True.

Q: By 1980, how were relations with Sweden?

HAMILTON: They were quite good. For example, I never had trouble getting an appointment with a cabinet minister quickly when I wanted to see him or her. I never asked to see the prime minister except when there was a visitor on whose behalf I requested to pay a call, but I have no doubt that I could have seen the prime minister had there been an issue that couldn't be handled without bothering him. I didn't, so I didn't come to know him very well. The government at that time was a coalition. The prime minister was of the rural party. The foreign minister was Ola Olsten was a leader of the liberal party, which is about what its name suggests meaning flexible and less doctrinaire than either the social democrats or the conservative party. There is some difference historically.

Swedes have faced two ways. The outlook from Stockholm and the whole Eastern tranche of the country is toward the East, it faces on the Baltic and the great Russian bear has been there forever. The Swedes are very proud of showing off two huge bronze cannons about 20 feet long, which they captured when they went to Moscow in the 18th Century. Life was different in those days, but the threat was there and the Swedish military were in advance of government policy in the strength of their relations with our military, not in any deceitful way, but there were interests there and it counts for things like the visit of Secretary of Defense Weinberger in the fall of 1981. The first ever visit to Sweden by a defense secretary. The Swedes wanted this not only for its own sake, but for balance. They had succumbed in treaties to entertain the Soviet defense minister not too long before and they really wanted in terms of their policy of non-alignment to balance that off. They pulled out all the stops for Secretary Weinberger's visit. They took him to highly disguised defense installations around the country. Showed him everything. It generated tremendous publicity. It was about the only time the United States, the mission ever got into the Stockholm press while I was there, but that coverage was very full, obviously stimulated and encouraged by the government. The Swedish government cannot dictate to the press, but they can make information available and people available.

The Western part of Stockholm, _____ was and that area looks west across the English, toward Britain and the Atlantic. It's a significant difference in the mindset of people who have lived and whose families have lived in the particular location or area for several generations. The exception was this famine that led to the migration and that was general throughout Sweden and didn't involve people who migrated from really all parts of the country except the far North which was very sparsely populated anyway. It was, I never had trouble getting appointments with anybody I wanted to see. That was the American mission in each in its own way had excellent access. Openness. Both the number two and the number three in the foreign ministry had served in Washington.

Another good friend was the chief of protocol and that brings to mind one of the earliest

of my really amusing experiences. As I said this was Cold War time and we hadn't been there more than a month or so before there was a state visit by Prime Minister Ceausescu and Madam Ceausescu of Romania. I don't know how that came to be, but they were on a tour. They'd been to several other countries in the Balkans and I think even Iran or something. Anyway, they'd been on an international tour and came to Stockholm. It was not easily handled. It was said, I can't vouch for it, but don't doubt it that Madam Ceausescu arrived with a list which she presented to the Swedish hosts, protocol, of the things that she wanted the Swedish government to give her during their visit. The Swedes don't appreciate that kind of treatment. During my only contact with it was at a reception in Ceausescu's honor at the palace and the diplomatic corps was invited to this reception. Initially I was newly arrived. I was the most junior of the chargé d'affaires and therefore, at the very end of the line as we filed past the great Ceausescu. Then the group moved into the Victoria Hall of the palace, which is a grand, huge open hall with a lot of gilt and chandeliers and that sort of thing. For a social time, wine and champagne was served. I was chatting with the few diplomatic colleagues that I had come to meet and when the chief of palace protocol came up and I had come to know him from paying my initial calls at the ministry. He had served both in New York and in Washington and was very pro-American. He said, he asked if I'd like to talk with, speak with Ceausescu. I said, well, if it's appropriate, I certainly would. It was a time when I wasn't too well briefed on this being over there and from Washington inspecting, but we were trying to be nice to Ceausescu because he had made some, not anti-Soviet, but at least more friendly gestures toward us including a speech that he gave on the course of this tour or a press interview perhaps that was very forthright in a pro-Western Europe sense. I was aware of that. Well, while I had to wait for a while for my turn and observed in the meantime the conversation between the Soviet ambassador who was a career educator, but had been in Sweden as ambassador for a number of years already at that time. I had not met him then. This conversation was very difficult. The two of them were left alone in an empty part of this great hall and it was obvious that the Soviet ambassador was giving the prime minister of Romania a tongue lashing over such things presumably as his recent speech. He was really berating him and Ceausescu got a little floored understandably and it turned out to be. This attracted attention. I was not the only member of the diplomatic corps who observed this monologue. It was a subject of a number of comments to me afterwards later on as contacts occurred. When my turn came and I went up and tried to be very respectful in presenting myself and my French is probably almost as good as his, but that doesn't say much. Anyway, I tried to; we had a very nice conversation. It was all beaming and smiles and telling I hope he would extend his travel sometime to see our country and oh, yes, he'd like to do that. We had a really nice friendly chat for probably not more than four minutes, but this was to the amusement of the diplomatic corps who watched and talked to me about it afterwards. That was sort of a dramatic moment, which I have not forgotten. The Swedes I'm sure enjoyed it also.

The mission in Stockholm was I think just about the right size. People were busy; the staff were good people in general. Some outstanding ones. Our military attachés had good relations for the reason I mentioned. The Swedes were, there were a couple of projects for acquisition of military hardware that they were pressing for and the attachés were encouraging them of course. There was no military mission there other than the

attachés. We had good agricultural and commercial attachés; both of them had European wives. They were on that circuit, foreign agricultural service and FCS (Foreign Commercial Service) and one wife was Danish and the other wife was Norwegian I think. Their access was even better than mine I guess. I married a girl from New Jersey and couldn't match that.

We had some, not very much occasion to travel in country obviously me being in charge I couldn't just wander around. Our first visit outside Stockholm was to go to Goteborg. I had two things happen. One I was able to install a consular agent in his new capacity. He was a resident representative of the American ship owners association or something like that. A well connected businessman. We had a history of having a consulate in Goteborg, were not depending on severity of budget cuts in the financial cycle. It had been opened and closed several times and had been closed a year or more before 1980 during a period of crunch and the townspeople were pretty upset about this. As I said, the Westerners are oriented toward across the Atlantic and it was very disturbing to them when we shut down. When approval came through to designate this consular agent I tried to make something out of that and arranged for a reception for the bankers and ship builders and so on and academic people from Goteborg and gave a couple of newspaper interviews, but it worked out, the timing worked out so at the same time I could pick up the Saab that we purchased and drive it back to Stockholm. That was a happy experience and a good car. I wish I could afford another one.

