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WILLIAM STACY RHODES

*Interviewed by: John Pielemeier
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Best USAID Missions are a “team of teams” working for larger missions
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INTERVIEW

Q: Hello, this is John Pielemeier, about to do a first interview with Stacy Rhodes. Today is December 7, 2016. Stacy, I want to start with your early days and influences that led you towards international work and work for an organization like AID (also USAID; U.S. Agency for International Development). Where were you born? Where'd you grow up?

Childhood and Early Background

RHODES: I was born in Tucson, Arizona, when it was a pretty small town, in 1944. After earning his PhD, my father became a professor at the University of Arizona in Tucson, where I grew up. My mother was a native-born Arizonan from Phoenix, who met my father during the Depression era, back when Phoenix had only one high school! I grew up with two sisters in a relatively normal middle class ‘nuclear family’ of five. After serving as a professor for many years, my father became the Dean of the Graduate College at the University of Arizona, until he retired in 1977.

Q: Professor of what?

RHODES: He was a professor of chemistry for many years. A true ‘science guy’, he loved all the physical sciences. He went on to become a dean and a very accomplished higher education administrator. Mom was mainly a homemaker and child-raiser, though she also periodically worked part-time. We were a ‘normal middle class family’, went to the neighborhood public schools, and the rest. Lived in one house with the family my entire childhood and youth. We attended the Presbyterian Church nearest to our home. In addition to my parents’ very strong influence, I think the church was the place where most of my core values were initially formed.

Q: Did you do any traveling while in high school or with your family overseas?

RHODES: No, not so much overseas traveling with the family, except a couple of trips into Mexico. But we travelled a lot by car, mostly in Arizona, where we did a great deal

of camping in state and national parks. Also, our Presbyterian church was very focused on civil rights and social justice issues, and we would take short trips out of the suburbs to some significantly less-advantaged areas near Tucson. One of those I remember being important to me -- and my developing value system -- was when the youth group went to work with Mexican migrant workers' families, who had come to pick crops at the farms outside Tucson. These were the days shortly before Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers became a big influence in Arizona. We mainly went to play with the kids of the migrant pickers in the fields, while their parents were working. So as a teenager I had my first exposure to people with a lot tougher life and much less opportunity than I did, at the camps for seasonal agricultural workers. I was pretty young and this had a lasting impact.

I did love travelling out of Tucson, though. For four years, from 6th through 9th grades, I travelled all around the United States as a member of the Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus, singing in community concerts in small and middle-sized towns all across the country. The TABC is a quality chorus with good vocal training, and we even appeared on national TV on the then-famous "Ed Sullivan Show" in New York, in 1956! This experienced exposed me to the wide variety of people and cultures within the U.S. at an early age, and certainly contributed to my curiosity to 'see the world' beyond home.

But perhaps more to your point, while not travelling overseas, I did have some significant "international experiences" through my father's frequent hosting of foreign exchange students who were his students at the university, many of whom came from developing countries. We often had at our dinner table someone from Venezuela or Nigeria or Kenya, who had come to the University of Arizona to study. I became fascinated by all of these people and the stories from their home countries.

Q: Was your mother working at that time?

RHODES: She was mostly a housewife and homemaker, but also worked part-time as a bookkeeper. But she was intellectually curious and particularly interested in Mexico's history and art. To illustrate her 'mettle', as soon as all the kids left home for college, she went back to the U. of A. and finished her degree in Spanish in 1969. Tucson is a very 'Hispanic' town, located just 60 miles north of Mexico, with a lot of Mexican influences. When I was in high school, Tucson's population was over 25% Latino, and it is even greater today -- though the schools in our suburban neighborhood were not very diverse. My Mom became very interested in Mexican culture, and pursued her interests actively.

Q: Any brothers and sisters?

RHODES: Two sisters; one older, one younger. We all went to public schools in Tucson and then to a small liberal arts college, Occidental College in Los Angeles, California. I overlapped with each sister at "Oxy," which has a very strong faculty and a very active foreign student program. President Barack Obama, who went to Oxy for his first two years of college, speaks about the influence of Oxy's 'foreign student culture' at some length in his autobiography, as does his biographer, David Maraniss, in discussing Obama's formative time at Oxy. He also speaks of one of his political science professors.

Q: Did either of your sisters go into international work?

RHODES: No, neither of them did for the long term. Both spent some time in Mexico and have travelled quite a bit, but both had their careers in the U.S. My younger sister did kind of ‘follow my footsteps’ short-term to also get her master’s degree in international relations at SAIS (School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University). But she married and started her family and career in Tucson, where she lives today.

Q: Anything in high school that stands out?

RHODES: As Tucson is almost a “border town”, we did see a fair amount of Mexico, as going back and forth across the border was an easy thing to do at that time. Trips to Nogales on the border were pretty frequent with the family. But I think a key event for me in high school was the election of Senator John F. Kennedy as President. I was a junior in high school when Kennedy was elected. I was quite taken by what he said in his inaugural speech about “...ask not what your country can do for you...”. I later went to a lunch meeting at a Rotary Club with my Dad to listen to one of the earliest Peace Corps volunteers. I was quite enthralled by what I heard and read then, and at Oxy, and became determined that I would to apply to the Peace Corps after college.

Q: What were you studying in college?

RHODES: Ultimately I majored in philosophy, as I found it fascinating and believed it was helping me grow intellectually in a significant way. And I more or less ‘idolized’ one of my professors, Donald Loftsgordon. Best teacher I ever had, and I wanted to take all his courses. But I also took a lot of political science and international relations courses. Then I applied both to Peace Corps and to graduate schools in my senior year. My Dad, who was a graduate school dean at the time, urged me to go first into graduate school and get a master’s degree in something that might be more, uh, more ‘useful’ than philosophy. As I was very interested in international relations and foreign policy then, I accepted a scholarship to Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. I decided to postpone the Peace Corps experience.

Q: Before we go there, were there any courses or professors at Occidental that influenced you in this direction?

RHODES: The philosophy courses I took really helped my maturation process and ‘intellectual development’. That major required a lot of writing and also allowed me to take many other social science courses. Certainly the political science and international relations courses I took were instrumental in guiding me to a profession. But perhaps my French language course was even more important at the time. I had an excellent French professor and the course revolved around French culture and cross-cultural understanding. So in the summer after my junior year I participated in something called the People-to-People Program, travelling overseas for the first time. This program provided for college students to go abroad and combine family ‘homestays’ with

traveling around Europe. So after my junior year I went to Belgium and France for several weeks, staying a week with different families. The participants all came back together to discuss their experiences. Most of us then went off to hitchhike or travel around Europe for the rest of the summer. That program got me fully involved in learning another language well and appreciating Western European cultures. I was pretty locked in at that point to go into something ‘international’.

Q: How did you choose SAIS?

RHODES: I applied to a number of schools that offered master’s degree programs, including Johns Hopkins’ School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), the Fletcher School at Tufts University, the Woodrow Wilson Center at Princeton, one or two others. SAIS wrote me and said that they liked my record and interests, but unfortunately didn’t have openings in the Washington DC Center. However, if I was willing to attend the SAIS Center in Bologna, Italy for the first year of the program, they would waive my tuition costs! So I immediately accepted, and had a great overseas experience in Europe.

Q: Master’s in?

RHODES: International Relations. I focused primarily on international economic development issues and studied with interesting, excellent professors, in Italy and D.C. Studied a lot about French colonial history in North Africa, but even more began to focus on Latin America and political/economic development issues in this hemisphere.

Q: What year would that have been?

RHODES: I went to the Bologna Center in 1966 for that academic year, and received the Masters in June 1968.

Q: Anything about the course work or professors? Were you in Bologna for both years?

RHODES: No, just one year in Italy, including traveling again around western Europe. Came back and spent the ’67-’68 school year in Washington, where I got my MA. A very eventful year in Washington, 1968. I participated actively in a number of large and growing demonstrations against the U.S. policy and rapidly growing involvement in the War in Vietnam. The death toll was rising rapidly there for guys in my generation, including some I went to high school and college with. The War seemed so senseless to me, and to a growing number of Americans. Based on the antiquated Cold War policy of “containment”. A terrible mistake. We also experienced some other very terrible, tragic times in Washington and across the U.S. in 1968, with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in April, followed just a few months later by the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy. Much of Washington rioted and burned in April, reaching our neighborhood between Adams Morgan and Dupont Circle, and we had National Guard posted along our street. This assassination of MLK, Jr. was followed by a massive “Poor People’s March on Washington”, led by King’s associates like Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson. It was a remarkable demonstration, a real eye-opener for me.

Then still more truly tragic news for all of us in June, as many of us were actively supporting Bobby Kennedy for President, hoping and believing he could unify the country again. My oral exams for the MA at SAIS had to be postponed because of the murder of Bobby Kennedy in California, just following his victory in the California primary. This was just the day before my exams were scheduled. Fortunately they were postponed. I stayed in Washington after the orals to watch RFK's funeral procession, and the funeral train came down the East Coast from Massachusetts, bringing him to Washington. Then the procession passed through Washington from Union Station to Arlington Cemetery. After I recovered a bit emotionally, I was more ready than ever to go overseas to serve in the Peace Corps. I went off to training in late June, 1968.

Q: What was the master's thesis, or major papers they had you write?

RHODES: Wow! Tough question; too long ago I'm afraid for a specific response. There was no 'thesis' required at that time, though many shorter papers. I studied and wrote mostly on issues of economic development and Latin America

Peace Corps Volunteer – Bolivia

Q: So when you applied to Peace Corps, you asked for Latin America?

RHODES: I did. I was assigned to go to Bolivia in 1968, and in June we went off to Utah State University for intensive training in Spanish, Bolivian studies, agriculture and community development. Back then, Peace Corps was doing its training in the United States rather than in the country of service, as it wisely changed to in the 1980s. Utah State was a strong "Ag School" and had a large contract with USAID to carry out work in agriculture and rural development in Bolivia, through the "National Development Program." A lot of our trainers had worked in Bolivia with this program, and Peace Corps supplemented them with excellent language instructors and experts in community development. Plus we had intensive studies of Spanish and Bolivian history and culture.

Q: This was an agriculture group? Not a broader group?

RHODES: It was a mix, but the focus was predominantly what was called then "rural community development." Not really technical or large-scale agriculture. I had been a philosophy major so they wisely didn't put me in agriculture per se! But I wound up working primarily on "*campesino*" agriculture in rural Bolivia. As with many Peace Corps programs in Latin America in the 60s, the primary focus was on community development; living and working simply in a village while getting to know your neighbors and the leaders, both formal and informal, e.g., teachers, church heads, business people, big farmers, etc. Then moving forward to provide assistance in organizing the community around setting priorities for improvements for the town. In those days, most of the volunteers going to Africa served in formal education; they either became teachers or trainers or were in schools one way or another. But in Latin America in the '60s, the focus was heavily on what some might call 'quasi-revolutionary'

development theories of change. This entailed challenging the status quo from the ‘grass roots’, organizing communities amongst the majorities living in poverty who were socially and politically excluded. It was about how to raise the level of community organization and ability to obtain new resources for meeting basic needs. It did not focus on political participation per se, but addressed economic and social exclusion from access to credit, technical assistance, and other resources. On how you get a school or a clinic built with external resources supplementing local inputs and ‘sweat equity’. There was such a broad set of social, economic and social constraints (including clear racial discrimination) for the *campesinos* – small farmers – in Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America. Peace Corps had determined that it was critical to support communities in taking these issues on pretty directly, with a very large group of community development volunteers that used participation, organization and engagement to mobilize rural people to prioritize their needs and figure out ways to go after them.

Q: This would have been in '68? Was this after Castro and Cuba?

RHODES: Yes indeed. During our training we were asked to shave mustaches and beards because of the continuing sensitivity to that kind of facial hair in Bolivia at the time. Che Guevara was well known across the public there, and while I can't remember the exact dates, he had just recently been killed there. So there was a strong security concern by the Bolivian government/military. The Bolivians were very receptive to Peace Corps volunteers coming, notwithstanding the ongoing influence and participation of the military there. Indeed, the then-president of Bolivia, René Barrientos, came to Logan, Utah to participate in the swearing-in of our group. So I got to meet the president of Bolivia before ever leaving Logan, Utah! And off we went to Bolivia, to be posted out in a distant small town high in the Andes on the *Altiplano*.

Q: I know Peace Corps stays separate from the government as much as it can from U.S. government activities. But did you see yourselves as part of the Alliance for Progress?

RHODES: Yes and no. I think all of us became aware in training of the relatively new “*Alianza*” with Latin America, which had been established by President Kennedy some years earlier, and formed the U.S. policy toward Latin America. But for most of us, all that was just ‘too far away’ from our tasks and we were much more focused on how to live and work in the Andes, or how to grow coffee down in the Yungas, or how to address TB in Tarija. I had the advantage of just having gotten a master's degree in international relations, focusing on Latin America. So I was well aware of *La Alianza para el Progreso* (Alliance for Progress) and the fact that President Kennedy focused on and made a major investment in Latin America. But while I knew that the USG had increased significantly its assistance under the Alliance, I did not have any sense of a direct link to the very rural development work I was to do as a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV). As you noted, Peace Corps was very sensitive about and jealous of its independence from the rest of the U.S. government, especially State and even USAID. Volunteers are not U.S. government employees; we were ‘citizen-volunteers’ participating in a program sponsored by a USG agency but we were not ‘part of the government’ or required to carry out (or defend) U.S. foreign policy per se. The Peace

Corps programs going to Latin America were huge in the 60s. When I was in Bolivia, there were between 300 and 400 PCVs there. There were even larger programs elsewhere; this was a time when Peace Corps was still close to its peak size, which was when Sargent Shriver stepped down as Director in 1966. So it didn't strike me that we Volunteers had a particularly strong connection to the U.S. government per se. But we were aware of the link of what we were doing to President Kennedy's foreign policy approach in Latin America

Q: You learned something about agriculture and improved your Spanish in Logan; how long were you there in Utah?

RHODES: Roughly three months. Unlike today, the volunteers were trained and sworn-in here, before going overseas. Peace Corps later wisely decided that training -- especially languages and cross-cultural training-- could be much better done through in-country training. After we were sworn-in as PCVs, we went off to La Paz for orientation and supplement in-country training by the Peace Corps staff in La Paz, including short site visits to other PCVs in the areas we were going out to. I was assigned out to one of the tougher remote areas, out on the Bolivian *Altiplano*. The *Altiplano* is a long, flat, cold and dusty plain above the tree line at 12,000 to 14,000 feet, kind of running along the top of the Andes. I spent two years living and working at about 13,000 feet on the *Altiplano*, without a tree within a hundred miles of my town! This area of Bolivia is occupied almost exclusively by the Aymara people, who speak an indigenous language which is very difficult to understand and speak. But most of the men had gone to a few years of school and spoke a basic Spanish, like I did. The Aymara women, unfortunately, did not usually speak any Spanish, and our communication with them was limited at best.

Q: Geographically, where were you in Bolivia?

RHODES: South of La Paz, and west toward the Chilean border. I served in the small town of Achiri, in Pacajes province, for about a year. After a year there, working primarily on sheep production and wool commercialization, I ran afoul of some local middle-men in the wool business. They felt I was undercutting their local trade profits by setting up a direct wool-buying market for the *campesinos* with the national (parastatal) wool agency. I worked with the *campesinos* to encourage them to shear their sheep regularly and sell their wool directly to the wool buying agency at much higher prices than they could get from local "*negociantes*" (businessmen). So they complained about 'the Volunteer' in their town (me), alleging I was engaged in expropriating property and was a bad influence. Of course I had no interest in owning land there, but I guess I was a bad influence on their profits from wool. But I think I had a good influence on the much lower incomes of the *campesinos* in the area. Nevertheless, Peace Corps/Bolivia decided it was best to move me to another closer-in and more developed site where a volunteer had just departed. So we moved to a larger town, closer to La Paz called Machacamarca (Vilaque) for our last year. It was a place with more potential for development projects.

Q: Well, were you successful in undermining the negociantes? (Laughter)

RHODES: I have to say, I haven't been back to that site to see how the wool economy is now, but frankly I hope I was. The *campesinos* learned a couple of things through the experience about how to more regularly shear their sheep and where/when the wool prices were higher. They learned they could make more money for their families if they sheared their sheep at the right time of year to produce and sell more wool. And they learned that they could make more money if they could get the wool to market outside the local intermediaries. But I can't say what the long-term impacts were.

I learned my first lesson in the importance of "women in development". I didn't speak much Aymara – and the women were all Aymara speakers, with almost no Spanish capability. Most of the men had learned basic Spanish in primary school, but few of the women had gone to school at all, and only spoke Aymara. But the women were the ones who were really in control of the family's money. I misunderstood that completely and kept thinking the man would be the main 'breadwinner' and have some money to invest in sheep shears, etc. And because of the language issue, I worked almost exclusively with the men in Spanish. Many of the men dropped out because their wives didn't want them cutting the sheep's wool, and possibly their skin. The men had to ask their wives to give them a small amount to purchase the (subsidized) sheep shears; the women had control of the livestock and the money, almost completely. The lesson was that I should have learned Aymara and taught the women how to shear the sheep, first. The whole project might have succeeded to a far greater extent in raising family incomes. That was a lesson that stayed with me for the rest of my career in international development. Never forgot it, and have ever since advocated a strong focus on the female population in development programs.

Q: You said there were several lessons; that was one. Any larger ones you can think of?

RHODES: The overwhelming thing was just how isolated and very poor so many people in this world were then and remain so today. Overall poverty levels in Bolivia and many developing countries have declined significantly in the past 30-40 years -- which of course is a great thing and very gratifying to me, having worked in the field over that period. But there are still millions of people in developing and middle-income countries living in deep poverty, not to mention significant "pockets of poverty" in more highly developed countries. But I came out of a middle class American family and culture to live in a 'thatch roof mud room' without running water or electricity, having to dig a latrine on one side of the 'house' and a water well on the other. You learn many lessons doing this which are never forgotten. Even through my USAID career, I was always able -- as many returned Peace Corps volunteers are -- to maintain a 'village-level perspective' on development programs, a basic view that many people coming into USAID or other agencies don't often have. This was a valuable perspective when later working on larger projects with more resources. You ask more questions on impacts than others often do.

Q: The second year of your Peace Corps placement, how was that?

RHODES: It was in a bigger market town, closer to La Paz but still a long ride on a truck. But unlike my first town, this place had an active weekly market, so there were other

ways to address family income issues and we worked on other things of greater economic importance to these folks than sheep were. I continued to work a bit on sheep issues, as they're raised by virtually all inhabitants on the *Altiplano*. But I started working in other areas more promising in terms of family incomes. Raising chickens became a very big project in Machacamarca. Improving potato production was another more promising activity. We were able to do improved potato production demonstrations, and we could sell potatoes -- and the eggs-- in this market once a week. This created potential for significant economic benefits to those families who participated in projects.

Q: They were moving from subsistence agriculture towards more of a cash economy?

RHODES: At least some of the families there saw this opportunity. The trucks would come out from La Paz and El Alto once a week to buy from the *campesinos*. Everybody grew at least some of their own food, mostly potatoes. Potatoes were 'invented' in the Andes; you can find them 'growing naturally' in some places, though they're usually very small tubers. We were trying to get the *campesinos* to improve the size and productivity of their potato patches. Everybody grew and preserved potatoes in one form or another as their main staple. And they could market any crop their family didn't need. Raising chickens also had potential to increase incomes. The chickens were raised to be 'layers'; we had about a dozen families raising 50 birds each after I was able to get a modest grant from the U.S. embassy for the project. The "Ambassador's Self-help Fund" provided \$1000 to help me start a small chicken growers association. Eggs were 'golden' in the market because chickens were relatively rare on the *Altiplano*. Families could sell those eggs, and eat any left-over ones at home.

Q: You said at one point you thought the community development program you worked in was perhaps funded by USAID?

RHODES: I don't remember being specifically aware of the extent to which that was the case when I was out in the field; I learned about the linkage later. Over my two years in Bolivia I probably got a sense of the connection as I would occasionally encounter an "AID advisor" in a meeting in a town where the local Bolivian community development workers (our "counterparts") would meet periodically. It was called the National Community Development Program, and I always had a counterpart, a young Bolivian Aymara man from my town who was called the "*Trabajador del Desarrollo de la Comunidad*". He was paid a modest stipend to be the community development worker. They were often assigned to work with a "*Voluntario del Cuerpo de Paz*", the Peace Corps Volunteer. We were a pair who would go around together and talk to families about what their needs were and what they thought they needed in the community and how they might be able to earn a little extra money, and help them figure out projects which would have this effect. Then we would speak to local leaders. Not all these projects were agricultural, and there was a significant demand for a new school or school improvements. Or for basic medical care through a "clinic". And we did work on these projects as well and income-related activities. But it turns out the program at the national level was being very heavily financed by USAID, with technical advisors from Utah State University at the Ministry of Campesino Affairs. But I don't recall being aware of

that when I was posted and working in the field. I guess when you are out in the ‘middle of nowhere’ you just don’t think about that stuff; you’ve got to many other problems to worry about.

Q: Did you have any opportunity to go into La Paz?

RHODES: Pay days. Every 2 months. There were a few special trainings or conferences there too. That was about it.

Q: Any meetings with State Department or embassy personnel?

RHODES: Occasionally, you would get briefed by a technical person from USAID or an agricultural consultant. When you would get together for meetings at the Peace Corps offices, there may have been periodic participation by an Embassy FSO, but I don’t have a strong memory of it. I did participate in that great tradition of Thanksgiving dinner at a USAID or Embassy Foreign Service Officer’s house, so I did meet some embassy and USAID people. But we were discouraged from staying in town very long, and indeed required to get back out to our sites within a relatively short time. I didn’t really have many social relationships with the USAID FSOs or embassy staff in La Paz.

Q: You were probably astounded at how luxurious their living was.

RHODES: Absolutely! Pretty nice houses. Not bad for someone working in development, I thought. Especially liked the hot showers. And the food.

Q: Nearing the end of your second year, did you think about staying on?

RHODES: Regrettably no. My draft board in Tucson still wanted me in the military. Apparently wanted to send me to Vietnam where the military effort was still growing. They had originally sent me the notice while I was serving in Bolivia! So, I was told that I had to go back to Tucson and deal with my draft board right after the formal end of my two years of Peace Corps service. So I really didn’t have an option to stay on in Bolivia.

Q: Did you travel along the way?

RHODES: Unfortunately no, though I would have loved to visit other parts of Latin America. I took my readjustment allowance and made a stopover in Panama City to buy a nice Asahi Pentax camera that I longed wished I had when I was out on the Bolivian *Altiplano*. I became very interested in photography when I was out there in the Andes with amazing mountain landscapes scenery, and very tough people working to survive. But I didn’t really have time to travel; I had to get home to address my draft board.

Q: This reminds me – what ability did you have to communicate with your family when you were in Bolivia?

RHODES: Oh, boy. Compared to today’s Peace Corps volunteer, it was almost absent.

We used the old blue, four-fold thin paper ‘aerograms’ to write ‘letters’. You would write and fold them up and get a stamp on them and give them to someone going into town to mail. Usually you wouldn’t get anything back for a couple of months, usually a written letter from home addressed to you at the Peace Corps office. I also remember calling my mother from a public phone booth in the central post office in La Paz, where they had operators who would help place long distance calls. You would wait and wait for the operator to connect with the person whose name and number you had given them. Finally after half an hour or so of trying to connect, they would call out and say to go to ‘phone booth number four’; you’d get on the phone and say, “Mom! Mom! Can you hear me!?” “Happy birthday!” And that was about it!

My father was a bit more adventurous though, and actually came and visited me at my site, in the latter part of my service. Not a lot of parents were doing that; as far away as Bolivia was and as remote as my site was. That was great though. I really enjoyed that; have some great photographs of my father visiting us up on the Altiplano.

Q: Great. I guess the next question is, what happened with the draft board?

Post-Peace Corps/Pre-USAID

RHODES: (Laughter) Fortunately, I did not in the end have to go off to Vietnam where they were pretty much sending everyone in 1970. I applied for conscientious objector status, because -- after working two years living and working with small farmers who lived in mud huts and scratched out a living from the ground -- I was very upset and strongly opposed to what was going on in Vietnam, especially with American soldiers being involved in attacking and killing that same type of person - small peasant farmers - in their villages and huts if they were suspected of being Viet Cong. You remember the My Lai massacre. I strongly believed that the war was not just unwise, unnecessary and very bad policy, but had become immoral and severely damaging to our country, in numerous ways. Ultimately I did not receive conscientious objector status from the board, which refused me a personal appearance, but I failed my induction physical and then turned 26 by this time, so was no longer eligible to be drafted. So I did not wind up going into the military, which I would have refused to do at that time. Fortunately, I had had the opportunity to do “national service” in a way I felt more capable and far more willing to do. But it was a very tough time. The country was probably even more divided then than it is today.

But I wanted to continue to be an agent of change in some way or other, and involved in public service if possible. There was a lot of clamor for change in the U.S., on many fronts, often led or supported by lawyers. So I decided to go to law school. I spent the year after Peace Corps in Tucson, first applying for conscientious objector status, then applying to law school.

Q: What did you decide to do next?

RHODES: I got into law school and went off to the University of California/Berkeley

School of Law, Boalt Hall. One of my heroes of the time, Cesar Chavez had started the United Farm Workers movement. Chavez and the UFW had achieved growing recognition in California and across the country, and had won a number of battles (legal and otherwise) vis-à-vis the big growers in California and Arizona. My initial ambition was to work as a lawyer for the farm workers in California or Arizona. So I went to law school; I hoped to become part of the California Rural Legal Assistance organization, which was doing a lot of great work with disadvantaged farm workers and other poverty-stricken minorities, most often Mexican-Americans. After three sometimes hard but good years at Berkeley, I got my law degree, and started applying for jobs.

Q: Was there anything of importance during that period in terms of things you did that influenced you later? Courses you took?

RHODES: You get a few chances to take electives the first year or two in law school – it’s all contracts and civil procedure and criminal procedure and so forth – but I did take international law courses in my third year. Boalt Hall had a very good program in that area and I became very interested in international legal issues. So when I came out of law school, I had a hard time – even though my Spanish was still pretty good – breaking into the area I had originally wanted to focus on, in part due to strong – and understandable -- affirmative action programs for newly graduating minority students. There was an increasing number of such programs in the ‘70s. Nor had I really been a “star” in law school. So I was unable to get a job offer from California Rural Legal Assistance or the San Francisco Area Legal Assistance programs. Even though I got good job offers from several large law firms in San Francisco, and one in New York, and one in Washington. The one in Washington was headed by Sargent Shriver and his partners. So, the early Peace Corps connection....

Q: Sargent Shriver was the former Peace Corps head.

RHODES: Yes, the first and founding director of Peace Corps. He had become a hero to all of us PCVs back in those early days of Peace Corps, something of a personal “demi-god” I suppose. When I went to interview at his law firm here in Washington, DC, the hiring staff stopped in on “Sarge” so I could shake hands with him. I was thrilled. Sarge said something like: “So you were in the Peace Corps in Bolivia?” I said, “Yes Sir.” He then said, “We don’t see many lawyers here who have been Peace Corps volunteers.” I said, “I served two full years in Bolivia; it was a wonderful experience.” And then he promptly ‘shooed away’ all the HR staff and said, “Come on in, let’s talk!” So I went into Sarge’s office for a ‘one on one’ for more than an hour (!), and we talked – not about my law school record or what the law firm does -- but about what I did in the Peace Corps in Bolivia. That’s all he wanted to talk about! Of course, he some talking too about his experiences as director of the Peace Corps. It was just great; I loved it.

So, I got a job offer the next day! I couldn’t resist it. I wound up deciding to move from Berkeley to Washington DC and go to work at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver and Kampelman. Sarge had gone into this law firm after he left public service in 1970. He wanted me to go to work for them, I think mainly because I’d been in Peace Corps!

Q: You had never lived in or visited Washington before?

RHODES: I had lived in Washington for one year when I got my MA from SAIS.

Q: That's right; so it wasn't new to you.

RHODES: Of course, it turned out that the law firm was a pretty classic corporate firm. Even though Sarge did some interesting international work, and I worked on international trade cases and a few of Sarge's clients, most of the work was straight corporate lawyer stuff. Representing corporations, importers, real estate developers and so forth. I frankly saw after about a year that it wasn't really what I was going to want to do long term. About a year and a half in I started looking around for a better path, and went back to interview with the Department of State. They made an offer to come work at State's legal adviser's office. So I left Sarge's firm on good terms after about two years. I went to State. It was a more interesting role in public international law, even as a new, young associate. But it was still desk-bound work, mostly research and writing, often on procedural issues. I liked it better than the firm, and felt fortunate to have that position, but I wasn't excited by the work, or ready to continue there as a career.

Q: You were how old at that point?

