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WILLIAM WHITE

Interviewed by *W. Haven North*
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Observations on experience in domestic and international development

KEY WORDS

Afghan refugees
Africare
agricultural project
China
community health program
community development
computer technology
East Africa
Economic Development Agency
Ethiopia
Far East Bureau
Indonesia
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Japan
Kenya
Korean Peninsula
Kwame Nkrumah
Laos
Lyndon Johnson
Malaysia
Model Cities Administration
Multilateral and Special Programs
Office of Economic Opportunity
Office of International Training
Pakistan
participation
Peace Corps
Philippines
President Kennedy
private business
program budgeting
refugee problem
Regional Economic Development Office
Sahel
secondary education
segregated schools
Sigur Center for Asian Studies
Singapore
Small Business Administration

South Vietnam
Taiwan
terrorists
Thailand
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Uganda
United Nations Association
Vietnam
West Africa Office

INTERVIEW

Q: Bill White joined AID in 1966 and left and came back and completed in 1985. Let's start back in your early years and give us an overview of where you are from, what kind of schooling, family situation you had, early work experience. I gather you served in the Peace Corps; you may want to talk about that. Let's start out with your early life.

Early years and education

WHITE: Well, Haven, I was born in Cleveland, Ohio. The best location in the nation, they used to say. I grew up there through high school and went off to Ohio State University in Columbus, which is where I graduated in 1952. I studied social administration at that time thinking I was going to be a social worker. Following my graduation - the Korean War had broken out while I was still a senior - I contemplated going into the Air Force. In fact I had taken all of the prelims prior to enlisting and was going to enter the pilot training program, but at that time you had to be a single person, and I was contemplating getting married. That, along with the 4 year commitment in the Air Force, compared with two years if I was drafted in the Army, I opted to get married and go into the Army. After coming out of the service, I went to law school for a couple of years.

Q: Where did you serve?

WHITE: I served in Alaska with the 196th Regimental Combat Team. The Korean War, incidentally, ended while I was in basic training, otherwise I don't know where I might have gone.

Q: Let's go back to education.. Were there specific courses that you found particularly interesting or professors that stimulated you and seemed to suggest something about international work?

WHITE: That's hard to say. I suppose I always had an interest in international affairs going back as far as I can remember, even in junior high school, oftentimes participating in activities involving international affairs, though there weren't a lot of those kinds of

things at that time. Once in college I was very active in international affairs organizations. I can't remember any particular course or professor that motivated me in that direction; I think I already had the motivation.

When I moved out to the west coast after returning from the service, the first job that I had was with the United Nations Association. I was fortunate enough to get the job as executive secretary for that organization. It was quite an interesting experience for me and of course it heightened my interest in international affairs.

Q: What were you involved with in that work?

WHITE: We were primarily involved in information and education. The objective was to provide explanations to the general public about activities at the UN and to inform them regarding issues before the General Assembly. We had a center where people could come and review literature about the UN. We had a speakers bureau which addressed groups on the issues and organized forums and discussion groups. It was a very interesting job. Subsequent to that I worked for the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations. It was during that time that I was in correspondence with people back in Washington, because I was continually interested in international affairs. In 1960, Hubert Humphrey came up with the Peace Corps idea, but it was Kennedy who created it by executive order. I wrote to a friend of a friend in Washington, inquiring at that time about community affairs programs in AID [Agency for International Development]. This was, incidentally, just before Kennedy's executive order. I didn't hear anything from this person for months. Then the executive order was issued. That's the sequence of events. I'm thinking back; it was quite some time ago. This person called me. His name was Lee St. Lawrence. First of all he apologized for not having answered my query months ago. He told me that he had moved over to the Peace Corps from what was then ICA [International Cooperation Administration].

Q: What was his position at that time?

Joined the Peace Corps - 1962

WHITE: I don't recall what his position was at ICA, but he was part of Sargent Shriver's task force to create the Peace Corps, and he had moved over along with Warren Wiggins and other people to set up the Peace Corps. So he asked me the question, "Why don't you think about the Peace Corps?" I responded [that I would] think about it. He sent me a Form 57, the standard application form which I filled out and sent back to him. More months went by, during which I heard nothing at all. Then one morning while I was shaving, my wife came rushing into the bathroom and said the White House is on the telephone. I thought she was joking. I went to the phone and it was Harris Wofford who at that time was special assistant to President Kennedy for Civil Rights. He advised me that he was moving over to the Peace Corps and was going to Africa to head up the program in Ethiopia, which was going to be the first Peace Corps program there. He was planning trips to the West Coast and wanted to meet with me. He had learned of my interest in the Peace Corps. So he did come out. I met him at the airport. He came out to

our house that evening, and I guess we sat up until 4:30 the next morning talking enthusiastically about the Peace Corps and the future and world affairs. I guess we slept a couple of hours and then I had to take him over to Universal International Studios where they were filming at that time the movie that Marlon Brando played in, The Ugly American. Wofford had been asked, apparently, to provide some advice during the filming. To make a long story short, he went back to Washington. I didn't hear anything for a long time. Then I got another phone call from a staff with an apology for not having gotten back to me, and asking when can you come to Washington for some interviews? So we worked out a mutually acceptable time and I flew back here. And for three intensive days I was interviewed by Peace Corps staff culminating with an interview by Sarge Shriver. After that was over, I returned to Los Angeles. Incidentally I must say that some of those interviews took place late at night. One interview, with Bill Haddad, was at 10:30 at night in his office.

Q: His position was what?

WHITE: Bill Haddad was, I think at that time, director of public affairs. What impressed me so much was walking into his office at that hour of the night, all the lights were on, people were working at their desks, typewriters were going, phones were ringing, it was as though it was 10:30 in the morning. That's how intense; that's how active things were at that time. But following those interviews, I did get the appointment. I was asked to join as an associate representative for the first program in Ethiopia.

Q: As associate representative number two?

WHITE: Actually there were three associate representatives and we each had geographic and functional responsibilities. There was a director and a deputy director and their associate representatives. So actually it was a "number three job," but there were three number threes. Two of us had to get out to Ethiopia early on to complete the negotiations because it was all so new.

Q: This was in what year?

Assignment in Ethiopia - 1962

WHITE: This was in 1962. We were going to set up a secondary education program and a community development program for Ethiopia. It was necessary to complete the agreements to go into the various provinces in the country, to meet the provincial governors and the education officers, and to actually work out the details about the numbers of volunteers that were going to be assigned there. So it fell to one other person and myself to go out and complete these arrangements. The idea was that we were going to come back to Washington and go through the training at Georgetown with the volunteers, who at that time were being recruited. So we did return and entered into the training program, and I believe it was the second day that we were advised that things were becoming unglued in Ethiopia. So we had to go back out there. As a consequence, we missed out on the training, which would have been a unique experience, staff and

volunteers training together. I think it would have been the first time the Peace Corps had done that.

Q: Was Harris Wofford involved in this or had he become the director yet?

WHITE: Yes he was involved, but he stayed behind in Washington. He hadn't yet wound up all of his affairs at the White House. So my colleague, Ed Corboy, and I went back out to Ethiopia to tie things back up again and await the arrival of the volunteers.

Q: Were there problems with the Ethiopian government?

WHITE: We had a few problems, but they weren't insurmountable. In many cases they were related to internal political quarrels, and there were some situations involving bruised egos that had to be resolved.

Q: Was the idea of the Peace Corps well accepted or was there resistance to having outsiders come in?

WHITE: It appeared that it was fairly well accepted and there was minimal resistance. I think that probably the Provincial Education Officers were the most fearful because of perceived threats to their status, and whether or not there would be a diminution of their responsibilities in their respective provinces. The Provincial Governors appeared to be very cooperative for the most part. They seemed to be the key to getting the program operational in those provinces. Eventually, the Provincial Education Officers, even those who had been reluctant at first, became very cooperative once they saw this was going to benefit not only the educational programs in their provinces, but was going to benefit them as well. So we ended up with 288 secondary and middle school teachers in Ethiopia. They arrived in August of 1962. We also brought in two physicians who were the forerunner of a community health program which started at a later time. Overall it was very successful.

Q: Who were the physicians?

WHITE: I can't remember their names now. Two young fellows who were very enthusiastic and did an excellent job. We also had a Peace Corps physician on our staff, Dr. Ed Cross, who later, incidentally, became the U.S. Surgeon General.

Q: He worked for AID too didn't he?

WHITE: Yes, he certainly did. Our first deputy was Bascom Story who was an AID employee, who moved to the Peace Corps right there in Ethiopia and worked with us. He subsequently went on to Nigeria. The second person who came in as deputy was Chet Carter, who later became Deputy Chief of Protocol for Lyndon Johnson. So we had some very outstanding people who worked with us there in Ethiopia. It was quite a significant program.

Q: What were your responsibilities? You said you had functional and area responsibilities.

WHITE: My responsibilities initially covered the eastern part of the country. Ultimately, I became the liaison officer to the Ministry of Education, and had the responsibility of working very closely with the Director General for Secondary Education, making certain that the programs were functioning, insuring that problems that developed were resolved. I still was responsible for meeting with individual volunteers to help them through their trials and tribulations.

Q: What was the name of the Director General at that time?

WHITE: Mary Tadesse was the Director General, a very effective, formidable woman.

Q: Who was the vice minister at that time?

WHITE: The Emperor carried the portfolio for the Ministry of Education.

Q: And then was there a vice minister in charge or not?

WHITE: Not in education. The Director General was the person in charge as I recall. Now there was a Dr. Mengesha. I'm just trying to remember whether he functioned as a quasi vice minister, but my memory now is a little hazy.

Q: Very well. This was a very significant program. How did it work? How were the volunteers able to proceed? Were they tightly bound by curriculum or did they have latitude? Were there issues that you were concerned with?