Q: Did you find that dealing with the Swedish media presented any special problems? During the Vietnam War period, the Scandinavian media had a wonderful time exposing the darker side of the United States. Was this continuing by this time?

HAMILTON: No. It was partly because there was a different government at the time of Vietnam that you're talking about. Olof Palme and the social democrats were thoroughly in charge with a large majority and Olof Palme was to me a very attractive figure. There was no question he was the most capable of all the party leaders and through his executive assistant, I've forgotten the title, but sort of career party worker, but with a personal assistant to Palme I got to know him better than the other party leaders except the foreign minister. For business reasons I became fairly well acquainted with him. I respected Palme very much. One of the common points of interest at that time was the Iran-Iraq War and as you may recall Palme was designated by the UN Secretary General as the special representative to interest himself in seeing whether there was a possibility for settlement in that bloody conflict. Palme usually took two colleagues with him on his visits to the war zone both his personal assistant and the foreign office, career officer who headed the equivalent of our Near East and South Asia division. This officer's competence ran all the way from Korea to Africa. He was more recently, just recently ambassador to Washington. I find he became one of my best friends. He was a social democrat and the foreign office designated him to go along with and assist Palme on his visits to Baghdad and Tehran.

In advance of those visits I was always able to get a briefing on our view of how the war was going and what the situation was and I was given pretty specific accounts of our

view that I think they shared, they had enough respect for Palme's qualities and this shows that the residue of the Vietnam period was not still poisoning our relations so that these briefings were quite forthright and I think very much appreciated. It was in our interests that he be aware of our thinking and our perception of the war situation. He was always that was very easy to see him when he was getting ready for part of his preparation for a visit. As I say I didn't see him much, I didn't become socially acquainted with them, but he was, I had more contact with him than any of the other party leaders though. He would have been viewed as the least receptive to American influence. I never complained to him, but I told many Swedes that I was glad I was not there, serving in Stockholm at the time of that part of the Vietnam period when Palme was prime minister and more than once led a torch light parade up to the chancery. I told Swedes that I thought that was inappropriate behavior for a prime minister of a friendly country and that I was very glad not to have been there at that period, but I never said that to Palme naturally.

Q: At that time you're speaking of the 1980 to 1982 period, did you get any taste of Sweden's infatuation with aid to Africa particularly (Julius) Nyerere (of Tanzania) and all that?

HAMILTON: Not in detail, but it was true at that period as before and after that the Swedes were devoting a significantly higher proportion of GNP to foreign aid than we were and special, but not exclusive interest in Africa. I don't remember many conversations; this was a fact of life that was ongoing. We didn't ever have requests to make representation about it. It was something they were doing and we approved of it and no need to make representations about it.

Q: Were the Soviets pulling these submarine operations around Sweden while you were there?

HAMILTON: Yes, that famous episode where one of them piled up on the rocks, whiskey on the rocks it was called. It was a whiskey class submarine. Our NATO designation. I don't know what the Soviets called it. That happened early in 1982 I can't remember the month and it was really quite dramatic. No one knows how long that kind of coastal penetration had been going on, but probably off and on for quite a while. What happened to cause the pile up I don't know. It was embarrassing of course to Moscow because the rocks that had piled up on were on the approaches to the main Swedish naval base in the South, which is well, sort of like Melbourne, a large harbor but then with a narrow neck outlet to the sea. The Swedes generally got a lot of, well, they were incensed and it was touch and go. It happened at an interesting moment in terms of the life of the mission. On the morning on which the landing occurred the naval attaché and his assistant were in Karlskrona visiting this naval base. I began getting phone calls and telegrams started coming in from the NMCC (the Pentagon's National Military Communication's Center) and everybody, what's going on and so it was very helpful. Our attachés called in and wanted to know what they should do. They had a planned itinerary of visiting bases around the Southern coast of Sweden and should they get out of the way or what? Because the press was descending and so on. I said, I want you to keep

calling me with what you learn, but keep your heads below the gunnels and continue on course and that turned out to be very useful because of Washington's curiosity for more information than the Swedish government in Stockholm I think had. The Swedes weren't quite as panicky about it, as the Pentagon. That was fortuitous.

But it had some interesting consequences. One of the Swedish bottlers, liquor processors, came out with a little half pint bottle of Whiskey on the Rocks and that was very popular. The Swedish military didn't appreciate that humor. I remember getting in trouble, not really, but being pulled up short by the, well, he was an admiral, but his job was command of the coastal artillery, coastal defense and at a cocktail reception, I made some jocular remark I guess about the whiskey on the rocks and he didn't appreciate that at all. So, I apologized and said of course for you it's a serious matter and I don't take it lightly either. He got over it because when we were leaving Sweden months later he came to what was a hail and farewell reception for my successor, Sherrod McCall and his wife and we were departing at the residence and the admiral came up and presented me with a framed copy of an 18th Century map of Karlskrona Bay which I still have and treasure. It was a dramatic episode.

From the standpoint of the press, which you asked about earlier, I frankly was not impressed with our embassy press officer. He didn't bring people to me. The Swedish press never paid much attention to our embassy in the time I was there and that included even after the sub incident. I didn't seek press attention. There weren't any big issues between us and that explains why there wasn't more coverage. They printed news about the United States and about our international activities, but from the wire services and so on and didn't come around for briefings. That was fine with me. As I say, I never craved attention and we didn't get it. There were a few exceptions to that. One of the Nobel prize winners got into some pictures in the society magazines and that sort of thing at times of the Nobel banquets and so on which was always fine and tasteful. I had no problems with them. It was a very different atmosphere from the Vietnam period. That was, Sweden had a social democratic government. Swedes generally posed, were critical of American policy in fighting the war.

Q: You were saying the press wasn't picking on you.