RHODES: I would have been about 32-33. I had worked at the legal adviser's office about a year when they sent me to Latin America to attend a UN conference in Argentina on water rights, international riparian rights. At that conference I met a guy named Richard Seifman from USAID who was assigned to the US/UN delegation. He had been a lawyer who went to work at USAID, and he was going to return from Argentina via Bolivia to see an old friend of his, who was the USAID mission director there. He knew I had been in Bolivia with Peace Corps and invited me to go with him.

So we flew from Buenos Aires to La Paz and he took me to meet his old friend, the then AID mission director Frank Kimball, one of the "legends" of Latin American and other USAID leadership positions. I went out with Frank and Dick Seifman, and we visited a number of USAID projects. I also went to my old Peace Corps site. Dick basically asked me, "So who's having more fun? Us USAID guys or you State Department lawyers?" Dick and Frank kind of recruited me on that trip, noting that the Latin America Bureau was hiring program officers, project development officers, and other staff. "Why don't you go talk to the Latin America Bureau in Washington when you get back?" Which was just a couple of floors down in Main State from the legal adviser's office.

So that's what I did. I met the old hard-core Latin America development resource (DR) crew – Buster Brown and John Sanbrailo and Robin Gomez and Hank Bassford and that group. They recruited me on Kimball's recommendation. So I wound up doing something pretty unusual for a State Department lawyer, and left State to become a project development officer at USAID in 1978. Some in State thought I was crazy!

USAID Latin America/Caribbean Bureau, Office of Development Resources

Q: So sort of a direct transfer?

RHODES: It was; they called it a lateral transfer. I was 'green' to USAID, so they wanted to give me a lot of training to become a projects officer, and they didn't want to send me out to the field quickly, which I wanted to do. And I didn't want to go into the general counsel's office either. I wanted to work in projects and programs overseas. I wanted to go back out, and work in development projects in Latin America

Q: Do you remember what grade you were?

RHODES: I don't remember exactly. It was a lateral transfer across agencies at the GS 10 or 11 level I think. But I converted to the Foreign Service, and basically came in as a development intern, formerly called 'IDIs' (international development interns).

Q: Now it would be FS-4 (Foreign Service).

RHODES: Yeah, something like that. I got a bit of credit for my three-plus years practicing law, after law school. I never regretted the investment in law school or the relatively short time 'practicing' because it was a time of real professional growth and great improvement in thinking and writing skills, in organizing and preparing professional memoranda. These were invaluable throughout my USAID career. As a program or project development officer, you have to know and understand a lot of policies and regulations, and be aware of restrictions on uses of U.S. foreign assistance funds, making sure when you prepare a project document that you abide by what's in those laws, policies and regulations. The legal training was very helpful right away.

Q: You haven't mentioned much about your family; had you met your future wife by this time?

RHODES: Yes, I met my wife Trish in late 1974, at the law firm. When I arrived at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver and Kampelman, she was the new law librarian there, just coming out of her master's program in library science. But she was much better at doing legal research than I was. So I frequently asked her for help and received very high quality support! We started dating while I was in the firm and went out for several years in Washington. Finally, in 1978, after I'd switched into the Foreign Service at AID and possible overseas assignments were being discussed with me, the pressure was on.

Q: Pressure from her?

RHODES: Yes, and I suppose from myself too. We had moved in together in a rented house, and I had started thinking more seriously about a future life overseas. By this time she had become a full time law firm librarian for a major firm, making good money and having good benefits. But she didn't seem to be enjoying it that much, so perhaps ready for a change. But she was definitely not going anywhere overseas without being married;

she made that pretty clear. So the pressure was on, and fortunately I finally responded in the most appropriate way. (Laughter)

Q: Were you going overseas at that time?

USAID Haiti, Project Development Officer

RHODES: After almost two years of training in the Latin American and Caribbean Project Development division (LAC/DR), I was assigned out. Because I was one of the few French speakers in LAC, and because they had a hard time recruiting within the bureau for the USAID program in Haiti, I was actively recruited for it. I had gone to Haiti on TDYs (temporary duty) to work on several projects in development. There was a superb mission director there, Larry Harrison. He said he was interested in my coming to work there. So Trish and I got married in October, 1979, and just three weeks later were in our little apartment in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The first of our five USAID posts.

Q: What were some of the differences you found as you moved over to USAID as you think back to your experience at Peace Corps and State. Were there any behavioral or cultural differences?

RHODES: Sure. Peace Corps had been a much less stressful job. It was hard in many ways, with all sorts of challenges, but I didn't feel 'stressed out' by it. You were 'living your job' and you did it every day because you had volunteered to do so, you were enthusiastic and energetic in doing it, and meeting the considerable challenges, even though it was tough at times. Being a Peace Corps volunteer was then referred to as "The toughest job you'll ever love", a great slogan. It was mostly outdoors work, lots of physical labor and even more work communicating in another culture and language, wholly different from your own. A great change in one's life, in almost every way. Unlike being a law firm or the State Department, where there was a very "established" workplace culture to conform to, Peace Corps was totally different. I loved being in Peace Corps, but I had to 'overcome' or leave behind some of the 'Peace Corps culture' to take on and succeed in these later jobs. Not just in dress, but in the greater formality of speaking and presenting, and the way you needed to relate and defer to 'higher ranking officials'. The first time I ever had to quickly stand up in a meeting when an ambassador entered the room, I was taken aback, but went along with the rest and stood up – just a little late. I started to understand the essentially '1950s culture' of formal diplomatic life, and the need to largely conform to it, if you wanted to gain respect and succeed. I was not very comfortable with that at the outset, but began to see it as "part of the job".

But the decision to move from State to USAID was not simply to recapture the Peace Corps experience or culture 'per se'. I was itching to work less from a remote desk in Washington and to work more directly with people and resources focused on addressing practical problems of poverty in developing countries. One could do that with significant resources supporting your work in USAID, It was less 'academic' in nature than the State job – yet certainly still more formal (and more indoors) than Peace Corps. In USAID you were judged more by your ability to see and understand and analyze issues of poverty and

exclusion, and work with others to analyze and propose possible solutions. Obviously in USAID the problems being addressed were very complex and long-term, and I was not a technical person; they hired me as a Backstop 94, a project development officer. We worked closely with technical people, most of whom were far ‘smarter’ than I was in their fields of expertise, but many of whom were not particularly good writers or organizers or budgeters. Frequently they didn’t have a broader concept of how to describe and address a complicated, long-term problem in a multi-faceted way, and write it all up.

Yet the USAID culture was more informal than the State culture and I was more comfortable in it. Nevertheless it was much more rigorous and defined by hierarchy than Peace Corps had been. I enjoyed it, I enjoyed being back overseas, even I when it meant working in a tough neighborhood in Port-au-Prince. We worked out of a rented former auto dealership building converted into USAID offices, three or four blocks from the embassy. Then the neighborhood wasn’t as risky an area as it is today. Back then, while Haiti was deep in extreme poverty, and people were struggling to make a living, it was safe to walk around town, and get to know it directly. The fact that it was a real “police state” contributed to this level of street safety, unfortunately. In a police state people don’t have much freedom politically, or many legal rights, but the streets are generally safe. We could freely walk around the streets of Port-au-Prince downtown, with our wives and children, and were able to get to know ordinary people. We were free to move all about the county and we travelled a lot. That was great thing for work and for the family. One of very few advantages of living in a police state.

Q: Did Trish speak French or Creole?

RHODES: She had studied some French, but she wasn’t really a language person. But we would go together to the market and bargain with the market ladies; we all enjoyed that. Of course our “deals” would be more expensive than for a native Haitian bargaining in Creole. Creole is the language everyone speaks; French is spoken only by the educated elite who live in Port-au-Prince or Cap-Haitian or a few other major urban areas, and really only in public. All Haitians speak Creole at home, from birth. So Creole was and is THE true national language. I took Creole lessons and learned quite a bit of Creole back then. And became a lifelong friend with my Creole instructor!

Q: Any adjustments to USAID that you remember that were surprising in terms of your role of a fairly experienced but junior officer? Coming into a mission where you probably had a lot of older people around – how did you react to that?

RHODES: One of the most surprising adjustments I had to make was in my very name! I was known up until I went to Haiti as “Bill Rhodes;” my first name being William. My middle name is Stacy. But when I got to the AID mission I discovered that one of the most senior people – and my supervisor – was also named “Bill Rhoades!” I’d never met anyone else named Bill Rhodes. I was amazed.

Q: Spelled the same way?

RHODES: His last name had an ‘a’ in it, mine does not. But pronunciation was identical – phone calls or even visitors would come in and would ask for ‘Bill Rhodes’ and the operator or reception would say “which one?” It was confusing. Mail, messages... He was a more senior guy; he was in charge of the big PL-480 *Food for Peace* program there and some of the programs I worked on, and at first I worked to some extent under his direct supervision. So I changed to my middle name ‘Stacy’, for all of my four years in Haiti, and became known in the Foreign Service as ‘Stacy Rhodes’. I stuck with it.

But many of the other adjustments were not so surprising. We had a pretty large staff of FSOs and some pretty highly experienced people there. We had three program officers – this is back when USAID missions almost everywhere had significant overseas Foreign Service officer staffs. We had a great Project Development Office with Aaron Williams, Scott Smith and me. You know both Aaron and Scott, and that both went on to exemplary careers at AID and beyond. Aaron went on to become a USAID mission director and later the director of the Peace Corps. But it was in downtown Port-au-Prince when I met Aaron for the first time, late 1979. Those were important times, our first FSO assignment. We became life-long friends, and one lesson I learned was “Always be nice to the person in the cubicle next to yours, because you never know what might happen later on.” I am still very close with Aaron here in the Washington area, and stay in touch with Scott, who’s since moved back to Michigan.

Q: Did you find yourself traveling around Haiti?

RHODES: Yes, a lot, both for work and with the family. But it was a rough set of roads in most places, and often very muddy in the season. You were not formally restricted though; we were fortunate to be serving overseas in those days when the security needs and requirements were so much fewer than they are today. In the course of my work as a “PDO” (project development officer), I traveled many times out with an agriculture or health officer to remote parts of Haiti. I also took other people out from NGOs (non-governmental organization) that we were working with and went all over, all through northwest Haiti, the most remote region. But also down to the tip of the southern peninsula, the area just recently hit by that terrible hurricane, Jérémie and Les Cayes area. Travelling through Haiti was a very rich and rewarding experience. While every country has ‘good and bad apples’, Haitians are by-and-large very friendly and open people with a great sense of humor and culture, their music and art in particular being well known. I found this kind of amazing for a country that suffers from so much poverty and so many direct hits by natural disasters – earthquakes, hurricanes, you name it. It’s just an amazing place, even if it sometimes seems cursed. While fate has not helped Haiti move forward, neither has it’s long string of really bad governments, including the one I was working under there, the second Duvalier regime. USAID’s democracy and justice programs are badly needed there, and have made some significant advances possible.

Q: This was Baby Doc?

RHODES: Yes, Baby Doc. He’d come into power succeeding his father, “Papa Doc” in 1971. I arrived there in ’79, so he was well ensconced in the palace as “President-a-Vie”,

president for life. We had to deal with all that as well as his pretty corrupt and lackadaisical government and all that entailed.

Q: Were your programs mostly bilateral programs with the government or were they projects working around the government?

RHODES: Good question and one that I asked early on. Most of the portfolio was a traditional “government-government” portfolio as originally conceived by Latin America bureau people who were working closely with other governments around Latin America. Most of the major projects with government agencies, such as the ministries of agriculture or health, were moving very slowly or even pretty much dead in the water for lack of adequate counterpart collaboration or accountability issues. Often some corruption had been experienced to some extent in many of them, and if not corruption per se, certainly inefficiency and very slow action (if any) by the Government of Haiti (GOH). Part of it was a capacity issue. Part of it was a lack of political will. Ministers and high level officials were pretty much all closely linked to the Duvalier Regime and were more concerned with their longevity in office and making some money while there. As much as we wanted the GOH to be part of the solution, it was clearly more part of the problem. So as a project development office, I worked very hard to shift the nature of the USAID program from the government-focused portfolio that was largely paralyzed or very slow-moving, to projects that focused more on working with NGOs, PVOs (private voluntary organization) and other organizations who were capable and willing to work for a more direct impact on Haitian people. I should say that there were a few smaller, ‘semi-autonomous’ and single-purpose government agencies who we continued to work with and through because of their demonstrable effectiveness and accountability, such as SNEM, the national program to eradicate malaria, the BON (Bureau of Nutrition), and the BCA (Bureau of Agricultural Credit). These were programs that operated relatively independently and had strong, service-oriented leadership. focused on making a difference. They were not as closely controlled by the Palace, and could account for the assistance, much of which was provided as technical assistance and training (rather than cash). They were much more accountable for resources than the larger, more politicized ministries. So we did continue to work with a number of smaller semi-autonomous government agencies. But by the time I left four years later, most of the program had shifted to working through non-governmental agencies in order to get something accomplished of direct benefit to people.

Q: These were grants, not loans?

RHODES: Yes. While the Latin America bureau was still managing a lot of old loans to larger Latin American countries, the Haiti program was an all-grant program.

Q: So there was no capital development, no infrastructure?

RHODES: No, not in terms of large-scale construction projects for infrastructure. The multilateral banks were financing some of these with concessional loans, but not USAID. However, the USAID portfolio did emphasize the construction and maintenance of rural

roads, unpaved farm-to-market roads, with labor-intensive methods. These efforts went through the Ministry of Transportation or a separate road maintenance, but relied on community groups to obtain local labor. But they were difficult to implement with adequate accountability. But it was critical to generate activity in the rural economy, so we worked at it, with modest success over time.

But allow me to tell you about a couple of projects in Haiti that I worked on intensively and which illustrate some of the issues of working with the GOH -- and a possible alternative. These two projects were of particular importance to me, and I think in some respects to larger U.S. policy. In 1976, Jimmy Carter had been elected president. By 1978, he had done significant policy work in human rights and an accompanying reorganization in the State Department. Our new, proactive human rights policy became much more important than previously for USAID as well. About this time, the Latin America bureau became the first place in USAID was looking in depth project work in this area, primarily through what called "administration of justice" (AOJ) programs. These were sometimes related to the increased human rights reporting from U.S. embassies abroad. The initiative was really led by a couple of very smart people with foresight about the critical link between judicial administration and economic/social development. Ambassador James Michel had served in the Department of State legal adviser's office (where I first met him) and he really led in the development of the early AOJ programs, along with USAID lawyers and LAC program/project officers. Initial efforts focused on the independence and competence of the court system, and its ability to manage cases, primarily on the criminal side. This was a "neutral" (apolitical) way of getting to some of the severe human rights issues rampant across Latin America and the Caribbean. We were beginning to look broadly at how USAID programs might more directly support the strengthening of the judicial process and criminal justice systems.

One of the first things I worked on, even before formal assignment to Haiti, was financed with a small amount (\$125,000) of human rights designated funding. It was called the "Legal Assistance to the Poor" Project and was designed to work with the Port-au-Prince Bar Association (ostensibly a professional organization, not linked to the government). Having been a lawyer, I was asked to take a look at whether something could be done to establish a public defender service in Haiti, at least for those charged with crimes which could mean a lengthy loss of freedom. My first involvement came on a TDY where I was accompanied by an experienced lawyer, Jim Bensfield, from the federal public defender's service in Washington DC. We went to Haiti to talk to members of the Bar Association of Port-au-Prince about the possibilities for this idea. Turned out that in their by-laws, members of the bar actually have an obligation to provide free legal assistance to indigents Haitians 'pro bono'. Of course they hadn't done that because they didn't have either the resources or any real tradition of voluntary legal services. Our thought was to work within the context of a well-accepted non-governmental organization, which had been authorized by the government to be created and carry out certain functions within the court system. We were able to get the Bar Association quite interested in establishing a legal assistance program for pro bono criminal defense, with USAID assistance. We hired a young, bright, proactive Haitian lawyer who had been doing legal work locally for the embassy and USAID. He spoke good English because he had gotten a graduate law

degree at Howard University after getting his law degree at the University of Haiti in Port-au-Prince. This was Guy Malary, who returned from the U.S. to Haiti to start his own private practice. Guy turned out to be energetic, enthusiastic about this initiative, very capable to work with; a clearly committed young lawyer who also wanted to do something for his country.

Guy worked with us over the following months within the context of the Bar Association and we put together plans for a small public defender service with Bar sponsorship. It was to open its door to provide advice and counsel to newly arrested indigents, with the help of the lead lawyer, interns (“*avocats stagiaires*”) coming from the University of Haiti’s law school, plus additional volunteers from the Bar Association for supervising interns. A lease for the offices in a downtown building was being negotiated and readied for signature when I was called in by a leading attorney, and informed that regrettably “the Palace” (the Duvalier government) did not want the project “to go forward at this time”. The project was being ‘put on hold’, of course never to see the light of day again.

That was a brutal lesson. We all had put a lot of effort into it, and were energized to begin this small projects to carry out an effort to implement the existing criminal code. But the effort certainly showed the true colors of the Haitian regime under ‘Baby Doc’, and the government’s action made it clear that it was not going to be easy to start even the most basic human rights related work in Haiti. I remember it all so clearly, in part because this local lawyer we worked with, Guy Malary, went on about 15 years later to become the Minister of Justice in Haiti, in the effort made during the Clinton Administration in 1993 to “restore democracy to Haiti” by returning the democratically-elected (but deposed) President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to office. Despite of the early failure of the Legal Assistance Project, Guy had continued his private practice and become a close friend and colleague during our four years in Haiti (even the godfather to my daughter, born while we were there). He had since been named by Aristide to be his first minister of justice, in the process of restoring democracy. He began work in Port-au-Prince before Aristide was returned to the country, working with Jim Michel and others from USAID’s LAC Bureau on a series of judicial reforms. Then about six or seven weeks into his tenure, he was assassinated by the departing ‘old regime’, shot down in the streets by thugs hired by one of the several military/police dictators who followed “Baby Doc,” after the Duvaliers were finally overthrown. So it was a very tough go, for me and for all in USAID who had worked with Guy, incredibly tragic, personally and even more for the country which needed him so much. I’ve never forgotten all that, and from then on understood better than ever just how important it is for economic and social development to build a viable, functioning system of justice. I have also never forgotten that while USAID officers often work to overcome challenges in difficult circumstances, we never face the kind of challenges and risks that many of our courageous “counterparts” face in their efforts to serve their own countries. While we may risk illness, they often risk death.

PAUSE

Let me speak for a moment about one other project which I’ll never forget from my Haiti experience, because in great contrast to the legal assistance program, it was a great

success! (Laughter). Apparently this project even went on to provide assistance to the small farmers of Haiti for many years after I left. It was the Agroforestry Project.

Within the mission we had a lot of internal battles between those who were very defensive about the older projects with government ministries in the portfolio who basically believed that all USAID's assistance should be channeled exclusively through the government of Haiti. The view was that as USAID is a U.S. government agency, we should work with counterpart government agencies in Haiti, in order to strengthen those institutions, build their capacity, and through them help the people they are supposed to serve. The mission's Agriculture Office strongly held this view, even though few of our numerous projects with the Ministry of Agriculture were making any measurable progress. Some of those projects had been active a long time but little could be found in terms of positive impacts for rural farmers in Haiti. Much of the existing project portfolio was immobilized, not being implemented effectively because of issues with the government, corruption in some cases, certainly a lack of capacity in most institutions, and most importantly a lack of political will within the Duvalier regime. I and others in the mission fought for change, for developing new projects working with and through non-governmental organizations, which we believed could make a faster and more measurable impact on Haiti's poorest.

This led us to develop -- with the help of Haitian experts and several American foresters and anthropologists with direct experience working in rural Haiti -- a project directed at getting a large number of fast-growing trees planted in areas where deforestation was rampant. We believed that it was critical to generate movement and momentum, and to implement the program through a variety of NGOs which were already working with Haiti's small farmers. We believed that there were non-governmental organizations with the capacity to organize rural communities and to monitor progress and impact.

Q: Where did your mission director Larry Harrison come out on this issue?

RHODES: By this time Alan Furman had replaced Larry. Larry was transferred to lead the rapid start-up in Nicaragua after the Sandinista revolution succeeded in deposing the Somozas. The mission's leaders took some convincing on this new approach for Haiti, but Al was open to new approaches and understood well the limits of working solely with the government. But we also had major critics in USAID in Washington. There was a lot of skepticism of the idea of funding and implementing a large project entirely outside the governmental structures. This was "the old days", you remember, and this was seen as a risky, serious departure from AID's traditional *modus operandi*, at least in the LAC Bureau. But we also had allies, especially from the technical side, who understood the seriousness of the deforestation crisis and had good ideas for assisting us. And virtually no one believed that another large project with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was worth additional project investment.

We worked very intensively with a number of Haitian and American experts, primarily anthropologists and forester about how to practically address the desperate need in Haiti for significant reforestation. Several anthropologists, including Dr. Gerry Murray,

believed that you could only get poor Haitian farmers to plant and ‘maintain’ trees out in rural areas, on a sustainable basis, if you could demonstrate that this could earn them cash income in the relative near term. This could not be done as a longer-term ‘conservation’ effort. Or an idealistic campaign “to protect the national patrimony”. So we began working with foresters with expertise in fast-growing, ‘coppicing’ tree species which could be cut down in a relatively short term for economic uses, and still re-grow from the stump (with the same established root-base in place) after being cut, reducing the need for continual replantings. There were quite a number of varieties of tree species that both grow relatively quickly and ‘coppice’ from the stump, which could be planted by rural farmers, intercropped with their maize or other food crops, or planted along borders, or in hillside areas where crops did not do well. If they could be protected, maintained and harvested for common uses like construction poles, making charcoal, etc. in the relative near term (1-2 years), it could provide a new source of family income. Then they could re-grow these trees and continue to plant more, as they made money from it.

So we developed a program with three major non-governmental organizations; the Pan-American Development Foundation (PADF); CARE and Operation Double Harvest -- a large-scale tree nursery. CARE had worked extensively in the large, remote Northwest region of Haiti, and had experience in this dry, difficult area. PADF would ‘cover’ key areas in the rest of the country, which required establishing many new working relationships with civil society groups, community organizations and religious service groups. And all of these NGOs had done extensive work in rural Haiti. We developed a project that utilized ‘cash cropping’ incentives to motivate poor farmers, to promote “agroforestry” tree-planting on a much larger scale than in the past. The ultimate use of the trees was left to the Haitians who planted, protected, tended and ‘harvested’ them. It was one of the very first large projects, at least in the LAC Bureau, to be carried out entirely through non-governmental organizations. And it was the start of a major shift in the Haiti program away from projects designed to be implemented through the GOH.

While I don’t know the full history of the project -- I left Haiti not long after we finally got it up and running – I did read later in the USAID newspaper Front Lines – that the project had succeeded well beyond anticipated results and had been renewed and expanded for another five years, with significant additional funds. This Agroforestry Project ultimately planted millions of trees in Haiti – most of which were later cut down after they became large enough to be sold for construction poles or to make charcoal, while in the meantime conserving soil and farmland. And most of those ‘harvested’ re-grew, while others were planted in addition. Haitians saw that significant income could be earned by “cash-cropping’ trees. Obviously not a complete solution to the severe deforestation in Haiti -- especially with its rapidly growing population. But at least the project was a successful start on effectively addressing an major development issue left largely unaddressed for decades. And it certainly enhanced the mission’s efforts to move to design other programs implemented through larger, capable NGOs.

.Q: You had to go to Washington for the approval?

RHODES: To the LAC Bureau for final project design and funding, yes. It was large enough that it could not be approved in the field. Plus it was somewhat controversial, viewed as risky and definitely a departure from the usual way of designing projects.

Q: Was there a process you used to undermine the opposition in Washington as you designed the program?

RHODES: The main tactic was simply to cite the lack of success in the alternatives. Kind of like President Obama's justification of the recent opening to Cuba: when you've been trying something for years, even decades, and it hasn't worked, it might be good to try something new. We didn't know if this would work. We took some risks with it. The anthropologists, all of whom had lived in the villages in Haiti and knew the "paysan" and the traditional "groupement", worked on a community basis as well as an individual and family basis. They were key to designing a project that would create incentives for rural farmers to earn family income while simultaneously addressing deforestation.

One final interesting point. The very first Peace Corps group to ever come to Haiti was in effect sponsored by this Agroforestry Project. My friend and colleague Aaron Williams, Embassy economic officer David Weiss and I were the sponsors of the first Peace Corps Volunteers to arrive in Haiti, in 1982. All the new PCVs worked in the Agroforestry program, as they had been forestry volunteers elsewhere previously. They supported and extended the NGOs' organizational efforts in rural Haiti. Peace Corps has since been in and out of Haiti a number of times, but I took great pride in helping to start a Peace Corps program in Haiti, via this project.

Q: This is John Pielemeier; this is the second interview session with Stacy Rhodes on December 13th, 2016. We'll start with Stacy read briefly from an article in the Wall Street Journal, June 9th, 1986, regarding the project he and others designed in Haiti while he was there, which was the first major NGO project that AID authorized in Haiti.

RHODES: Thank you, John. We discussed in our last interview the development of the Agroforestry Project in USAID Haiti, and the fact that back then it was out-of-the ordinary to develop a sizeable project to be carried out entirely through non-governmental organizations, rather than through host government institutions.

Let me just read briefly from this article in the Wall Street Journal, which is from June, 1986, about five years after the project was conceived and developed. The author, Gerry Murray, was a very creative anthropologist who helped us greatly in the design of the project in the early 1980s. He was the primary advocate for the strategy of reaching out to peasants through local village-based groups with the financial incentives of 'cash cropping' trees.

He writes in the article, "Well it took about two years, but a phone call finally came from a determined young AID program officer in Haiti" (yours truly) "After some rather bloody bureaucratic battles, he and some allies had finally succeeded in having a private voluntary project approved for Haiti. AID had actually...raised the figure for the project

to \$8 million to be allocated over four years through three different PVOs” (private voluntary organizations).

“I was asked to climb down from my ivory tower [University of Florida] at that point and to manage a \$4 million chunk for one of the PVOs, for the first two years of the project. For \$4 million, the AID economist expected at least 6000 peasant families to plant at least three million income-generating wooden trees. I nervously accepted this offer. The results, however, left everyone including myself open-mouthed. When approached by local groups who spoke in the idiom of income-generation rather than that of altruistic ecology, the Haitian peasants leapt into action. By the end of its final year, the four year project had led to the planting of trees by not 6000 families but by 75,000 Haitian peasant families. The total number of trees planted with project funds was just short of 20 million rather than the originally projected three million. By going through PVOs, the project had avoided the usual delays and cost overruns. A few institutional dinosaurs still contended the money should have been given to the Haitian government instead. But even former skeptics in AID recognized the potential for this non-governmental approach for other countries and other commodities. To its enormous credit, AID in Haiti has responded by altering its institutional modus operandi. At one recent point, it was channeling about 57% of its \$50 million AID portfolio through private groups, reaching hundreds of communities and tens of thousands of families. This approach worked well for AID in Haiti and is now being successfully implemented in other countries. Politically courageous decisions will have to be made to institutionalize this approach further worldwide and to empower the creative elements in AID and to prevent highly placed obstructionists from letting the agency slide back into business as usual.”

So while I was astonished to see this in the Wall Street Journal, of all places, in 1986, I had to love it, and I thought he made the point – perhaps overstates it to some extent -- that this new approach had worked well in Haiti and should work in other countries. So in my early career as a USAID project development officer this was probably the single most successful project I helped design. .

Q: Revolutionary!

RHODES: It frankly seems kind of tame now, but back then it wasn't!

Q: All right. We're going to move on from Haiti to your next post.

USAID Morocco, Senior Program Officer

RHODES: I was now a bona fide French speaker, even though placed within the Latin America bureau. I had a couple of opportunities to work in Central America at that time, which were tempting because I was very much interested in the area. But it was a very troubled area in the mid-'80s with the “Contra War” in Nicaragua and Honduras, as well as other major policy issues regarding El Salvador, Guatemala, etc., under President Reagan. And I got a great offer to go and join a USAID leader I'd met in Haiti, who had just become the mission director in Morocco, Bob Chase. I still consider Bob one of the

finest mission directors I have ever known. He asked if I would come to Morocco, I happily accepted and we moved the family to Morocco in mid-1983. It was a very different situation than Haiti, needless to say.

Q: You were the project development officer?

RHODES: I was the senior program officer. The Middle East Bureau relied heavily on program officers and not nearly as much on project development officers, as had the Latin American bureau. I had to have the BS-02 “program officer backstop” added, and was now qualified for both jobs. I knew that this would likely mean less direct work on projects and more time planning, budgeting and preparing strategy documents, but I was okay with that. It was a very different place. It was a true kingdom, which in one sense was not so different from “president-à-vie” in the Haitian context, but this was a truly long-standing royal kingdom, with a family which had held power for decades. King Hassan was viewed as a relatively ‘progressive’ monarch, interested in modernizing the country, and he was also a moderate Islamic leader with a positive relationship with the U.S. It would be a ‘new world’ for me, and we went there with enthusiasm and curiosity.