WHITE: They had a good deal of latitude in their work. They were also encouraged to engage in other activities outside of the classroom. In fact another rather outstanding person who was there was Paul Tsongas, who was a volunteer at that time. As I recall, Paul was very active along with several other volunteers in his community in initiating the construction of a hostel for Ethiopian students who came from very remote rural areas in order to permit them to stay in the area adjacent to the school so they didn't have to make that long trek to school every day. We had two retired secondary school teachers, Beulah Bartlett and Blythe Monroe. At that time they were in their sixties and, as I say, had retired from the public schools in the United States. They were probably two of the most active and effective volunteers we had in Ethiopia. They started a library in their province, tutored students after classes, and engaged in a number of community activities. They were just very enthusiastic and served as role models for the Ethiopian teachers in the school where they were teaching.

Q: Were there volunteers all over the country?

WHITE: Yes, they were all over the country. North, south, east, and west.

Q: What did they teach? Mostly English?

WHITE: They taught the core subjects. English, math, science, geography, as well as business and vocational... virtually all the courses.

Q: This was at the secondary level?

WHITE: At the secondary level and at the middle school level. We had some volunteers assigned to middle schools.

Q: Middle school was what year?

WHITE: Seventh and eighth grades. Nine through twelve were at the high school level, and we had some volunteers assigned to the technical schools as well.

Q: Did you travel around the country at all?

WHITE: Yes. I spent a considerable amount of time on the road, so I saw a good deal of Ethiopia. Even today when I meet Ethiopians here in the United States, and we talk about the country, and I mention some of the places I have been, they look at me and say, "I've never been to those places."

Q: How effective do you think the teaching was? How do you judge this?

WHITE: You know, Haven, that's always a difficult question to answer. I remember during that period of time Robert McNamara was Secretary of Defense and he instituted the PPS-- what was that evaluation system-- I think it was program planning budgeting system. The essence of it was to quantify what you have been doing in terms of determining whether or not it was effective. The problem we had in applying that kind of a process to what was going on in Ethiopia, and other countries where you had educational programs, was that you can quantify the number of hours that have been taught by the volunteers, the number of textbooks that were introduced into the system and the number of students that were in the classrooms. However, what the students themselves were deriving from this experience would be nearly impossible to quantify. I think that the only way you can determine what kind of an effect you have been having is years later when some of the students you have been teaching, or have been taught by some of your volunteers, emerge in positions of responsibility in their governments or in the private sector. Then you can begin to see whether or not some of the values that have been imparted to them during their formative years are being manifested in the decisions they are making in their respective positions. In that respect, I would say the jury is still out. Certainly there were people who found their way in to positions of responsibility, but because of the turmoil in that country, many of those people had to leave or unfortunately lost their lives. One might say that the fact that they lost their lives or had to leave, is an indication that their ideas, their methodologies were effective and were anathema to the incoming revolutionary regime. So in that sense they were effective, maybe too effective.

Q: How would you judge the impact of the volunteers? It is often said that the Peace Corps does more for the volunteers than it does for the country. Do you share that statement?

WHITE: I would think so. All of us, volunteers and staff included, derived more than we gave. I think that's true in a very general sense in terms of when you are contributing to something, when you are giving, you receive more than what you give. That was my perception there in Ethiopia. Some of the volunteers, many of them moved on to positions of greater responsibility in their respective lives here in the United States and abroad. Many of them ended up in the Foreign Service; many in the private sector. I think the experience they had as Peace Corps volunteers in Ethiopia was a very significant part of their development. I think that we all without exception derived more than we gave.

Q: Were there any issues of particular significance that the office had to deal with, that you had to deal with in relations with the government or the volunteers that stood out in your memory?

WHITE: I guess the underlying issue was a feeling certainly on the part of the Ministry of Education that we were probably pushing things along too fast. There was some tension between the Ministry of Education and the Peace Corps with respect to what was happening in the secondary schools. This did not mean they didn't like what was going on or didn't want us there; they very much wanted the Peace Corps in the country. Because you had A: the clash of cultures, and B: the tendency as part of that clash, the tendency of westerners, especially Americans, to want to move fast and to want not to waste time.

Q: Change things, improve things?

WHITE: Exactly! There was a very frequent expression, "We're agents of change" and it was used in those days. Occasionally that concept rubbed people the wrong way so that there were, occasionally, problems that had to be resolved, but I don't recall that there were any major problems.

Q: Were the volunteers involved in some development areas like curriculum development or program development or were you just teaching the established curriculum?

WHITE: That's right. There was curriculum development, and that of course was a point of friction within the schools.

Q: But not in all countries were the Peace Corps allowed to do anything but teach the syllabus. You had more latitude there.

WHITE: That's right there was more latitude. The Emperor at that time was very much aware that they had to move ahead. The country had stagnated developmentally, and there was a very definite feeling emanating from the palace at that time to move ahead. As a consequence, there was encouragement for the Peace Corps to come and have this latitude. At the same time there was this reluctance, as I have indicated, particularly

among the Provincial Education Officers to see this evolve. But again, for the most part, the Provincial Education Officers saw the benefits that could be obtained by this and also saw that their status would be enhanced with the success of the program in their provinces.

Q: You mentioned the Emperor. Did you meet the Emperor?

WHITE: Yes I did. My children were very young. I had two sons and a daughter. My daughter was 2 ½ years of age. Shortly after the volunteers arrived in Ethiopia, the Emperor, Haile Selassie, had a reception at his palace for the entire Peace Corps, and prior to going there we coached our children as to how to behave towards an Emperor. They had already begun in that short period of time to learn Amharic. My daughter who, of course, was in her own little world, was coached to curtsy when she met the Emperor and to speak to him in Amharic. We practiced this several times and it all seemed to go quite well until we got to the palace. We were standing in line waiting for our turn to greet the Emperor. Since there were people in front of us and my daughter was very small, she could not see what was happening until suddenly she was in front of the Emperor, who was seated on his throne. And, at that moment, she saw that he had two tiny dogs sitting at his feet on pillows, which immediately attracted her attention. The Emperor extended his hand to my daughter and she completely ignored him and started petting one of the dogs. He said to her, "I see you like my dogs." She said, "Yes" and kept right on petting. That just sort of broke up the entire reception. He just chuckled which indicated a very human side of the Emperor.

Q: Do you have any views of the Emperor; did you meet with him on any subjects?

WHITE: No, they were strictly ceremonial. We met several times with him, but each time it was strictly a ceremonial meeting. There were no official, substantive discussions with him at least at our level.

Q: But obviously he was very supportive of the Peace Corps and a prime mover in having it happen.

WHITE: Absolutely. It was at his request that we were there. The major problem that he was creating by having the Peace Corps there was that the program caused a greater thirst for higher education on the part of the students. Many of them did go abroad to obtain higher education. When they returned, the economy wasn't expanding rapidly enough to absorb them and that was the problem he was creating by what he was doing. But, he was aware of that.

Q: What about relations with AID? They had a big program there.

WHITE: They had a very big program, and we had excellent relations with AID which were enhanced by Bascom Story's presence for the first part as the deputy.

Q: What was his position?

WHITE: He had been the education officer for AID and was very well plugged in to the system so that it facilitated the entrance of the Peace Corps into that country in the educational program. Bascom knew virtually all the people in the Ethiopian education hierarchy, who were important and who had influence, and he was very helpful in getting that program started

Q: What kinds of things did you collaborate on?

WHITE: With AID? Well they provided primarily logistics support to us in the beginning stages. They provided some educational materials. The Peace Corps brought in footlockers of texts and reading materials that the volunteers had that they could distribute to their students. Of course AID was helpful to us in the distribution of those materials around the country.

Q: And in the curriculum development work was there any collaboration on that?

WHITE: I don't recall that there was.

Q: Was there a public health section to the Peace Corps program?

WHITE: That came later and the two doctors who were there were beginning to lay the ground work for it, making contacts through the Ministry of Health.

Q: Were there any other dimensions of the Peace Corps program?

WHITE: At that time there were not.

Q: And the community development work?

WHITE: That had not started yet.

Q: You were there for what period?

WHITE: I was there from the inception of the program in '62 to '63 and returned to Washington as the program officer for East Africa.

Q: How did you find your relationship in Ethiopia? What kinds of people did you find in social and working situations?

WHITE: I found Ethiopians to be very bright and sensitive people, very sensitive, and for the most part willing to incorporate new ideas into what they were trying to do there in the country. I found the culture fascinating. I've been back to Ethiopia on several occasions, and have Ethiopian friends here in the United States. I found it to be a very positive experience relating with them.

Q: We can come back to that. You left Ethiopia in 1963?

Returned to Washington as Peace Corps Program Officer for East Africa - 1963

WHITE: Came back to Washington.

Q: What was your assignment then?

WHITE: I was Program Officer for East Africa. I had responsibility, of course, for Ethiopia, negotiating a new program in Uganda and in Kenya and was responsible for the program which was ongoing in what was then Tanganyika. I went back out to Uganda and Kenya with Franklin Williams who was then Regional Director for Africa and completed the negotiations for the programs in Uganda and Kenya.

Q: Was there anything particular about those programs that you worked on?

WHITE: Education and community development.

Q: You were in this position for how long?

WHITE: I was there for a year.

Q: Just one year, a rather short time.

WHITE: Right! In those early days of the Peace Corps, one often did not remain in one position for too long at a time.

Q: You met Sargent Shriver obviously, What were your impressions of him?