HAMILTON: That's right because, what they start, then of course it will extend beyond criticism during the Vietnam period extended to more things as you yourself mentioned than Vietnam policy, but they became finding with American culture and that sort of thing. When the provocation namely the Indochina War disappeared, so the criticism of other things tended to abate somewhat.

Q: How did the Swedes treat to arrival of the Reagan Administration. I would think that particularly early on Ronald Reagan, a former movie actor and all who was considered a cowboy, a lightweight and all that, very conservative, was that reflected in Sweden?

HAMILTON: Not provocatively that I remember, no. Newsweek, there was news coverage. There always is of whoever is American president whether congenial to them

or not, but I don't remember editorial comment critical of President Reagan in the early years, no.

Q: How did you find the social life there?

HAMILTON: Incessant and always, well there was part of the position if we had had an ambassador during most of my tour she or he and we would have shared the invitations that poured in. My attitude as chargé and this was reflecting the only advice that I got from David Newsom then undersecretary of political affairs on whom I called before going to Stockholm. I didn't try to see the secretary absent issues and David, we had a nice chat and the only advice he gave me was fly the flag high. We accepted as many invitations as would fit in the calendar. Almost always pleasant. Swedes contrary to popular lore, at least those we encountered are not big drinkers, parties were decorous and not all night and it was the way of expanding our contacts. We entertained reciprocally as much as we could. I did not expect to be chargé for very long, because Sweden is a desirable post and I thought after the election of November 1980 that the new ambassador would come and we'd either leave or continue as deputy. We didn't move into the residence. I didn't like the idea of an ambassador arriving and knowing that his DCM had just moved out of his bedroom so to speak, so there was on a long term lease a very handsome apartment for the DCM with ample representational space. We could have a sit down dinner for 20 and receptions for well, 50 were easy, much more than that it wasn't like the ambassador's residence where you could have a couple of hundred at a reception without being crowded. We entertained quite a bit with very little assistance except when we gave dinner parties; the embassy kept on the household staff of the residence. Again, their mindset was the same as mine, it concurred with the admin counselor and he got agreement in Washington that we would continue paying the household staff. It was in the expectation that it wouldn't be a long interregnum.

When we gave dinner parties the cook and the maids from the residence would come over and Jean would go over and discuss the menu with them. There was a wonderful Swedish American woman, Swedish in culture, American by citizenship who was residence manager and protocol assistant and so on, Benita Ramul. She was married to a Swedish scientist of some distinction and she was really Countess Ramul, could have been, but she didn't use that. When Jean would get in touch with Benita Ramul and discuss the party she was going to have and Benita was very helpful with compiling guest lists and she knew what some people liked to eat and that sort of thing. Then sometimes we had if we were giving a function in our apartment we had to borrow maybe some serving pieces or something of that sort although our apartment was very well equipped with flatware and dishes handsomely, but she'd get the household staff come over and help serving for dinner parties.

On certain occasions we'd use the residence. For example, during Weinberger's visit I gave a not black tie, but rather formal dinner with the defense minister and commander in chief and so on, people like that. So, for that kind of occasion we would use the residence. Sometimes for receptions, for example, during our tour I had fun reaching out to different groups of people in the Swedish community that I think would be very

customary and it was thanks to visits. We had for example a visit from the Washington Capitals hockey team and the New York Rangers. This was set up by Sonny Werblin who was president of Madison Square Garden and also owned the Rangers. He had Scandinavian connections. So they came to Sweden and played a series of hockey games in different centers. While they were in Stockholm, by pre-planning of course I put on a reception for all of the people who covered winter sports and invited Americans who wanted to meet these hockey players and bring your children. That was a nice kind of party.

Another occasion also in the athletic area, we learned happily enough in advance to set something up that one year, there is a Stockholm marathon. I don't know that it is held every year and this doesn't compare with Boston or New York, but it is an international event and one year there was a travel agent in the U.S. who set up a charter flight and mobilized about 30 American distance runners. I don't think I can remember the name of, there was one outstanding fellow at that time, Rogers maybe? Anyway, so they were all coming to Stockholm to run in the marathon. We put on a reception for them and I asked the promoter of this event, I said, "What can I serve these people at the reception?" He just said, "Carbos." So, we had and they ate bowls of plain white spaghetti if you can believe that and a couple of other things and stoked themselves and that was fun, too.

Of a different character than the lunches we gave during Nobel week each year in December. It's a tradition that the chiefs of mission of countries having Nobel Prize winners give a function during Nobel week. That is just a fantastic experience for the laureates; they are guests of the Swedish government. They can bring their family and some of them gave a rather broad interpretation of what family meant. They were put up in the supposedly best, though not really the most modern hotel, given one car per laureate with a foreign office escort, a junior officer who stuck with them for the whole week. The whole week is a planned program. There is a reception every night put on by the Swedish organizations, which select and sponsor the Nobel competition. It is a great week ending up with the Nobel banquet in the Stockholm city hall. You've probably seen photos of that huge Viking temple, brick not stone and really in an imposing building. It was a pretty special pleasure to be able to sit at the head table and "skol" (toast) the queen of Sweden looking deeply into her eyes. This dinner for 1,300 people and the Swedes and this typical gesture, the 1,300 other than some Stockholm luminaries included a lot of students, budding academics to encourage them. The wait staff was assembled from all over Sweden. Man or woman who had caught the manager's eye up in Norrland got to travel to Stockholm for Nobel banquets. This was a very impressive occasion I must say, but they were all, the staff got there obviously ahead of time and got trained up because with each, well, first of all there was a grand entrance of the head table. There'd been a reception upstairs before the dinner, but with the guests assembled. We all had to troop down a great long winding staircase onto the floor of the city hall.

The second year we were there I remember especially because the person I escorted was the wife of a recently arrived Japanese ambassador. She was of course in her greatest court finery with great long gown and so on and she very blushingly hung onto my arm I'll tell you going down that stairway. We took our places at the table and as I say

exchanging toasts with everybody up and down the line. Then the wait staff would come out with each successive course on their trays and parade in a long stream and find their places and each take up a position with a tray at the ready. There was a leader of the band who stood up partway up the stairway and put his hands up in the air and then dropped them suddenly and every tray came down to serving level at exactly the same moment throughout this great hall. It was white tie and very nice I must say.