The Moroccan economy had been developed around the French parastatal model, with strong government price controls and managed trading. The Moroccan government was providing substantial subsidies and regulating the private sector, as well as owning and running its own parastatals. Over time that model had proven in the ‘70s and ‘80s to not work very well, and indeed Morocco was part of that story. The economy was in deep trouble, with large budget and balance of payments deficits. Fortunately the Moroccan government had committed itself to the transformation of its economy to a much more market-based, private sector led future. They also had certain ‘national security interests’ which would keep the government involved in some economic sectors and trade deals. But the government of Morocco (GOM) had agreed, because of their economic difficulties at the time, to an IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank structural adjustment program. The donor community had rallied around the idea of helping Morocco transform its economy with a shrinking role for the public sector and the privatization of many parastatals, at least those not considered “vital to national security”. We worked as part of that donor effort and undertook a number of program activities to support a growing private sector, with the intention of strengthening economic growth and generating sustainable employment through market forces.

That was a big part of our program. Unlike in Haiti, a program focused on working through governmental institutions made good sense here. We had two very good economists in the mission – Jay Smith and Rick Ernst. They worked closely with the government of Morocco in the overall economic policy sphere. We tried to help the GOM improve the efficiency of its economy and to reduce an oversized “public service”. Then we had a major focus on agriculture as well, and on generating greater agricultural export growth and developing more export for the European market. The “ag program” also focused on increasing the food supply, mainly rain-fed cereals and grains, and increasing the efficiency of production for domestic consumption. There was a smaller component on helping the Moroccans develop tree crops – citrus and olives and others, as

well as some other exports for the European market. So, on the economic side, we worked with the GOM on improving their policy environment, reducing price controls and subsidies, increasing the efficiency and distribution of agricultural inputs like seeds and fertilizers, and improving production of domestic staples and exports destined for nearby markets in Europe. While hard to measure in the near term, these projects were consistent with the government's strategy and changing policies, so they did move along with a pretty good record of implementation and accountability. Political will helps.

But perhaps the mission's most important program was the health sector, particularly the family planning and child survival programs. Morocco had a network of health clinics out in the smaller cities and countryside, but they had very spotty staffing, limited training and few pharmaceuticals. Thus very limited capacity to reach out to rural people. It was very much a Muslim culture, though with a thin "French veneer" in urban areas, and a strong Berber culture in many rural areas. There were issues around gender that we had to be careful of, and treat sensitively. Perhaps we should have been bolder in some ways, but in the context, we felt we were being as bold as we could be in taking on issues of fertility and reproductive health; we depended heavily on governmental collaboration and support. And by comparison with other Muslim countries in the Middle East, Morocco was open to new ideas and approaches to extending services. We helped the Moroccans develop female village workers to work with girls and women in rural areas. Some of the constraint on reducing high fertility rates could be overcome, and the Moroccans wanted to address their serious problems of infant and child mortality. With some care we were able to build a large, active and accepted family planning and maternal and child health program, extending services well beyond those previously available.

On the child survival side – I don't know if you remember, but child survival was getting significantly new and increased financial support by Congress -- we were able to expand services greatly in Morocco, focusing on oral rehydration therapy for diarrheal diseases, regular vaccinations were becoming available at health clinics, as was the ability to identify and treat acute respiratory infections in children. And the "birth spacing" programs proved to be a huge factor in improving the health, not only of the babies but the mothers. We pressed forward with this effort, with collaboration from the Moroccans.

Q: Were you working with UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Fund) at that time? UNICEF was a USAID partner in the child survival program.

RHODES: We didn't have a direct partnership with them there that I recall, but we had very significant donor coordination efforts there. Our health office was headed by excellent senior officers who worked closely with other donors' health experts, coordinating most effectively in sector groups. While there were coordinating meetings of the heads of agencies, which the mission director would attend, these tended to be "big picture" in scope, focusing on economic and other policy issues, and would not entail program-level discussions, particularly in more controversial and sensitive areas like family planning and child survival. The real value of donor meetings was in the technical officers putting their heads together and learning from each other about specific interventions which were working well. There was good collaboration at that level.

Q: Was Dale Gibb your health officer?

RHODES: Yes, she was. And before her, Jerry Bowers, who was also just excellent, very proactive. One of the funniest people I ever met in my career. Then Dale came out when Jerry was reassigned and built the operation up even more extensively, as new funding became available. We had good financial support in this priority sector.

In addition to economic reform, agricultural transformation and family planning/MCH, the last piece of the Morocco program was a small but innovative energy program. It had two aspects: policy analysis and an early, innovative program in renewable energy. First we worked with the responsible government agencies to address existing policies which had created high costs and substantial inefficiencies. These included all the “common issues” like government pricing and subsidies, weak cost-recovery, maintenance problems, customer dissatisfaction, etc., etc. Like so many government-controlled economies, the GOM provided substantial subsidies on electricity that couldn’t be sustained over time. We sent a lot of GOM managers to regional and international seminars and workshops in energy, and provided technical advice. In an effort to improve management and policies in the energy sector. Steve Kline worked very hard in this area.

But we also started a very far-sighted and innovative renewable energy program, established with government support and interest, but limited direct involvement or financial contribution. With the government we established a renewable energy center in Marrakesh, which experimented and demonstrated new and appropriate technologies, focusing particularly on the potential for village and small town use of wind and solar. It was quite early in this field still; this would have been around 1984-85, but we had some dynamic people in this group. Steve Kline supervised the creative work of Dianne Tsitsos, a true enthusiast for renewables, as was Rob Kahn. In context, it was a successful effort, opening minds and generating ideas and questions. USAID didn’t have many renewable energy programs in those days, but Morocco was a good place for early, experimental efforts, with lots of potential for both solar and wind power.

In addition to our programs in the four specific sectors, I should mention one additional program which supported these sectors. One of the most far-sighted and ‘highest-return investments’ USAID has ever made was called “Participant Training” in those days. Not a name well-suited to gaining additional support from Congress, but before the funding for “participants” faded over the subsequent years, we had a great training program for Moroccans. We provided technical and managerial training on a large-scale. We focused our long-term participant training on Master’s degrees in agriculture, public health, economics, etc., or on one-year technical or policy analysis programs (e.g. executive MBAs). We had a very capable Moroccan staff, headed by Monique Bidaoui, who would identify young and rising policy-makers and managers who could obtain a sabbatical and spend one or two years in an institution of higher education, mostly in the U.S. Sometimes they were relatively new, highly regarded recent graduates from Moroccan universities who had been identified in collaboration with the government ministries as future hires. We had a very large program of scholarships to American colleges and

universities. While we did have to address periodic problems of scholarship recipients wanting to stay on for additional education, or becoming involved with a reason to delay their return to Morocco, these cases were the exception. All participants were required to sign a commitment to return to Morocco, and by-and-large this was honored. Based on my frequent and multiple contacts with both the selectees and the returnees, I came to believe that the return on this investment was very high for USAID and for Morocco. The enhanced technical capacity of participants was obvious, but even more important was the attitudinal change, the change in their energy level, and commitment. Their approach to problem-solving was far more pragmatic, investigatory, even entrepreneurial, than in the traditional Moroccan government ministry employee. We were generating better, more productive staff, likely future policy-makers in key sectors. And we were also generating much more positive opinions about the United States, the American people and the potential benefits of a closer relationship with the U.S. government.

Those four sector programs plus the participant training were the core content of USAID's Morocco program. I was there for three gratifying and interesting years, working with strong staff and leadership. And did I mention that the USAID Mission also had a very good basketball team? We won the U.S. Mission Championship, defeating both the Marine Corps and the Peace Corps!

Q: I recall hearing about a government idea for cloud seeding? Did that occur? Did AID fund anything?

RHODES: Oh, yeah. (Laughter) Geez! I guess it's fair to say that USAID in Morocco funded one or two more projects than I personally was comfortable with! Yes, let's just say that politics did play a role in some of the things we did in the USAID Mission. This was an important country for the U.S. government, and we were informed that the Royal Palace was highly interested in such an effort. We were asked to pursue it. This was not a USAID initiative, based on discussions with our normal counterparts in the GOM.

So how did that initiative start? There was a severe drought in the mid-1980s, as there periodically is in Morocco, on a pretty regular cycle. The King was very concerned and 'wanted action'. The GOM did a very interesting thing at the beginning, which was to try to find a sound scientific basis for a cloud-seeding effort, to generate more snowfall in the Atlas mountains and to re-fill the reservoirs with Spring run-off. The Moroccans knew about "dendrochronology" and requested the assistance of experts from the University of Arizona. I was surprisingly somewhat familiar with their work because the U. of A., where I basically grew up with my science professor father, had developed the initial methodology for dendrochronology, or tree-ring science, which entails the analysis of cross-sections or 'trunk cuts' from old, large and long-lived trees. As I understand it, the analysis of these tree slices can show a long historic pattern of water absorption and growth by the trees, which can be used to try to predict the cycle and possible extent of drought in the areas where the trees came from. You can clearly see the differences between the 'rings' of growth during normal rainfall, as compared with drought periods. And you can look for patterns. This is the basic idea, very interesting stuff.

I believe it was one of the top air force generals, very close to the King, who had a son studying in the U.S. who was somewhat knowledgeable about cloud- seeding efforts in the U.S., being done in the Rockies and the Sierras to try to increase snowfall and Spring run-off to restore depleted reservoirs. Morocco has a lot of dryland agriculture and was expanding the area of irrigated land near the Atlas Mountains, which run across a large part of the country, separating fertile lands from the desert. The Atlas normally catch a lot of snowfall, and Morocco was investing in a lot of water reservoirs to capture it. So the idea for what eventually came to be called the “Winter Snowpack Augmentation Project” was to effectively ‘seed’ the cloud cover over the Atlas during the winter to increase the precipitation of snowfall, in order to fill the reservoirs and increase water supplies for agriculture and cities in the Spring. So there was a scientific basis for the project, though I believe that the merits and cost-effectiveness of ‘cloud seeding’ have been debated for decades, and I have no idea what the consensus view is today. But while there was a scientific basis for this project, it would not be inaccurate to say this project was politically driven. The King badly wanted the project and wanted it soon, well-before major feasibility studies could be carried out. It came in to us via the Ambassador, but I don’t know the specifics of to whom the original request was made by the Palace. We did fund some rapid studies and a “project design”. Experts and researchers were hired to work with us on this, but regrettably I can’t tell you the ‘punch line’, as I was on my way out of the country to my next assignment in Nepal, before the implementation period began. So I can’t tell you the extent to which the project was carried out nor the extent to which the winter snowpack in the Atlas Mountains was actually ‘augmented’ via the project. So it did take place, I just have no idea whether it had a measurable impact.

Q: So you were there for three years. Did you have children by that time?

RHODES: We have had three kids altogether. The two daughters were born while we were in Haiti, and we lived in Morocco as a family of four. Our son was born later, while we were in our next post, Nepal. My wife Trish, an experienced librarian, became the school librarian at the Rabat American School (RAS). Our two girls were in nursery school and kindergarten, with the eldest starting elementary at RAS. It was a wonderful place to be. Rabat is a very pleasant city, the attractive capital of Morocco, and not a large industrial city or commercial port – a much nicer place to live with a young family than Casablanca, for example. Rabat is not far from incredibly interesting places like Meknes and Fez and Essaouira. We’d put the girls in the car and head out on great family road trips. At that time Morocco’s road infrastructure (unlike Haiti, and my next country, Nepal) was quite usable. We would get in our Peugeot and off we’d go for interesting trips to the ancient cities of Morocco and to beautiful areas in and beyond the Atlas Mountains. Morocco always made it clear that it was never a French colony, but it was a protectorate of both France and Spain at different times/places, and French language and culture live on there, though do not dominate. And there’s actually an area in northern Morocco where Spanish is still spoken, including in Tangiers. Indeed, there are still Spanish possessions “in Morocco”, and the British love to bring up the ‘Spanish island’ off the coast of Morocco whenever the Spanish raise the Gibraltar issue. (Laughter)

Q: Did you seek to depart Morocco after three years?

USAID Nepal, Deputy Mission Director

RHODES: No, not actively, but I had an opportunity to move into a senior management job, my first one. Our Director in Morocco, Bob Chase, was advocating for me to move into senior management position in USAID. So in 1986 I was being considered for the deputy director job in Kathmandu, Nepal. I had thought I'd probably go back to Latin America after Morocco, but instead had a great opportunity – not many people would turn down an assignment to Nepal! I remembered from Peace Corps days that Nepal was the most-sought destination by applicants – as well as the highest rate for early termination for medical reasons! We were still in our adventurous mode; the kids were still young. So in 1986, we picked up the family, took home leave, then moved on to Kathmandu. Really happy that we did that; Nepal is a beautiful and fascinating place with wonderful people. And a great place for families.

Q: And you were the deputy director?

RHODES. Yes. I had the chance to follow in the footsteps of another “legend in her own time” of AID, Janet Ballantyne, who had been deputy director. She left to become the new mission director in Morocco! And I was happy to move to Kathmandu.

Q: So you're moving into Nepal, the deputy director position – senior management. Had you had any training as a senior manager?

RHODES: Yes, I had great training. Very short, but very good. I actually benefited enormously – I can remember much of it, as it was very helpful to me. I needed it. Even though I was a senior program officer, and before that I'd been a project development officer, chairing some project development committees, etc. But I had truly enjoyed “getting my hands dirty” by getting out to the field, first to develop and design the projects, and then to monitor their implementation. Which you could do as a project development officer, interactively with the technical offices and project implementers.

But once you move up into the management ranks, you move away from projects. I immediately felt a new distance between myself -- and my work – from the on-the-ground assessment of the problems and directly helping put together an approach to addressing it. Since 1978 I had been very focused on analysis of specific ground-level constraints on poor people. We used the classic “logical framework” for problem analysis and project design, a pragmatic, analytical approach to local, ground-level issues. And I was anxious about moving from that work to a more abstract, procedural set of issues, many internal in nature. It was kind of captured by a funny comic strip cartoon that was passed around in our senior management course: Two men in suits, sitting in their offices at their desks, were talking, and one said, “Will I ever do meaningful work again?” The other answered, “No, you're in senior management now.” Ouch! I was finding that as a new deputy director, I was chairing lots of meetings for which I was relatively unprepared, as I was just coming from another meeting. Lots of meetings.

So I was feeling maybe this wasn't such a good idea, maybe I should have stuck with what I was doing and enjoying, and seemed pretty good at. But the agency had a contract with an organization called Training Resources Group, or TRG. They had some extremely effective management trainers who understood well this kind of reluctance in new managers, and the kinds of new skills one needed to develop not only to succeed as a manager, but to feel gratified by the role. "Happy in your work". They helped me understand the value of the role of a manager and how to get real gratification from guiding, supporting and helping other people, and other parts of the larger organization, accomplish important things. I needed to step back and develop a larger view.

Q: Was this one-on-one?

RHODES: It was in a group; in a series of management training courses TRG provided.

Q: Jim McCaffrey, Ed Salt, Wilma Gormley.

RHODES: Yes – they were the principal trainers and just excellent. I learned so much in the course of that initial training, then also taking the Senior Management course later. I wish that USAID had continued with that training program. I finally became much more comfortable with being a senior manager. Nonetheless, still the greatest fun in Nepal was getting out into the field to visit the projects and meet those implementing them.

Q: Who was your director?

RHODES: When I first got there, David Wilson was the mission director. A wonderful man. He had been mission director in some of the toughest parts of the world. He and his wife had lost all their worldly possessions being evacuated from Chad. Dave was getting to the end of his long career with USAID. He was a real outdoor person who loved Nepal and took advantage of the beautiful mountains and trekking. In Nepal there wasn't too much to do except outdoor sports. Not much nightlife in Kathmandu. The whole USG mission had a very nice rec center linked to the embassy; softball diamond, tennis and basketball courts, swimming pool, all the benefits of being in a pretty remote Foreign Service post. Dave and I worked closely together, and he had confidence in me; so he was gone from the mission a fair amount of time on leave, as he got closer to retirement from USAID. So in my second year I began to serve as acting director frequently and for long periods. After Dave retired, I served formally as acting director for quite a while, more than six months before the new director came out to post. Not an easy time frankly, with a new Ambassador. Kelly Kammerer was to be the new director, but his arrival was frequently postponed in AID/Washington. He'd been extremely important in the HQ as head of the legislative affairs group; they kept postponing his transfer, so I continued as acting director for quite some time. It was a great experience.

Q: And your ambassador became Julia Chang Bloch?

RHODES: Yes. She had arrived as our new ambassador. She came as a political appointee ambassador; she'd been preceded by two other political ambassadors. She was a challenge to work with in some ways, very hard to please. Very tough and demanding. Certainly one of those ambassadors who felt her way was the best way and the other way was the highway. (Laughter) Interesting person.

Q: How did your mission director Dave Wilson define your work as deputy director? Did you sit down and talk about that or did it just happen automatically?

RHODES: Interestingly, at the beginning he asked me to take on a lot of the internal mission management issues, and I kept those through all of my time there. Chairing meetings of the different sectoral and program offices, and then often even chairing the bi-weekly senior staff meetings. We had a very large staff there. The costs of employment in Nepal are very low by comparison, and your budget for hiring FSNs (Foreign Service nationals) could go a long way. We needed them too, as it was a large program, spread nationally over rough terrain. Lots of lengthy travel to the field needed to develop and monitor projects in many sectors. We had a large FSN staff of well over a hundred, possibly 150 at peak, with about 20 or 25 Foreign Service officers and a number of American contractors, both institutional and personal. I had a lot to do on internal management there and supervised the supervisors of each of the program offices, as well as a very substantial and busy contracts office, the ADMIN/GSO (general services office), the Controller's Office, etc. I pretty much was involved in everything, thrown in the deep end as a manager. Had to learn a lot. But I enjoyed it. It was a great place to live. The Nepalese are very welcoming and congenial and they very much appreciated our work and us, as Americans; unlike some of their South Asian neighbors. Very lovely people for the most part, always willing to help, to be sure that issues were addressed.

Health for American families was a big challenge there; it was really a problem staying healthy, mainly because of the water. Many water-borne diseases. There was very little local potable water available; almost none. We had water delivered to the houses by tanker truck. Most everyone had bouts of water-borne diseases of a variety of types.

Q: I recall that there's some comment that Kathmandu has more fecal matter per square meter than any other city in the world!

RHODES: I don't think I ever saw a stat on that, but that wouldn't surprise me. There was no sewer system in the city. Septic tanks were only for the wealthy. A lot of the poor people basically used a latrine if they were lucky and sometimes not even a latrine, so there were 'open sewers'. Nepal's such a beautiful country with incredible mountain and valley views, but you really had to keep your eyes down as you walked along the streets, not up towards the mountains, in order to avoid stepping in something.

Q: Did your family have health problems?

RHODES: Nothing too serious. Yes, we had little kids and our third child, our son, was born while we were in Nepal. We had his astrological chart done by one of the local

Nepali astrologers, so he knows his fate from the very beginning. At least as Nepali astrologers foretold it. It was a great place for kids. Our daughters were now both in elementary school, at the Lincoln School, where my wife was the librarian. Our son had a wonderful Nepalese nanny, so Trish could work in her profession, and be close with the little girls. Fortunately, I had married someone who had a profession of her own which she could take from developing country to developing country and usually find good work, often at the American or international schools. This was key to our family's capacity to live this 'nomadic' life and stay happy together. Nepal was also a great place for the kids. We did a lot of trekking on weekends or holidays. When the kids would get tired, we picked them up and put them in these *dokhas*, these baskets that hired Nepali bearers carried. They loved sitting in a basket looking out, going forward on a trek while we traipsed along behind with our cameras. A wonderful place to live and work and play.

One of the beauties of Nepal – much more than any country missions I ever served in – was that it was not significantly dependent upon nor influenced by the political or economic interests of the United States. It was small and far away, and the 'purest' development program I worked in. U.S. government interests relatively minimal; the Embassy Political Section might get wound up about how was Nepal going to vote on a UN issue in the General Assembly or something like that, where the U.S. wanted or needed Nepal's vote. But few "Big Issues," as Nepal is not a significant power, even in the regional South Asian grouping. The area is almost completely dominated by India and Pakistan, and their respective relations with China and each other. U.S. economic interests were also quite modest – some, but not many American companies did limited business in Nepal. But USAID was the most important agency there, for U.S. interests.

Q: Did you and the mission work closely with the government, or were these programs outside of government?

RHODES: We did work closely with the government there, though capacity was limited in most GON agencies. But we also had grants to NGOs, both international and local.

Q: Was the government effective? How would you characterize them?

RHODES: I'd say that the capacity of the GON was the biggest issue for us, difficult to "solve". This of course is true in a lot of developing countries, but at least in Nepal – unlike Haiti – there was political will to accomplish programs and reach out to rural people, to a large extent. I arrived at post just 35 years after Nepal was essentially first "opened for business" with the outside world. It had been very isolated for decades, a bit like Bhutan, almost completely closed to outsiders until 1951. After King Mahendra opened the country to foreigners in the early '50s, the U.S. government, along with a number of European governments, came in with economic and social assistance programs. Nepal was clearly the poorest country in the entire South Asian region, perhaps in all of Asia. It was, and still is, made up largely by isolated mountain communities, without public services of almost every kind. Levels of absolute poverty comparable to the Sahel and Central Africa.

Notwithstanding its physical location half-way around the world, its small size and the absence of major interests, the USG became a relatively large and influential donor in the earliest days. The most daunting problems in the early days were a major lack of transportation and communication infrastructure, of any primary educational system, and very high levels of malaria in the only fertile flatlands of the country -- what's called 'the Terai' along the Indian border. The best arable lowlands was not very populated, made pretty inhospitable by malaria and numerous wild animals (including tigers, Asian elephants, rhinos, etc.). In those early days, the USAID program focused on building basic infrastructure, putting in basic mountain roads, trails and bridges, including numerous, swaying suspension bridges over deep canyons. Most of these still exist and are highly used; it was a major contribution to the country. I have trekked across quite a few of those, not without some trepidation! The focus was ultimately on linking the country east to west, and linking larger mountain communities to each other and to the capital. The U.S. worked with other donors to build a major paved highway the length of Nepal (west to east), below the Himal in the Terai. Donors and the GON actually lost quite a few people-- both workers and new 'migrants' to the Terai -- as a result of malaria. So one of the largest and earliest donor programs was malaria eradication, which was quite successful. The U.S. played a major role in this, which opened the Terai region to new settlers/farmers, coming down from the hills. It was the start of a large rice economy in Nepal, further advanced and diversified by the "Green Revolution. Other grains are grown there now. The early agricultural assistance by USAID to these areas has continued, but now focus more on the mountains. But the opening of the Terai was a huge economic boost for the country. And with the improved transportation and a growing communications infrastructure, basic health and education programs could get a foothold and begin to spread more broadly across the country.

Good mountain roads were still scarce 35 years later when we arrived there, with the exception of the road between Kathmandu and Pokhara. A lot of people still had to walk days to a road-head to get on a truck into a town (or to return home). The fact that the country is located largely on very rugged terrain with steep mountain slopes creates many 'development problems', including in the social sectors. Early USAID assistance focused on helping to establish a primary education system, which at the time was virtually non-existent in many, perhaps most areas. This has been especially difficult to improve in the high mountain areas. Basic education remains a major focus for a number of donors. The malaria program had continued for several decades, and still requires surveillance, but really it had achieved near-eradication by the time we arrived. We were able to travel for work and tourism in the Terai, with little worry. But we took malaria prophylaxis down there, all the same.

By the 80s, USAID had largely moved on from early efforts focused on core infrastructure. The country does have a basic airline, RNAC (Royal Nepal Airline Corporation), which some said stood for "Really Not an Airline Company." We did fly a lot in small planes to get to around the country, to remote project sites. I flew in some, uh, older very small planes ... some flights would take off from Kathmandu and when headed to a mountain "airport", you could only see out the side windows and you might never actually see blue sky -- you would only see craggy mountains to the left and the

right, as they flew through the deep valleys. It was a little nerve-wracking. We often used “STOLs”, for ‘short take-off and landing’. Twin Otters from Canada were used a lot because they could land on short mountain-top runways where you didn’t really have two chances; you had to hit the ground at the beginning of the dirt runway and hope the pilot could stop the plane before you got to the other end. (Laughter) These guys, they were kind of bush pilots, but it was the only way to get around. I took some hairy flights – but usually with incredibly stunning scenery along the way! A pretty exciting job.

Q: I recall Nepal was well-known within parts of USAID for their community forestry programs; were you involved with those?

RHODES: That was an area that had become quite advanced by the time I got there; it was a major focus of the program. We had an agriculture and rural development program and then we also had a separate forestry and natural resources management program. The agriculture/rural development program had moved from helping support rice and cereals production in the low-lying fertile and flatter area of the Terai, and was working hard to improve the productivity of hillside agriculture, which required a lot of natural resource conservation and agroforestry management. The Nepalese historically have been geniuses at terracing for farming in the mountains; they would grow rice on these terraced fields. But the varieties were not high-producing as in the Terai, and we were doing quite a bit of applied research on improving rice varieties and techniques for hillside agriculture, as the large majority of Nepalis still live in the mountains.

In the lowlands, we were now focused more moderately on water management issues, and on building up smaller, farmer ‘user-group’ managed irrigation systems. There were a few large irrigation systems put in the Terai area in the past – some built with U.S. assistance in early years – which had been badly managed over the years by the Ministry of Agriculture or its sub-agencies. So we focused on developing and improving a whole system of small farmer irrigation program to preserve and manage their water locally.

In addition we had a strong forest management program, dominated by community forestry, and including the improvement of the National Institute of Forestry. It was a leading program because it was addressing a huge need and had become well-known for its promotion of new rules and methods for local community management of common forests, to replace largely unsuccessful management by the Ministry of Forestry. Further, the Institute of Forestry was supported by USAID and other donors to build a major program to train its staff and improve research, textbooks and teaching materials. USAID had long been involved in agricultural education and helped build up Nepal’s agriculture research and capacity through its institutions there; the intent was to do likewise for the forestry sector.

One other thing I should mention – USAID had a very large integrated rural development program in Nepal. This was a time when “IRD” programs were very common within the donor community. IRD was an effort to enhance the impacts of projects by combining them, across several sectors, in the same limited geographic area, to get “synergy”, or a ‘compound effect’. It was a development approach seen as more effective, though more

geographically limited. A number of donors did this in Nepal. Donors coordinated to take responsibility for different, defined areas of the country in which they developed and implemented a series of IRD projects, intended to complement each other. USAID was responsible for a three-district area in the western part of Nepal, which we called the “Rapti zone” – including Rukum, Rolpa, and Dang districts. The Rapti IRD Project had a multi-faceted program focused heavily on agriculture and livestock production, including small farmer irrigation. The area was partly in the Terai lowlands and then went up into the hills/mountains. Rapti also included forestry management and soil conservation, as well as a substantial focus on small business development, particularly in market towns like Tulsipur. We provided funds for the construction of improved roads and other small-scale infrastructure (including schools, etc.), and institutional support for strengthening local governments’ capabilities. It was a true integrated rural development program, and a large part of USAID’s overall portfolio.

Beyond these programs focused on rural areas, USAID/Nepal also had a very large national family planning and child survival program, as there had been in Morocco. This was a huge emphasis of USAID programs around the world, and they were really quite successful, both in reducing fertility and infant and child mortality rates in many parts of the world. Frankly I believe that USAID never gets enough credit for all the impactful work that was done around the world in getting down to the town and village levels to have a very positive development impact through family planning and child survival programs. Again, in Nepal as in Morocco, these focused on key interventions in infant and child health measures, like immunizations and oral rehydration therapy for diarrheal diseases. Further, acute respiratory infections (ARI) like pneumonia were very common in young Nepalis, a very prominent cause of child illness and mortality. Much of this was due to children breathing in smoke from indoor cooking; very common in Nepal’s mountain communities. We financed some excellent research and programs implemented largely by John Snow International, which documented the extent to which ARI was the cause of child illness and deaths, and then initiated a large program which entailed both treatment as well as a preventive effort through distributing ventilated wood stoves for smoke-free indoor cooking.

Finally, USAID/Nepal still had a significant program in primary education, heavily focused on increasing literacy both through schools as well as informally through community programs, on the theory that if you can teach a mother to read, you greatly increase the odds that her children will learn to read. We struggled at the time to develop more effective means of ‘distance education’, primarily via radio.

Finally, let me mention one other small area of work, because of its ultimate importance to the political development of Nepal. By the 1980s USAID could access modest funding for human rights programming through something called 116E funds. This was thanks to President Carter’s foreign policy and it was carried on during the Reagan administration. The State Department had established a bureau for human rights, which provided modest funds to USAID for small rights-related projects. Now, these were small amounts of money, but since we didn’t yet have a democracy/governance program or office, I got to manage these funds personally, and developed quite a few good contacts with the legal

community in Nepal. I'd been a lawyer, and we had a wonderful USAID lawyer, Steve Allen, who had been a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal and spoke fluent Nepali. Steve came frequently to Nepal from his post in Bangladesh, and we worked together to cultivate the mission's links to a number of progressive organizations. You couldn't call them human rights organizations *per se* during this era, but they were pro-democracy and citizen participation groups. One was called 'Leaders', which worked in developing leadership skills for young university-educated Nepalis. Another was the Nepal Law Society, an association of the most distinguished lawyers in Nepal.