WHITE: One of the most dynamic, hard working, highly intelligent persons that I had ever met. I first met him in the hallway at Peace Corps headquarters, as I recall. I was waiting to go in for an interview with Bill Delano who was General Counsel for the Peace Corps. Sarge walked by me in the hall and he turned, and I stood up, and he said, "Hi, I'm Sarge Shriver." I said, "Hi, I'm Bill White." And we talked for a few minutes, which was illustrative of the kind of person that he was. Very easy to meet and down to earth, very dynamic, and in many ways very unorthodox in terms of the way he operated. He sometimes drove his staff mad because he didn't always follow the chain of command. In fact he rarely followed it. He dealt with people individually. Sometimes that was effective, and sometimes that created chaos. But, for the most part, he was very effective, and I thought, well liked by the entire Peace Corps. He came out to Ethiopia on a swing through Africa while I was there. I recall that Joe Coleman, who was traveling with him at the time, said that Sarge is very wealthy, but he always forgets to pay the bills. We are having dinner, or getting out of a taxi, and what always happens, he said, was that somebody meets him and shakes his hand and pulls him off and they go off talking with the result that Joe said that I'm stuck here having to pay the bill. He just doesn't think about those things. But, of course, when you got back to Washington and

reminded him, "Sarge, you didn't pay for this or didn't pay for that," he would immediately respond and cover it, but it was kind of disconcerting for people traveling with him, but that was sort of characteristic of the kind of person he was. He was so involved in what he was doing that he didn't think about the little things.

Q: Were there any aspects of his policies or decisions that you had problems with or were concerned about?

WHITE: I don't recall having a concern or a problem with his policies. His policy with respect to service in the Peace Corps which was In, Up, and Out, was one we all embraced. He didn't expect you to make a career out of the Peace Corps. You would come in, do a service, and then leave and go on to other things, which I think was a very good policy. Now the drawback to that was that it tended to limit the development of an institutional memory in the Peace Corps. As a consequence, the Peace Corps found itself re-inventing the wheel on occasion. But overall I think that was a good policy. He also personally negotiated the first programs around the world. He went out and would meet with the key people in the countries, from prime ministers to Emperors, and so on, and established a rapport which, in my view, insured the success of the program in those countries. He had a charisma about him, a persona that I think made it very difficult for a head of state to want to reverse the decision and get the program out of the country, although I guess on occasion it did happen. His style of operation was a very effective one, in my view.

Q: Well after one year, what happened after that? Where did you go?

Became Executive Director, Economic Development Agency in Los Angeles - 1964

WHITE: I went back to Los Angeles and took a job as the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Area Economic Development Agency, which was sort of a mini-AID program, focusing on development in central and southeast Los Angeles. We had a tie-in with UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles], with their Department of Economics, and we sought to initiate projects in that part of the city that would promote development.

Q: Any particular projects that you were involved in that were noteworthy?

WHITE: Yes. One of them was the development of two Small Business Development Centers in Los Angeles. These centers provided financial assistance as well as counseling to fledgling business people. We obtained an agreement with the Small Business Administration for the guarantee of loans that were available, and we also had an agreement with the Office of Economic Opportunity to provide assistance to the business people. We had a fairly successful program. I remember one case of a person coming in to our south central center asking for a loan to start up a used car business. There was a great deal of skepticism at that time about that kind of a business in that part of the city. But, because all of his paperwork was in order and even the SBA said it looked passable, the loan ultimately was made and he went into business. I remember several years later, I was attending a meeting of the National Business League in Detroit, and during the

course of the conference, General Motors had a hospitality suite in the hotel and I was invited up. I went there and in that suite they had a board with pictures of new car dealers, and one of those persons was this man to whom we had made a loan for establishing a used car business. I sort of felt like the schoolteacher who saw his successful student years later.

Q: That must feel really good.. How long were you in this position?

WHITE: I was there for two years, and then I came back to Washington to work for AID.

Q: So this was in?

Joined USAID Far East Bureau in Washington, DC and the Philippines - 1966

WHITE: 1966 that I came back.

Q: What position, how did you get to AID?

WHITE: I'm trying to remember the circumstances, the details. I think what happened was that a group came out to LA that was recruiting really for the Vietnam Bureau. I was interviewed and subsequently was offered a job in what was then the Far East Bureau. At that time they didn't have the Vietnam bureau; it was the Far East Bureau. I was hired as the Program Officer in the Office of Development and Planning for the Far East Bureau. Rudd Poats was at that time the Assistant Administrator. I worked there. Sol Silver was the director of the office at that time, and I worked for him. Subsequently, he left and Charlie Breecher came in. I worked there for approximately a year, and then I went out to the Philippines as the Regional Program Officer and at that time worked with Lee St. Lawrence.

Q: In your Washington assignment, what were your responsibilities?

WHITE: Well, primarily administering the various projects in Southeast Asia. We were managing the money for the projects in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines at that time.

Q: Managing the projects, what does that mean?

WHITE: We had a responsibility for keeping track of the flow of funds to the various projects in the region, ensuring that money was available when obligations were made; and ensuring also that commodities were always able to fill project pipelines. We also had a major role in the annual program review for the region and preparation of the Congressional Presentation.

Q: We can come back to that later. You were in that program office for just one year, so it gave you an orientation I suppose. Then you went on to the Philippines.

WHITE: The Philippines, yes as the Regional Program Officer.

Q: This would be 1967.

WHITE: Right!

Q: What was your function? What were your responsibilities there?

WHITE: There we were setting up regional projects in Southeast Asia. One project that would serve all of the countries in the region. For example an agricultural project in Los Banos in the Philippines which provided training for participants from Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Vietnam, Laos, as well as the Philippines. A tropical medicine project in Bangkok which, again, provided training for the people from those countries in the region. The idea was avoid duplication of these projects in each of the countries, but to serve the region in a more efficient and effective manner.

Q: This office was called what?

WHITE: It was called the Regional Economic Development Office. It was headquartered in Bangkok and was at that time headed up by Lee St. Lawrence.

Q: That's how you got in; you had a connection. But you said you were in the Philippines.

WHITE: I was based in the Philippines. We had a Regional Program Officer in each of the countries. We had one in the Philippines. One in Laos, one in Thailand, and one in Indonesia.

Q: What was the objective of this? Simply efficiency of common projects?

WHITE: That's right.

Q: How did the projects get selected to fit all of these countries?

WHITE: Well I think initially the decisions were made back in Washington. A determination was made that the Philippines would be the logical place for an agricultural project which would provide the training for the participants from the various countries. Los Banos was the ideal location for this because the agricultural college was located there.

Q: This wasn't IRRI.

WHITE: No it wasn't connected to IRRI, though I think it benefited from some of the ongoing research there. The Math and Science center in Penang was selected because I guess they felt that it was the most effective training center at that time in Southeast Asia. These decisions had been made previously. I wasn't part of the decision making process.

Q: Were you working on the Philippines liaison role in this?

WHITE: That's right, and also working on the bilateral program in the Philippines.

Q: You worked with the bilateral program in terms of working with these centers?

WHITE: That's right.

Q: And essentially your role was selecting the people and arranging the training programs?

WHITE: That was essentially it.

Q: Were there any particular issues or concerns with that?

WHITE: I can't recall any major issues we had to deal with at that time. There was a concern that a program called Operation Brotherhood, whose head was there in the Philippines was creating something of a problem, but I cannot recall that there were major issues.

Q: Were the problems with the relationships with the USAID Mission? Sometimes regional programs and mission programs become a bit crosswise with each other. Were there concerns of that type?

WHITE: No major problems that I can recall. We had a very effective Mission Director at that time, Wes Haraldson. Ernie Neal was the Deputy Mission Director a very fine human being. I think that, by and large, there was a good relationship between the bilateral program and the regional program. Lee St. Lawrence, Wes and Ernie related quite well.

Q: How many people were brought through the training programs? Were there large numbers that you were involved with from all the other countries?

WHITE: There were not large numbers at that particular time. I think in the agricultural program we probably had at any given time no more than 20-25 participants. I think in the tropical medicine program we had approximately 28 in Bangkok. There was a lesser number, probably 20, in the Southeast Asian Ministry of Education the educational project also in Bangkok. It was not a large program at that time. I think it grew in later years.

Q: This was the only thing the region was doing, these training activities?

WHITE: At that time, yes.

Q: Most participants were sent to the States for training. Why was it determined that

these participants would not come to the states?

WHITE: In part because this was an economy move. It was felt that these institutions were as effective, if not more so, than those in the United States. It was certainly going to save the U.S. Government a considerable amount of money to provide the training there. Ultimately it would develop the training centers there to a point that that kind of a program would sustain itself after AID was gone.

Q: Did that happen?

WHITE: I don't know. Maybe we should go back and take a look.

Q: Was AID involved in helping these institutions at the same time?

WHITE: Yes, there was assistance going to those institutions. I don't remember the scales of the amounts.

Q: American universities were involved in the tropical medicine center and the agricultural school?

WHITE: Not to my knowledge. It seems to me, now my memory is a little hazy, I don't recall whether there was direct involvement. We did have people coming out from time to time from American universities but I don't recall whether there was direct involvement.

Q: What about follow up of the people who participated in these courses and what happened to them?

WHITE: Well, I think I recall that one of them was working recently with FAO in Rome. I think there had been one or two here in Washington working for the World Bank. I would like to think that there are many of them who are working in their own countries carrying on that tradition.

Q: And the countries they came from you said were of course the Philippines and where else?

WHITE: The Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Laos and South Vietnam.

Q: Anything else about the program you want to comment about?

WHITE: I can't think of anything now. What I will do is go back through some of my old papers and hopefully my memory will be revived.

I came back to Washington in 1968. I left AID to work for the Model Cities Administration.

Left USAID and joined the Model Cities Administration

Q: Why did you leave? Did you have any feelings about AID at that time?