There was that and then the following night in Nobel week there is a more intimate dinner at the palace for I think that had about 150 people all at one table. We saw quite a lot of the laureates and I got a very different impression. I had always assumed that Nobel laureates to achieve that kind of distinction must be really introverted, green eye shade types and uninteresting, but they were the most well-adjusted people, nice families and interested in world affairs to a suitable extent, even if their prize was chemistry or something of that sort. We saw them quite a bit. The second year I even got bold and talked them into coming to the American Embassy during the daytime just to see our plant and to be seen and they agreed to do it by golly. Then the Embassy folks could bring their families down and all got to meet the Nobel laureates. Other than that, for the banquet in the city hall I think I had something like 10 pairs of tickets for that. It was such that over the two years every officer in the mission and his spouse got to go to the Nobel dinner once and that was a satisfaction, good for morale. A really outstanding week. Some of them go on to lectures and other capitals in Europe while they're there or at academic centers, but they were very approachable, regular people. I was astounded that to rise to a pinnacle in a scientific field and maintain that kind of balance and normalcy was very impressive.

Q: How did the Ambassador Forsberg use you when he got there? Was he comfortable with you do you think?

HAMILTON: He was a political appointee and unfamiliar with standard State Department operations. I had to show him how we do things. First off I gave him the telegram take, the same distribution that I had as chargé, but that was just to show him what it was like. He very quickly decided that I could screen the traffic for him which I did and sometimes especially at the beginning I would carry cables in to talk about it and to explain background or what we should do. He was really not sure of himself and I could understand that. As I say he was a magazine publisher. Our business was quite different. He was good at the PR aspects. He got to know the press people, some of whom he already knew. He had been very active in the Swedish American Chamber of Commerce in New York for example and because of his own family background he and his wife, they lived in Greenwich, Connecticut, had been very good about receiving, helping to receive, students coming to the U.S., children of business people who were coming to American universities and he had been very helpful to a lot of them. He knew the Swedish business and industrial community quite well and since he knew them that's what he was comfortable with and that's mainly what he concentrated on.

Very rarely did he make any requests. I had more or less encouraged him to do, for example, there was once when we got, this was in the days of El Salvador and all that

mess and we got stern instructions to explain our position of the week to the host government, this was a circular and it was made plain that this was an important something that Washington considered important. I took it into him and I said, this is a major telegram, you should be aware of this right away and he read it and I said, he said, well, do we have to do anything about this? I said, yes, sir, we do. Either you need to go to the foreign minister or you need to ask me to go or we could go together, and he said, well, we'll do that. We went down to see Ola Ullsten and this was to admonish the Swedes for their non-understanding attitude toward the Central American conflict. We went down and paid the call on Ola Ullsten and the ambassador said well, we got a message from Washington about El Salvador. You know what we think about that and that was all he was going to say.

Q: Well, I was wondering could you talk on Sweden about the royal family? Did they play any role at all?

HAMILTON: Not politically, but I think it is a well-liked, the personalities of the current rulers, then and now, such that they were well liked by the Swedes and I never had any thought that the Swedish monarchy was in danger. The king plays no political role. He opens the session of the parliament and gives a state of the realm address, which is non-controversial. They are public figures. We attended a ceremony when the queen christened a sloop that was going to enter the around the world, sailing race. We went down and watched her drop the champagne, I mean release a rope which dropped the bottle of champagne from off the top of the mast down onto the deck. Unfortunately the thing didn't break and so she had to pick it up and whack the thing herself. She's a gracious lady, Silvia, very attractive woman. Recent pictures seem to suggest she still is.

They had two princesses, one of whom was, they were sub-teen and teen I think. I remember seeing them at things like skiing demonstrations. This was the period of Phil Mahre and other leading American skiers of that generation and this was sort of a demonstration at a hill not far from Stockholm. It turned into a social occasion. Everybody turned out and I remember standing next to the older princess for a while and chatting with her. The family was quite open. Security must have been there, but not evident. I don't really think any was necessary. They received modest publicity. The press never hounded them at all, but I think they were well liked. If they went to visit some other part of Sweden, there would be coverage, but very respectful. There was a big reception to celebrate the king's birthday every year. Ambassador Forsberg said he was going to go hunting with the king and I hoped maybe he was able to work that out, but if so, it was after we left. I never saw the king or queen except at pretty formal occasions and with the diplomatic corps, but on two occasions I had significant conversations with him including what were the occasions, it was probably his not his birthday, but something like Flag Day, which they celebrated in June, and that was when we were getting ready to leave. I had occasion to talk with him and say farewell to thank him for hospitality that the king and queen had shown to me during our stay and how much we had enjoyed Sweden including some other travels and maybe I could say a few words next time about the North country which is very different from Stockholm and where I had the opportunity with my Jean to visit with the diplomatic corps which the Swedish

government takes on an expedition once a year so they get acquainted with the country to which they're accredited. That was an interesting experience. My contact with the royal family was limited to what I've said, but they were approachable and personable. Nice family.

Q: Today is the 19th of February, 2004. Bill, we're sort of finishing up your Sweden time, but let's talk about your tours of the North country, but also how you saw developing the immigrant issue in Sweden, what the German called Gastarbeiters (guest workers).

HAMILTON: Okay, well, this could be wound up by our adventures in Sweden very quickly. I mentioned the trip because one of the customs of the Swedish government and the foreign office was to have a major outing for the diplomatic corps, I mean chiefs of mission resident in Stockholm once a year. The first year I think we got there too late to have had a summer excursion, but we did have initially a city tour, an interesting tour of the underground water supply and sewer system and a couple of industrial plants in the Stockholm area. In the second year the expedition which I mentioned last time was to Norrland, the North of the country and it was a comfortable sized group I think, the resident chiefs of mission were not more than 45, not like Washington. It was a comfortable busload when we got up there. We were flown and actually I didn't find the records of this, but we were shown a variety of aspects of life in the North country.