Steve actually spoke the Nepali language so well, he was the only American up to that date ever admitted to the Nepali bar; he legally could appear in court in Nepal! I worked with him and we made some small grants from the human rights funds to these organizations just to help strengthen the hand of people who valued and promoted democratic governance, greater freedom of expression and the expansion of citizen participation. While these organizations were not outwardly "political" in nature, they were to become very influential. In 1990, there was a true popular uprising in Nepal. It began as a series of street protests led principally by Nepal's 'communist parties' against the monarchy. These were initially largely nonviolent though very disruptive and bold in their civil disobedience, until there was a violent police/military response. Things took off from there, and it developed into a mini-revolution, with several hundred people killed in the streets of Kathmandu through skirmishes with police/military. The numbers of people involved and being injured or killed grew rapidly, and King Birendra, though he did not 'abdicate' the throne, agreed to negotiate a truce and an agreement to dismantle the so-called "Panchayat system", and to reestablish a constitutional democracy, with a greatly reduced governing role for the palace. The Panchayat system was a Palace-established and controlled political process which basically resulted in a pre-approved congressional body which supported the monarchy. The King agreed to allow democratic elections and to re-establish a multi-party constitutional democracy.

In the aftermath, many of the contacts USAID had developed through the small human rights grants proved very valuable to the U.S. mission, and to the new government of Nepal. The Embassy had been heavily focused on its relationship with the Palace. And as the democratization process went forward, quite a number of the senior, respected lawyers and young leaders that we had worked with became involved in developing the structures for and the content of a new constitution. USAID was asked by the GON to provide international experts in the process, and we financed several highly respected international experts to help them write a new constitution for Nepal which restored multi-party democracy, significantly diminishing the roles of the King and the Palace.

I was very proud of that effort, which significantly grew out of our small human rights grants program. By this time, Kelly Kammerer, who had been both the general counsel and then director of legislative affairs in USAID/Washington, had arrived at post. Needless to say he was extremely enthusiastic about supporting this initial big step in the democratization process in Nepal. In my last six or so months at post, I worked with him on this process, utilizing my fairly extensive contacts with the legal and NGO community. And Kelly went on to grow this early "democracy program" at the Mission.

One of the little-known things about USAID assistance is that sometimes just small amounts of financial and moral support to the right people in non-governmental organizations and the “private sector” can have a major impact on the development of a country. I left Nepal by August 1990, but USAID/Nepal went on to become a major supporter of democracy and governance programs in Nepal, and helped strengthened the new constitutional, democratic government significantly. Nepal remained a “constitutional monarchy” for some years, but later became a more modern constitutional democracy, after a second revolution in which the King was deposed altogether.

Q: Did you speak any Nepali by this time?

RHODES: Only a very little. Not nearly enough. It was not an easy language to learn. I had found both the Arabic in Morocco and the Nepali language to be very difficult to master, even though my proficiency in Spanish and French was strong. With the rest of my job, I just didn’t devote enough time to learning to speak Nepali well. This was also a function of not really needing the language to do my job as a senior manager. In Morocco I had been able to use French a lot, at least in the city and working with government ministers; most of those meetings were in French rather than Arabic. In Nepal, a lot of English was spoken, at least by government officials and the more educated Kathmandu-dwellers. While Nepal had never been a colony of England, England was the dominant colonial power in the region and most educated people in Nepal spoke English. We had very good English-speaking Foreign Service National staff and I always travelled with them. I always had very capable young Nepalis go to meetings with me, and never lacked for good, immediate translation services when needed. I learned the daily greetings, how to ask a few simple key questions, but regrettably never learned to speak it. But quite a few of our American staff did so; many had been Peace Corps volunteers in Nepal.

Q: I do recall a contretemps from when I was in Washington backstopping the South Asian programs, with a thing called “the Hatfield Trees”. Can you explain this one?

RHODES: Yeah, sort of. Not totally unlike the cloud-seeding project in Morocco I guess, but this time the politics were all-American in nature! I might have exaggerated slightly when I said there was virtually no political influence on the program. There was a bit, and this is possibly the most blatant example. Unlike the king of Morocco, Nepal was not our best friend in the Region, and the palace in Nepal had little influence on our programming. But there was fairly intense interest on the part of Senator Mark Hatfield. As I understood it, one of his big supporters and personal friends in Oregon had a large nursery and had done a lot of reforestation in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest with a variety of “Oregon poplar”, in which he was very confident. He was apparently sure that this variety of tree was just what was needed to address deforestation and soil erosion in Nepal. He was sure of this, though no Oregon poplars had ever been planted in Nepal.

So Senator Hatfield requested that USAID in Nepal utilize its forestry program to plant a very large number of Oregon poplars in Nepal to address the well-known problems of deforestation. This was probably well-intentioned, as Hatfield was generally a supporter

of foreign assistance and by reputation a very bright, progressive Senator. But we already had a program and were already doing extensive work with indigenous tree species and others on which substantial research had been done; species from other parts of South Asia. Our foresters knew well the potential risks of introducing large-scale, single-species 'plantations', as was being 'required' by Senator Hatfield. The numbers he was using were large. The Mission balked at this request, and the Senator decided to withhold our entire program budget through a "Congressional objection" until the mission complied. This became a huge issue for us, because both our forester and our mission director, then Dave Wilson, thought it was a very questionable, unjustified level of political interference with a well-founded and successful development program. Our appropriation was delayed for a lengthy period, and it got pretty nasty. Our forester said that he could not in good conscience work on such an ill-conceived program.

Q: Rob Thurston?

RHODES: Rob Thurston was there and head of the office responsible. But it was really George Taylor. Rob was his supervisor. I was Rob's supervisor and Dave Wilson was mine. That was the chain of command on this, and from the bottom of that chain came a clear refusal to go along with the request and start diverting funds and staff-time to planting large numbers of Oregon poplars. For good scientific reasons; no experimentation or research had ever been done on whether this particular variety would grow well in the environment, which was quite unlike that of Oregon in key ways. Nor was it known whether the poplars would grow fast or slow, or be usable for the kinds of things for which trees were being used in Nepal. So it got to be a big 'contretemps', yes, because basically the mission said, "This is a bad idea, and we are unwilling to do it."

Washington was not pleased by the refusal of the USAID mission to move forward with Senator Hatfield's Oregon poplars program. And our funding or other work was in danger of suffering. Finally a compromise was negotiated largely, as I recall by Kelly Kammerer who at the time was head of legislative affairs in Washington. It was finally agreed that the mission would import a certain limited number of Oregon poplars and plant them in research plots in a number of places in the country. We would support research on these for the coming years, to find out how well-suited the species is within the climatological and ecological factors in Nepal, and if they could be a productive and optimal species to be used for reforestation and soil conservation in Nepal.

I had left Nepal by the time those plots were planted, and I can't tell you at this time how successful they were. I am sure that my friend George Taylor knows the answer. He was and is a highly capable and clearly principled forestry expert. But to my knowledge, there are not today a significant number of Oregon poplars growing in Nepal.

Q: How long were you in Nepal?

RHODES: Four years – four really good years. Great place to have a young family; it was a wonderful group of very dedicated and hard-working people at the mission, both Nepalis and Americans. And the culture and people of the country were both so

interesting. It was really poor place, but so rich in its physical beauty and with its peacefully co-existing Buddhist and Hindu cultures and traditions. The levels of poverty and illiteracy and ill-health in the high mountains continues to be severe, and we need to continue working there.

I don't know why it seems the poorest countries also seem to attract things like earthquakes, but as we know both Haiti and Nepal have suffered major earthquakes in the last few years, which have really set back their efforts and slow progress. Progress in developing effective and functioning democracies and government institutions – that also continues to be difficult in both countries. But they're surviving and striving on. I was very happy to have spent eight years of my life in those two fascinating countries.

Nepal is really a wondrous place; I got to do things like trek up to the base camp of Mount Everest, up to a little over 18,000 feet. By then I was in my mid-40s and that was it for me, I wasn't going any higher than that! Then I was able to take a trip to Tibet when China first opened the borders to groups of tourists – though not for government officials or diplomats. I had to use my personal passport for that trip, which was of course an “accompanied tour”. We had a very nice Chinese guide with us at almost all times. It was fascinating – the culture of Tibet, was still strong and lived daily by the people, notwithstanding obvious Chinese efforts to stamp it out over the past years. The Tibetan people were so welcoming and amazing, so glad to see Western visitors and to hear about the “outside world”. I had some small pictures of the Dalai Lama which I could give to some of the people we met who were kind to us, which were so appreciated, except by the Chinese. Kept it below the radar. My years assigned to Nepal were truly great ones.

Q: Good! The four years were what years?

RHODES: 1986 to 1990. I had the chance to go back to Nepal recently, 22 years later, as chief of staff in Peace Corps, to swear in the first group of Peace Corps volunteers to come back to Nepal after eight years out. Peace Corps had vacated Nepal after many years during the ‘Maoist’ uprising in the early 2000s, and we were able to negotiate its return in 2012, and I had a chance to go back to Nepal for that event. It was very meaningful for me personally, and I think also for the Nepalis, as the ‘welcome back’ for Peace Corps was very big, clearly important to the people and even to the GON officials who greeted us and the new PCVs, notwithstanding that many had been members of “communist” parties. Kind of a symbol that the bad days of a terrible civil war were over, and that peace and ‘normalcy’ had finally returned to Nepal.

Q: Excellent. Now you had done more than two tours. That's normally about what a senior Foreign Service officer would do. Did you put in a bid for your next assignment along the way?

Long-Term Training, Duke University, Sanford School of Public Policy

RHODES: We'd been overseas about 11 years from when we were first assigned to Haiti. The family had grown to five when our son was born in 1989, while we were posted in Nepal, and we had discussed that it might be good for the kids to have some time with other kids at school in the States. I had been moved up to be a Deputy Mission Director, and had spent a great deal of time in Nepal as "Acting Mission Director". But in addition to getting the family back home for a while and "recharging" as Americans, what I really wanted to do professionally was to learn more about the current issues facing USAID, and the 'latest' in development theory and practice. Luckily, USAID still had a long-term training program for senior staff at that time. I had always envied those before me who'd been able to take a year's "sabbatical" and do a serious study related to their roles. So I applied for that program, and was selected.

In the meantime, the new Assistant Administrator for Latin America, Jim Michel, had asked me to come back to work in the Latin America bureau as the director of the Central American programs. Central American programs were huge in the early '90s, and the office was large and well-staffed. Very high profile at that time, with all that was happening in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras at that time. So it was a great job and a chance to come home for a while, which my wife and now three young children were interested in doing. The kids had never lived in the States. So I talked to Jim, told him I greatly appreciated the offer and it was a job I'd love to have, but I had just been approved for a USAID scholarship to go to a graduate program for international development policy for an academic year. I didn't want to turn that great opportunity down. So Jim made perhaps the most generous offer I'd ever had in USAID: he basically said that if I wanted to go ahead and do an intensive study of Central American issues, he would staff the Bureau so that I could come back from the graduate program as the director of the Central American office. So I was able to focus on the development issues and U.S. policy in Central America for an entire academic year! Jim was so thoughtful, and extremely considerate of me and our family. I hope I was able to give him a good return on that investment. I spent a great academic year at Duke University, at what is now the Sanford School of Public Policy. Focused on Central American development issues and in the process, worked with a number of Central Americans there, and earned a Master's in International Development Policy (MIDP) from Duke.

Q: Did you live in Chapel Hill?

RHODES: I did – in Durham, actually, close to Chapel Hill. Duke was just starting to establish its Sanford Institute of Public Policy, which now has become a full-fledged autonomous Graduate School, with a variety of programs in public policy. It is a great place for those interested in public policy issues, both domestically and internationally. I felt very fortunate to have the opportunity to go there. Duke also happened to have a very good basketball team that year, academic year 1990-91. I had played some basketball in college and am a huge basketball fan, so I hoped that I might get to attend some good games while I was there. And indeed, March Madness was at its best! Just coincidentally, Duke won its first National Championship in 1991! A big bonus for me!

So it was a great year for many reasons, both for me professionally and for the family. I worked hard studying with some very good professors, especially my excellent advisor Bill Ascher, a true expert on the Central American region as well as on public policy more broadly, who helped me with researching key development issues in the region, and made sure that I earned enough credits to receive the MIDP. I worked with him to review the Reagan Administration's policies in Central America, as well as the proposed alternative policies developed by the Sanford Commission, established during the Reagan years by North Carolina's Senator Terry Sanford, a former President of Duke. I wrote papers on the integration and disintegration of the Central American Common Market, the need for tax reform in Guatemala, policies to address deforestation in Honduras, topics like that. I learned a great amount and had a very productive "schoolyear", before returning for my Washington assignment as Director for Central American Programs.

Q: How did your family react to the one year posting?

RHODES: The kids were all pretty young, so we put the girls in the public elementary school near Duke. Our young son was still in nursery near the campus. Trish took some courses at the University of North Carolina in education. I had a very good year, and in spite of the cramped quarters and moving 'homes' so frequently, I think it was good for the family. Certainly, in many respects it increased my readiness for the role I was to assume at USAID's Headquarters in Washington.

Q: This is John Pielemeier; we're about to start the third interview session with Stacy Rhodes. It's December 23rd, 2016. In our last conversation we ended with your move back to head the Central America Office in Washington, right?

USAID LAC Bureau, Director, Office of Central American Affairs

RHODES: Right. I don't think we have yet covered the years when I was back in Washington as director for Central American affairs.

It was an exciting time to be there, and a very interesting job, as Washington jobs go. The '90s were the period when, for the first time, all of the Central American countries were becoming formal democracies, through popular, democratic elections. It was the first time ever that all of the governments of Central America were truly democratically-elected. But it was a very difficult time for them and for us, as the long, vicious civil war in El Salvador was not over until the negotiation of the "Chapultepec Accords" between the Government and the FMLN, and signed in 1992. The decades-long civil war in Guatemala was still not over, but was being fought at a lower intensity of violence -- and fortunately with fewer human rights violations -- than in the 80s. Perhaps most surprisingly, in Nicaragua, the rule of the Sandinistas had come to an end with the astonishing victory in 1990 of Violeta Chamorro and her "National Union" coalition over

the Sandinistas and Daniel Ortega, ushering in a democratic era in Nicaragua, which it had not had in many years.

While El Salvador was still not at peace in the early '90s, and was still fighting its civil war, a more moderate, progressive businessman – not tightly linked to the military as those in the past – had been elected in 1989, Alfredo Cristiani. There was also a democratic election in Guatemala, I think for just the second time in some years, essentially a restoration of an 'open' political process and democratic elections. Democracy in Guatemala had been destroyed in the 1950s, regrettably with USG support. But Jorge Serrano had won the Presidency, which unfortunately did not turn out well, as during his difficult term he suspended the Congress and closed the Supreme Court, in what was termed an "*auto-golpe*" (or "self-coup"), and he tried to rule by decree. A real setback to Guatemala, but Serrano had at least been 'democratically elected.' So you had a lot of promise for progress in the region.

And we had a new U.S. foreign policy coming into place after the presidential election of 1992, with a clear shift away from the Reagan-Bush era policies by President Clinton. The Reagan administration had focused heavily on 'anti-Communism' and very substantial economic and military support to regimes dominated or controlled by the military, to defeat 'rebel' anti-government forces in the region. It was a very difficult but interesting time to work on Central America. During the presidency of George H. W. Bush (1989-92), U.S. engagement in the region was shifting away from the ideologically-driven policies of the Reagan administration to more pragmatic engagement.

In my new role, the office carried out the normal functions of a regional office in Washington – supporting the programs of the bilateral missions in every way possible. We had responsibility for six country missions in the region, and most were very well-funded, except Costa Rica and Panama, which were the most 'advanced' countries in the region. The other four "northern" programs were very heavily supported and funded, and a lot of political attention was given to them, both by the Executive branch, as well as by Congressional committees. I traveled to the field often to better understand the programs and the needs of the missions to operate effectively in this politicized environment.

The most interesting of these trips came as an informal, somewhat 'below-the-radar' visit to El Salvador, which ultimately constituted a piece of the ongoing peace process for El Salvador. Negotiations by the government had been ongoing with the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) over many years. The newly-elected President Cristiani had given new hope and energy to the negotiation process, which had not progressed for quite some time. In order to provide incentives to the FMLN to come to the table and sign on to a peace accord, there was an effort by several key staffers who worked for Senate and House committees concerned with U.S. policy in the region. I was in an important, but not "high-level" position in USAID, well-placed to go on an unpublicized mission to El Salvador with some deeply involved senior staffers, Dick McCall from the Senate Foreign Relations side, and Rick Nuccio from the House Foreign Affairs committee. They were both extremely knowledgeable, forward-leaning, and linked to numerous Central Americans, in and out of governments. Both had been trying to moving the peace

process forward in El Salvador. They had also developed strong personal contacts, through intermediaries, with some leaders of the FMLN.

Our mission was to fly on a helicopter coming out of the USAID mission in San Salvador into to a key town in a relatively isolated mountainous northern region of El Salvador, which had been under FMLN control for decades. There had been no government officials or services, no good roads or other infrastructure, no public schools, health clinics, or infrastructure. I was the USAID person on the mission, to communicate the active interest of the U.S. government in “getting to peace” and to send the signal that peace could bring concrete benefits to FMLN areas. I was not to make commitments, but to illustrate the readiness of USAID to go to work in those areas that had been occupied by the FMLN, and were in great need of services for extremely poor Salvadorans.

It was a pretty hairy trip, even scary. We flew into “hostile territory” in a helicopter, to the village of Santa Marta de Victoria. There were two helicopters, and when we looked down, there was a dusty schoolyard where they were going to land. There were a lot people, *campesinos*, school children and FMLN fighters there, wearing ammunition belts around their chests and carrying AK-47s and other weapons. It was a pretty exciting moment, and while I was nervous about going down there, it was a tremendous experience. We held discussions with some of the FMLN leaders there, who were interested in what kind of concrete assistance might come to this and other “FMLN villages” in the region, with USAID support. The FMLN was aware of the rural electrification program that the government of El Salvador had been carrying out with USAID support in other parts of the country. They very much wanted electricity in these isolated, dirt-poor towns that had little in the way of electricity, water, roads, schools, etc. So we discussed the possibility of electrifying Santa Marta de Victoria and the other nearby towns in the future. I was positive about these possibilities, of course letting them know that the USG couldn’t work in these areas until there was a signed peace accord, and that our support would be part of the implementation of the accords. I still treasure that experience. It was one of the most exciting and interesting things I ever did.

Q: Did that program happen?

RHODES: Yes, it did. I can’t give you a detailed history of it, but that trip was in 1991, and in 1992 the Salvadoran government and FMLN signed the Chapultepec Peace Accords in Mexico. There was a large international donors meeting held shortly afterwards -- including USAID – pledging large-scale support, in particular to include former FMLN-held areas. The commitments were made in earnest, and among other programs funded and implemented, largely with USAID funding, was a major rural electrification program in the mountain areas of northern El Salvador. There was a huge U.S. government response to help support and implement the peace agreement and to make sure that peace and a democratic process were solidified, after decades of civil war. I believe it was NRECA that implemented the specific program – the National Rural Electrification Cooperative Association. NRECA had been a partner of USAID for a long time, working in El Salvador and other countries. I haven’t been back to Santa Marta de Victoria, but I’d love to go! Though I’d rather go by road this time.

Q: After some time in the Central American office, do you then move to Guatemala?

RHODES: Yes. USAID had a large program in Guatemala, though over the years it had been declining as their civil war continued on and on into the 1990s. While some progress had been made under the first (since 1954) democratically-elected government of Vinicio Cerezo, the government of Guatemala after election of President Jorge Serrano had been something of a “*fracaso*” (disaster). In 1993, when I was still in Washington DC, Serrano got fed up with the difficulties of democracy and actually pulled off his *auto-golpe*. Although he had been elected, the Congress and Supreme Court had angered him with their actions and rulings, and President Serrano decided he’d had enough of this electoral democracy stuff.

Usually a ‘coup’ comes from outside the presidential palace; this time it was from the inside! The constitution was suspended, the Supreme Court was dismissed, and the Congress closed. Serrano tried to rule by decree, but the Guatemalans viewed this as an insult and further embarrassment to the country. Their ‘democracy’ was young but a matter of pride, given the difficult past, and the people came out into the streets. The popular protests were huge, and the Constitutional Court (separate from the Supreme Court) held a special session and declared all of Serrano’s *dictats* unconstitutional. Serrano also did not have the unified support of the military, which past dictators had depended on, and the crisis ended without much bloodshed, when Serrano negotiated his quick departure and exile.

The Congress then selected as “interim president” Ramiro de Leon Carpio, a highly respected lawyer who had been the independent human rights ombudsman.

USAID/Guatemala had been supporting the foundation and development of the human rights ombudsman’s office for years, and the mission had a very close, effective working relationship with de Leon Carpio. He was courageous, energetic and active, fortunately able to get broad support across the political spectrum. As a result, Guatemalan democracy was restored in 1994, with much support from the U.S. Embassy and USAID programs. In spite of many imperfections and often weak and ineffective administrations, Guatemala’s democracy has done well since, with numerous consecutive elections.

USAID Guatemala, Mission Director

It was quite exciting to then be assigned as Mission Director to Guatemala by LAC Assistant Administrator Mark Schneider, and sworn-in by Administrator Brian Atwood. I departed the HQ in January of 1994, to head up the country mission, with the family following six months later at the end of the school year. USAID was able to work very closely with President de Leon Carpio, and we were well funded to carry out a broad and strong ‘democracy and governance program’, as well as the more traditional and badly needed, poverty- oriented programs. Our education and health and agriculture programs were heavily focused on the indigenous people in the highlands of Guatemala – the Mayans. Mayans were and remain a majority of the population, but have been long excluded socially and economically. Still a difficult situation in a very beautiful country.

Q: What would have been the budget of the mission during those years? How many years were you there?

RHODES: I was in Guatemala total of about four and a half years. One very interesting thing that happened to me as I was preparing to depart for Guatemala, I was also assigned to be director for Central America regional programs. A decision was made by the LAC bureau to eliminate what was then called "ROCAP", the separate and quite autonomous Regional Office for Central American Programs. The idea was not to eliminate the important regional programs, but to cut administrative costs and consolidate the two separate offices, which previously operated independently, across town from each other in Guatemala City. So assistant administrator Jim Michel, one of the most outstanding leaders ever in USAID, made the decision to close the ROCAP office and move the most effective Central American programs into the Guatemala mission. So I had the great good fortune of going to Guatemala and to become the director for both for the bilateral program in Guatemala as well as the Central American region-wide programs. I had a deputy director for each, that is two deputy directors, which was very helpful.

Q: Who were the deputy directors?

RHODES: Earhart Rupprecht became the new deputy for the regional program, and the brilliant Hilda ('Bambi') Arellano was the current deputy for the bilateral Guatemala program when I arrived. Bambi was with me for almost two years and taught me a huge amount, got me well-grounded in the complexities of Guatemala. When she was promoted and reassigned elsewhere, she was succeeded by another excellent Deputy, Tish Butler. So I had two very strong, knowledgeable and dynamic deputies for the growing Guatemala program. I was very lucky.

The regional program was a smaller, more limited program, about \$10-12 million annually and focused on strengthening regional institutions, especially SIECA, the Central American System for Economic Integration, and a fledgling but important regional agency called the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (or CCAD), headed by a capable and energetic leader named Jorge Cabrera. With strong USAID support, CCAD led a significant effort among Central American countries to cooperate on cross-border protected areas, natural resource management, rapidly increasing deforestation, and wildlife protection issues. Bill Sugrue was the head of that dynamic regional environmental program when I first got there, and had been successful in getting it broadly accepted and moving forward. We started one new program in addition; a major regional HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome) campaign and social marketing of protective condoms across the region. Even at this point in the early-mid '90s, the incidence of HIV was increasing rapidly, as virtually nothing had been done on education and prevention, let alone treatment. We supported the 'start-up' regional social marketing firm in Costa Rica, and established cooperation between the ministries of health to better address the growing pandemic of HIV/AIDS there.

But the most exciting and larger part of my responsibilities were in the Guatemala bilateral program. While the civil war wore on, the fighting between government troops and the URNG had become less frequent, with fewer impacts on the general population than in previous decades. Nevertheless, it was continuing and very draining for both sides, facilitating an ongoing dedication of major public resources to the military. It was also preventing any unified country effort to move forward on the numerous development fronts where assistance to the rural civilian population was badly needed. In earlier years and decades, there had been a vicious conflict, characterized by widespread human rights violations by the military and government, including horrific massacres by the Guatemalan military, in Mayan villages on the *'altiplano'*. This conflict was still going on, after some 35 years in Guatemala. With so little progress on the peace negotiations, the previously larger USAID bilateral program had declined in funding in recent past years, due in part to the stalemate in negotiations and the lack of movement toward a formal peace. Of course there had also been issues in the well-known levels of corruption, the wholly inadequate system of taxation, and the lack of an effective judicial system at many levels. So the mission had focused primarily on a 'basic needs' program, addressing agricultural, health and educational needs, with some important innovations. Poverty in Guatemala was (and undoubtedly still is) most severe in the western highlands, with the Mayans living in small rural communities at higher altitudes in the western and northern areas of the country. We also had strong and effective rural health and family planning programs, addressing extremely high fertility rates and issues of maternal/child mortality. MCH programs included oral rehydration therapy for diarrheal diseases and immunizations, acute respiratory treatment for conditions most often caused by smoke inhalation from indoor cook stoves, similar to Nepal.

USAID's education programs were very large and complicated, because in Guatemala, there are about 20 different Mayan languages. Not just dialects, different Mayan tongues, which are mutually unintelligible across distinct Mayan groups, separated by difficult terrain. So there was a major emphasis on 'bilingual education' which required us to focus on the four largest Mayan languages – K'iche', Q'eqchi', Kaqchikel, and Mam – which covered about 80% of the Mayan people -- and translate Spanish language textbooks into Mayan language textbooks, etc. This also required strengthening school teacher training and providing supplementary bilingual materials, etc. There was also a huge focus on increasing the number of girls in school and improving the quality of those schools in rural areas, as well as the quality of classroom and school 'management'.

I did want to mention some breakthrough programs in agriculture which began well before I arrived in Guatemala. As elsewhere in Latin America, agriculture was a principal focus of USAID's efforts in Guatemala. But because increases in trading opportunities, Guatemala's relatively cool climate at altitude and the close proximity to the U.S., USAID's agriculture programs had shifted from staples to exportable cash crops. Unlike many traditional agricultural development programs, the Guatemala program had shifted toward non-traditional horticultural crops – snow peas, broccoli, green beans and other crops that can be grown at altitude and marketed for significant return to neighboring countries to the north. The cooler weather in the highlands, where the majorities are poor Mayans, is a major asset for tradeable crops, if you can succeed in meeting the high

standards on food exports. USAID worked extensively with the Guatemalan ‘non-traditional exports association’ and supported improvements to small farmers’ export potential through cooperatives and small farmer associations.

Beyond the food crops for export, USAID also developed an effective association with the national coffee growers association (ANACAFE) to support small farmers’ coffee associations. During my time there, this project grew and was enhanced by the growing interest of importers of premium coffees in the U.S. and elsewhere. Premium coffee varieties need to be grown at altitude, generally above 4000 feet. Starbucks and other premium coffee importers were expanding worldwide and also highly interested in “fair trade coffee” at the premium level, aware of the historical earlier dominance of large growers and exploitation of smaller, low-income growers, living in the mountains. A number of major NGOs were also entering this fair trade work, often supporting small farmer coops and operating as intermediaries between small grower coops and processors or large importers. With the rapidly growing demand in the United States and elsewhere, there was a confluence of interests between the Mayan *campesinos* in the highlands, where the best coffee is grown, and the large overseas importers. Ironically, although the Mayans had originally been pushed out of the lowlands and up onto the ‘skirts’ of the volcanos by the Spanish colonists and the mestizo population, the *campesinos* now literally ‘held the high ground’ for this market. The colonists and ‘*Latifundistas*’ wanted to hold the lower, more arable flatlands for their plantations for bananas, corn and beans, and even large-scale unshaded coffee. But the tables had turned a good bit in the coffee market by the mid-late 90s. So this proved fertile ground for a great income-generating program for those who were among the poorest of the poor. We also helped the coops set up small-scale processing plants, in order to keep a larger piece of that growing value in the mountain communities. We could support efforts for initial processing – the washing, drying and hulling of the coffee beans -- with appropriate technologies in the mountain communities. Another important breakthrough in non-traditional agriculture there.