WHITE: It wasn't so much a feeling about AID as it was what was happening domestically in the U.S. and I felt at that time I should be working on the domestic side dealing with what I considered were very serious problems. This was shortly after the assassinations of both Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Those two tragic events had profound effects on my thinking and feeling. It made me question whether I was doing the right thing by being away from the country at a time when perhaps we should be concentrating our energies here at home. It didn't in any way reflect in a negative way on the foreign assistance program in which I was working.

Q: How did you find the AID experience up to that point though?

WHITE: Well I found it to be quite invigorating and satisfying, and the people with whom I associated were the kinds of people I enjoyed working with. But that's been my experience throughout my career. I've been fortunate enough to be in the kinds of jobs where there are people who are like minded with similar commitment, so that I found the same kind of people working in AID that I found in domestic programs that I was involved in here in the United States.

Q: This domestic program, what was it that you were working on?

WHITE: The Model Cities Administration was a program that was enacted by Congress. It was called the Demonstration Cities and Model Cities Act that was enacted, I think, during the Johnson administration. The objective was to concentrate the resources of key federal agencies into select cities. Originally, 50 cities in the United States that were in need of economic development and assistance were to be selected. As the bill went through Congress, obviously many Congressmen wanted some of that assistance for cities in their districts, so that we ended up with 75 cities rather than 50, which diminished somewhat, the amount of money that would be available. Nevertheless, the legislation enabled the Secretary for HUD to coordinate certain moneys from various federal departments and agencies into a city for a specific project. I was responsible for business and economic development and was the chief of that branch in the model cities program.

Q: Countrywide?

WHITE: Countrywide, yes. What I did was to assist the various local business and economic people in setting up various projects in their respective cities that would promote economic growth and development.

Q: What kind of projects were you concerned with?

WHITE: These were community development corporations which were set up to provide assistance to local business people in the same manner as the business development centers that we had set up in Los Angeles back in the earlier years. Projects that were providing counseling and educational assistance to prospective business people, as well as loans. This was the essence of these projects.

Q: Which cities were involved in this program?

WHITE: Oh, cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago, Indianapolis, Cleveland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, cities in New England, I can't remember all of the names now.

Q: Mostly the major cities.

WHITE: They were the major cities. That's where Congress perceived were the major problems.

Q: What did you find worked in that program?

WHITE: A variety of things worked but primarily they were projects that enabled local people to form corporations that were going to assess the economic situation in their respective localities and then to raise money to either do construction for a supermarket, housing project, or to start businesses. Primarily it was business development, but there were some housing projects and some community centers projects, but essentially it was business development.

Q: Where was this working well comparatively?

WHITE: I think it worked well in New York in the Bedford Stuyvesant area for example. It worked well in Los Angeles in the South-Central area, to some extent in San Francisco, and there were a number of midwestern cities where there were projects that were successful as well.

Q: What were the characteristics that signified that they were working well? What made them work well?

WHITE: I guess it was the mix of people that you had involved. If you could get some business people who had ties with the overall business community working with some of the very smart, but unsophisticated local people who became a part of the project and had the confidence that they were going to be very much involved in the implementation of the project, those tended to work well. The ones that didn't work well were those in which you had the type of business people who just kind of overran the local business people and called the shots and ran the projects. Generally speaking, the benefits weren't as great in those latter situations.

Q: Was there much participation of the community in the process?

WHITE: There was a great deal of participation. In fact, probably the one factor that tended to delay some of the projects was that there was continual questioning on the part of people in the communities to be affected as to whether or not the people who were involved in this were on the up and up, legitimate. And whether or not they (the local people) were going to have a true stake in the results of the project.

Q: What kinds of businesses were generated by this that we were talking about?

WHITE: We are talking essentially about small businesses, small groceries, occasionally a shopping mall, dry cleaning establishments, very small operations, but projects that put people to work and provided sources of income where there had not been any before. Many people gained a new sense of confidence in themselves and in their communities

Q: Do you have any sense of the impact of the model cities program?

WHITE: I think perhaps in some parts of the country it has generated a momentum that has been sustained but the state of our economy during the recession probably diminished if not completely wiped out some of those operations unfortunately.

Q: Were there any particular lessons that you learned from working in that job?

WHITE: Well, I think that one of the lessons, Haven, is that when you do that sort of thing you should probably concentrate resources in a smaller number of cities. I think the fact that the same amount of money that was originally planned for 50 cities was spread out over, actually it was more than 75 cities and eventually became 100 cities, diminishes the impact you can have in any single area. One thing that I did see that was interesting was there was a good deal of cooperation at that time between the federal agencies, HUD, and the Departments of Commerce, Transportation, and other federal agencies that had funds that were available that could be used by the Secretary of HUD to be put into these programs. It seems to me that should be a model for future assistance for cities in this country.

Q: Could you be more specific on the business and the economics. What did that mean? What did you actually do?

WHITE: Well, I went out to many of the cities, sat down with them there, talked with them about projects they could do, what has worked in other places, what hasn't worked, and then try to point them in the direction of resources they could utilize and bring to bear on the particular problems that they were addressing.

Q: You did this for how long?

WHITE: I did that for about two years, and then I went back to the Peace Corps.

Q: Back to the Peace Corps. What made this move? Why did you go back to the Peace Corps?

Returned to the Peace Corps - 1970

WHITE: There was a change in the administration resulting in personnel changes in all of the Federal departments and agencies including HUD and the Model Cities Administration. A number of key people at the Assistant Secretary and Director levels had to leave, of course, and this made for a very different climate for those of us remaining in which to work. At about the same time, a new operation was being set up at the Peace Corps, and the person who was managing it wanted me to come there to work with it. It was similar in some respects to what I had been doing, in that we were going to get returned Peace Corps volunteers involved in domestic programs around the country.

Q: In domestic programs?

WHITE: Yes. So it was my job initially to make contacts with the various organizations, agencies, and businesses in the United States that could utilize Peace Corps volunteers who had a specific kind of talent or experience that they brought back with them.

Q: So it was retired Peace Corps volunteers, in effect, helping to place them.

WHITE: That's right. Exactly. I worked there for about a year and then moved into another office in the Peace Corps which was called at that time the North Africa, Near East, South Asia programs, NANEAP. I was the Program Officer in that office and responsible for programs and training for that part of the world.

Q: Training Peace Corps volunteers to go out. What kind of training programs did you provide for them?

WHITE: Well, we provided training programs in education in health, and agriculture, we sent some to India for training in agriculture. Primarily it was in education and agriculture.

Q: What were you trying to teach these people in such a short time?

WHITE: Well, for example in the education program, these were people who obviously had education experience and who were going out as teachers and they simply went through a teacher training program. We had contracts with various colleges and universities around the country. Essentially the same kind of arrangements were made for those people who were going out as agricultural assistants.

Q: Did they have, I don't know what they call them, survival courses; on how to survive in difficult environments?

WHITE: Yes, that's part of their orientation. That's always been a part of the Peace Corps program, to make sure that a person knows how to make it under very adverse conditions.

Q: Were there any particular orientations of the training program that you were trying to promote or insure that was brought about?

WHITE: I think we wanted to be certain that the volunteer was going to be sensitive to the culture in which he or she was going to be working. To recognize that you are not necessarily going to change the methodology overnight. When you are talking with farmers for example, you are dealing with people who have been doing things a certain way for generations. You can't just come out and make them change their practices overnight.

Q: Were there any particular experiences of the Peace Corps program in that part of the world compared with Africa that suggested a different situation?

WHITE: We had such a variety. In North Africa we had programs in Morocco and Tunisia. In the Near East we had programs in Iran. We had programs in India, Nepal. It was quite a mix. I don't know that there was a common thread that I can draw through those experiences through the various projects other than the fact that again you were dealing with cultures that were very different from those which the volunteers were coming from, and there was a great deal of sensitivity required on their part in order for them to be successful.

Q: Any particular issues that you experienced during that time?

WHITE: I can't recall any particular outstanding issues.

For the remaining three years that I was at the Peace Corps I served as Director of the Office for Multilateral and Special Programs.

Q: What is multilateral training?

WHITE: Multilateral and Special Programs was an office that dealt with-- well actually there were two major aspects of that program. One, that it housed the technical specialists for the Peace Corps who went out to specific countries on assignments to assist volunteers with their programs. We had an agricultural specialist, we had an architectural specialist, we had an education specialist in that office. We would get requests from Peace Corps directors to provide an expert to come out and assist the volunteers in a particular aspect of their project. That was one of our areas of responsibility. The other dealt with the International Volunteer Programs. We had a liaison with an office in Geneva, the International Secretariat for Volunteer Services, which was an international Peace Corps. We also were instrumental in getting started the UN Volunteer Program. What we did was to assist in developing international Volunteer Programs in these countries in which volunteers were recruited around the world to serve in various countries.

Q: This was a UN program?

WHITE: Both the UN and the international secretariat. The ISVS, the International Secretariat for Volunteer Services, was purely private. I shouldn't say purely private because we were providing funds to it. It was based in Geneva; it had a secretary general, and we provided one person for that office in Geneva. France, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, and the Netherlands also provided either staff or financial resources. This was an organization that actually monitored the activities of the international programs. The UN program was separate, just getting underway, but it had essentially the same objective which was to provide international volunteers for programs in developing countries.

Q: These were the UNVs. They worked in the UN offices though or were they actually working in the rural projects?

WHITE: In both.

Q: Were some of these programs multinational in terms of the teams of volunteers that went out? They went out as a group of volunteers together?

WHITE: That's right, they were all multinational.

Q: How did that work?

WHITE: It worked fairly well in some instances and in others there were some problems. I recall that we had some problems initially in Iran. I think that it worked well in Ghana. I think the experience at that time was mixed.

Q: Because of the inter-cultural issues among the volunteers and then there were the problems with the country that complicated it.