A visit to a factory that made prefabricated houses and you could buy a whole assembly. We watched them putting up, nailing segments of panels together with a thing like a staple gun, but it fired ten penny nails at machine gun rates into the assemblies. We visited a, I've forgotten the name of the university up there. What else did we do? The most interesting adventure was being up there at midsummer and we had been at a dinner and some dancing that night and then, they said, well, it's the midnight sun. We said, we want to see the midnight sun. Well, you couldn't see it. We weren't far enough North. The people said that you had to get up to a little higher elevation, so we talked our bus driver into, he knew the way, up a mountain until we got up to about 3,500 feet and that's as far as the road went and then we had to get out and scramble up what was really a downhill ski run, a rocky, stubbly thing, and the ladies in their dancing shoes and the rest of us in black tie as I recall, scrambling up there and finally got to the point where we could watch the sun not set. That was sort of amusing. Some of the ambassadors were older than I was, but they all struggled and made it. This was an example of the, it illustrates the desire of the Swedish government for the senior diplomats to get to know their country and not just run back and forth to ministries in Stockholm.

Q: It's a good idea, an excellent idea. Are there Laps up there?

HAMILTON: Yes, there's not as many as in Finland, but there are some. We saw, yes, we saw a few reindeer. They must have been herded by Laps I suppose, but the population is sparse. The Swedes mainly want to go South except for older folks and there's a little internal migration there, but that's as I just mentioned a project that I approved of. We all derived value.

The other final subject has to do with immigration and I think the Swedes I don't know all the pattern in Europe, but I think the Swedes have handled that influx as happily, successfully, and smoothly as the Thai have in absorbing the Chinese. The pattern is very similar and namely that the Swedes turned these foreigners into Swedes. They do it by sort of force feeding, but without bars and chains. They have to learn Swedish. They're sent to school. They're given a place to live, a reasonably comfortable apartment, and they work on Swedish. Their job is found for them and if they need a skill that they don't have they get the training. In other words the Swedes integrate arrivals into their society rather quickly. They're guaranteed housing and medical care and education for the children and so on. Absorption into Swedish culture of course is more difficult. There is no restriction that I'm aware of on activities of minority groups. That is organizations of where there are clusters of people from a particular country or sub region. The pattern was different than in Germany. There weren't many Turks. There were people from Southeastern Europe. A few and some from the Caribbean, not many from Africa. I think that it appeared to us at the time that it was working quite smoothly with thoroughness and the Swedes sensibly devoting resources necessary to the task. I admired that characteristic also, but it was essentially done for a selfish nationalist purpose. They wanted everybody to be Swedes in the same way that, there are about a million Finns that live in Sweden and vice versa and they're all part of the population and loyal as far as anyone knows.

Q: I suspect also that the Swedes are up against the, you might call it the European disease and that is they're not reproducing themselves and their population is getting older. It probably wasn't as evident at the time you were there.

HAMILTON: No, that's right.

Q: But I would assume that Sweden is part of that overall trend.

HAMILTON: I'm sure it is. There certainly was a very visible senior population, the Swedes at that time, even at that time tended to be fairly long lived. They had a good health care system and so they were long lived and there were lots of very senior people. There were many of them lived as long as they could independently, but there were facilities. There were senior homes and so on for everybody, not just military veterans. I haven't thought of any missing links over the past 10 days.

Q: Well, Bill, I can't remember if I asked you last time, but speaking of immigrants was there a residue of Americans who had left the United States? Many of them deserters of the American army in NATO and all. Was there any left of that?

HAMILTON: Probably, but if so, they had gone into the woodwork. I didn't ever encounter any. Actually there were, I remember stories in the press, there were a few who had stayed on, but most of them, once the pressure was over when they could go home without going to jail most of them did or went to Canada. Of course many, more dodgers had gone to Canada than to Sweden, although there were quite a number there's no question in Sweden during the height of the Vietnam period, particularly the years of

draft.

Q: I can't remember if I asked you about this. Did we talk about the universities and how would you characterize the professor class?

HAMILTON: They had more democratic socialists, the leading scholars were mainstream. I didn't get too deeply. I visited superficially the University of Stockholm. What's the next town? Uppsala, and in Gothenburg, I knew the rector of the University of Stockholm fairly well. As a matter of fact he was on the board of the Fulbright Foundation. I made only one brief visit to the campus which was attractive. One of the most notable features which he pointed out to me although it was far from invisible was the hotline to Moscow ran right across the bottom of the front steps in one of the buildings of the University of Stockholm.

Q: I guess that covers that period then?

HAMILTON: As I say I haven't had any fiery recollections since we last met.

Q: Again, you will eventually be getting a transcript and you can expand. You left Sweden when?

HAMILTON: Let's see, we left with a stutter. We took, we were waiting for Sherrod McCall who took my place to come from Moscow and then very briefly after that we took off for a visit to Crete, which I wanted to do and that was sort of a decompression. Came back for just a few days to close out and see if any problems had developed that I could help the ambassador or Sherrod with and left the mission I think without any disruption occurring. We had good senior staff across the board and I didn't have any hesitation about leaving. I had been high profile for so long that it was an embarrassment to the ambassador when he came and he'd go to meetings of the NATO ambassadors or other gatherings and they'd always say, where's Bill Hamilton? We don't see him anymore. It was a little uncomfortable for the DCM. He'd come back and recount these things to me, but in a friendly way. It was of course like most Foreign Service Officers I had hoped that my career could end with a mission and it didn't. Nevertheless I left with good feelings. We would have liked another overseas tour. We were both physically capable and the children were out of the nest, but there wasn't long enough before my mandatory retirement to permit an overseas assignment. That's because in the adjustment to the 1980 law raising the age to, the mandatory time to 65, my mandatory age came to be 62. I did not receive an LCE, a limited career extension, so I had to make work for when we got back to Washington in I think it was August or something like that in 1982. There wasn't anything for me to do immediately and so I said, okay, I'll go on home leave. I had plenty of it and I said, I'll take two months. That became known and then they decided they wouldn't do that anymore. Maybe the lowering of the gate which became known in personnel as the Hamilton rule. I said at the time, I said, well, I'll take two months, but I'll be around Arlington and if something turns up you want me to do, please call. It was amicable.