Looking back, though, I would probably have to say that the highest priority focus in our Guatemala programs were the democracy-strengthening portfolio of projects. We were fortunate to be well-funded in this area. Ambassador Jim Michel and others had established the earliest programs in the administration of justice (AOJ) programs, later to be called rule of law (ROL) programs, as they expanded from strengthening courts and court systems to strengthening prosecutors’ offices, investigative processes and some defender services. The program area expanded further into supporting efforts to improve the functioning of the Congress with efforts to establish committee systems and a things like a ‘research service. Further, our democracy programs also evolved to do a great deal to enhance the electoral process through extending the franchise and assuring fair/transparent voting. Finally our program worked very closely with and provided support to a substantial number of Guatemalan of civil society organizations and human rights groups. The is clearly still an area of relative weakness for Guatemala, to this day, but I think it is fair to say that we did make a significant impact on the capacity of the courts, the effectiveness of the human rights ombudsman and on the public ministry’s investigative and prosecutorial and trial processes. This was perhaps less due to material

assistance than with the extensive training programs for judges and prosecutors, along with the staffs of these institutions.

Q: Any of the USAID staff names you want to mention?

RHODES: Sure, with pleasure. Bambi Arellano had really started up a lot of these programs, with help from the LAC bureau and the AOJ/ROL staff, as it developed during the early days of Democracy/Governance programs in Washington. In addition, when Bambi became the Deputy Director of the Mission, her second in the Democracy Office, Beth Hogan, rose quickly to the challenge and never looked back! Both were bright, dynamic, highly energetic leaders who became true experts in this field and excelled in creating proactive and effective Mission teams. Even more important was their ability to establish relationships of extraordinary trust and confidence with the Guatemalans, both in the governmental institutions and the civil society organizations we worked so closely with. Both have been true leaders of USAID in this developing field.

Q: Did you also work with good contractors, like the DOJ, right?

RHODES: Right. We had a very productive interagency agreement with the Department of Justice and used the expertise in a couple of its divisions to provide technical assistance and training to Ministry of Justice investigators and prosecutors. We also had help working with the court system from the National Center for State Courts and several other U.S. organizations to strengthen court systems and processes, and even bringing groups of Guatemalan judges to the United States for training in evidentiary rules, trial conduct and open courtroom management. A lot of work was done to strengthen the justice system, which really has been an Achilles heel, and to some extent remains so.

I have to say that while the overall program in Guatemala was very strong, funding had definitely leveled off as many in Washington were growing impatient with the very long, drawn-out peace negotiation process. But following de Leon Carpio's time as Interim President, there was a very important national election, resulting in a "reformer", the respected mayor of Guatemala City Álvaro Arzú became President in a clear and open democratic election. This was in late 1995, and when he became president in early '96 he promised to make the peace negotiations his highest priority and get it done within one year. He achieved this with the long-awaited, heralded signing of the peace accords just after Christmas 1996. It was an amazing achievement, really. It took one year of banging heads and making significant concessions that no other president had been willing and able to achieve. Arzú was also able to rein in the Guatemalan military to a greater extent than any earlier elected civilian President, utilizing his enormous popular support. So while the new democratic 'tradition' in Guatemala had started earlier, Arzú followed up on de Leon Carpio's initiatives and built on them (and adding his own) to significantly solidify it. And while there have been ups and downs, certainly some poor presidents and some weak ones (including a couple of former generals), the military has never again taken power in Guatemala, and a civilian has been popularly elected there ever since. That is progress. And that Arzú was also able to finalize and reach closure with the URNG (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity) on far-reaching peace accords, this

made an enormous difference for the entire population, but especially the Mayans – it was the first real official statement or ‘codification’ of the rights and privileges of the Mayan majority, which had not been established constitutionally or legislatively. Now it was there in black and white. There were 10 separate ‘accords’, six of them were ‘substantive’ accords – and these were historic documents, with the force of law, laying out the policy objectives and programs the government committed itself to, in order to address social exclusion and improve the socioeconomic situation of the Mayan people.

Q: Was the mission, or were you involved with those negotiations or drafting those documents?

RHODES: Nothing as dramatic as my personal involvement in El Salvador and flying into FMLN territory in the mountains! But in substance, the answer is yes, there was a small core group of large and influential donors including USAID that was supporting the government side in particular develop what it could commit to and would be funded as part of implementing a peace accord, after it was signed. I would say we were the leading bilateral donor; of the group, though Norway was quite influential, though it usually worked through the UN and provided substantial funding. The EU (European Union) was very involved. And of course the OAS (Organization of American States), especially on the post-accord reintegration side. The UN was very, very important, as it had established MINUGUA (UN Verification Mission in Guatemala) and was the organization responsible for managing and monitoring the disarmament of the URNG, and evaluating the government’s and URNG’s implementation of the peace accords.

I would like to mention a particularly important project and USAID role, before the peace accords were assigned, which helped to get to the final signing. This was something not dissimilar to what we did in El Salvador, described earlier, to ‘incentivize’ the somewhat exhausted ‘rebel’ groups to come in. The Mission prepared and initiated a ‘peace project’ called Communities in Transition. It was focused on communities in relatively remote areas, especially in northern Quiché and Huehuetenango provinces, where large portions of those populations supported (and provided) URNG guerrillas. We initiated project activities in some difficult and relatively dangerous areas of the “*Ixcán*” where URNG was still active, but where it was possible to work on providing basic services to the small towns. We were able to reach agreements with local governors and mayors to start building rural infrastructure, as well as improve public services in the towns. We awarded a substantial grant to an American NGO called CHF International (now Global Communities), which worked in partnership with Rigoberta Menchú Tum, whom you will recall had won the Nobel Peace Prize about a few years earlier, in 1993, for her very courageous work as an activist in advancing indigenous rights of Mayans in Guatemala. Indeed, she had lost much of her own family in Quiche to army massacres in the 1980s. With her Nobel Prize funding, she established a domestic non-governmental organization, and CHF worked in partnership with the Menchú foundation to develop and begin implementing a program in the *Ixcán*. The work in this still risky and remote area was led by a very effective Chief of Party named Steve Huffstutlar, who generated the mobilization of local leadership and resources for building rural access roads, installing “Bailey bridges”, improving town infrastructure for water and other services, and

providing agricultural support to local people, without asking whose “side” they were on. Steve in fact was a long-time friend, who had served as a Peace Corps Volunteer with me in Bolivia in the late 60s! Steve and his team really went to work in a very tough area, with impressive results for local people. This ‘peace project’ earned a great reputation.

As in El Salvador, the underlying premise of the project was to show in concrete ways the benefits to the local population of moving to a formal peace. This effort was not carried out through the central Guatemalan government *per se*, but was done with their knowledge and assent. Many in the area had been (or still were) with the URNG. But the Government would go on to establish a major autonomous ‘peace program agency’, “Fonapaz”, after the peace agreements were signed, with which our well-established *Ixcán* program collaborated very closely. We and other donors helped finance Fonapaz’ work, and it became a very strong partner in the resettlement and reintegration of returning *campesinos* after the accords were signed. But I think it is fair to say that our work did help “pave the way” towards a final peace agreement, by assuring people in URNG-controlled of the concrete benefits in reaching a formal peace.

The *Ixcán* project went forward after the accords were signed, and focused heavily on the challenges of preparing for the return of thousands of Guatemalans, who had fled the violence of the protracted war, and wished to “come home” from their long exile in camps in southern Mexico, in the Chiapas region. This work was supported strongly by the State Department and the Congress. Senator John McCain even came to Guatemala to support this process, and flew by helicopter into the *Ixcán* region -- my first (and last) ride in a military helicopter! Senator McCain spoke movingly to a large assembly of Guatemalan *campesinos* in a small town of his experiences in Vietnam, and the importance of supporting the resettlement and reintegration of refugees from war. I am still very proud of this effort, one of the true highlights of my USAID career.

After the accords were signed, USAID -- working with the other donor and diplomatic agencies mentioned earlier -- provided extensive support to implement the actual disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of URNG guerilla fighters and their families. We supported the establishment of camps set up to manage the process with those ‘coming in from the cold’. The demobilization camps would be established in half a dozen provinces around rural Guatemala where URNG concentrations were greatest. The rebels brought their personal weapons, and heavier weapons that belonged to the URNG, into those camps; they turned over those arms to MINUGUA peace keepers, and remained in the camps for about two months, where they received a supply of civilian clothes and personal items, and obtained certification of eligibility for training of different types to help reintegrate them into the Guatemalan economy. Some wanted plots of farm land and obtained ‘starter packages’ of agricultural implements and inputs for establishing their own farms on land provided to them. Others chose to receive education and training in a variety of vocational areas. By this time, many guerillas no longer wanted to go back to farming, even though the civil war had begun decades earlier largely over unequal land distribution and the domination of the post-colonial *latifundia*. Times had changed, and many of the guerrillas wanted modern job skills more than land.

The demobilization was an uncertain process, but a very exciting time. USAID and the UN (funded by Norway) implemented most of the construction of the camps. The UN was very active throughout the entire process, through MINUGUA and the UNDP. OAS carried out significant training and ‘democracy education’ within the camps. The EU provided a lot of support to clinics and other facilities. So over a relatively short 60-day period, the URNG was fully demobilized in 1997. We did have to keep one camp open a little longer, as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright wanted to view this process but couldn’t get to Guatemala quite within the 60-day period! The Clinton administration had invested in the reintegration process as well as the USAID ‘peace program’, as this was the end to the last major civil conflict in Central America, a war which lasted over 35 years and resulted in tens of thousands of death. So we kept one camp open an extra week to accommodate the visit of the Secretary and USAID Administrator Brian Atwood.

Q: Was she properly impressed?

RHODES: She was. While I wouldn’t call the camp we kept open a “Potemkin village”, the basic work of this camp had been completed within the prescribed 60 days provided by the Accords, but we were able to stretch out work there for another week. The Secretary was very impressed and USAID subsequently received a large increase in our budgets, from the “economic support funds” (ESF) controlled by the State Department.

Q: The demobilization process – was that copied from what had happened in El Salvador and other countries?

RHODES: There was certainly quite a bit of previous experience in El Salvador to draw on. But certainly not a ‘replica’, as the situations were really quite different. There are unique aspects to any civil war to which you have to ‘tailor’ the process so that the needs and demands of all the parties are sufficiently satisfied to assure a lasting peace. The URNG side was very distrustful of the process, for some good, historic reasons. But it was key that Guatemala had now had two democratic presidents in a row committed to a real peace, de Leon Carpio and Arzú. Neither of them had needed to rely heavily on the Guatemalan military for the successes of their presidencies. Both were seen as relatively corruption-free, and Arzú relied heavily on respected and trusted national figures in his peace commission, who negotiated the accords with the URNG leadership. It was an honor to work with these people and very gratifying to see the peace process succeed, one of the most important things I have ever been involved in.

Q: In summary, what would be two or three things USAID did that really supported the peace process?

RHODES: I would say that, as in El Salvador, we were able to convince the supporters of the URNG that this was going to be good for them and for the Mayan people in regions they controlled; that there were going to be concrete benefits to peace. While this may sound kind of simple, it is important to remember that many of these people had been in a severe civil conflict, losing the lives of family and townspeople, for decades. So it entailed a long process of building trust in a legitimate government and a risky process,

after decades of discrimination and destructiveness. It had to be first built ‘bottom-up’, in the rural communities supporting the rebels for years. As an example, the *Ixcán* project installed a ‘Bailey bridge’ across a river where there had been a bridge decades earlier, before it was destroyed in the conflict; you could still see the ruins of it. One side of the river had been ‘army territory’, while on the other, the community had supported the URNG. This was a very effective use of project funds by the CHF International team and its COP Steve Huffstutlar. Literally, the local people on both sides were rebuilding a ‘bridge to peace’. The bridge even reunified families who had lost ‘brothers’ to both sides, during the long conflict.

That kind of ‘symbolic’ reunification effort was key to achieving a lasting peace, as well as the development of the local economy. So the implementation of the peace accords became part and parcel of USAID’s bilateral program for my last two years there.

Q: By this time you had been in Guatemala for how long?

RHODES: I got there in January of ’94; the accords were signed in December of ’96 and I stayed on until August of ’98. It was a great four-plus years of USAID service, in many ways the most satisfying professional experience of my life. I would have been interested in staying on longer, but there was a change of ambassadors and I did not receive the same level of confidence and support from the new ambassador that I had earned from the former ambassador, with whom I worked closely and admired greatly.

Who was that?

RHODES: Marilyn McAfee. There weren’t that many female ambassadors back in the mid-90s. She came out of USIA (United States Information Agency) originally, and she was excellent; very smart and savvy, and a very thoughtful, deliberate person. I had worked very closely with her and had her full confidence. The new ambassador had a different concept of the appropriate relationship between USAID and the embassy, essentially seeing us as underlings working for him, on his terms. The relationship with the new ambassador was not as productive or enjoyable as it had been with Ambassador McAfee. I often felt undercut in my long-standing working relationships with Guatemalan officials. He was highly proprietary about what he considered ‘ambassadorial-level’ prerogatives, which significantly limited my ability to work as I had previously, dealing directly with the ministers of finance and agriculture and education and health, etc. The new ambassador believed that direct dealings with ministers and high-level government officials was exclusively an ambassador’s role, not a USAID director’s role. So he “trimmed my sails”, you could say, and it was time for me to move forward to a new posting.

But there is an amusing story about how that happened. I was assigned by USAID senior management panel to go next to Peru to be the mission director. It was a big program, and Peru’s an incredible place; I was very pleased, and anxious to go back to the Andes. I got on the phone and started talking to senior staff in Peru; we were recruiting new staff and I arranged a lease on a house, all by phone from Guatemala. My wife Trish obtained a position at the international school in Lima. Then Administrator Atwood, who had been

extremely supportive to us in Guatemala, asked me to come and see him when I was in DC. He brought me into his office and said something like, “Stacy you’ve done a great job in Guatemala. I know you’re a true ‘Latin American guy’ and you speak good Spanish, so you have this great new assignment to Peru. But I’d like you to think about something else, because our director in South Africa, Aaron Williams, has unexpectedly had to leave post early due to an illness in his family. I would like you to think about replacing him there; he recommended you very highly. And given the major level of commitment the Clinton administration has made to Nelson Mandela, and the importance of the program in supporting his government, I think you’d be very good there. I’d like you to consider changing your assignment to South Africa.”

Then he said, “But it’s up to you, you make the decision. Think about it this way: Fujimori or Mandela; you make the call.” Alberto Fujimori was then the president of Peru who’d taken power in a coup and had progressively become more autocratic, using the military and his intelligence services to consolidate power and stifle all opposition. Serious violations of human rights. “So you think about it; Fujimori or Mandela?” (Laughter) What was I supposed to do? Choose Fujimori? Brian was persuasive.

Q: So did you respond in that meeting?

RHODES: Yeah, I responded by saying, “Now that you put it that way, I’ll think about this very seriously! But I do need to talk to my wife, who has just been hired to teach school at the Colegio Roosevelt in Lima!” I was heading back to Guatemala the next day, so I went to a DC bookstore and bought a big coffee table book of beautiful photographs of South Africa’s coasts and incredible wildlife safari parks to take home to show my wife and kids. Needless to say, I was feeling under some pressure to make the change from the Peru job, but wanted to convince the family that this was a good idea. And I was honored that Brian wanted me to go to South Africa during the Mandela administration. It was a huge program, a lot of funding committed and very high profile. I hated to give up Peru; I’d been in the Andes in Peace Corps – Bolivia was be called “Alto Peru” during the colonial period -- and I was very engaged already, looking forward to it. But after some discussions with Trish and the kids, we made the switch.

Q: You had never served in Africa before.

RHODES: No, not in USAID’s African Bureau. I’d served in North Africa, in Morocco, in the old Middle East Bureau, but Morocco’s not much like sub-Saharan Africa.

Q: Was there anything in particular that convinced your kids and wife?

RHODES: The big high gloss photographs were very helpful! The kids actually didn’t realize we’d be living in the capital city, Pretoria, which is inland, doesn’t have a seacoast and isn’t nearly as interesting as Cape Town, where many of the photographs were taken. But how could I complain? I was sure they would adjust well, and this was by far the biggest program in the Africa region at the time. The Clinton Administration was so highly committed to it, and I was still close friends with Director Aaron Williams from

the early days in Haiti; he strongly urged me to take his place there, and indeed paved the way for me. He said that it would help him and the program if I would replace him. So we decided to go with Mandela rather than Fujimori! Brian was pleased! (Laughter)

Q: How long had the AID mission been going in South Africa when you arrived?

RHODES: There had been a program for South Africa, some form of USAID involvement there, over quite a long time. But there was no actual field ‘Mission’ and staff there until the early 1990s. I don’t know exactly how long the assistance program *per se* had been going on, though I would guess it could be dated back to 1986-87. But it was never carried out through the “*apartheid* regime” there. Rather it was focused on supporting the black population through scholarships and training programs implemented outside South Africa. I believe there was also a pretty extensive small grants program for civil society organizations which supported the end of *apartheid* and a real democracy in South Africa. These programs were administered for a substantial period by USAID staff working from offices in neighboring countries and in Washington. A full history of this effort would be both very interesting and instructive, as it was in effect a USAID program in opposition to the governing regime of the country for which it was authorized! Rare!

Q: This is John Pielemeier, with Stacy Rhodes. Today is January 6th, 2017. We’re going to be talking mostly about Stacy’s time in South Africa. Stacy’s going to set the scene with some background information about the early stages of USAID work in South Africa and then move towards his period there as mission director.

USAID South Africa Mission Director

RHODES: It was an honor for me to be able to be named Mission Director for USAID in South Africa in 1998. While I was not personally familiar with the history, USAID’s prior involvement in South Africa was quite lengthy and extraordinary, in highly positive ways, during a very difficult period historically. As I mentioned last session, there were significant assistance programs in the late ‘80s which provided scholarships, training and small grants to black South Africans, many of whom went on to lead the struggle against *apartheid*, and later to become government officials during the Mandela administration in the mid-1990s. Before that time, the *apartheid* government essentially operated a highly oppressive system of separation by race, carrying out a quasi-socialistic effort to meet virtually all the needs of the 15% white population, while deliberately neglecting even the most basic needs of the black population, which it viewed not only as inferior, but to be exploited as a cheap labor force, and physically confined to traditional tribal lands.

Q: In ‘homelands’.

RHODES: Yes, black South Africans had to have ‘internal passports’ to move from their so-called *Bantustans* or ‘homelands’ to work in the white cities, and had to be out by a certain hour of the day. It was an amazing thing. Seems incredible today that it

was allowed to exist for so long, into the 1990s. There were several official divisions or separations of the South African population by skin color, and in addition to whites and blacks, there were what the regime called “Coloreds” – often Indian South Africans, or ‘mulattos’ who were a bit lighter in skin color than blacks. They were treated differently than whites, discriminated against yet treated significantly better than the majority black population. This *apartheid* system of ‘separation by race’ had been in place since the mid- 1940s, under the ruling National Party.

The Reagan administration’s policy of ‘constructive engagement’ with South Africa was implemented under the leadership of Chester Crocker, our ambassador to South Africa. He was a senior political appointee of great influence. In some respects, it seemed that the USG was ‘trying to have it both ways’, maintaining regular diplomatic relations with the *apartheid* government and quietly urging it to make changes, while also trying to quietly provide some modest assistance to emerging black leaders, from outside the country. But officially the USG had labelled the African National Congress (ANC) a ‘terrorist organization’ after the level of violence in the struggle increased significantly in the 1980s. Of course the ANC was the primary ‘struggle organization’ of Nelson Mandela, and would go on to become the absolutely dominant political party in South Africa. So this shortsighted action lived on well past the time the ANC gained political power and caused all sorts of problems for USAID South Africa, often making it very difficult to obtain U.S. visas for ANC members who had become high level officials!

As I mentioned last session, Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) in 1986, which was unequivocal in its opposition to *apartheid*, and called for greatly increased assistance to black civil society organizations, undertaking a whole different approach in support of the liberation struggle. This was then one of those rare occasions where the foreign policy of the United States became determined primarily by the legislative branch, rather than the executive, with Congress overriding President Reagan’s veto of the CAAA, with the support not just of Democrats, but also significant number of Republicans. This changed almost everything in the diplomatic relationship, and its impact has been well-analyzed and discussed at length in the book Partner to History, by Princeton Lyman, who went on to become a very important ambassador to South Africa in 1992, during the ‘transition’ from *apartheid* to democracy.

The new law and policy required a new assistance program, and USAID sent its first director and a small staff to South Africa to reside and work in-country for the first time. Tim Bork was the first director and he had a very pro-active staff who not only greatly expanded its scholarship and training programs, but made many more and larger grants to black-led and civil society organizations. One later evaluation of the program described it as a highly unusual effort to hasten the demise of an existing regime, similar to what we now term a ‘regime change’ initiative, by overt and growing support for a new and expanded democracy. Extraordinary to have a USAID program that was directly opposed to the continuation of the government and its policies in the country in which it is operating. I doubt there have ever been other cases like that, at least not to this extreme.

The CAAA limited direct U.S. assistance only to black populations and community organizations. But violence and acts of ‘guerilla warfare’ in the country were increasing, as the ANC and other organizations were rapidly moving away from what had originally began as a non-violent approach. I think the hope was that more direct U.S. support for black organizations and leaders, and a clear U.S. policy against *apartheid*, would help move the process into an accelerated transition period toward full democracy, reducing the violence. Perhaps it did in some modest ways, but far more important than U.S. assistance was the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in early 1990, after 27 years in confinement. The U.S., along with a very large number of other governments and international organizations, had been strongly urging South Africa to take this step for years, and his release was greeted by vast and massive celebrations across the country. More than a quarter century after his initial imprisonment, Mandela emerged as the clear leader of South Africa’s majority black population. It was really something to behold. While National Party leader F.W. de Klerk remained as President of the country for another 3-plus years, ‘the writing was on the wall’. This transition period in the early ‘90s until the first true democratic election involving the entire population in South Africa in 1994 was challenging and difficult for many, and Lyman’s book offers far more detail than I can on the U.S. diplomatic and assistance efforts that led to the completion of the transition.

As I mentioned, it was very unusual, if not unique, for USAID to operate a program that was overtly opposed to the existing government, essentially supporting a near term “regime-change”. Probably one of the most interesting and dramatic pieces of USAID’s history anywhere in the world. Before President Clinton was elected in 1992, near the end of the administration of George H.W. Bush, Leslie ‘Cap’ Dean was appointed to go to South Africa in 1992, replacing Dennis Barrett, who had served after Tim Bork initiated the program. Bork and Barrett had used the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act as the guiding policy for an active but relatively modest-sized USAID program. Under President Clinton, in 1993, the USAID program was greatly expanded to support the systems needed to carry out a successful set of national elections in 1994. USAID enhanced programs to support the preparation of voting materials, voter education materials, training of political parties – the kinds of things that were increasingly becoming more common elsewhere through USAID’s expanding democracy and governance programs. A much-heightened role for USAID’s democracy programs took place in the lead-up to the ’94 elections, to help assure they would be ‘free and open’, and achieve and international ‘legitimacy’.

As almost everyone knows, the Presidential election was won overwhelmingly by Nelson Mandela, who became the first ever truly democratically-elected leader of South Africa. This now seems almost ancient history, but it was a world-wide event in many respects. Its success in assuring a transition from a repressive all-white *apartheid* regime to a government controlled by the former “terrorist organization”, the African National Congress, was due in great part to the wisdom of Nelson Mandela -- combined with the remarkable willingness of former President F.W. de Klerk -- to include de Klerk as one of his two vice-presidents in the new democratic government. The other V.P. was ANC leader Thabo Mbeki, in many respects the principal ‘policy guru’ of the ANC, later to

become Mandela's successor as President. They started as co-vice presidents under the new Mandela regime in 1994, symbolizing racial reconciliation and the peaceful transition. F.W. de Klerk also received the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Mandela, though later left the government under great pressure from the National Party and others.

It was a fascinating period, in which USAID contributed on a large scale to this fully democratic election and ultimately peaceful transition of power, which was almost miraculous if looked at from the perspective of the 1980s. There was still a lot to do to achieve the reduction of residual violence in South Africa, both between blacks and whites and between the ANC and the party of Zulu leader Buthelezi, who was both a tribal and political rival. There were some very difficult times leading up to the election including major acts of violence, and the magnitude of the change and the ANC victory did not entirely quell this. Mandela's work in reconciling and unifying the country was in some senses just beginning. The U.S. was determined to support this process, and President Clinton expanded further his earlier commitment of assistance to support it.

USAID Director Cap Dean then went forward in 1994 to begin to implement the huge Clinton initiative announced after the inauguration of President Mandela, of a \$600 million U.S. assistance program commitment to the new Mandela government over a three-year period. Of course, positions in the new government coming in were mostly filled by ANC members who had little or no governing experience, and the governmental institutions were extremely weak, especially since they had previously been dedicated to serving only the white population. A lot of very energetic and committed activists from the ANC were named and determined to move things forward, but the institutions were not built or ready to move in the directions the Mandela administration wanted to go. Most new government managers and staff had been political activists or leaders of NGOs or civil society organizations for decades, and the institutions they assumed control of were not equipped to undertake the enormous transformation now required. So it took a lot longer than hoped or anticipated to develop and start implementing large-scale projects and programs expanding public services in health, education and other sectors. But USAID's committed assistance levels grew rapidly each year from 1994 through 1997, resulting in a very large funding 'pipeline'. Much of this funding could not be spent for the actual implementation of programs until later years, including my time from 1998-2001.

Q: Were these government-to-government programs?

RHODES: Yes – for the first time, USAID in South Africa was completely committed to working with the national government. The Anti-Apartheid Act prohibited assistance to the South African Government, though a modest exception was made in during the transition period allowing USAID to provide support to educational institutions which served black and 'colored' students, such as some higher education colleges and universities in the Cape Town and Johannesburg areas. But it was only after Mandela was inaugurated that direct financial assistance to the new government was authorized.

One of the most positive and symbolic project ‘start-ups’, indeed the first major USAID grant signed directly with the government, was signed in Mandela’s residence in 1994 to strengthen the Ministry of Justice and to build new courts in the former ‘homeland’ areas. It was very important that USAID under Cap Dean was able to build confidence and trust in the “bona fides” of its assistance efforts with key leaders of the ANC, and one of the true heroes of the liberation struggle was a man who had been Mandela’s lawyer, Dullah Omar. I had the honor and pleasure of working with him a lot during my time there, as we built in assistance to the system of justice even further in 1998-2001 period. Dullah played a key role in making our assistance both well-accepted by radical ANC leaders, and more effective in impact. There was still much debate within the ANC and amongst the new government officials about whether South Africa should even accept official USG assistance. A significant number of members of ANC and Communist Party leaders in government remained hostile and suspicious of the United States in the wake of years of USG support for the *apartheid* regime and lack of support to the liberation movement. “Constructive engagement” was seen as support of *apartheid* and some leaders of the ANC actually opposed accepting assistance from the U.S. government; this was an ongoing debate in the inner circles for some time. Dullah Omar was a very courageous guy, one of those unsung heroes you seldom read about. He was an Indian-South African Muslim who had earned the close confidence of Mandela, and one of the ‘inner circle’ who believed the U.S. government had wholly changed in its policy, and understood that we were now willing to support the priorities of the Mandela regime, relying on the South African government to guide the assistance program, based on its own priorities.

So the focus of USAID assistance shifted dramatically towards institution-building. Programs were developed in close collaboration with South African counterpart agencies. The effort was intended to fully support the Mandela government’s initiatives and carry out institutional strengthening programs in key areas where the new government’s priority was to transform public services, whether it was in education or public health or agriculture or business and trade. It became a very large and broad-based bilateral program to build the capacity of the new public sector to address the needs of those who had been excluded for so long. In the justice area, it started with assistance to building up a functioning court system out in the former homeland areas, both with new facilities, and through extensive training of lawyers, judges, prosecutors, public defenders and court administrators. Indeed, my first field trip after arriving in 1998 was out to Umtata in the former “Transkei” homeland to help inaugurate a new courthouse facility built with USAID support to Omar’s rapidly reforming and expanding Ministry of Justice. The training process took longer than the building of courthouses, but the latter were highly symbolic. The very existence of a new courthouse promised great change in the way black South Africans were regarded and treated under the new democratic judicial system. Criminal justice was no longer to be based on forced confessions but on evidence and open trials before a neutral magistrate. This was huge.