WHITE: That's right. But the concept was a good concept especially because you were getting volunteers, many of them from the developing countries themselves. They were having an experience of going to another developing country to work. I thought that was one of the great benefits.

Q: Was it a fairly large program?

WHITE: At that time it wasn't very large; the UN program was just getting underway towards the end of my term and the ISVS program, I think at that time, had projects in seven countries.

Q: You were the U.S. liaison with that group providing both the funding and the volunteers?

WHITE: That's right.

Q: Any other dimension to that work? Were we the prime movers in getting that

multinational program going?

WHITE: Meaning the U.S.? Yes we were. It was a Peace Corps initiative. We held meetings once a year at the Secretariat headquarters in Geneva to discuss programs and policy. The U.S. position at these sessions generally was to promote more involvement from the developing countries in the projects, while holding costs to the minimum. I believe that we were successful in this.

Q: Well then after that?

Assignment with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights - 1974-1980

WHITE: From there I went to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. There I was an Assistant Staff Director. I served there for five and a half years before coming back to AID.

Q: What were you concerned with on that job?

WHITE: For 2 ½ of those years I was the Director of the Office of National Civil Rights issues which dealt with the writing of reports and doing analyses of major civil rights problems in the United States. We looked at issues involving employment, housing, and education, and then wrote reports which were distributed to the Congress and the President. Occasionally there would be a press conference in which the findings would be aired. The final two years there I was director of an office that had three divisions: public affairs, community organizations, and again national civil rights issues. We continued to do the policy papers and the analyses, but we also worked with the regional civil rights committees. The commission had regional committees around the country. It was part of our responsibility to liaise with those offices.

Q: Were you working on any particular civil rights issue yourself?

WHITE: At one time I was assigned the task of doing the study on school desegregation. That was the landmark study the commission did back in '73-'74. That effort involved practically the entire commission at that time, and I was given the responsibility for directing it.

Q: Were there any particular aspects of that you were concerned with or concluded in that process?

WHITE: Well, at that time we were looking at the status of segregation in secondary schools throughout the United States. The findings at that time were that they were heavily segregated and that there was a direct relationship obviously between housing and school desegregation. We presented our findings to the Congress. They were controversial. There were a series of hearings that were held by the commission in connection with that study. I guess the most famous of those were the hearings that were held in Boston. They were quite controversial at the time, and there was a great deal of

resistance in some communities in Boston both to the presence of the commission holding hearings and, of course, the ultimate findings that came out. There were the resulting court orders in some jurisdictions around the country resulting in reestablishing school districts and setting up pilot schools. We didn't call them pilot schools in those days, we called them target schools, which drew students from various parts of the community. That was an experiment in some cities to provide some balance to the educational experience on the part of the students. That today, incidentally, is being disputed in some circles. Those were the efforts at that time based on the findings.

Q: It was a very significant report and had quite a big impact.

WHITE: We think it did.

Q: Did you travel around the country a lot presenting the report and doing the research?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: Did you find it pretty controversial wherever you went?

WHITE: Yes it was very controversial. Of course, it elicited a lot of mail which we spent a lot of time answering. It still is a controversial subject in our country, still one that requires a great deal of attention.

Q: Do you have any sense of movement or progress?

WHITE: That's a tough one to answer. There have certainly been studies which have shown that students in some segregated settings have actually out performed students who have been in integrated settings. I guess to those who argue against the whole concept of integration, this would seem to be a justification for them. But if you remember that prior to the 1954 decision by the Supreme Court, the segregated schools for the most part in this country did not have the resources that the other schools had so that it would have been impossible for those kinds of results to have endured. There are some exceptions. Some of the missionary schools established for blacks in the south, for example, provided every bit as good an education as the white schools in the south, if not better. The graduates of those schools did very well in their ultimate careers. But in terms of today and whether or not we're any better or further along, I just don't know the answer to that question.

Q: But that was an issue of the quality of the education rather than whether it was integrated or not, right?

WHITE: Yes. I think ultimately the country's going to come down on the side of quality of education, and I think that more and more people in the minority communities are taking the view that it is the quality that is more important and not necessarily whether the school is integrated. It's an observation with respect to the question on the quality of education. What we see happening in the country today - at least what I see happening

and, I think, probably most people would agree, is that communities more and more are focusing on the issue of quality rather than the intermixing of races in schools. While I think that's an important aspect of education, what we are experiencing in many communities today are minority communities taking issue with forced bussing, as they call it, and feel that it's better for their children to go to the neighborhood schools where they can walk, they're in close proximity, and that the attention and the focus should be on upgrading the quality of the education in that school or in those schools and those facilities rather than bussing them across town, getting up at ungodly hours of the morning and coming home late at night. We see a shift away from where the issue was prior to 1954. I think that probably we're going to come out eventually with the emphasis on quality of education.

Q: You're talking essentially about public schools.

WHITE: That's correct.

Q: What does upgrading quality mean? When you talk about improving quality, what does that involve?

WHITE: Primarily the availability of appropriate texts for the students, certainly the training of teachers. There is attention being focused today on the preparation of teachers. Recently in Massachusetts (I believe it was Massachusetts), there was an indication that a large proportion of teachers who had undergone training to be teachers couldn't pass the qualification test by the state. I think that schools are going to have to focus on upgrading the training and the ability of the teachers to teach as well as the texts that they're using.

Q: What does "appropriate texts" mean?

WHITE: I think texts that place emphasis not just on European history, but embrace history around the world, which bring to the fore the accomplishments, the achievements of people who were considered minorities and people who had been neglected by historians and educators in the past.

Q: Anything else on that?

WHITE: The facilities themselves. The school buildings need to be well equipped, certainly venues or locations for learning. I think more and more the modern buildings that are being constructed do promote that. I think that a lot of the older building here in the District of Columbia, for example, lack those qualifications. So, there has to be an emphasis there as well.

Q: Do you see this happening?

WHITE: Yes, I think it's beginning to happen. More and more states are turning their attention to that, but there is still resistance to higher taxation to build these facilities in spite of the fact that our education population (the children) is growing. I believe it comes

in part from the retired community, but not necessarily exclusively. That has to be overcome. I think that everyone has to recognize that we all have an investment in the future and that our children are certainly our greatest investment.

Q: Very good. Shall we move on?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: What period were you there?

WHITE: I was there for about five and a half years from 1974 to 1980. Then I returned to AID in 1980.

Q: What position did you go to?

Returned to USAID as Director, Office of International Training - 1980

WHITE: I took the position as Director of the USAID Office of International Training for AID.

Q: What did that involve?

WHITE: OIT, as it was called, involved the training of foreign nationals. These were people who came to the United States or went to a third country for training that was project related. Each of our AID projects in their respective countries generally had a training component to it. My office was responsible for facilitating the training of these people. We brought people in for various terms of training. Some came for very short term training ranging anywhere from six weeks to six months. We also provided long term training for participants ranging up to four years. Some of them went on to get baccalaureate degrees or even advanced degrees.

Q: Why were they called participants?

WHITE: Because they were actually participating in the projects and many of them were going to go back to their respective countries and administer those projects.

Q: What are some examples of the kind of training we were providing?

WHITE: It ranged from technical training to academic. We trained hydrologists, agriculturalists, agricultural technicians, academicians, people to administer business projects. It covered the entire spectrum of projects in which AID was engaged abroad.

Q: What were the major concentrations? Was there any area where the majority of them were trained?

WHITE: As I recall, the greatest number were in the technical fields. These were people

who were going to work specifically on irrigation projects or who would work on agricultural projects, that were going to participate in the building of dams, who were going to work in some production facilities in their countries.

Q: Were there any categories specifically excluded?

WHITE: I don't recall that there were any. We may have, but if there were, they would have been excluded at the mission level.

Q: What were you trying to do with the training program?

WHITE: We had local issues, internal AID issues. Some of the missions wanted to have a greater control over the training themselves. Some felt that the facilities that they were coming to train in may not have met their expectations. But I think that, by and large, the training that was provided was more than adequate for the participants. One, I suppose, overriding thought that we encountered was that some participants came to this country and didn't want to leave and sought ways to extend their training to somehow or other continue to stay in the United States. A corollary to that was that as some of them did acquire advanced training, they became very attractive to international organizations and to U.S. corporations, and sometimes did not go back or, if they went back to their respective countries, they didn't stay there very long because they were then hired away by international organizations. That was a problematic situation for AID.

Q: How did we deal with that problem?

WHITE: It was difficult to deal with. We obviously tried to discourage the extension of training. If there was a legitimate reason for a participant to stay on to acquire additional training, we would try to facilitate that. But for the most part, we made every effort to get them back to their country and tried to ensure that they were going to stay there. We had a follow-up program for the participants which attempted both to encourage them to stay in their respective countries working on their respective projects and to keep them abreast of developments in their field so that they were continually provided with technical information and dialogue with our office and with their training institution over a period of time.

Q: Were there differences between countries or regions in terms of those who returned or didn't return? Was there any pattern to that?

WHITE: It was hard to judge. We had a large number of participants, of course, from the Middle East and from Africa. But I think that probably an equal percentage from each of those regions wanted to stay here. I don't recall that there was any great difference in that respect.

Q: Where was the training office organization area in AID?

WHITE: We were under the Bureau of Science and Technology. It was not exactly the

most ideal fit, but that's how the reorganization of AID at that time left OIT.

Q: Why wasn't it ideal?

WHITE: I don't think that we were really involved in the science and technology aspects of the operations of that bureau to the extent that they were. Certainly some of our participants were pursuing science and technology courses, but that really wasn't where our focus was. But they had to fit us in somewhere.

Q: Where do you think it ought to have been?

WHITE: I would have preferred that the office had remained independent outside of any bureau.

Q: And report to the Administrator?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: Why would that be better?