When I got called, I was asked to do a part of a contingency planning study, continuity in government, COG. What would happen if the ultimate disaster befell us? This was highly compartmented. I know I mentioned part of this because I had the task of going out to interview people. My task was to design a communications network for the Foreign Service post disaster and that involved talking with people in other agencies in terms of our country team approach to life. That was interesting. That was why I went to get a polygraph which I'm sure we talked about against my better judgment, but I agreed to do a study and it was necessary to go through that drill it seemed, although in fact as I may have said I had finished all the interviews with agency and other people before my clearance ever came through. So, that was water over the dam. The study was remarkably well received since I had no background in communications or information management technology and so on. It was viewed as a pathfinding study and it got out ahead of other parts of that disaster preparedness planning that were going on in other agencies as well as elsewhere in State. I know nothing more broadly about it because as I say it was a highly compartmented thing, which I don't even remember the acronym category. It was an interesting adventure. I had a desk and a typewriter and could call on the services of a secretary when, old fashioned production and turned it out before, by the first of April.

My retirement date was set for June 30 of 1984. The last 15 months I became director of the Office of Systematic Review in the Bureau of Administration (A/CDC/SR) succeeding Larry Pickering who had established it. He and Clay McManaway had established the declassification program for State. CDC, at that time under Deputy Assistant Secretary John Burke also included an Office of Mandatory Review (CDC/MR). Systemic Review handles FOIA, Freedom of Information, cases and some presidential library referrals depending on the age of the documents. Mandatory Review handled documents which were 25 years old and being processed for turnover to the National Archives.

As I said, I was with Systemic Review for 15 months. I had two principle preoccupations during that period. One was improving relations with counterpart people in the NSC staff that relationship had some troubles and ended up some years later. I have no credit for it with the detailing of two State declassifiers to work physically a couple of days a week at NSC with those people. We improved the relationship and I was working on that in the early stages.

Well, a major part of our work at that time was processing compilations by the Office of the Historian, which were volumes in the Foreign Relations of the United States series, the FRUS. The people who worked for me either worked on FRUS or they worked on library mandatory review cases. They were all retired FSOs with up to date security clearances. We had one secretary and we had an area down in the basement behind a safe locked door across from the barbershop. I always said that we were clipping the documents.

The third aspect that was a major preoccupation of mine, other than managing the staff which was not difficult. They were all good people and many of them friends. The third aspect was handling their employment, which at that time was not as WAE part time

employees, but people under contract.

Q: How was that a problem?

HAMILTON: The task of handling, achieving personal services contracts for the declassification reviewers was difficult because the lad in the budget office, I've forgotten what his office title was, who handled that acted as though his task was to not award contracts. Each one was a struggle justifying why I needed someone to do this particular batch of work and why I needed this person rather than anybody else. His instinct was abetted by the woman in career management whose task was to find placement for corridor walkers. I always had to go through the ritual of getting affirmation. The trouble with the contracting office, I referred to a woman in personnel who was working hard to try and find placement for officers who were without assignment. I always had to, I always said sure, find somebody who had this or that specialization and who was available for at least six months so we can, because we would want to do a performance evaluation for anybody who comes into our shop. None of the corridor walkers wanted to be committed for six months so that never worked. Then finally I could go and get a contract awarded for people who had been living and were among the original reviewers. That ran down to my retirement at the end of June 1984. Retirement in those days at least in that part of the Department was without ruffles and flourishes and after checking out on a Friday I returned on a Monday as a reviewer to work for my successor as director of systematic reviews who was Henry Bardach and that was it.

Q: Well, Bill, let's talk a little because historians will be interested in some of the dynamics of how papers were declassified. Were you responding to requests from academics or researchers, was that part of your thing or was that another side?

HAMILTON: If the documents were collected in response to a request, it would go to the FOIA people who handled recent cases because their focus was on recent times. Our focus was on historical periods, mainly 25 years was sort of the golden mean. That was the point at which National Archives expected documents would be handed to it for keeping. We used to argue with the Office of the Historian's officer who wanted to accelerate, get closer to real time and we always said, well, the closer you get to more, the higher the percentage of documents that will be denied to you. We decided that 25 years was about a golden mean.

Q: It seems to me a yardstick of 25 years declassification might be problematic if the people be discussed are still members of a foreign government. You look at a place like Cyprus and you have the same guys that are still there.

HAMILTON: Not solely for that reason, but I recounted a tale about Thailand with a colonel who became chief justice of the Supreme Court. The battle I had with the historical advisory committee over a document they wanted which contained some scurrilous remarks he had made as a colonel about the queen. By the time they wanted to get that sprung loose, he was a member of the king's privy council. I had declined to

yield.

Our procedures were first of all in the initial years, our reviewers worked part time reviewing documents and part time on developing guidelines for what they themselves were doing. We produced volumes of country guidelines and functional guidelines by triennium, by a three year period. Breakdown and I prepared few of these on Nordic areas for example, in which we identified subjects of continuing sensitivity on which would either be withholding or careful checking was required. The first step was to accept the judgment of these declassifiers. I always said to them that it was a wonderful job because you have this background and skill, that's why you're working here and you act for the U.S. government. You decide whether this document is releasable or whether is to be held for X years or without limit which is extremely rare. Release sometimes we can say dependent on the concurrence of another government or a change in government, a factor of that sort. The reviewers make their own judgment unless they think it's a marginal case and then they will consult the desk officer. That's what we're supposed to do. The more experienced the reviewer is, the less frequently he will resort to that both because the desk officer is too busy to want to look at our documents and also because the reviewer gains confidence in his own judgment. That basically was the system.

Q: Did you in your capacity, did you keep track of your reviewers' judgments?

HAMILTON: That's the balance that one has to strike and the philosophy of the office was favorable to release. The idea was not to keep as much as you can, but release as much as is consistent with avoiding damage to national security or other matters such as privacy governed by legislation or executive order. Of course the executive orders changed with administrations, a little tighter or a little looser and we tried to respect those. One of the informal rules we had was that people didn't review their own stuff. If they ran into documents that they had created. Some would like to have everything out. Some would, this was, I skewed this one, so let's keep it. That was not done and as I say the philosophy was toward release and over the years at the time I was director we didn't keep statistics as thoroughly as current management obliges my successors to do. Nowadays in recent years I know from being involved that we release between 95% and 98% of what we look at and that's generally against this 25 year time line. What's left behind is usually sources and methods or sometimes relating to a treaty, classified international agreement that remains classified. There has to be a special reason. We do not withhold stuff because it will embarrass Americans. If it will embarrass a still living foreign minister seriously, that's a valid ground under successive executive orders, but we do not use the privilege of withholding documents as I say to protect the reputation of Americans.