As I noted earlier, although the actual expenditure levels for USAID’s growing portfolio was rising over these years, the funds ‘pipeline’ remained large because of the enormous obligation of funds in the early years of Mandela’s administration. But the long and complex process of designing and implementing transformational programs was slow,

requiring much care to include and consult local populations, the preparation of assessments and technical feasibility studies, etc. It took an even longer time for disbursements to grow, reflecting actual implementation costs being paid out to contractors and other implementers. So when the new 'funding obligations' in the later years of Mandela's term began to decline, and the publicized figures of USAID's latest funding levels started downward, some tensions were actually created. On a couple of occasions, in the later part of his term, Mandela expressed to the Ambassador his disappointment with the 'shrinking size' of the U.S. assistance program. Ambassadors and USAID Directors spent some time explaining to the new administration that actual program expenditure levels were still rising even though the new funding levels were not. Basically, we were spending money that had been obligated in earlier years, and still had some years ahead which programs would be funded in part by the backed-up "pipeline".

Aaron Williams went to South Africa as Mission Director in 1996; I believe you are also interviewing him, and he'll tell you about his important and interesting experiences with the Mandela administration from 1996-98. He inherited the much expanded programs and priorities established by Cap Dean, supporting the new government's transformational strategies. When I came in to replace Aaron in 1998, we went forward with the existing portfolio of programs while working to accelerate the pace of implementation. One of the less traditional USAID programs which was of enormous importance to the Mandela administration was in housing. For decades black South Africans living in so-called "substandard housing", a generous term to describe actual conditions. There was a massive housing shortage, beyond massive. The vast majority of blacks lived in shacks or 'shanties' in huge "townships" outside the major cities, where decent housing was reserved to whites. Few had electricity and fewer had running water; virtually none had sewage. Conditions were far worse than in what Americans know as "urban slums". The 'housing deficit' was almost incomprehensibly huge. The Agency's Regional Housing Urban Development Office (RHUDO) had expanded its staff and was starting to make a dent in this problem with energetic leadership from people like Carleen Dei and Joel Kolker, who creatively established partnerships with South African agencies and banks.

Further, basic public health services to black South Africans had been limited to a few large and badly understaffed public hospitals in a few large townships, and basic institution-building for health service delivery had become a major priority for the government and many donor organizations. Our leader in this area was a highly capable senior public health officer named Ken Yamashita. In addition to strikingly high rates of infant and child mortality and other well-known issues resulting from unsanitary housing and lack of primary health care services, the early signs of an HIV/AIDS epidemic were just emerging, and starting to be measured during the Mandela administration. In part because so little was known about the rising epidemic in South Africa, and in part due to the reluctance of new government to dedicate itself to a wholly new and "scary" problem when so many huge old problems remained inadequately addressed, the administration did not seize on HIV as a priority area. Mandela himself was focused heavily on still critical political and reconciliation issues in the early days, and ANC political figures were reluctant to address this mysterious and potentially embarrassing issue.

The focus was on transforming the health care delivery system so that it served blacks as well as whites. Vice-President Thabo Mbeki and the powerful Minister of Health, Nkosazana Zuma, were more than hesitant to commit the government to dealing with the new problem, they were actually in denial that there was such a problem. They resisted USAID's repeated offers of help to the Ministry of Health and the South African government more broadly to develop an initial program. The fact that there were several millions of dollars available and dedicated to address HIV/AIDS was made clear on a number of occasions. Ken Yamashita and I went to the minister and told her that USAID would be willing to put large-scale funding into a new government-run prevention and treatment program for HIV/AIDS. She simply wasn't interested, never took us up on the offer; it was astonishing. We ended up using those funds to support civil society organizations and health NGOs willing and able to initiate prevention programs.

Some prominent South African officials (including Mbeki) not only denied the very existence of the HIV, they exacerbated the situation by expressing anti-Western views and accusing large Western pharmaceutical companies of a conspiracy to 'once again take advantage of Africans' by charging outrageously high prices for the early anti-retroviral drugs. This stubborn resistance and high level denials were often politically motivated, and the resultant delay in any large-scale government effort to systematically address the rapidly growing epidemic most certainly cost thousands of lives. Thank God that over time, well after my departure, the South Africans initiated a major response to the epidemic, supported by USAID and many other donors.

In contrast to the experience we had in failing to establish a large-scale HIV/AIDS program during my time there, one of the joys of being a part of the USAID program during this period was in witnessing the growing bonds between our two countries' leaders. After the Clinton Initiative started, the two presidents developed a close relationship that became apparent to all. While President Clinton was much younger than President Mandela, they developed a special friendship seen by some as almost a "father-son relationship", which went well beyond a traditional relationship between two heads of state. With the Clinton administration being so highly and publicly supportive of the transformative processes the Mandela government was implementing, it was great to actually see the closeness of the President's relationship, and to feel like part of the transformation resulting from it. Beyond the Presidents themselves, this mutual commitment extended down through their respective Executive branches. Vice-President Gore and members of the U.S. Cabinet were tasked to work closely, at the highest level, with Vice President Mbeki and their counterparts in the South African executive to establish the U.S.-South Africa Bi-National Commission, or BNC. The idea was to significantly deepen the relationship between the two governments beyond an "assistance program". There were major BNC meetings, starting in 1995, of almost the entire cabinets. While not all of the USG cabinet 'secretaries' were involved, but the ministers of the South African departments of agriculture, housing and urban development, environment, energy, education, and health would meet with the secretaries of those departments of the United States, both in South Africa and in the U.S. USAID was tasked by the Ambassador to effectively serve as the 'secretariat' of these BNC meetings, and to coordinate follow-up to the agreements resulting from them. Vice-President Gore worked

very hard to establish and maintain this relationship with Thabo Mbeki, who was seen as the likely successor to Mandela.

While this large role in the BNC process put USAID in a high-profile and leading role in the bilateral relationship, it also created some problems, as few of our U.S. cabinet departments had budgeted funds to provide assistance to their counterparts in the South African government. Few U.S. agencies could directly support the technical assistance programs and exchanges which many of the cabinet secretaries wanted to carry out following BNC meetings. So they all saw USAID as ‘the bank’ for the BNC, even though our budgeted assistance funds were largely already committed in existing projects and programs planned earlier with the South African government. But as there was only one place to turn for “BNC financing”, we tried, on an ‘*ad hoc*’ basis, to meet these needs at least in part by ‘re-programming’ funds already obligated in existing projects. Nevertheless, this became progressively more difficult, so there were some heavy discussions between USAID and officials of some of our own cabinet agencies.

I am sure that my predecessor Aaron Williams will give you much more on the BNC process, as the BNC was developed and initially expanded during his time, under Ambassador James Joseph. Ambassador Joseph was probably the most distinguished ambassador I ever served under. He had a divinity degree and had been a working minister in the South, I think in Louisiana. He had a PhD and had served on a number of Boards as well as Chairman of the Council on Foundations. Extremely impressive in his thought, manner and language, able to portray things in almost a – I say this in the most positive sense – preacher’s language, that could touch you emotionally as well as rationally. Very impressive man. He was extremely supportive of USAID, and I was proud to serve under him. Ambassadors can sometimes make life tough on mission directors, but Ambassador Joseph understood well both his role and mine, and he was a pleasure to work with. Occasionally he would call me up to say something like, “I told somebody who approached me about U.S. assistance me that they’d have to talk to you about their proposal, so they’re going to contact you. But I understand you will need to work within your program strategy and your policies and regulations. So I’ve done my job, and possibly put a little burden on you, but I’m not telling you what to do, and will completely support your decisions.” This was not always my experience in USAID. But Ambassador Joseph was extremely supportive, as was his successor, another distinguished African-American named Delano Lewis, former president of National Public Radio. I was very lucky to have had two excellent political-appointee ambassadors who were very supportive, and didn’t try to use USAID for their own purposes.

In other key areas, USAID further worked diligently to support to transform basic education and the strengthening of primary schools – including building many new school buildings -- in the townships and the former “homelands.” This was a huge priority for us. We had a very well-funded and well managed education sector program under our program chief, Patrick Fine. He worked closely with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI International) in developing and implementing far-reaching educational reforms through the Ministry of Education. RTI’s chief-of-party Luis Crouch was particularly creative and effective in his working relationships with the South Africans

and a great deal was achieved in the early transformation of this sector. In addition, we expanded USAID's support of and work with the private sector in significant ways, especially focused on new opportunities in trade and investment. The U.S. Congress had recently passed the Clinton administration's African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA. This was an effort to open a new opportunities for export-led economic growth, with significant trade preferences for products made in Africa exported to the U.S. on a duty-free basis. While it was still very difficult for African countries to meet the standards that were required for exporting on any scale, there were many new South African entrepreneurs developing businesses, and some of them were reaching export-capability. A lot of work focused on getting medium-sized enterprises eligible to trade with Europe and the U.S, prepared to deal with regional and international standards, to reach the minimum requirements of the ISO (International Organization for Standardization), as well as getting production volumes and quality up and to meet demands of foreign consumers. Our program put an increasing emphasis on new private sector job-creation, working primarily with black-owned businesses.

Our work within the justice system remained a crucial part of the program throughout my time there, and for some years thereafter. One special achievement with the Ministry of Justice was the creation of the first South African 'public prosecutor's office', which then established a special office on gender violence. The public prosecutor's role grew under a dynamic lawyer, Bulelani Ngcuka, and we were able to achieve much in the broad effort to establish and develop stronger law enforcement and judicial institutions in this period.

Mandela did a historic and unusual thing in 1999, declining to run for re-election to the presidency, even though he was still eligible under the constitution to stand for re-election. As you know, that example has not been followed by many other African leaders of his generation, and was particularly ignored by his neighbor and fellow liberation struggle leader, Robert Mugabe. As we all know -- to our sorrow -- while Mugabe was hailed as the primary leader in the struggle for Southern Rhodesia's independence and the establishment of the nation of Zimbabwe, he has to this day declined to leave power and remains there, presiding over a beautiful country which has steeply declined under his long autocratic rule. But Mandela was determined to firmly institutionalize democracy in South Africa quickly, even though it was -- and to a lesser extent remains -- essentially dominated by one party, his party, the African National Congress. There were some growing opposition parties back in my time there, and there was another 'free and open' election held in 1999, with Vice President Thabo Mbeki as the ANC candidate, and winner by a large margin. I had the pleasure of being an official observer to those elections, and was so impressed by the determination of the government and the people were to assure that the electoral franchise was fully exercised by all who were able. After experiencing the horrors of *apartheid*, and the complete denial of political rights and civil liberties for so many decades, voting is a treasured exercise of civil rights, and virtually nobody was denied the opportunity to vote. No government-issued 'photo-identification' was needed, at least in those days, though the system for voter registration was developed and is much more sophisticated today. But South African voters would patiently wait in line eight or more hours for their chance to vote, uncomplaining. The lines would snake back and forth outside the polling places for

extraordinary distances. I even observed voting inside a prison in South Africa, with prisoners coming out of their cells into a voting area to booths set up in a common area. The group of international observers I was with were impressed as these guys in their orange jumpsuits came into the commons and reviewed these large ballots, then cast their votes! As many South African voters were illiterate, the ballots are very graphic and colorful, with photos of the candidates, and symbols or logos of the parties, with the name of the party spelled out in block letters. It was such an impressive exercise in extending the franchise, and seeing democratic elections being taken so seriously. Very high turn-out rates; puts us to shame. We were proud to help finance the preparations for this second national election in South Africa and witness the peaceful transition of power.

Q: What level were your contacts with the government?

RHODES: My direct working contacts in South Africa were generally not at the same level as in Guatemala, where the country and the government is much smaller. I met frequently and regularly with a high-level civil service official in the ministry of Finance, at the “Director-General” level, who was responsible for the overall coordination of donor assistance to the government. I also had a regular phone relationship with him, and often called him to resolve concerns which came up. He did likewise. But the ‘political level’ cabinet ministers were more separated from operations in South Africa than they had been in Guatemala or Nepal. On the operational level we had a very close relationship with the highest-level “civil servants” and we really worked to be sure our programs supported the transformation of these governmental institutions, and that they were seen that way by cabinet ministers. I did meet the ministers at the Bi-National Commission events, but not at ‘working meetings’. But we also had large-scale annual reviews of our programs with high-level officials – sometimes ministers but more often the “permanent secretaries” of the major ministries with which we had programs, e.g., justice, housing, education, health, finance, etc. We’d have a full two-days dedicated to the review of the USAID program at a large roundtable, literally a round table in the impressive seat of the South African government, the “Union Buildings” in Pretoria. The senior-most staff of the USAID Mission would sit with ministry officials and review the progress of each major project over the previous year. There was quite a bit of oversight, continuous discussion and consultation. In South Africa so much of the success of the program depended on the ability to develop a high degree of trust, which was borne of transparency and frequent frank and open discussions. Trust was the real ‘currency’ there.

So it was a professionally close and effective working relationship with the government, but not conducted at the same ‘political level’ as in some of the other, smaller countries I worked in. The cabinet level ministers were at a very high political level in South Africa, almost all high ANC party officials and active politicians, usually not as involved or knowledgeable of our programs. Dullah Omar in Justice was an exception to this generalization, and there were a few others. But a big part of the honor of working in South Africa was in the opportunities it brought to meet with that country’s most extraordinary individuals, some of whom were not ‘government officials’ but were in many respects the country’s true leaders, like Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Shortly after my arrival in-country in 1998, our education chief Patrick Fine asked me to accompany

him to Cape Town to sign an agreement with then-Bishop Tutu, through which USAID would provide modest grant funds for his organization's scholarship program. Tutu had founded an organization years earlier to provide scholarships to young and poor students from the townships around Cape Town, for higher education in local institutions, a rare opportunity for disadvantaged black or "colored" students. So virtually the first official act I carried out on behalf of the USAID mission was with the future Archbishop, and Nobel Peace Prize awardee. While he was not a government official per se, he was and remains so revered in South Africa – as well as around the world – as the very "conscience of the country". It was an honor to start my time in South Africa like that.

But the ultimate honor there came nearing the end of my time there in 2001; some of the HIV/AIDS funds that we had not been able to utilize with the Ministry of Health programs were employed in support of local civil society groups and NGOs working on HIV/AIDS issues. So we provided a grant to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund to work with families affected by AIDS and to assess the rising problem of "AIDS orphans". It was a relatively modest grant for our program, but a large grant for this NGO. At the annual dinner recognizing supporters of the Fund, my wife Trish and I were seated at the head table, near the guest of honor, Nelson Mandela. Well, it was one of those 'transporting experiences' where you are so affected by the presence of another person, that you literally don't know what to say! (Laughter) Here's this person who is so respected and admired, even idolized around the world, considered a virtual 'living saint'! And in the short time since he had left the Presidency, he had become a very strong global advocate for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment. I was frankly at a loss for words, but Trish and I both just felt so honored to have a chance to shake his hand and exchange names and greetings. It was a short conversation about President Clinton and U.S. support to the country, but the honor of sitting with him and speaking even briefly as 'partners' in a common endeavor was pretty amazing. Made me feel very good about the career I had chosen. And my wife gave me a lot of "points" for this!

Q: Was he working out of home at this point?

RHODES: Yes, he had officially retired from politics but obviously still had a lot of influence in South Africa, and had become a major global spokesman, especially for addressing the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS. I saw him from a distance a few years later, after I left USAID and went to work for Save the Children USA as the head of their HIV/AIDS office. It was the experience gained in South Africa that generated my desire to go to work in this field for several years. I went to international conferences on HIV/AIDS where Nelson Mandela was the keynote speaker. He'd become a dedicated global advocate and very actively pressing on, in spite of his age, in his mid-80s. Thankfully South Africa today does have a strong government-supported HIV/AIDS program, but at the time we were there and for some years after leaving, it was a struggle.

Q: Stacy, during the three years you were there in South Africa, did you have a chance to travel around South Africa? With the family?

RHODES: I was extremely fortunate to have both the opportunity to travel in-country for work as well as to travel with my family by car. For work, I often traveled by air as well as a vehicle to a number of USAID projects being implemented far from Pretoria. The USAID countries I had served in previously were smaller than South Africa and did not have comparable airlines and infrastructure. In South Africa, I often went to the large Johannesburg airport and flew on South African Airways 737s to make project visits to some of the more distant former homeland areas and townships in the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu Natal, and down in the Cape Town area. We had a lot of business in all three of those regions, especially the Cape Town area. The Bi-National Commission meetings were often in Cape Town. And there are some pretty rough, very poor township ‘slum areas’ surrounding the beautiful city of Cape Town – Guguletu and Khayelitsha in particular – where we had several major projects, especially in housing and urban development. We also had an extraordinary partnership with a remarkable NGO there, the Amy Biehl Foundation. Some of the project-related travel was shorter, by vehicle, like the frequent trips to the Johannesburg area and the huge Soweto township where we were doing a lot of HIV/AIDS work with NGOs. There were also field trips by vehicle to a number of very poor rural areas. Often it was for a ceremony or inauguration of a project. I remember a fascinating trip out to Limpopo in the northern part of the country to inaugurate one of the new primary schools USAID had financed.

There was quite a bit of travel with the family, also. We lived in Pretoria, in a very nice house in the old ‘white neighborhoods’ which had changed somewhat, but were not yet very integrated racially. The legal constraints were gone but the economic constraints remained. The extensive paved road system in South Africa made the country very accessible for family vacation trips and we often went out to the nearby Pilanesberg wildlife park, and several times went further out to Kruger National Park, near the Mozambique border. While most American and European tourists would stay in the high-end lodges just adjacent to the park areas, we could take advantage of living there and going to the office of the National Park Service to make reservation for a national park cabin inside the park! Very reasonable prices, and we could drive in the parks in our own vehicle during the day, and go on guided park drives later at night! The Afrikaners took outdoor life very seriously and had long-since established a large number of national parks with campgrounds and relatively strong systems to protect the wildlife in South Africa. While there are still some poaching issues, South Africa has done a very good job protecting wildlife, in comparison to many of the (often much poorer) neighboring countries. It’s just a stunning country to visit, and ‘going on safari’ was the favorite thing for our family to do together. Always looking for the “Big Five”. Of course South Africa also has beautiful beach areas, and some amazing mountains ranges, like the Drakensbergs, which it shares with Lesotho A beautiful area with hiking and other mountain sports. We were lucky; it was a great place to have a family and get outdoors.

Q: Who was with you in the family at that point?

RHODES: We had only dropped one member to college in the U.S. by then. Our oldest daughter was off for her first year at college in Virginia; but she would come ‘home’ to South Africa for holidays, and sometime bring her friends with her; so we’d go off to

Kruger or another game park with the whole group. Our younger daughter Maggie was a student at the excellent American International School Johannesburg (AISJ), and took the IB (international baccalaureate) program there; she and did very well and went off to the University of Virginia after graduating from AISJ. So we spent our last year there with just our son Max at AISJ. My wife Trish taught there, and was very successful. AISJ decided to establish a primary school branch up in Pretoria, and Trish was asked to become the founding director of the new school in Pretoria. A great place for the family, and it would have been good to stay on another year.

Q: I was going to ask why you didn't stay another year!

RHODES: That's a good question! A bit hard to explain. Actually, not very hard. I was "out-voted". By then, two of our daughters were thousands of miles away in college in the U.S., with the older about to go into her senior year. We had spent very little time with her during her first three years of college. So the girls teamed up and decided it was time for us to go home. I was basically 'out-voted' on staying a fourth year. 'Big picture', they were right, it was time. I was nearing the end of my Foreign Service career. I was at the top of my class and running out of 'time-in-class' anyway, with just a bit over a year left in the senior foreign service. While I would have enjoyed spending one final year in South Africa, I certainly don't regret coming back to be near our daughters in Virginia.

Q: How did you orchestrate that move?

RHODES: It wasn't totally easy, and the logistics of moving a family from continent-to-continent were always pretty complicated, and sometimes onerous. Fortunately my wife Trish is super well-organized and very practical, hard-working. And professionally, I was very well supported by the Africa bureau in USAID. The issue for me came down to whether I was going to stay on in USAID in Washington for another year after I came back, or whether I should leave the Foreign Service. With two kids in college and another coming up, retirement never entered my mind! There had just been a national election in the U.S., the election of 2000. I was very disappointed in the outcome, especially the manner in which it was determined by the Supreme Court, in a way that seemed pretty 'political' to me, and certainly not reflecting the popular vote. Wouldn't happen like that in South Africa! I previously had a chance to meet and work with Vice President Gore and his staff on the Bi-National Commission, and I was a fan and supporter of his, so it left me pretty upset that he won the popular vote but was deemed -- by the Court in effect -- to have lost the electoral vote. So I knew we were going to be dealing with a new administration, which I was not enthusiastic about. It would be another year of major changes at USAID in Washington, likely not all for the better. So I decided that it was a good time to leave the agency. I decided to leave the USG and take on a new phase of work in international development. I started to look for opportunities, mostly with NGOs whose work I was familiar with in South Africa or Guatemala or elsewhere. I wanted to move into a new set of challenges and type of career, outside government. So after almost 24 years in the agency, five very rich and interesting tours overseas, and some amazing experiences in Washington while working on Central America, I decided it was a good time to finish up my Foreign Service career and move to something new.

Q: Who replaced you?

RHODES: Dirk Dijkerman. He had been director in Kenya; a very capable guy. I believe he was at that time back in Washington, but was very interested in returning to Africa, where he had served previously. I had the chance to have him come out to South Africa for a few days; he was there for my wonderful farewell party. So we had some chance to overlap and I could take him around a bit. It was a pretty smooth transition. Things were by then going well in the mission and with the government. We had a very good Foreign Service National staff, very strong. Excellent strategic team leaders....

Q: Who were some of those?

RHODES: Glad you asked. Kind of a ‘dream team’ really, who I had the pleasure of working with. I had two very capable deputy directors in Henry Reynolds and Eileen Oldwine, and most of the other senior staff went on to become USAID mission directors. Patrick Fine was the team leader for education; he went on next to be deputy director in Senegal, and later mission director in Afghanistan. Beth Hogan was the superb team leader for our democracy and governance team, as she had been with me earlier in Guatemala. She wound up her career as Acting Assistant Administrator for Latin America! Ken Yamashita, the head of our Health and HIV/AIDS office, went on to serve as deputy mission director in Peru and then director in Kosovo, and finally USAID Director in Afghanistan, where he was elevated to the overall U.S. Coordinator for Economic Assistance, responsible for all U.S.G. assistance programs. Karen Freeman, the hardest working Program Officer I ever met, went on to be a mission director in both Zimbabwe and Kenya. Bill Brands headed the trade and business development office for us, later went on to be mission director in Honduras. Even our general counsels – we had Paul Weisenfeld when I first got there, who went on to be a mission director -- and he was succeeded by Karl Fickenscher, who similarly progressed after his time in South Africa. And how could I forget the wonderful Carleene Dei, who was the director of the RHUDO when I arrived, who went on to be mission director in Haiti, among other things. She was succeeded by an extremely creative, energetic urban development expert, Joel Kolker, who later left USAID for a very successful career in the World Bank. It was a great blessing to have the opportunity to “supervise” such an all-star team, complemented by a similarly dedicated and capable team of South Africans. My role seemed to be one of primarily making it possible for them to do their work and succeed; protect them from interference and distractions and support their initiatives. So notwithstanding the frequent suspicions and justifiable skepticism we faced from the worldly-wise South Africans, we were seen as helping them build new set of government institutions to serve those who had gone so long without. I was so fortunate to have a team that could succeed so well.

Looking back – what are the high points in terms of what you think the program’s successes were while you were there? Just a general continuation of programs? Were there new programs? Things you’re particularly proud of?

RHODES: Tough question. There were many. Certainly there was a lot of consolidation and “institutionalization” of the initiatives and programs built by my predecessors and the highly committed South African staff. We were standing on some big shoulders. The remarkable work of the Cap Dean years helped to expanding individual freedoms and opportunity, and build a truly democratic process, after decades of autocracy. Wow! Aaron Williams’ crew greatly advanced the work of those who were building new, transformative institutions that served all the people, not just the 15% whites. The process had come a long way. I would say in general what we did was to further build on and strengthen those new systems and institutions, move them forward with some big steps, and add significant additional capabilities. As you know, it’s a process. In particular, I remember well and have already mentioned the satisfaction I took in helping move forward the work of the Ministry of Justice, with Dullah Omar at the helm. He was an innovator in modernizing and delivering justice to all the people. The start-up and strengthening of the new public prosecutor’s office was also an important achievement.

In the public health area, we significantly advanced the delivery of basic services to one of the largest of the former homelands, creating models replicated in others, and faced the rapidly expanding but poorly known HIV/AIDS epidemic. Ken Yamashita was extraordinarily competent as a program manager and supervisor, as well as highly respected in the public health field. He worked closely with a strong implementing contractor, Management Sciences for Health (MSH), in strengthening basic health service delivery in the Eastern Cape. The gap between the health care available to the urban white population and the rural black population were worse than day and night. So it was critical to do a lot of capacity development and institution-building to dramatically improve services to the black population. I think that was very important achievement in South Africa. And while we failed to get the government involved them in addressing HIV/AIDS, we did take on the ‘new’ but rapidly expanding problem of HIV/AIDS in a number of ways notwithstanding. Ken and the public health team worked tirelessly to find other ways and means to do what we could in a very frustrating environment. At the least this effort was an important ‘pathfinder’ and forerunner of the subsequent enormous growth in the USAID program, as well as large programs by the Global Fund and other donors. So I salute all those USAID public health officers and their implementing partners who came after us, inheriting our solid beginnings, continuing to deal with the obstacles posed by the leadership until after Mbeki left the presidency. So we did make some early breakthroughs, providing something to build on. And much was built on it.

So I took a lot of pride both in the strengthening, expanding and “going-to-scale” in some already well-developed “inherited” programs, as well as in the new things that we added to the portfolio. And I certainly think we increased the level of trust and cooperation between our two governments, further building the credibility and impact of U.S. development assistance in South Africa. This was a long process, starting more than a decade earlier in the very tough times faced by Ambassadors Edward Perkins, William Swing and Princeton Lyman, along with their USAID directors Tim Bork, Dennis Barrett, Cap Dean and Aaron Williams. These are the people who built USAID South Africa, and standing on their shoulders was a humbling place to be. I am very grateful for the whole experience.

Q: This is John Pielemeier, with Stacy Rhodes. It is January 18th and this is our fifth and last interview. This will touch on Stacy's work post-USAID, after he retired from the Foreign Service at a fairly young age.

RHODES: Thanks John. And I still feel young some 15 years later! I had served almost a quarter-century in USAID and would have been happy to stay on a little bit longer...

Q: Twenty-four years with AID, plus more at Peace Corps.

Retirement from USAID

RHODES: Well, yes. I had served two years in Bolivia as a Peace Corps Volunteer before USAID, and then, much more recently, some five additional years as its Chief of Staff here in Washington. But for our family, 2001 was the right time to make the transition to 'life after USAID', which I was pleased to discover then actually exists, though I wasn't so sure about this at the time. I came home feeling a bit lost after leaving USAID and the USG, as it had been my life and career for so long. I was looking for a new role in a non-governmental organization, preferably one working in international development. I was familiar with quite a few of them through work over the years in USAID, with a significant number of NGOs having been very strong partners with the agency in carrying out effective programs overseas. But I was looking for something a little different.

Post-USAID Work with Non-governmental Organizations

And I wound up getting an interesting and generous offer from an NGO called the Institute for International Education (IIE). My father had spent his entire career in higher education as a university professor and a dean. And he was very involved in teaching and hosting foreign students, and in international education. He worked with the Africa-America Institute (AAI) council of graduate deans, travelling quite a lot in Africa looking for qualified students for scholarships to U.S. universities. So I took a hard look at IIE. They'd been responsible since the post-WWII period for implementing the Fulbright Scholarship exchange programs overseas. IIE also administered Humphrey Fellowship programs, which is a graduate scholarship program for rising students from developing countries. So I had met many of these scholarship holders and been involved in nominating and reviewing candidates for Humphrey fellowships overseas. IIE wanted to expand their modest role in international development training, and had obtained a major grant from USAID in Egypt to implement its huge participant training program. They wanted to expand on that, so they hired me as a new vice president for development training. It was an interesting position with a well-established NGO, and I worked there for about two years on building a new office for Global Development in IIE, increasing its involvement in higher education and training programs related to international development. In addition to building up the participant training programs for USAID in

Egypt, we received a substantial award from the Packard Foundation to do a leadership program for people involved in reproductive health in high-fertility rate countries like Nigeria, India, Philippines, Pakistan, all places where reproductive health issues were very sensitive and challenging.

But in the end, I had become so involved in my last USAID posting in South Africa, and so concerned about the still-growing HIV/AIDS pandemic, and its impact on development, that I was still very committed to working in that area if possible. And this opportunity presented itself, through our former USAID colleague, Ann Van Dusen. Ann had been one of USAID's premier public health and family planning experts in the HQ, and was someone for whom I had the greatest respect. She had left USAID just a few years before I did.

She was the director of the office of global health, right?