WHITE: I think that we would have been less fettered by bureaucratic procedures and problems. The mere fact of bureau meetings that we were involved in and the numerous exercises that the bureau would undergo - we became involved in them despite the fact that we were not always directly related to those exercises. We had to participate. A great deal of time was taken up with bureaucratic matters that I think could have been avoided and more time and energy on the part of staff could have been devoted to the office's training operations.

Q: Were there any policy issues with this training or was it pretty well established and clear cut?

WHITE: I believe they were pretty well established. I don't recall at this point that there were major policy issues. International training had been going on for a long, long time within the organization. The only major problem that we were faced with about a year into my tenure was that because of budget constraints we had to downsize the operation and that presented some problems, some heartaches in terms of letting people go.

Q: Who actually administered the training? Did you have your own staff who did all of the work?

WHITE: The training was actually conducted by contractors.

Q: The arrangement of training was done by a contractor or by your office?

WHITE: By our office. We made the arrangements.

Q: But earlier on, I think it was done by staff.

WHITE: Yes, that's correct.

Q: What kind of contractors did you have to help with the administration?

WHITE: Certainly some of the contracts were administered through USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] and then there were independent organizations, the names of which do not come to mind at the moment. We had several that we dealt with. We had an arrangement with USIA [United States Information Agency] for the initial orientation of the participants. They handled their arrival in the country. Sometimes they came in through New York. Sometimes they came directly to Washington. USIA arranged to bring them into Washington and arranged for the initial orientation for them before they would go out to their respective training institutions. It was quite a well coordinated program for them.

Q: What was the scale? How many participants are we talking about?

WHITE: I believe we had somewhere between 1,200 and 2,000 a year coming in. I suppose if I went back and reviewed the records, it might vary quite a bit from that. But we had people coming in at various times of the year for different terms of training. So, it's difficult for me to remember whether in March of one year we would have 1,200 participants in country in various aspects of training and whether by November of that year we might have had 1,500 or 2,000. Some were coming and some were going all the time.

Q: How do you think the Agency received international training as a priority in its development programs? What was the atmosphere around this program?

WHITE: Initially, when I came in, I felt that there was a great deal of enthusiasm for international training. From my view, I've always felt that this was the sine qua non of international development. If we're out there to promote development and out there for the short-term, certainly not there on a permanent basis, we've got to have a legacy that we leave. The legacy is the trained people who run these projects and continue to administer them, who continue to govern long after AID has gone. I think, however, that as time went on (of course, we had an administration change while I was in that position.), the emphasis began to shift.

Q: When was that change?

WHITE: Between 1980 and 1982.

Q: It was the Reagan administration that picked up?

WHITE: Yes. I think that we saw that there was less of a concern about this and about a number of other vital issues in our country. Whether or not that was a direct result of a

policy shift at the administration level I don't know. But certainly we had to cut staff and there was a diminution of participants who were coming in. I think that the budget cuts that resulted that were apportioned to programs around the world certainly were a factor. But they may have all been a reflection of a change in emphasis or a shift in emphasis on the part of the administration.

Q: Did you have a feeling when budget cuts came along that training was sort of the first to get hit?

WHITE: I think so, yes.

Q: It's expendable.

WHITE: I think that was the view. It's unfortunate that projects that are more difficult to quantify are the ones that suffer the greatest. I think I made reference to this earlier when we talked when McNamara was Secretary of Defense and he instituted the program planning budgeting system. We were asked to quantify all of our projects. I mentioned to you that I was in the Peace Corps then. It was very difficult to quantify education projects in the developing countries. Certainly you can count up the number of textbooks that have been introduced and the number of students that have been taught, but you can't really quantify the impact that that education is having on those students because you're not going to see the results from that until many years later. The same thing applies with international training. In many respects, you can certainly count the number of participants that went through the program over a number of years, the number of projects that they went back to, the amount of money that was spent. That's all quantifiable. But in terms of the impact on those countries, you won't know the results of that for many years to come, if indeed ever you will. But you have to hope that not only the training, but the influence that was imposed upon those participants when they came here to the United States, the kinds of things that they inculcated into their subconscious that they took back, that influences the decisions that they make whether they're working for governments or private enterprises, whatever it is they're doing, one would hope that these are positives that are the results of what we have done. Since you can't readily quantify that, when it comes time to start cutting budgets, these are the areas that get cut.

Q: Were there any evaluations of the participant training during your time?

WHITE: I think there were, but just at the moment I can't recall.

Q: What was your own view of the importance of the training? Did you go out to the field? Did you see any projects? Did you see some evidence?

WHITE: I participated in several seminars, but did not have a great amount of time to visit the projects. I did that later when I was serving in another capacity. But the seminars that we held were primarily training seminars for our staff who were in the field. The feeling that I came away with from those was that the projects were working reasonably well. There were always problems that arose, but I think overall they were doing fairly

well. The Mission Directors seemed to be fairly well satisfied with what was going on. They felt that overall the training was effective. There were some who wanted things to be accomplished faster and wanted to develop their own training programs.

Q: What were these seminars about? What was the content?

WHITE: These were primarily administrative seminars to instruct our field staff on new policies and procedures and to also hear from them with respect to problems that they encountered to try to help them to resolve the issues that were arising in the field.

Q: By your time, were most of the training officers Foreign Service nationals or were they still Americans?

WHITE: I think most at that time were Foreign Service nationals. We had, I believe, a U.S. Foreign Service officer who was a training officer in Egypt at that time but in most of our sub-Saharan African countries, they were Foreign Service nationals, as well as in the Middle East. In fact, in Syria and Jordan, those were Foreign Service nationals. I think that perhaps Cairo was the only place where we did have at that time a U.S. training officer.

Q: So, these seminars were mostly for Foreign Service nationals?

WHITE: Yes, they were.

Q: What kind of impression did you have of them?

WHITE: Very, very committed, well trained, highly intelligent people. These were people most of whom had worked with the missions over a fairly substantial period of time, were familiar with the overall operation of AID and had a commitment to the programs, knew the local regulations and were familiar with policy. They were good people to work with.

Q: Do you have any general observations on the effectiveness of the international training program at AID?

WHITE: I think that while it's difficult to really measure the overall effectiveness, my feeling has to be that aside from the training itself, which I believe was in most cases very good, even in those cases where they didn't stay in their respective countries and went to work for international organizations, they were still making a contribution worldwide. They're still advancing, you might say, civilization, if I may be a little philosophical. But I think that the influence that we can have on participants or that we did have on them during their tenure here in the United States was a very positive one for the most part. I think that only time will tell in the long run whether or not this pays off, not only for the United States but for the world at large. But I can't help but think that the kinds of values that we hold here have rubbed off on a good many of these people and that those values are having a bearing on the kinds of things that they are doing in their respective roles

that they occupy today.

Q: You said for the most part, but are there any examples that come to mind where sometimes the training program didn't have a positive effect even though it may not have been the major feature?

WHITE: No, I can't say specifically what training programs may have fallen short of the goals. I think that what I really had in mind were some possible negative experiences that some participants may have had while they were here in the United States. Inevitably, that sort of thing happens. I think it was in the minority rather than in the majority because I believe that most communities were rather quick to assist with the handling of the participants.

Q: Do you have some specifics?

WHITE: There were organizations that we worked with around the country, volunteer groups, that made preparations for the participants who were coming into their cities who would be attending the institutions in their cities. They would host them in their homes. They would hold social activities for them to make them feel welcome and very much at home.

Q: What were the issues?

WHITE: I think that in some instances some of the participants (and these are very isolated incidents, but nevertheless, they happened occasionally in some communities) encountered negative situations primarily because they were seen as members of minority groups and felt some of the slings and arrows of discrimination. I think that this did not have a very positive effect on them. Hopefully those incidents were overridden by other positive experiences. I can remember thinking back to Kwame Nkrumah when he was here in the United States and the kinds of negative experiences that he had. I would imagine there were similar experiences for some of our participants as well.

I would hope that somehow or other that aspect of international development - i.e., international training - could be revived, could be sustained, and reemphasized. I do feel that that is one of the most important aspects of development.

Q: Do you think that with the change of times there would be a different focus or a different concentration? Would it be pretty much the same pattern?

WHITE: I think it's going to have to reflect the changes that are taking place in the world in terms of the kinds of training that would be required?

Q: Such as?

WHITE: More training for developing private enterprises and labor intensive business. More training in computer technology. An even greater emphasis on public health,

agriculture and water resources. And certainly, greater emphasis on developing and expanding local educational institutions and technical training centers that will prepare the future leaders, managers, and technicians in the developing countries to assume their roles of leadership and responsibility.

Q: You finished up there in 1982 and then what did you do?

Transferred to the Sahel, West Africa Office - 1982

WHITE: I went to the office of Sahel and West Africa Affairs. I don't know whether I should mention this, but when the administration changed, they made some interim changes in AID. My position at IT became politicized. It was no longer a Foreign Service officer position. So, I was called in one day by the Assistant Administrator and advised that I was going to have to find another position.

Q: You were a career officer at the time.

WHITE: Yes. As luck would have it, there was a position open at that time in the Africa Bureau. It was the Deputy Director's position in Sahel and West Africa Affairs.

Q: What was that program? What were we involved in there?

WHITE: We were focusing on the countries in the Sahel. These were the bilateral programs in Senegal, Niger, Chad, what was then Upper Volta, Mali, and the Gambia. These were largely agricultural development programs.

Q: What was the focus of that program? What were we trying to do?

WHITE: We were trying to prevent desertification in the Sahel. As you probably well know, the desert is a formidable challenge. The problem there was trying to prevent it from further encroaching upon the crops, livestock, and the well-being of the people who lived in those respective countries.

Q: Do any projects stand out in your mind that you were concerned with?