Q: Just as a note I'll just put in here. I did a book on American consuls and the foreign relations series goes back to Abraham Lincoln's time. During the 1890s we had a consul I think in Santiago, Cuba who sent dispatches in castigating the Spanish authorities. This was before the Spanish American War and the next year these appeared and pretty soon he had mobs in front of his office and he wrote back and said, don't do this. These sons of bitches are demonstrating. The next year his dispatch calling them sons of bitches

appeared in the series.

HAMILTON: Well, that's because it was already in the public domain. You can't withhold what's already out.

Q: During your watch or even subsequent times doing this because you continue this work, were there any serious repercussions of documents that have been released that you can think of coming from other places or even Americans who were suing or doing something?

HAMILTON: There have been, I'm going to have trouble now, there have been few, but a few, diplomatic repercussions. One was a volume on Central America, probably Guatemala in the 1950s or something like that, a time of contention. I think I'm correct in saying that another minor flap, despite a subsequent change of government related to Iran, where the only times this kind of problem has arisen and nothing became a national issue that caused assistant secretaries to make demands and that sort of thing, but where there were echoes not from Americans. I don't remember any flashback in my time. Of course it's because sensitivities are diminished after 25 years and those still living are less sensitive and so on. It's interesting that you've pursued this, Stuart, because I would have assumed you by now would have many interviews with other people who have been doing declassification reviews. There are so many of us.

Q: Well, they often don't touch that sort of subsequent career, but you were at an early stage in an executive position.

HAMILTON: For the first 15 months as active duty, so that was part of my career. Yes, I see that distinction, right. Most of the people, most of the reviewers, are retirees and now that contract problem doesn't exist anymore. They are all hired, what we call WAE, when actually employed. As a WAE there is a limit on the amount of money or the amount of time that you can record in a given year. The formula for that is the ceiling is whichever is beneficial to the individual. You can earn the difference between your annuity and your retirement day salary or the difference between your annuity and today's annualized rate of pay for the work you're doing and our reviewers are mostly taken on as GS-14s, top step. The senior reviewers are people who check the work of reviewers are GS-15s, top step. They have the choice; whichever is beneficial to them individually on either of these two formulas.

Q: Well, Bill, this is probably a good place to look back, how do you feel about your career?

HAMILTON: Well, I had just a few things that I jotted down and the first ones are what we've covered. How I got to bow out so to speak and about the declassification which was both pre- and post- retirement. It's a very in summary about declassification I would say it is a vital activity that support of scholarly and journalistic and private citizen interests. The United States government I think is in a leadership role in responding to the democratic impulse to feed those markets and within the U.S. executive branch of the

State Department can justly claim credit for being out and leading the parade. We have had other governments send representatives to study how we do this. I think we've had some influence on how the British and some other governments set up their own declassification procedures. Some of them have adopted now have freedom of information laws which they didn't have before. International exchanges led to knowledge that you really can do this.

Governments have a variety of standards as to when they release their own records. The British systematically review files at 30 years. In other words, each year they go through the files for a single year on New Year's Day or December 31st, one or the other, most of the stuff that has become 30 years old is released. I'm not privy to their guidelines except that there are certain things based on discussions. We have had exchanges over the years with the authorities in a few other governments that do this and our guidelines reflect what we know to be sensitivities of the British and the Australians and Canadians. Our relationships are closest with the comparable staff people, groups, in those countries. The French are somewhat more restrictive. The Japanese also keep, I've forgotten the number of years before they release things, but most governments have a system. In fact our historian's office has published a comparative analysis of declassification policies that this is 15 years ago or so and I haven't seen it lately to describe it more fully.

It occurs to me now that part of a question that you asked earlier, I got diverted from without answering and that was about the clearance process before final declassification of documents. We go to the desk officers to check our recommendation with current events and sensitivities. Sometimes we consult the NSC staff although they have to see a good part of their documents, but there are subjects of NSC interest where we can use judgment, but sometimes in exercising it we consult with the NSC staff to check our impression of sensitivity of something that is not of their origin, but still a topic of obvious interest. But further, my additional point is with respect to the foreign relations series, the FRUS, the historians browse around through the files in State and as much as they can in other agencies and prepare a compilation of the documents they would like to publish to record our diplomatic relations with a country or a sub-region over the period of a presidential administration. When that compilation is ready, it is passed to the declassifiers to review and see what can be printed and that process involves not only acts of judgment on the part of the reviewers, but consultation with the bureaus. Sometimes with other departments and in a limited number of cases with foreign governments. Sometime if we want to publish a British or a German document we will ask the embassy to please seek foreign office approval to publish it. They respond in terms of their own standards. If it is just a matter of foreign government information as distinct from a foreign government document, then an exercise of judgment is all that is applied. That process of referral to foreign government used to fall to the declassifiers in our office, but I know subsequently that the historians now handle that by themselves.

Q: Well, I might just add here that what we're doing right now is this oral history process is considered as sort of an adjunct to the documentation thing. It catches the flavor and the actions of individuals. Of course we go through our own self-screening because basically we have to consider everything we say is not classified. You're still doing this

declassification aren't you?

HAMILTON: On a very limited basis. I work only about 18, 16 or 18 hours a pay period.

Q: I would think there is an increasing problem with the use of telephone, e-mail, fax, the whole change in communication will create a problem for the historian. No paper reference.