RHODES: Yes, and I'd always been so impressed by her consistent, serious, knowledgeable support of the field missions with large health and family planning programs, as we had in every one of my posts. Ann had left USAID a few years earlier and become the chief operating officer (COO) for Save the Children, which was planning to expand into addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic more extensively, especially as it was affecting children in Africa. Save the Children's health office had been working in reproductive health for young women and addressing the prevention of HIV infection, but wanted to expand their focus to help deal more intensively with the fast-growing number of new orphans in Africa resulting from AIDS-related deaths. Frankly, Save the Children ("Save") recognized this virtual "tsunami" of new orphans would have major development consequences, as the number of AIDS-related deaths per year around the world were reaching about three million, as I recall, with another 30 million people worldwide who were HIV-positive. And in Africa the prevalence and number of deaths were much higher than anywhere else, with several million new infections each year. While most deaths were of adults, the number of children being infected was growing through mother-to-child transmission. And the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) was skyrocketing.

While the OVC issue was beginning to be recognized, it was not yet being addressed in any systematic way. USAID had begun to develop a modest orphans and vulnerable children program within its HIV/AIDS Office, to complement the work on prevention, education, treatment and care. As you may recall, our new president, George W. Bush, did a somewhat surprising thing, and one of the very best things of his entire administration, by creating something called the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or "PEPFAR". And surprising to many of us, he was able to work with Congress to achieve very substantial funding of this new program. While the Clinton administration had previously worked hard to address HIV/AIDS within the executive branch agencies, and had raised awareness in Congress, President Bush's new PEPFAR was a quantum leap forward. To his everlasting credit, he was able to build a coalition of Republicans and Democrats to see and understand the critical need for very substantial financing to address the rapidly spreading pandemic. The primary focus was on Africa.

Ann van Dusen asked me if I would be able to develop a new office and OVC program in Save, to focus ‘like a laser’ on this problem of orphans and vulnerable children, as well as infected children. They had some fine technical people, real experts, already in Save, but needed someone with management experience and who’d been out in the field to develop and implement projects, with good familiarity with USAID and the U.S. government programs overseas. So she recruited me and I began work as Save’s new director for HIV/AIDS. It was for me a very exciting position to be in, and I took it on with energy and enthusiasm, though not a lot of expertise. And we moved forward to build Save’s capacity to prepare and carry out real ‘grass-roots’, village-level efforts to address the HIV/AIDS on kids. Save’s focus on OVC was primarily on community-based approaches to providing care and support and schooling in the village setting for orphans, as well as care for infected adults whose children were at high risk of becoming orphans. We also provided assistance to growing efforts on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), but the primary focus was to address the severe stigma and loss of support which accompanied being an “AIDS orphan.” Wherever possible we worked to keep these kids within their own village setting, going to school with their own cohort, and placed within a family of a local relative or close friend. To “mainstream” them, not to put them in orphanages, and try to assure as ‘normal’ a childhood as possible.

Our focus was on four countries where Save had been particularly active – Malawi, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Uganda. All these countries that had very high adult prevalence of HIV, and rapidly growing populations of orphans. We raised private funds in the U.S., and put together a number of proposals to USAID and PEPFAR, as well as some other donors, to carry out OVC programs in these countries. We had multiple, larger programs funded in all four of these countries, especially Malawi and Ethiopia. We also had a smaller program in some other countries, including Haiti; Haiti was the only country at that time eligible for PEPFAR funds outside of Africa. We had a tight-knit office in Washington, with a lot of strong technical people, with both Americans and Africans working in the office. And we had highly dedicated and knowledgeable staff working in Save offices in these countries, who did terrific work organizing the villages.

Q: Did you hire most of these people?

RHODES: Many of them had been working in Save’s health programs previously, so a fair number of my staff were already Save employees when I arrived. I did need to hire additional staff, both in DC and overseas, as we received some additional private funding and we were awarded several USAID grants. Of course I’d seen firsthand in South Africa what AIDS was doing to the entire country, and it was a much larger, more resilient country than those on which Save was focused. The epidemic was decimating school teachers, health workers and other key public workers who were critical to addressing development issues and specifically the very problems created by the epidemic. It was devastating these countries, and this was before there were affordable anti-retroviral drugs broadly available. There was a lot of hopelessness, as people getting HIV believed they had received a “death sentence”, and the pandemic was destroying families and even institutions in the most affected countries. Things are much better today for many

reasons, including some of those early efforts under the Clinton administration -- especially by Vice-President Gore -- to address the rising pandemic and get the prices of anti-retroviral drugs down to a level where developing countries could afford them. Then the Bush Administrations PEPFAR program ratcheted-up these efforts greatly, and made widespread care and treatment possible in Africa. Along with the new Global Fund for AIDS, the USG put a huge amount of resources into building the capacity of national health systems and institutions, getting the ARV drugs out to infected people. Save worked in something of a 'niche' effort, if you will, to reach the children and families most deeply affected, and I feel gratified to have played a role for three years in developing and expanding the attention and resources dedicated to them.

Q: Did you have challenges in this program not being a health specialist yourself?

RHODES: Yes, I did. One or two of the technical staff at Save didn't see me as sufficiently 'qualified' to lead the HIV/AIDS office. Indeed, in terms of technical expertise in the disease, and in the treatment area, they certainly had a valid point. But I wasn't hired to be a technical health expert, and in this position, as in my several managerial roles in USAID, I rapidly and gladly deferred to technical team leaders, whenever a greater level of expertise was needed. I think what Charlie MacCormack, the President of Save the Children at the time, felt was what that Save needed was somebody who could organize the effort, build and supervise a multi-faceted team, and expand the program through quality proposals to USAID and PEPFAR, as well as private donors. They needed an experienced team-builder and manager/supervisor, not an expert! But I did have to deal with a couple of people who questioned whether I had been the most appropriate choice. I think I overcame most of that during my three years there.

It was an interesting and very gratifying position to hold. As Charlie MacCormack used to say, "In the NGO world, everybody's a fund raiser." So I had to try to develop some new skills and make numerous presentations before small groups of "individuals of high net worth," as well as to foundations. We even raised some money from a socially conscious rock band, Pearl Jam, out in Seattle; I got to meet the band's drummer; it was a new world to me! (Laughter) But exciting, interesting and gratifying. After about three years, the office was operating well and we had increased Save the Children's involvement in this very global issue very significantly, in particular expanding its work in Malawi, Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique.

I learned a lot and felt I had accomplished quite a bit; I think it was truly valuable. Ann Van Dusen by that time had left Save, and a new person had come in as COO. A new supervisor was placed in charge of international operations, who was my new supervisor. We had some growing differences in priorities and our strategic approach, and over time it became clear to me that it was probably time to move on and for a new opportunity. Just by good fortune, or hopefully 'karma', one did come up just at the right time.

Millennium Challenge Corporation, Managing Director for Latin America

A former assistant administrator for Latin America at USAID, Fred Scheck, called me. He knew of my history in as a 'Latin Americanist' and told me that the new U.S.

government development assistance agency, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), was looking for a new Managing Director for Latin America. Establishing and funding the MCC was probably the second best accomplishment of President George W. Bush, after PEPFAR. Founded in 2003, it had developed some challenges to operating successfully as planned, something like an investment bank, more on a model closer to the multilateral development banks. It had a number of relatively complicated investment financing grant agreements, or “compacts”, already signed with “qualified” countries, but not being effectively implemented overseas. The MCC needed a new managing director for their Latin America office, which was quite active, having signed and established significant compacts with Nicaragua and Honduras, and was developing a large new compact for El Salvador, with possible compacts being studied for Bolivia and Colombia.

Q: These are compacts of \$100 million, \$200 million, something along those lines?

RHODES: Yes, in the early compacts, and larger in later cases, sometimes up to \$500 million, and in a few cases – Morocco and Tanzania – even more. The MCC was pretty well-funded by its initial Congressional appropriation. But it had tied up very large amounts of assistance funds over the five-year periods provided for implementation, which was where the early problems arose. The one we were working on when I first went to MCC in 2006 was worth between \$400 and \$500 million; quite large. But one of the useful differences between the MCC and USAID was that MCC had five-year authority for their appropriations, and was not constrained by the same annual fiscal year obligation requirements that USAID operates under, every year. So MCC had developed a number of large compacts which were not disbursing, that is, the activities they provided funds for were not being implemented, and payments to implementers or contractors were not being made. Big inputs with small outputs in the early years; the press and Congress were not impressed with the meager results being reported, and MCC began looking for new ways to implement, and new staff with actual overseas project implementation experience. As you may remember, the whole idea was to do something on a different model than USAID. A more “private-sector focused approach” that would not require large “missions” of American staff overseas, and an approach focused on fewer countries that had a record of proven progress on MCC policy standards to meet eligibility for assistance. Also the MCC was determined to assure a greater degree of “country ownership” of the programs, and a much greater role in implementing them. The biggest problems seemed to be in this latter process, with the host government carrying out effective and transparent international procurements to obtain good contractors, and finding effective ways to implement program activities, so that the funds could be readily disbursed and reliably accounted for. Big sticking point. This part of the MCC’s operations has since been greatly improved upon, but which continues to be a bit of a thicket. Perhaps one of the most interesting and impressive things about the MCC was the policy criteria and selection process for determining country eligibility. From one perspective, even perhaps from USAID’s point of view, it was a bit of ‘cherry-picking’ the ‘easy’ countries to work with, the ones which had already reformed their policy regimes in a more sophisticated or advanced manner and illustrated commitment to move forward. But the MCC’s view was that by requiring policy changes first, and meeting related eligibility criteria, you were not only more likely to get a return on your

investment, but you were creating a pretty powerful incentive for developing countries to engage in policy reforms. The requirement was that the policy changes continued to be positive in order to remain eligible for these very large grants, which could be used for major infrastructure programs. The MCC had three overall policy areas that were measured, using ‘neutral data’, i.e., not from U.S. sources but from international organizations and NGOs, etc.

Q: Accounting firms?

RHODES: More like the multilateral development banks or U.N. organizations, such as the World Bank, the IMF, etc. The first ‘basket’ of policies was then termed “Governing Justly,” which contained criteria relating to political freedoms, civil liberties, rule of law, etc. Freedom House and other non-USG measures were used. Then there was “Investing in People,” essentially based on published public health and education measures; the data were mostly from the U.N., WHO, and the World Bank Institute, and included things like government spending on primary education as a percentage of the budget, retention rates of primary schools, immunization rates, etc. The final basket area was “Economic Freedoms,” and had to do with macroeconomic policies, the openness of trade, the number of days it takes to start a new business in the country, etc. By far the most important policy in that area was in the control of corruption, and anti-corruption efforts. Much of the data on this came from Transparency International and the World Bank Institute which as I recall combined the data of several organizations which studied the impacts of corruption on development. A qualifying score in this policy area was a “*sine qua non*” for MCC eligibility. There were about five or six criteria in each of these three policy baskets, so about 16-18 indicators that countries had to address and to meet minimum standards in order to be considered eligible for MCC grants.

Once a country was ruled “eligible” as a result of its policy scores and a review by the MCC Board, chaired by the Secretary of State, it was up to that country to submit a ‘compact proposal’ to the MCC. This was the whole idea of “country ownership”, as opposed to a U.S. government agency basically designing a project they thought was good for the recipient country. This is an area where MCC would draw a major contrast with what they characterized as USAID’s methodology. And while there was a difference in those processes of project design, it was of course more of a ‘shades of grey’ issue rather than a true ‘black vs. white’ contrast. The MCC-eligible country would establish a compact development team and prepare a proposal for review by the ‘parallel’ MCC transaction team in Washington. The proposal virtually always includes large infrastructure construction projects of one type or another, roads, bridges, irrigation systems, sometimes port or airports, or energy-generation installations. MCC provides all grant funds, and large scale grant funding for infrastructure projects is almost impossible to obtain from other donors, and never from the multilateral banks. The compact proposals had to illustrate a significant rate of return, double-figures, to be eligible for funding, confirmed by MCC economists. The MCC also differentiated itself from USAID’s approach by insisting on proof that the compacts would result in real economic growth first, and a resultant impact on poverty second. There was flexibility, but MCC became very dependent on its economists for the investment reviews. But there are also

thorough environmental and social impact evaluations of compact proposals by MCC staff, before compacts are approved by MCC for review by the Board.

Once an eligible country submitted their initial proposal, the country and MCC team would go over it in detail and discuss it thoroughly, sometimes including visit to the country to better understand the activities being propose. Often the country would propose some, uh, questionable ideas. I remember the one from Bolivia. I was anxious to work on it since I'd spent so much time in Bolivia years earlier. But in addition to a major road which made some good sense, they were proposing a small farmer credit system with highly subsidized interest rates for certain indigenous farmers. While these were exactly the people I had lived and worked with some five decades earlier in the Peace Corps, I hadn't seen ideas like that proposed for donor funding for almost as many decades. MCC simply can't provide grant funds for programs which are inherently unsustainable, and we had long discussions on how the famer credit system might be made sustainable over the long run, without greater cost-recovery. But the idea of 'country ownership' was very powerful, and the Bolivians were uncompromising on the need for highly subsidized interest rates, so after a lot of negotiation back and forth we had to let them know that MCC couldn't fund that part of their proposal.

The time I spent in MCC was an interesting and productive experience. The staff are very committed and highly professional, very bright and dedicated. I do think the MCC is a good balance and valuable supplement to our USAID programs, which does provide incentives for policy reforms in countries more 'ready' and capable of taking such steps. USAID focuses more directly on addressing the impacts of deep poverty, without a 'eligibility' prequalification process. And it does not require a double-digit economic "rate of return" on its projects. USAID is also much larger in the number of recipient countries, and does not limit its assistance to countries with a set of successful policy reforms. The effort is more focused on the causes of poverty and how to address them. And USAID works in some of the least capable countries in terms of human resources, with the weak governmental institutions; these would not be able to qualify for MCC funds for years, even decades. But assistance is needed both on humanitarian grounds, and to help build the human resource base and strengthen the institutions needed. While these countries would never qualify for an MCC compact today, they hopefully can do so in the future. USAID staff do most of the analysis, most of the design work on new programs, and carries out the procurement processes, moving thing along. The U.S. cannot limit its development assistance to countries that can meet MCC criteria, and the MCC is clearly focused on a much narrower, shorter list of countries moving forward. And these countries do deserve special attention, as they have provably made strong efforts to meet the needs of their people and are the best "candidates for graduation" from assistance in the near to medium term. I think the earliest compacts were with more highly regarded developing countries like Ghana, Tanzania, Morocco, El Salvador, Mozambique, the Philippines, Indonesia, Namibia etc., countries which have made a lot of development progress. Of course some who are on a good path when approved for a compact do 'backslide', e.g., Nicaragua, Honduras, the Philippines, and lose their eligibility for follow-on compacts. The MCC is a much smaller agency than USAID and has staff of fewer than 300, ninety percent of whom are in Washington. There are small

MCC offices in countries where a compact has been approved and is being implemented. They usually consist of two or three U.S. direct hire staff plus several local staff, who work to guide and support the host country's implementation unit staff, usually referred to as an "MCA" (for "Millennium Challenge Account"). The MCA is the implementation office, with a director and program, technical and administrative staff responsible for procurement of contractors and oversight of the different components of the compact. Some have noted the similarity of the MCA with the World Banks' "Project Units."

Q: Did you find yourself working with USAID missions in Latin America as you developed these programs, or were they stand-alone designs with the host government?

RHODES: At the outset, in 2003-04, MCC had set itself apart as the "non-USAID." They were going to do things differently and better, more 'business-like'. Many of the MCC's early leaders investment bankers, and most of us "USAID-types" felt that there was a certain amount of investment bankers' arrogance in their efforts, with the MCC's intentional avoidance of any experience or advice USAID might be able to provide. In the early days, the MCC put together very impressive and detailed compact agreements, which looked and read a lot like major bank loan agreements, though they were for grants to developing country governments. When I first went into the MCC HQ office, I looked on the walls, and instead of seeing pictures of projects being implemented, as you would at USAID offices, there were very classy framed copies of the investment transaction agreements that had been signed, along with very pens used by the people who had signed them. Really! It was a bit bizarre to me. I would never had been hired by MCC and its CEO from Wall Street in the early days. But because these complicated agreements didn't turn out to be 'self-executing' as perhaps assumed and implementation was extremely slow, MCC realized it really did need people who had worked in developing countries before, with experience implementing programs and projects; that was what my extensive USAID background had to offer. And the MCC was changing over time, by 2005-06, and the second round of leadership was much more pragmatic, and determined to address the bottlenecks, and get the compacts moving forward; this was critical to future Congressional support and appropriations. It was shifting in a positive direction.

So to respond more directly, after I started as MCC's Managing Director for Latin America, we were in touch quite a lot – informally and formally – with the USAID missions in the countries where we were developing or were already working to implement MCC compacts. I knew personally many of the leaders of USAID country missions and always received a welcoming reception and a lot of useful information on the government and private sector leaders, issues to be aware of, reviews of the country's MCC proposals, etc. Very professional and helpful. But there was always some reasonable concern in the USAID missions that if a country was selected as an MCC compact recipient for large scale programs, this would result in a significant budget reduction by USAID from the development assistance funds allotted for that country. The public statements by both MCC and USAID did not support this fear, to the contrary, and in theory MCC compact funds were intended to be *in addition* to any existing U.S. assistance funds, as it was viewed both as an incentive and a 'reward' for good policy

performance. Did it actually work that way? Probably not entirely, and there was no evidence of anything approaching dollar-for-dollar reductions. But USAID country budget levels were changed annually in any case, often declining over the years, depending on annual appropriations by Congress, the latest set of 'high priorities', etc. But I would say it is highly likely that USAID and State's "budgeteers" -- who were setting country levels annually based on global strategic priorities -- took into account the fact that a country had recently received an MCC compact. Hard to tell the extent to which this was true, especially in Latin America, as USAID's country budgets were coming down annually in any case. The major crises of the '90s had passed and a lot of the countries that had had civil wars and large post-peace accord programs were having their budgets reduced in any case. El Salvador is a classic case, as they moved forward quickly on a high quality compact proposal to MCC while their USAID budget was significantly declining, apart from MCC considerations. Fortunately they obtained a large MCC compact!

The MCC approach to development assistance, and the new type of policy-based compact funding provided, was a very good addition to USG assistance programs. I am glad that I had the chance to work there and make a contribution to its strengthening as a U.S. foreign assistance agency. I would not support any effort to "merge" the two agencies as I think the confusion would be great, there would be a net loss of USG assistance funds, and the policy incentives created by the MCC's new approach would disappear. I am pleased to say that the MCC went on to recruit more "graduates" of USAID, both in technical areas and as senior managers. I was probably one of the earlier higher-level USAID managers brought in to be senior managers and supervisors, but far from the last. Indeed, USAID's Patrick Fine who I mentioned was the team leader for education in South Africa and subsequently a mission director, went on to serve in MCC as its Vice-President for Compact Operations, well after I had left. I think there has been a very beneficial linkage between the two agencies, as well as some generally 'healthy competition'. The MCC has progressed greatly since its earliest years, and while there are still difficulties in getting things implemented effectively with MCC's local business model, the implementation performance and disbursement rates have improved significantly over time, perhaps in significant part because inputs from experienced USAID officers coming in at senior levels.

Q: Were you reporting to an MCC chief operating officer, or did you have contact with the political appointee who was the director?

RHODES: Both, actually. Early on I reported directly to a high-level political appointee named John Hewko, who was Vice-President for Compact Development. And indeed he had been an investment banker, but in Latin America! Very smart, knowledgeable, with rigorous standards, and not always easy to deal with. But I respected him and he also respected what I could bring to the role, even though our political party orientations were clearly different. He was the boss and I worked hard and effectively with him. The second CEO of the MCC was a very senior political appointee named John Danilovich, who had been President Bush's ambassador to Costa Rica first, and then to Brazil. Of course as MCC's CEO, he had wide-ranging global responsibilities, but fortunately for me he still was especially interested in Latin America and paid a lot of attention to the

compacts my office was working on. So he and I developed a pretty close working relationship. He would even call me up with his questions and concerns – the MCC was a smaller operation than USAID of course! I remember when he called me just before leaving to Nicaragua where he was scheduled to meet the newly-elected president, Daniel Ortega -- who of course had been president years earlier in the 80s, after the success of the Sandinista revolution. While certainly a ‘Bush Republican’, Danilovich was very good in dealing with Ortega. He has an impressive “bearing” and was firm on the MCC not being willing to tolerate government interference, especially of a political nature. So the MCC continued to implement the strong compact program for a lengthy period during Ortega’s presidency. Nevertheless, unfortunately things continued to “go south” in Nicaragua, and the country lost its policy eligibility for continued MCC support, failing on corruption and several governance indicators, so we had to close the compact early. But I was a fan of Danilovich’s leadership of the MCC; he was a strong leader in his ‘presence’ and presentation, and did well representing the agency on Capitol Hill. While he may not have fully known or understood international development and MCC’s procedures, he used his extensive business experience and impressive representational skills to the benefit of the agency. He would ‘stick to the script’ and supported his staff, honoring their inputs to his actions on behalf of the agency.

I didn’t expect to go into the Bush administration after I left the Foreign Service in 2001, but the opportunity got me back into Latin American affairs, in a substantive development role. I had good opportunities to work with the Bolivian team, the Salvadoran team, a high level group from Colombia, and the MCC compact implementers in Nicaragua and Honduras. It was very interesting and rewarding work, and I believe the MCC continues to be a very worthwhile component of the overall American foreign assistance effort. Hopefully it will remain so into the future.

Q: So by then you’ve completed three year there?

RHODES: Yes! I guess my professional career after USAID turned out to be quite similar in some ways to service in the Foreign Service! Interesting pace. Three or four years in each assignment over the decades in the Foreign Service, and a remarkably similar pattern for the decade following! My wife would sometimes say, “Isn’t it time to settle down?” But now came the Presidential election of 2008. I was excited by and strongly supported the ‘insurgent campaign’ of Senator Barack Obama, and while I wasn’t an important part of the campaign, I volunteered to work in it, along with a close friend and former colleague who did take on a major role, one Aaron Williams. As you know, as well as being my old close friend, Aaron is a tall, thin, handsome African-American man from the south side of Chicago! Hmmmm....

Q: A striking resemblance!

RHODES: (Laughter) Exactly. After Obama’s victory over John McCain in the 2008 election, Aaron was asked to be on the President-elect’s transition team. Aaron worked with Gayle Smith, the current USAID administrator, and several others policy people on a review of the USG’s “development agencies”, including USAID, the MCC and Peace

Corps. So, after about 6-7 months into his first year, President Obama asked Aaron to be the new director of Peace Corps. Aron was a “returned volunteer” or “RPCV from the Dominican Republic, having served there virtually simultaneously with my service in Bolivia, in the late 60s. And he was most happy to be so honored by the President, and to be engaged in the new Obama Administration. He called me and asked if I’d be willing to come into Peace Corps with him. I said, “Wow, that sounds really great; could I possibly be the head of the Latin American bureau?” He said, “No, I have a bigger job in mind, if that’s OK.” And he asked if I’d be his Chief of Staff at Peace Corps! So in September of 2009...

Q: How long did it take you to say “Yes” to this?

Peace Corps, Chief of Staff

RHODES: Oh, about 3 seconds. (Laughter) You know Peace Corps – it’s like that ‘first love syndrome’, where you just never forget the experience, and then to have presented to me the opportunity, some 40 years later, to come back to where I started my career in international development; it was frankly a thrilling prospect. I was very excited at the prospect of working with Aaron again, which I had done at USAID both out in the field in Haiti and then again in the Latin America bureau later in the ‘90s, then succeeding him in South Africa. It was just a great moment for me. He started as director of Peace Corps after being confirmed by the Senate in August 2009. I followed in September. Off we went on that exciting journey, the last five years of my international development career.

Q: What does the chief of staff do for Peace Corps?

RHODES: The chief of staff position at Peace Corps was a very high-level but not initially a clearly-defined job. When I started, there was not a formal description of duties that I could find. I suspect that may also be true at other federal agencies, though I may be wrong. So I never saw one. But it is a key, high level position at Peace Corps as elsewhere, and the tradition in the recent past had been a very powerful, encompassing role, involved in virtually everything. Kind of the “COO-plus. But whatever the ‘formal’ job description says, the chief of staff almost anywhere is going to be the “eyes and ears”, and even the ‘nose’ of the agency’s head. Call it the “troubleshooter-in-chief”, the “right hand”, etc. It is a position of great trust and confidence, which requires discretion, sound judgment, and absolute loyalty to the head of the agency. You are the sounding board for his or her thoughts, ideas, plans, and often charged with ‘testing them out’ in full confidence. You’re generally charged with keeping your finger on the pulse of the agency, especially the morale and productivity of staff, and ‘smelling trouble-brewing’, whether between a supervisor and their staff, between managers, etc. You need to establish close working relationships with all senior managers/staff, but also be readily available to hear out more junior staff, and know their concerns up and down the line. Find out and know what is going on throughout -- and why -- and do something about any rising issues early-on! Keep ‘crap’ out of the Director’s Office. In some respects you might call it chief counselor and advisor, chief problem-solver and deal-maker, as well as chief protector of the agency’s chief! In addition to these functions, of course you also do

whatever else the head of the agency wants you to do! You're his or her main person, so you get a lot of stuff coming in to you from all sides, and you need to sort out what you and others can resolve, and what needs to go up for the Director's review/decision.

The Peace Corps was a very interesting and enjoyable place to work. But it had developed a 'culture' where the "COS" was highly operational and a very powerful manager/supervisor in the recent past administrations. At the beginning, I took on a huge amount of supervisory and management roles, across the agency. I was really stretching myself too thin in trying to stay on top of everything, and frankly felt that this over-centralization of responsibilities was not optimal. So after discussions with Director Aaron Williams and the new Deputy Director, we decided to "de-concentrate" the Chief of Staff's role and divide up some former COS responsibilities with the Deputy and the new Associate Director for Global Operations, also an experienced high-level political appointee. The new deputy Carrie Hessler-Radelet came in about 9-10 months after Aaron and I arrived. As you know, she is highly experienced overseas and as a senior manager, and indeed is the current director of Peace Corps. Aaron and Carrie and I then restructured the management and supervision of Peace Corps' offices, dividing the roles more functionally, with Carrie and I each supervising about half of the offices. Carrie took over the primary oversight of overseas operations, and I covered most of the support HQ-based offices like human resources, chief information officer, chief financial officer, and a number of smaller offices. But we agreed to always keep each other fully informed and to meet formally weekly, in addition to frequent *ad hoc* meetings, as necessary or desired. It was a healthy management partnership and better sharing of roles. I was sorry to take a reduced role in overseas operations, given my past experience and high interest. But Carrie and Aaron committed to share all information and key decisions with me, which they did, and I told Aaron I'd be happy to divide it up however he thought best.

In our first year, we started a lot of new things. We had inherited a proud and strong agency, and there was not a need for great structural change or a large scale "re-org." It was a very exciting time with a new, service-oriented Administration, and we felt it was kind of a 'new beginning' for Peace Corps. The Obama administration wanted a "bigger, bolder, better" Peace Corps, and had promised to put significant new resources into it. The top priority was to see Peace Corps grow in the numbers of volunteers serving overseas and the number of countries in which volunteers served. Like the President, we were "fired up and ready to go"! And the President – through OMB – did request a significant budget increase for Peace Corps in his first FY10 Budget. Indeed, we ultimately received an even larger appropriation than he had requested, thanks to the cadre of RPCVs in Congress and their close colleagues on the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. Pretty unusual.

Starting at Peace Corps with Aaron, as you know, we both had lengthy USAID backgrounds; the staff knew all about that. But we were both RPCVs, as was Carrie, and we all had pretty good reputations in "the development community." But I think there was still some concern within Peace Corps that we might be inclined to "turn Peace Corps into a junior USAID", or a *de facto* 'USAID contractor'. As you know, Peace Corps has treasured, protected, and defended its independence from the early days, and

especially during the Nixon years. Even at its inception a number of JFK's top advisors were trying to locate Peace Corps within USAID or the State Department, but this was fought off by our founding director Sargent Shriver, with the critical support of Vice-President Lyndon Johnson. And it has successfully fought off other 'consolidation' efforts a number of times since. Often an issue with State, but one in which successive Secretaries have recognized in writing its unusual degree of autonomy. So Peace Corps is always sensitive to any 'risks' to its independence. So when Aaron and I first came in, we were careful to emphasize our responsibility to honor and protect that independence, and assured all that its traditions and 'culture' would not just be respected, but fiercely defended during our tenure. Frankly, it's kind of amazing that a small agency like Peace Corps has been able to survive as such, as a wholly independent agency. Though while it has never been directed or 'reorganized' to work under the heads of State or USAID, under the Nixon-Ford Administration it was temporarily grouped with other volunteer agencies (like VISTA) called ACTION. But since ACTION was disbanded, it has not been 'under' any other agency, though it does coordinate closely with State, and Peace Corps country directors fall under the Ambassadors' broad authorities overseas, serving as members of the Embassy's 'country team.' Indeed for security reasons, there is an increasing close link with State Department, especially with Diplomatic Security. So in some ways there is a closer inter-agency relationship out in the field than in Washington!