WHITE: Not at this moment.

Q: What did you see as your function?

WHITE: It was largely administrative.

Q: Administrative meaning what? What did you do?

WHITE: I was primarily running the office and directing the responses to the congressional inquiries. We had a great deal of work at that time answering requests to members of Congress. We also were responsible for preparation of the Congressional

Presentation.

Q: Do you remember any of the congressional issues? Were you involved on the Hill yourself?

WHITE: No, I wasn't involved on the Hill at that time. I was directing the preparation of the responses and the correspondence.

Q: Did you find that Congress was generally supportive of the program?

WHITE: Generally speaking, no. There was always pressure being exerted to cut the foreign aid budget, and the Africa region was usually hit the hardest. Since our program budgets for the Sahel tended to be smaller than those in other regions, any across-the-board budget cuts would hit us the hardest. There were few U.S. strategic interests there for which the Congress would be supportive.

Q: Did you travel in the Sahel?

WHITE: Yes, I traveled to Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, and Upper Volta.

Q: How did you find the situation in those countries?

WHITE: Trying, to say the least. I think that probably Senegal was doing better than most, but the problems throughout the Sahel were largely that there wasn't sufficient budget for the programs to accomplish their objectives. Our staff were feeling frustrated in terms of what they were trying to accomplish.

Q: Sufficient budgets?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: They were underfunded?

WHITE: Yes. They were frustrated. But the people nevertheless were committed, hard working, dedicated people.

Q: Was there any view about the extent of the training, the education of these people in the Sahelian countries?

WHITE: Basically, the people who had come to the United States for training were doing well in their projects. I think that the missions themselves were satisfied with the results of the participants.

Q: Do you think the scale of the effort was adequate?

WHITE: I don't know whether it was adequate, but I think that to the extent that they

participated, they were satisfied.

Q: Any other aspect of that work? You were there for how long?

WHITE: One year.

Q: Just one year. It was a relatively short time.

WHITE: It was, yes indeed.

Q: If you want to add something, you can. That was what year?

WHITE: '83.

Q: In '83, you moved on again.

Overseas in USAID/Pakistan - 1983

WHITE: I moved on to Pakistan. A new opportunity arose and I went back overseas.

Q: What was your position there?

WHITE: I was the Regional Affairs officer in Karachi.

Q: What does that mean?

WHITE: In Pakistan, the mission was headquartered in Islamabad. We had, as the embassy did, an office in Karachi. The U.S. consulate was in Karachi and the regional office for Sind province, which was a very large province in Pakistan, was there. I had a responsibility for the regional affairs in Sind, but then had a countrywide responsibility for private sector development. At that time, the mission was attempting to promote development in the private sector. We were undertaking efforts to bring in consultants from the United States and from other regions of the world to work with the Pakistanis on various projects.

Q: What projects were you working on?

WHITE: There was a community development project which involved setting up a development bank and several industrial development projects.

Q: Your private sector work was countrywide?

WHITE: That's right.

Q: And you were bringing in private consultants and so on to work with the government in setting up businesses? You mentioned the bank.

WHITE: Business enterprises, yes.

Q: How was the climate for promoting private business there?

WHITE: The climate seemed to be fairly conducive to that. At that time, General Zia, who was then President, was promoting private sector development. There obviously were issues involving Muslim law which created some problems in terms of how you set up a financial institution, set interest rates, etc., but overall, the climate was favorable. Obviously, there were people there who had their own special interests and wanted to take advantage wherever they could, but then that's true in any culture.

Q: You thought of the Pakistanis as people who had sort of an entrepreneurial spirit, that they picked up into business easily?

WHITE: Very much so. They're very business oriented. If there was greater stability there, I think it's a country that would be in a much stronger position economically than they are today.

Q: Then your other responsibilities covered programs in the Sind province?

WHITE: Yes, it was largely administrative.

Q: Do you remember the programs you had?

WHITE: We had a large warehouse where we housed all of the equipment and facilities, vehicles for the mission. We received all of the supplies, material, and commodities that came into the country.

Q: The import program.

WHITE: Right. They were processed there and we arranged for them to be transported to other parts of the country for the projects.

Q: These were not so much projects for the particular region as it was for servicing the mission, was that it?

WHITE: That's right.

Q: You didn't have any particular Sind district projects as such that you were overseeing?

WHITE: No. I worked very closely with the consulate general in Karachi.

Q: How did you find working in Pakistan?

WHITE: While there, a Gulf Air jet which had departed Karachi exploded prior to landing at its destination, due to a bomb that had apparently been placed in its cargo bay. One hundred eighteen passengers and crew lost their lives. Some months later, an Air France passenger jet took off from Karachi International airport with what was later determined to be plastique that had been placed in its cargo bay by terrorists. Fortunately, the detonation did not damage the cables controlling the ailerons and rudder, and the pilot was able to bring the plane back to the airfield and land safely. Still later, an Air Jordan transport departed Karachi International with what was later determined to be a suitcase bomb in its cargo bay. The detonation caused a fire in the cargo bay, but, again fortunately, the pilot was able to land the plane safely in Amman.

But unfortunately, while I was there, two of my colleagues were killed in an aircraft hijacking: Bill Stanford and Chuck Hegna. They were AID auditors for whom I had an administrative responsibility. They had gone out to Yemen with a third American to conduct an audit and were returning to Karachi when their plane was hijacked as it took off from Kuwait. The pilot was ordered to fly to Tehran where it landed at its international airport and remained on the ground for six and a half terror-filled days. We went through an agonizing and frustrating ordeal attempting to monitor developments via a "back-channel," but feeling helpless to intervene. The hijackers periodically released passengers until only the Americans and Kuwaitis remained. (They were demanding release of the terrorists whom the Kuwaitis had imprisoned for bombing the American embassy there the year previous.) They were subjecting them to torture. What we didn't know was that Chuck had been killed early on. He had been shot on the first day by the hijackers and his body thrown out of the plane onto the tarmac below. His identity remained unknown until the Swiss ambassador, who was representing U.S. interests at that time, cabled a description to us. We surmised from that description that it was Chuck, but we couldn't be certain because BBC had been reporting that it was a British Subject who had been killed. Ultimately and sadly, we learned that it was indeed, Chuck. Bill was mercilessly executed by the terrorists on either the fourth or fifth day. The hijackers were finally "captured" by Iranian troops who finally boarded the aircraft. I never learned of their disposition.

Q: You were very sensitive about the issue of terrorism.

WHITE: I am indeed. We had to check our vehicles every day, as many people have to do now in missions, before you get in and start them up. That was routine for us there.

Q: Was there any other part of the program there that you have some observations about? How did you find working with the government?

WHITE: In spite of all of the foregoing which shall remain with me for the rest of my life, there still were aspects of my tour that I felt were worthwhile. There are many dedicated, highly intelligent and committed people in Pakistan who are working extremely hard to bring about significant reforms for overall improvement and who also are seeking a rapprochement with India on such volatile issues as Kashmir.

Q: Did you socialize with them much? Was that possible?

WHITE: Yes, it was. The social activities were largely segregated. That is, when you went to an affair, the men were here and the women were over there and there was very little interaction between men and women. Nevertheless, they were very sociable. Considering that we were in a Muslim country, the fact that women were at the social affairs at all was significant

Q: Then you finished up in Pakistan when?

WHITE: In 1985.

Q: Did you have a new assignment?

WHITE: No, that's when I retired.

Returned in 1985 and post-USAID activities

Q: Let's talk a little bit about that in a minute. What kind of work did you go into?

WHITE: I did a number of things. I took a contract with Africare and went out to Ethiopia as the country director during the time of the drought in Ethiopia. I took a contract with WorldVision International and went out to Pakistan. I was working up on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border with refugees from Afghanistan. This was during the time of the Soviet occupation, the war actually. I did a stint up on Capitol Hill. Then I worked for five years at George Washington University at the Sigur Center for Asian Studies. I was a staff chief there. We did research on military, security, trade, and economic issues in the Pacific Basin.

Q: Let's go back to Africare and talk about that for a minute. What was the role you had with Africare? Africare is a private voluntary organization.

WHITE: Yes. We were operating, at that time, three primary health care centers in different parts of the country. We also were administering relief to many of the victims of the drought. We also were engaged in an irrigation project in the northern part of the country, in Mekele. That was primarily the mission there in Ethiopia.

Q: What were those projects contributing? Was the primary health care comprehensive? Was it in rural areas?

WHITE: In the rural areas. They were very, very basic, dealing with diseases arising from lack of sanitation and immunization.

Q: What about the staff then? Were these all Ethiopian?

WHITE: We had both Ethiopian staff and we had volunteers from the United States.

There were U.S. physicians who would volunteer a certain amount of their time, usually about three months, and registered nurses as well who came out for periods of six months to a year.

Q: Where were these centers located?

WHITE: One was in Masawa, down on the Red Sea in Eritrea. One was in Mekele. Actually, that was basically a field hospital. We handled some of the casualties from the war at that time there. One was in the south in Showa province, well south of Addis Ababa.

Q: How did you find managing these centers? Did they work?

WHITE: They were challenging, but they indeed worked.

Q: What were the issues you had to deal with?

WHITE: One of the basic issues was simply their proximity, getting out there to the projects. Roads were difficult to traverse. Getting supplies out to the centers for the staff was a problem. Logistics were a major problem. There were sometimes issues between different ethnic groups within the staff, conflicts that we had to try to resolve.

Q: They were under the Ministry of Health or were they private?

WHITE: These were private. We had project money coming from the United States. We simply advised the Ministry of Health of what we wanted to do and got their agreement. The personnel were people that we hired ourselves. In one or two cases, they may have been former Ministry of Health staff.

Q: Were these the only kind or was this a part of a pattern with health centers all over the country?