HAMILTON: It surely will be a problem for the historians. We're involved only in that we are now reaching the period in which we have to review records electronically, or electronically retrievable rather than from paper and that requires different processes and different facilities. Some of the people I mean I'm working still with old paper documents, but some down in (the State Department annex at) Newington, were not using, not receiving paper copies. I'm sorry I can't address the question of how difficult they're finding it. In principle it looks to me more difficult because you move, pull up a document on your screen and then you've got to make a decision. Until you dispose of that you can't go to the next one, whereas with paper you can put a flyer on one document until the reviewer who really knows about Cyprus comes to work next week. So, I can imagine, but am not competent enough to speak whether it's going to be more difficult in the future. It will be a greater; there will be greater damage to the quality of the work of the historians. Anything that is recorded, if you record or make a record of a conversation by however it occurred by telephone or e-mail, if you make a memo or a record, then that will either be electronically or on paper available. Of course, well, for instance, I know as a fact, I've not seen them, there are records of Henry Kissinger's telephone conversations, probably not all of them, but thousands. He's not the only one, but that's an example. I know those have been gone through. The problem will probably grow larger as we make more and more decisions may be made with less and less record keeping. If you like I have just a few thoughts about the Service.

Q: Sure.

HAMILTON: You said, how was it. I'm happy to be among those who have found it a good career. My interest as I think I said at the outset was from college days in international relations and particularly international politics and I didn't initially care much whether I pursued that within the academic world or the world of operations. It was good for my family. We had two children and we had four tropical posts. None of us ever had a serious illness and I attribute that both to quite a lot of luck and to very rigid water control, which I always insisted and impressed on our staffs, and we endured the awkwardness of that. Sometimes when you're on field travel and there's nothing you can drink except stopping at a little Chinese teashop and having hot tea. You figure if they had it boiling on the stove it's probably all right.

I was not academically prepared to work on East Asia or Southeast Asia, but by virtue of the vagaries of assignments I became specialized in that field and later on, then we had two excursions out of that in Europe. One with NATO and the other Stockholm, each of which I've described. They had their virtues of the change of pace. Each of them was

good. I enjoyed all my Foreign Service assignments with the single exception which I referred to as the period I was back in INR in the early 1970s was difficult because of my inability to establish a good relationship with the director of INR. That was the least pleasant, the only really unpleasant assignment in my career and I think I'm probably in a really small minority of officers who make that statement. I certainly feel fortunate.

I've been involved in interesting things and a great variety of events. Variety between just sheer reporting and analytic work. In the last years I was much more concerned with both management and with national security affairs functionally and strictly political. I survived without real trauma. Some of the, well, my career covered transitions and none of them were really very bumpy from civil service where I started to the Foreign Service through Wristonization. Through changes from six classes to eight classes and the establishment of the Senior Foreign Service and the LCE thing which finally tripped me up. None of these things was very traumatic.

I think bespeak both the flexibility of individual officers and the wisdom of those going back to Dr. Wriston who has planned successive stages of modernization in the Foreign Service. One of the aspects of modernization which I applaud, but which I observed over the decades is the progress that we have made toward equality of opportunity within the Foreign Service. That's true across ethnic and cultural lines, but very dramatically I think in the case of the role of women in the Service. Most aptly illustrated perhaps when I left Stockholm the political counselor, the economic counselor, the station chief were all ladies and fully competent. The political counselor went on to be ambassador in Czechoslovakia and somewhere else. [Ed: Jenonne Walker was Political Counselor in Stockholm in the early 1980s and became Ambassador to the Czech Republic from 1995 to 1998.]

Q: Who was that?

HAMILTON: Well, if you hadn't asked me, I would have told you, gosh. She came to the Foreign Service as a lateral transfer from a CIA background. I will put it in because it's a senior moment.

The other transition in my career passed through a few times that were difficult because of situations that our country was in, not me personally. One of course was Vietnam. Initially I supported the war and I did for much longer than some people did because I took a Southeast Asian point of view. My view still is that if we had not made the effort that we did, the communist wave I think would have reached on beyond the Mekong, Thailand and Malaysia and Singapore.

Q: And Indonesia.

HAMILTON: And Indonesia would have suddenly become very vulnerable. I believe we gained time. Our relationship with Thailand enabled them, helped them. We created, we helped them achieve strength, sufficient to stand on their own feet and in effect say thank you very much and we diminished our relations after 1973. It was appropriate to do so. I

was never asked to go to Vietnam except informally by Sam Berger when he was Deputy Ambassador when we were stationed in Thailand. He used to come for a weekend to catch his breath once in a while and several times we had the same conversation over and over again in which he'd say, "Bill, would you like to come join us?" I would say, "Sam, I wouldn't for the following reason. I have had years of six and a half day weeks and I've got still young children and I cannot tell them that after what we've been through, now I'm going to go away for 18 months." But, I said, "Sam, if a particular hole opens up for which you think I am specially qualified, you call and I'll come." He never called. I appreciate the fact that he didn't. I related to the war of Indochina and in Laos and in Thailand, but I never did serve as so many did and was never officially approached by personnel to. So, I didn't have to struggle over the assignment.

I had somewhat similar policy related problems over El Salvador where I was not enthusiastic about our policy. This was during my Sweden days, but I played the role of a loyal soldier. Several times I remember having to go down and admonish the foreign minister of Sweden for a speech he'd given which was offensive to the people in Washington, but I always smiled at him and said, "I have instruction from Washington to tell you." In other words I sort of divorced myself. I wouldn't say I don't think you should follow this policy. I would say Washington is upset. My relationship with Mr. Ullsten was not damaged to the point that when he had a meeting with the chiefs of mission one day for him to give sort of a briefing on the Swedish outlook probably in early 1982. One of his staff people came up to me and said, "You ask a question" of which I'm sure he was put up to. I was troubled, as the briefing unfolded it was gosh, what can I do, but a question occurred to me which was probing, it wasn't nasty at all and I posed it and he responded forthrightly. That was okay and El Salvador did not become a real problem. Now I have come to believe and I've said to many folks over the last year, that I'm happy to be retired because were I still in the Service I'm sure I would have had to resign a year ago during the buildup period.

Q: You're talking about the Iraq and?

HAMILTON: Iraq, well, the whole impulse toward preventive action and unilateralism.

Q: This is the Bush administration.

HAMILTON: The Bush administration. I could have served in certain capacities in Washington, but I could not have had a senior assignment overseas and lobbied for American policies, Kyoto, you name it, so I would have had to resign. Therefore, I finished my career. I'm happy doing the limited amount of work I do for State to this day, but I am content that my career came to the end when it did.

Q: Okay, well, thank you very much, Bill.

HAMILTON: You're welcome.

End of interview