But under the George W. Bush Administration, the Peace Corps had been not only independent, but had become quite insular. We felt that there was something to be gained for Peace Corps' effectiveness on the ground by turning towards more formal working partnerships with other organizations, especially including other U.S. government agencies. We energetically undertook to generate a partnership initiative to collaborate more closely with USAID, the MCC, the CDC and other agencies operating at the developing country level, and with all these we found common ground on which to work jointly, for significant added-value to both parties' program achievements.

We went on to establish a new director for partnerships in Peace Corps, with a small office responsible for generating and supporting new partnership arrangements, in close collaboration with our regional directors, who oversee country operations. Inputs from overseas posts made it clear that there were already quite a few partnerships in existence, especially with NGOs, established on an *ad hoc* basis and working well. So to encourage and advance that trend, we worked with the head offices of a number of NGOs with whom we shared activities in the field, including Save the Children, CHF International, CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and others. And we identified a number of other NGOs in the U.S. who were highly interested in establishing new mutually beneficial working relationships in the field. We built on existing partnerships and moved forward enthusiastically on new ones. In retrospect, it was a complex process to assure real added-value to both parties on the ground, and there was a mixed record of success and failure. But I feel that overall, it significantly advanced Peace Corps' and NGO objectives.

At the same time Peace Corps was undertaking efforts to grow the number of volunteers and establish new partnerships, the Obama administration initiated what it termed the "whole-of-government" approach to international development, a USG-wide "all-in"

approach to our foreign assistance efforts. The NSC staff undertook to develop and elaborate what this meant through a series of discussions with key agencies, chaired by Gayle Smith, currently the Administrator of USAID. The idea of working more closely together with other agencies overseas in development assistance coincided with our partnership initiative and we developed very close working relationships with USAID on several presidential whole-of-government efforts. Amongst the USG agencies that made the most sense to work still more closely with was PEPFAR, with which we had an existing large-scale partnership. PEPFAR had been supporting and expanding the HIV/AIDS work by Peace Corps Volunteers, primarily in education and prevention. PEPFAR funds were used to train and support volunteers in this field, including all volunteers assigned to African countries. PEPFAR greatly valued the effectiveness of volunteers working at the village level, and most Africa volunteers who were teachers or had another 'primary job' also worked in HIV/AIDS prevention and education as a 'secondary project. This partnership expanded through my five years with Peace Corps, with PEPFAR's increasing confidence in the impact of our work.

Of course we felt like the 'most natural partner agency' for Peace Corps would be USAID, and our past experience there proved quite helpful in moving that prospect forward. Informally, of course, Peace Corps and USAID had been partners for many years in numerous countries where both existed. You recall that when Aaron and I were with USAID in Haiti in the early 1980s, we helped bring the first Peace Corps volunteers to Haiti, to work as forestry volunteers assigned to CARE and PADF (Pan-American Development Foundation), the primary USAID Agroforestry Project implementers. And when I was Deputy Director of USAID in Nepal, the Winrock organization was the major USAID agricultural contractor, and they worked very closely with Peace Corps' agricultural volunteers in the field carrying out trials of new rice varieties for hillside farmers. Similarly Aaron had worked in other countries to bring together the work of USAID with the local Peace Corps programs, for mutual benefit. So we relished the prospect of building a larger and more formal working relationship, which was perfectly suited to the President's new "whole-of-government" strategy. Our new partnership with USAID really took off with the new "Feed the Future" initiative. Feed the Future was dedicated to enhancing food security in poor and 'fragile' developing countries, by increasing local agricultural production, improving natural resource management, and expanding nutrition education. Given Peace Corps' unique asset of having highly committed, educated and energetic "change agents" living and working out in the "last mile," for two years at a time, we had a lot to bring to the table to combine with USAID's superior technical expertise and funding capabilities. So we developed a very large and productive partnership with USAID on Feed the Future through which we received significant funding and technical expertise from USAID. This partnership not only significantly increased the number of Peace Corps volunteers in the field working in agriculture and rural development, but also greatly strengthened the internal technical 'backstopping' capabilities of Peace Corps staff in Washington and overseas, and made a real impact in improving the resilience of the countries in which we worked together. Agriculture had been a Peace Corps program area which had atrophied over the years, and we were down to a very modest number of volunteers working in the sector prior to Feed the Future, but this partnership with USAID significantly expanded both the number

of volunteers in agriculture and natural resource conservation, and enormously enhanced the quality of our training materials and HQ capacity.

So the partnerships with PEPFAR and USAID were by far our largest and most impactful of those with other USG agencies. We also developed a new partnership with CDC (Centers for Disease Control), as well as USAID, in carrying out the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). In this case we didn't receive funding from USAID or CDC, but expanded our collaboration with both out in the field, and received significant technical expertise from both agencies in upgrading the training of volunteers working in anti-malaria efforts in Africa. Very productive and useful partnerships. And in the latter part of the Obama years, as part of the "whole-of-government" effort in international development, First Lady Michelle Obama's office started an initiative called "Let Girls Learn," which has become a very big USG effort overseas. Because of Peace Corps' long-standing commitment to girls' education and leadership training programs around the world, Peace Corps was asked by the First Lady's Office to take the lead role amongst USG agencies in implementing "Let Girls Learn". We worked very closely with USAID, the Department of Education and other agencies to push this initiative forward.

Q: What were some of the less happy elements of your work? What were some of the more difficult challenges you and Aaron had to face?

RHODES: They were a number of those! Certainly wasn't a bed of roses during my time in Peace Corps. Of course it could never be easy to manage an agency whose true success depends on successfully overseeing about 8000 young Americans volunteers – who are not employees of the USG -- spread all around the world in 65 or 70 developing countries. The 'chain-of-command' issues were very different than they had been with USAID. Not a typical 'supervisory' relationship. Lots more "care and feeding," to use a tired and frankly poor metaphor. But volunteers were mostly young, always energetic, naturally adventurous and often 'on the move'. They could also quit at any time, essentially without penalty, and naturally did not respond well to 'hierarchy'. Our country directors faced many of these challenges daily, and where more serious issues or problems developed, I was very frequently involved in dealing with them. In addition, many staff in Peace Corps HQ were young, recently-returned volunteers, and the work-place 'culture' in-house was not hierarchical either. I was pretty comfortable working in and with this culture, but some managers felt the frustration of a relatively "flat" organization much more strongly, where virtually everyone got their say, and the need to consult all interested parties, prior to making a decision at any level, was mandatory.

But beyond internal management challenges, I suppose the budget situation was a perennial problem, usually a big one. We'd been mandated by President Obama to grow Peace Corps from the outset. And that first FY10 budget allowed us to move forward apace with a "bigger, better, bolder" objective. In Congress, our first budget was approved at a record-breaking \$400 million. While this is quite modest compared to the budgets of other agencies, and roughly equal to the annual costs of all the U.S. military bands, it did make it possible for us to grow as we headed to 2011, the 50th anniversary year of Peace Corps. We were shooting to get up to 10,000 volunteers overseas by that

time, to comply with the provision of the Peace Corps Act, which states that “it is the policy of the United States to maintain at least 10,000 volunteers overseas, subject to the availability of funds”. In reality, Peace Corps had not had 10,000 volunteers out in the field since 1970! So that was our first goal. But the number of Peace Corps volunteers in a given year has been determined largely by Peace Corps’ annual appropriation from the year prior. So while we got started on the road to reaching the 10,000 mandated statutory minimum, our progress was brought to a screeching halt by the Congressional mid-term elections of November 2010. The Republican Party took control of the House of Representatives in 2011, led by the “Tea Party” uprising, which uncompromisingly opposed any Obama initiative. The rising, record financial support we received in that first FY10 appropriation proceeded to disappear. We did get the number of volunteers overseas over 9000 by the end of FY ’11-- for the first time since 1970 – and over my time at Peace Corps we were able to establish or re-establish country programs in Indonesia, Sierra Leone, Nepal, Kosovo, East Timor and most recently Burma. And a new agreement has just recently been signed with Vietnam! But starting in FY11 we began to be hit a series of annual budget reductions, or at best a “straight-lining” of the prior year’s budget level through a “continuing resolution”. This was very discouraging.

So there went the “bigger” part of “bigger, bolder better”. But you may remember it got worse over time, with not only budget reductions, but at times no budget at all, along with the rest of the USG. On at least two occasions the Republican-controlled Congress simply failed to agree even on a continuing resolution before the end of the FY, and let the budgets of all agencies lapse altogether, causing an actual shutdown of the federal government. Amazing, the irresponsibility of that. So when I was Chief-of Staff I spent an inordinate amount of time working with others to figure out how to deal with real government shutdowns, sending all so-called “non-essential” staff home without salaries. Not a pretty picture. We tried to protect the programs overseas by heavily reducing the staff and costs at HQ while qualifying all overseas staff and volunteers as “essential” personnel. And we managed to find ways to leave the volunteers in place and largely unaffected; clearly it would have made no sense to bring them home because that would have cost far more tax dollars than leaving them in place. So the work went on overseas, but without much support or responsiveness from the HQ. These were bad times.

Q: So you succeeded in keeping them in place?

RHODES: Yes. We got through the shutdowns without too much damage to the programs in the field, but we began to shrink again. While we achieved a bit over 9000 volunteers in 2011, in 2012 it dropped to the low 8000s, and on down to the 7000s in 2013 and 2014. I think last year it was in the upper 6000s, but not sure exactly. But I think the shutdowns were the worst thing I had to go through as a senior leader in Peace Corps, except for the several occasions I had to deal with the deaths of individual volunteers out in the field.

Q: Remind us how long that shutdown was?

RHODES: I don't remember exactly but think the longest period lasted at least two weeks, possibly longer. Two weeks may not seem that long in retrospect, but when you're being 'let go' from your job for an indefinite period, not being paid, and worse not knowing whether or when you'll go back. And not knowing whether you would ever be reimbursed for the time you were 'laid off'....The staff was really upset. These were dark days, and we did this twice under budget shutdowns that resulted from the House Republican caucus being unable to reach an agreement to do something so basic as keeping the doors of the national government open. It was difficult, distressing, and certainly set us back; one of the hardest things I ever had to deal with.

The hardest thing I had to do was much more individual in nature, rather than a managerial responsibility. I won't dwell on this, but with 7000-8000 volunteers spread around 65-70 developing countries, you're going to have problems with accidents, diseases, assaults, et cetera. As much as we try to assure the safety of the volunteers, and indeed put volunteer safety as our highest priority, you can't eliminate risks out in the real world. Peace Corps' mission is not and cannot be highly risk-averse. As much as you work to reduce the risks, and train volunteers to be as safe as they can be, things do happen. So in addition to a number of 'medical evacuations' to bring volunteers back to the U.S. for advanced medical treatment, we did experience 2 or 3 volunteer deaths each year I was there. There was one year with four or five due to a major vehicle accident, so it may have averaged three volunteer deaths a year, out of the 7000 or 8000 volunteers out there. So by far the most difficult job I had was to receive the calls from posts overseas or from our medical staff regarding a volunteer death, and then on a number of occasions, to inform the parents, discuss arrangements with family members, attend their services, speak on behalf of the agency, present the flag representing the volunteers service to the nation, etc. The director played a key role in each case, whenever he or she was available. When they were not, or when I was Acting Director, I handled it. It was probably the most difficult thing I've ever had to do.

Q: I think there were press reports of people raising issues about whether female volunteers were being properly protected in overseas assignments, even allegations that Peace Corps wasn't reporting sexual harassment or assaults. Were you involved in that? What was the story there?

RHODES: I was involved in this issue, along with the rest of the senior management team, the regional offices, the security office, the health services office and the general counsel. I didn't have a major role in this issue, as the country directors and overseas staff were the 'first responders', while in Washington, the offices that directly backstop the field missions, the security staff, the legal and in particular the medical services staff were primary in responding to and addressing sexual assaults which occurred. It was a difficult but a priority issue for us, as we were continuously working to enhance the safety of volunteers, especially females who now constitute over 60 percent of volunteers. They are definitely more likely to be harassed and assaulted than male volunteers. We have been collecting and analyzing statistics on sexual assaults from all overseas posts, for a long time. And over time, Peace Corps has progressively developed a much better volunteer security data collection and analysis capability than in earlier

times, so it's hard to compare today's statistics with those reported some years ago, and determine the extent of an increase, assuming there has been one. And there is no question but that volunteers have become more willing to report these days than in the past, which is certainly a good thing, but also makes comparisons tricky. So I can't say for sure from available statistics, as extensive as they are, that there has been a major increase in the incidence of sexual assaults, or the extent of it. But we have always taken the issues raised very seriously, and undoubtedly paid even more attention to them in the wake of widespread media coverage, working very hard to be responsive and to address the issues, in order to increase the security of all volunteers, particularly females. It was clear from the stats that there are certain countries where sexual assault risks, and other serious crimes, are greater than in others, and Peace Corps was always active in monitoring and addressing those statistics with measures taken locally, at post, by changing policies on volunteer travel in-country, creating 'no-go areas' and curfews, etc. We had done this with respect to crime risks more broadly for some years, especially the most common "street crimes" affecting volunteers, common for both genders. But it is certainly the case that our efforts in risk-reduction steps, the tightening policies at posts, and strengthening the training of volunteers in how to more effectively reduce risks of sexual assaults greatly increased over my five years at Peace Corps.

Beyond the strengthening existing internal processes and procedures, we took a number of additional 'big steps forward', based on new legislation which Peace Corps helped prepare and supported, the "Kate Puzey Act". Kate Puzey was a volunteer who had been murdered in Benin in early 2009, some months before Aaron and Carrie and I arrived at Peace Corps. Homicides of volunteers have been extremely rare over the decades, but this case was, and remains, unsolved, notwithstanding lengthy and intensive efforts by Peace Corps, the FBI and the Benin authorities to investigate and solve it. Three arrests of suspects were made by the Beninese government, and I believe they remain in prison to this day, but there has been no trial or conviction yet, due primarily to the inadequacies of existing evidence. In any case, following this horrific tragedy, the persistent and valiant efforts of Kate Puzey's family, strongly supported by their Senator from Georgia Johnny Isakson, led to the development of a new piece of legislation named after the volunteer. This legislative effort was supported and assisted by Peace Corps, and focused on significantly strengthening the security of volunteers, further improving the Peace Corps capacity to reduce risks and to respond more quickly and effectively to volunteers who are victims of crime, including in particular sexual and other assaults. The Peace Corps established a new, far-reaching Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program, overseen by a Sexual Assault Council including several outside experts in the field. Peace Corps established a new position at each post for a sexual assault coordinator, who would be trained up through a world-wide training program in how to improve local risk-reduction measures and respond to instances of crime. The Peace Corps' director issued a new "Commitment to Volunteers" laying out everything Peace Corps would do to prevent and respond to sexual assaults. And while Peace Corps had established a "Victim's Advocate" prior to the Puzey Act, as a result of that Act, this small office was significantly expanded, with staff added and budgets increased to provide for staff travel to the field and more resources for training overseas staff in prevention and response measures. A special and highly confidential system of reporting

sexual assaults was established to encourage volunteers to come forward more readily with reports, when they might otherwise be reluctant to do so. Other actions were also taken, which I don't recall just now, but the agency took a highly proactive role in implementing the Kate Puzey Act to increase the Agency's capacity to address the issue.

Traditionally, the security of volunteers had been protected primarily by the community; through a high level of "community acceptance" and local pride, built on the trust and confidence a volunteer develops over their first months in-country with their neighbors and local authorities at their sites. This continues to work well with respect to most community-based problems which may arise, as the volunteers' continued "health and welfare" are greatly valued by the people benefitting most from their presence and work. Rural villages take great pride in Peace Corps volunteers and will do anything they can to keep them safe. But it doesn't work to protect volunteers from "outsiders", which is becoming a growing problem for Peace Corps around the world, especially in parts of Africa and the Middle East. One of the toughest parts of our job was making decisions on where and when to evacuate or withdraw volunteers because of security risks of different kinds, some of them quite new around the world. For example when you have "outside groups" coming in to 'kidnap Westerners', as in some of the Sahelian countries, we customarily started by relocating volunteers to safer areas not directly affected, but subsequently had to evacuate them if and when the threat spread. This happened during my time with some very effective and long-standing Peace Corps programs in the Sahel, which were closing into their 50th Anniversary celebrations. Al Qaeda-related terrorist groups, or thugs hired by such groups to take 'western hostages,' ultimately led to the closure of excellent, highly-valued programs in Mauritania, Niger and Mali. Tragic for the volunteers and the people they were working with. And other kinds of security risks, including high and growing levels of 'ambient crime, led to the closure of two 'old' and large Central American country programs in Honduras and El Salvador. Painful for all.

Q: This is a growing local problem?

RHODES: Well in some areas it is. As you know these problems have become more regional, or cross-border in character in a number of places. Peace Corps has long had a network of both regional and local security officers out in the field, and a lot has been done to strengthen this network. And we built an even closer relationship with the State Departments security office and the Embassy security officers to help us anticipate problem areas, plan for them and act quickly if threats became too great. The health and safety of the volunteers was top priority. But you're never going to be able to eliminate risks in the real world, especially the developing world, and new risks emerge over time. Peace Corps can't become overly risk-averse and still achieve its mission, as established in 1961 and unchanged since. It's an ongoing, continuous process of being vigilant.

Q: Let me ask you the opposite question – what were the most rewarding times of your Peace Corps chief of staff time?

RHODES: The chief-of-staff position tends to be a repository for problems. You are responsible for solving problems that nobody wants to have go on up to the Director. But

it was not just that, not by far. There were lots of rewarding moments, especially as you learned about the successes of country directors and their staffs out in the field, and especially about the remarkable achievements of particular volunteers. In many ways the most rewarding experiences I had was in visiting volunteers out in the field, which I didn't get to do nearly as much as I would have liked. But over the five years I was able to have good visits to about 10 or 11 posts. Ghana in particular was a rewarding experience, including a great birthday lunch for an amazing 80-year-old Peace Corps volunteer, working in a community as a health officer. She was an energetic, tough, committed woman who'd been a nurse most of her life, and had gone into the Peace Corps after retiring. To see people like that whose own commitment and courage clearly exceeds your own, fills you with admiration. One of many very productive achievers, out there making a real difference to the people in their community.

I also had the opportunity to go back to Nepal for the first time since I'd left USAID/Nepal in 1990, 22 years later. I went out to swear-in the first group of Peace Corps volunteers returning to Nepal since they had all been evacuated for security reasons some eight years earlier, in 2004. Nepal is one of those great Peace Corps countries which always provides a warm reception to American volunteers, and where you can accomplish with very limited resources. But it became unexpectedly dangerous during the so-called "Maoist rebellion" in the early 2000s – very dangerous to be out in the rural areas where the "Maoists" were attacking and often killing government staff, civil service employees who were teachers, health workers and others. Interestingly, the story is that some of these rebels in rural western Nepal let Peace Corps volunteers know in advance that it was too dangerous for them to be there as while "we're not attacking you, but we are attacking this monarchy and their officials with whom you sometimes work". Essentially advised them to leave so as not to be in harm's way in the future. I don't really have all the facts on that, but Peace Corps did leave before any volunteer was harmed in 2004. And I had the great good fortune of being sent to represent the Peace Corps Director in the reinstatement of the program in 2012. A great event. And some eight years later, many of the former Maoist commanders had taken high level positions in the Nepali government. Indeed, the minister of finance who came to speak at the ceremony at the U.S. Ambassador's residence for the reinstatement of Peace Corps was a former Maoist officer. "Maoist" in the Nepali sense, which meant essentially anti-monarchy, anti-oligarchy, "for the peasant". He was pleased to be there, showing the legitimacy of his cause and knowing that volunteers in Nepal work in rural areas on behalf of the people for which he and his comrades had struggled for years. He was pleased to have the Peace Corps country director draft a speech for him, and he stuck to her draft text! A classic Nepali, very friendly and welcoming to the new volunteers. A great experience!

Another true high point of my time at Peace Corps was being there for the preparation and celebration of the 50th Anniversary. This was a huge occasion for Aaron and Carrie and me, as well as for all 225,000-plus returned volunteers. As I mentioned earlier, I had worked in the mid-70s with Sargent Shriver as a young lawyer. Sarge (as he liked us all to call him) not only founded and directed the Peace Corps, but went on to direct the "War on Poverty" and establish many of the key federal programs and agencies working to this day on behalf of poverty-stricken Americans. Sarge regrettably passed away in

early 2011 just as we were finalizing the preparations for the Anniversary. But we all felt it was significant that he'd held on to the year Peace Corps turned 50 years old. He was in pretty bad shape by then as he was 95 and had suffered from Alzheimer's for a number of years. But this gave us the occasion to pay a great tribute to him at 50th anniversary events in March 2011, just weeks after he died. I was in charge of putting together the historical retrospectives and pulling together some of the amazing people from Sarge's early days, including Bill Moyers from PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), who was the first deputy director of Peace Corps under Sarge. Also C. Payne Lucas was a very dynamic early staffer and Africa expert. Bill Josephson was Sarge's first General Counsel, and the co-writer of the famous "Towering Task" memo, which gave Sarge the strategic concepts he needed to get the agency started up in a hurry in the earliest days of the JFK administration. And Sarge's "gal Friday," as he called Maryann Orlando back in the early '60s – he likely wouldn't call her that today, I imagine, but she was a mover and shaker for him, and his exceedingly capable office administrator in the earliest days. And Charles Peters, the journalist, author and founder of the *Washington Monthly* magazine, who was Sarge's field program evaluator and roving troubleshooter, another key figure in the earliest days of the Peace Corps. These "founders" made for a great series of panel discussions on the establishment of the Peace Corps, along with Sarge's sons Tim and Mark, who also came to speak movingly about their memories of their father.

We also found some of the earliest volunteers, including the primary movers amongst the students at the University of Michigan who had originally developed the petitions circulated after presidential candidate Senator John F. Kennedy spoke on the steps of the student union in October of 1960. This had become the 'moment of conception' for the Peace Corps, this new effort to send young Americans out into the developing world. "How many of you would go to Ghana for two years to serve as a doctor or engineer?" This was his challenge, 50 years earlier, to students like Alan and Judy Guskin, who then put together a petition and rounded up something over 5000 signatures at Michigan in just a few days, then sending them to candidate JFK. The proposal for the establishment of the Peace Corps appeared in Kennedy's next and final campaign speech! The Guskins they were in the first group of volunteers who went out to Thailand. Other "firsters", from the Ghana and Colombia groups as well, joined the Anniversary program, and spoke of their inspiration and the harrowing experiences of Peace Corps' earliest days. And then President Obama issued a proclamation congratulating both USAID and Peace Corps on their 50th anniversary and held a joint ceremony at the White House for a senior staff from both agencies. It was great to have both of the agencies where I'd spent so much of my life and career celebrated this way by a President I greatly admired.

But there were many high points. For all the issues I had to deal with back in Washington, once you got out there and saw the volunteers at work, still idealistic, still energetic, still optimistic, but smarter and more connected than we had ever been, capable of doing much more than we were. Volunteers today have more resources and research capacity; they go on-line and figure out how to do something that we had no idea how to do. I had to go into the capital city and find a technical backstop or get some pamphlets from USDA or USAID. How to raise chickens for commercial purposes? I had no idea, no email or websites. These guys? They can find a whole raft of projects similar to

whatever they want to do in any part of the world, either via email through the Peace Corps technical teams, or online otherwise. Gotta love YouTube. Peace Corps volunteers are still out there doing very productive things to raise family incomes, improve the health of their neighbors (and other villages), and teaching reading, English, math, science, computer literacy, etc. to poor kids all over the world. Doing it better.

Final Concluding Thoughts

Q: Great summary. Now I think it's time if you want to do a broader wrap-up? It's scary to ask to do such a thing, but anything in summary you'd like to say about your career or where USAID fit into it, and recommendations or highlights you'd have for anyone who's thinking about joining AID now?

RHODES: I was very lucky, just so fortunate to have the opportunity to spend an entire career trying to make a difference for people who needed help. People who had been excluded from opportunities or discriminated against in numerous ways, and who had suffered from poverty and disease and the lack of basic public services. I had never suffered that way, very lucky to have been able to go beyond meeting the basic material needs of life to give a hand to others not so lucky. This was something I just had wanted to do since my youth and had the great fortune to get to do it for a long time. Of course, once you become an adult you do 'make your luck' in certain ways and at times by working hard, being there, coming through for others and being committed, by going beyond your "job" to do the extra work that may be needed by whatever 'team' you are on. USAID and Peace Corps both were characterized by their 'team approach' to their missions. The best USAID Missions are a 'team of teams' all working for the same larger mission, and I loved this atmosphere, as a team member and leader. I am sure it is similar in the corporate world, the academic world, the non-profit world as well. I sometimes like to think of my career at USAID in 'Cal Ripken terms' – one of my great heroes in baseball. His career with the Baltimore Orioles and mine at USAID covered nearly the same period of 20-plus years. He did it by showing up every day, playing in every game, playing with heart, recognizing he was part of a larger team and never getting too high or too low, just kept pushing himself and his teammates forward achieve the mission. He broke Lou Gehrig's record for most consecutive games! And now he's remembered as one of the greatest players of all time. So while that little 'analogy' may be an exaggerated bit of self-flattery, I learned from him and a number of others that I could make a difference if I stuck with it, day-by-day-by-day. That's what I tried to do.

There are so many reasons to value the experiences I had, and to be grateful for the opportunities. Working in international development turns out to be a really good thing to do, both for other people and for yourself. When you work out in the field you got to meet some amazingly capable and courageous people, some really 'good guys' who need just a bit of a hand to really fulfill their potentials and meet their objectives. There were 'bad guys' out there too, no question, as there are everywhere. But they fade in memory by comparison. And to be in a position where you are able to meet a Nelson Mandela or Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and other Nobel Peace Prize winners, like Rigoberta Menchú. As part of your "job"! Not just to be able to shake their hand, but to actually sit

with them and sign an agreement to do something together with their in a partnership – those were amazing “highs” in my professional life, made me feel that I must be doing good work! That’s a great “job.” And it isn’t just the famous Noble Prize winners who make you feel that you are in the right place. How many people in the world get to work out in these fascinating countries with highly committed foreign national staff on your team. And have a chance to work with many highly committed foreign officials or non-government activists, experts and managers directly, and to collaborate with them on a daily basis to help them help their country and their fellow citizens. I think of the courageous and highly accomplished people like Guy Malary in Haiti, or Helen Mack in Guatemala or Dullah Omar in South Africa, whose names are not known but who put their lives on the line and as admirable as the more famous one mentioned. Not many people get to meet and work with people like that as part of their work. Most people in the world spend virtually all of their time and energy getting enough training or education to get a job, and trying to provide for themselves and their families, keeping their kids housed and healthy and in school, just working so hard just for the basics of life. It is a great thing for people to succeed at this. Yet we have had the opportunity to go beyond this kind of life and even for our “job responsibilities” have had the chance to live and work these beautiful and fascinating countries and work with extraordinary people who live there. Can’t get over how lucky I was. The whole experience from a personal level was – I mean, my kids were raised and matured overseas in four or five different countries. For them and us, to experience this diversity of ethnicities and races and religions and languages and cultures and ways societies are organized – you learn so much more than others have the chance to learn through books. You do develop a certain “citizenship of the world”, and your kids realize early on that, “Wow, this is a big world with a lot of different kinds of people.” Sure is!

I had a great drawing in my office in Peace Corps, a drawing of some very different looking people, and the main character says, “I don’t really think of it as working for world peace; I think of it as trying to get along in a really big, strange family.” (Laughter) In living and working overseas you do find the commonalities between you and all these other different people are far greater and stronger than the things that divide you. The ‘core values’ of almost all of these different cultures, different religions, as you learn about them first hand, begin to share common features that you didn’t see, when all the differences first strike you with force. You do begin to see that you have had the awesome privilege to have had this opportunity and to do this work. It’s fair to say that I’ve heard numerous USAID ‘retirement speeches’ in recent years, and they invariably include emotional tributes to the people they have worked with, and gratitude for the opportunity their career provided to spend most of their lives working to make a difference in other people’s lives and the world a better place. Couldn’t agree more.

Finally, to get into the morality -- or even ‘metaphysics’-- of it all, for just a final minute; Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday was yesterday. He gave many great speeches, but in one he says -- if I can paraphrase it -- something like, “The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” But he and others have pointed out that it doesn’t bend by itself. It only bends from people who go out ‘into the arena’, and actually fight for what they believe is right. People have to bend it! We have had the chance to do that

in our own American way, and to help those in poorer and tougher places to make great strides for themselves and their countrymen. To paraphrase yet again, we have gotten the chance to “Be the change you wish to see in the world”, as Gandhi put it. Helping to bend that arc toward justice. And as a common saying goes, “Without justice, there is no peace.” So trying to help bend that arc just a bit over my career is something I take pride in. I had the privilege to do that for a quarter-century with USAID, plus another decade or so with Peace Corps and non-profit organizations, which gives me a lasting sense of meaning, and happiness.

Q: Very good. Thank you very much, Stacy.

RHODES: You're very welcome.

End of interview