WHITE: These were unique as far as I could tell. The government at that time, either had not the resources or the interest, or perhaps both, to establish health centers in the more remote areas of the country.

Q: They provided a wide range of services?

WHITE: They were basic services. Immunization, treating diseases associated with lack of sanitation, and instruction on health and sanitation.

Q: Were general childcare services involved?

WHITE: There was some of that, but it wasn't very well structured. The Centers were established to deal with the overwhelming problems of disease and trauma that were there.

Q: And family planning?

WHITE: No, that was not a part of it.

Q: You were dealing with the refugee problem.

WHITE: We were providing grain, food supplies, and clothing to the refugees.

Q: Was this directly or were you working through some organization?

WHITE: No, we were doing this directly.

Q: In what areas were you doing it?

WHITE: In the north, in Mekele province as well as in Harrar and in Shewa provinces.

Q: These were refugees from where?

WHITE: These were Ethiopian refugees, people who had been displaced from their original places of living.

Q: By the drought, by the war?

WHITE: By both the drought and the war.

Q: I see. What was your policy about dealing with them in terms of how long you kept them or dealt with them?

WHITE: We were simply meeting their needs as they arose and as long as the supplies were available. If we got a shipment from Levi Strauss, if they were shipping clothing, then we would simply provide the clothing as long as it was available for them.

Q: The government had no problem with your working on this?

WHITE: They didn't seem to have a problem with it. It was helping the government actually, I think, in the long run. We were there to help the people, but not necessarily the government.

Q: How big a staff did you have?

WHITE: We had a core staff of a director, a Program Officer, a logistics officer, an accountant, a secretary, and a general - six people in Addis. Then we had a local staff in the field plus the doctors and the nurses. In Mekele, we had probably at any given time, seven or eight people at the center there. In Masawa, we had three. In Shewa, we had four to five people depending on the rotations of the doctors and nurses.

Q: Were you concerned with the question of the long term future of these centers or the sustainability that we often talk about?

WHITE: Yes, it was understood that these were going to be temporary facilities. The nature of their location and of the structures themselves were such that we did not expect them to be long term.

Q: They were all primary centers then.

WHITE: No, although the one in Masawa could have been because of the structure there that we were using. The projects themselves were sustainable only as long as we had contributions coming from the United States.

Q: So, there wasn't any particular plan to turn them over to the government or to somebody else who would pick up from there? It was sort of a short term service?

WHITE: Right.

Q: It met a particular need at the time.

WHITE: That's correct.

Q: Interesting. Were you involved in any training program?

WHITE: No, we didn't do any training at that time. There was on the job training that some of the local staff received. However, their effort was perceived by the local government as emergency, short-term.

Q: Do you know why these areas were selected?

WHITE: I think because of their remoteness and because of the perceived needs in those particular areas. They had not been reached by the government.

Q: Anything else on Ethiopia?

WHITE: Just sort of a footnote to that. My logistics officer ultimately came to the United States and went to engineering school here and is now making preparations to go back to Ethiopia. He wants to work there in his country. He received a degree in electrical engineering here.

Q: Good. In the Pakistan experience, you were again dealing with refugees, you said?

WHITE: That's right.

Q: What was the issue you were concerned with there?

WHITE: These were displaced Afghan refugees who had come across the border into Pakistan and were in refugee camps both in the areas of Quetta, which is where I was based, as well as outside of Peshawar in Pakistan. The attempt there was to provide the basic facilities for them: health and sanitation facilities, obviously try to make them as comfortable as was possible.

Q: How many refugees are you talking about?

WHITE: In the area of Quetta, there must have been 30-40,000. In Peshawar, there were half again as many. Huge numbers of people. I had gone out for WorldVision to set up the program.

Q: Was this the only program?

WHITE: No, there were other programs operating there. The problem that we ran into there was that WorldVision International is an evangelical organization. The Pakistani government had difficulty with that, and as a consequence threw up many roadblocks to the successful implementation of that program. Ultimately, it didn't work out.

Q: How long were you there?

WHITE: I was there initially for six months. I came back to the United States for consultation and then went back out again for three months to close out the operation.

Q: What kind of roadblocks did they put up? They let you in, obviously, to begin with.

WHITE: Yes, they let us in, but they were very, very subtle. First of all, we ran into a problem with the UNDP. I think there may have been simply a personality problem. The local director there didn't seem to want any other organizations in the area.

Q: Was UNDP providing the primary management?

WHITE: Right. I think that the personality of the person who was running that program was such that he just didn't like to have anybody else there. But whether or not that in any way influenced the provincial officials, I'll probably never know. But it became apparent that we weren't going to be able to successfully operate the program.

Q: Why did WorldVision want to go there compared to somewhere else?

WHITE: I guess that they felt that there was a very strong need to assist the refugees. To my knowledge, there was certainly no discernable attempt to do any proselytizing. The objective was to help, to provide assistance to the refugees.

Q: Were the refugees there indefinitely or were they temporary?

WHITE: They were there indefinitely.

Q: What kind of people were there?

WHITE: They were Pushtun and Tadzhik, and some Uzbek. I can't remember which groups predominated. But we had hoped to be able to help them to develop some cottage industries and to eventually facilitate their return to Afghanistan once the war ended. After returning to the United States for consultation, I was then trying to get a visa to go back. There was great difficulty in getting a visa here in the United States. So I was advised informally by an official of the Embassy of Pakistan to go to the U.K. and apply for a visa there, which is what I did. I was able to get back into the country and to close out the program.

Q: Did you have a staff there at all?

WHITE: It was local staff.

Q: You were the only outsider.

WHITE: That's right.

Q: Difficult. How was living there?

WHITE: It was all right. Pretty basic. Not exactly like living at the Ritz-Carlton.

Q: Then you moved on from there to the Sigur Center?

WHITE: No, I did a year up on the Hill.

Q: What were you doing on the Hill?

WHITE: I was the AA [administrative assistant] to Congressman Lou Stokes of Ohio.

Q: What kind of issues were you dealing with in that role?

WHITE: The entire spectrum. I was the Congressman's staff chief and had the responsibility for directing the flow of paper and for assigning the staff to legislative issues, for representing him at meetings, seminars, speaking engagements, and for handling special assignments.

Q: Were there any particular legislative issues that Stokes was concerned with that you got involved in?

WHITE: Not specifically. We had on our staff, legislative affairs personnel who specialized in particular areas of concern, for example, health, education, law, economic development, welfare, etc. It was my responsibility to ensure that the issues were properly researched by staff and that the Congressman was fully briefed before going into

Committee sessions or onto the floor for debate. In addition, there was a perpetual flood of correspondence from constituents that the Congressman felt a keen responsibility to answer. It was my job to manage the preparation of those responses for his signature.

Q: How did you like that kind of work?

WHITE: I liked it very much. It was very challenging, very demanding. It's a 24 hour job.

Q: I can imagine. Were your colleagues and some of the other staff trying to push legislation through?

WHITE: The Congressman himself would take a direct role in that. He was primarily interested in health, education, and economic development issues.

Q: Were there any major events you were concerned with during that time?

WHITE: It seemed as though every event was a major one. At least your constituents thought that was the case.

Q: You did that for a year or two?

WHITE: For a year.

Q: Then you decided that you had had enough and would try something else?

WHITE: Yes. It was time for me to leave. There were some family problems that I had to deal with.

Q: So, you went to the Center for Strategic Studies?

WHITE: The Sigur Center for Asian Studies at George Washington University. The Sigur Center was named after Gaston Sigur, who was the National Security Advisor for East Asian Affairs under President Reagan. He had also been Assistant Secretary of State in the Bush administration for East Asia and the Pacific. He had always been on the faculty at GW, but he served in government during the Reagan and Bush administrations. Then he came back to the Center in 1992.

Q: What were the studies that you were doing?

WHITE: We were doing research on military security, trade, and economic issues in the Pacific Basin. The Center was primarily set up to deal with East Asian studies, focusing on Japan, China, the Koreas, and Taiwan. But then it gradually expanded its focus to the entire Pacific Basin. The Center examined the strategic issues vis-a-vis China, the U.S., and Japan. We undertook a trilateral project, a study, which looked at those issues as they affected those three countries. This involved scholars and government officials from the three countries. We held workshops and conferences in Beijing, Tokyo, and Washington.

We rotated these meetings over a period of three years.

Q: Were there large numbers of people involved?

WHITE: Not large numbers. The workshops involved six representatives from each country, a total of 18. The conferences involved 12 for a total of 36.

Q: These were all university-type people?

WHITE: No, they were not. Some were scholars from universities, but some were government officials. We also had some people from the private sector here in the U.S.

Q: They were able to communicate together pretty well?

WHITE: Yes, they were. One interesting aspect of that particular project was that the Chinese delegation did not want to include Taiwan on the agenda. As a matter of fact, they almost walked out of the very first session we had because one of the Japanese participants raised the issue of Taiwan.

Q: How did you resolve that?

WHITE: It was resolved by agreeing that Taiwan would not be on the agenda, but that in fact it had to be discussed with respect to the whole range of issues involving the three countries, and that if you were going to talk about the U.S.-Japan defense agreement, talk about China and Japan relations, then you were going to have to somehow or other include issues regarding Taiwan at some point, but it would not be a formal agenda item in that sense.

Q: Did you come up with conclusions or resolutions? Were there reports that came out?

WHITE: Yes, there was a report that was published at the conclusion of the project. It identified the issues and the areas where there was agreement and where there was not agreement.

Q: What was the fundamental agreement or disagreement?

WHITE: The delegates from the three countries agreed that no set of relationships is more important to the future stability of the Asia-Pacific than those of the United States, China, and Japan. They concluded that both the historical record over the century since 1895, and the contemporary strategic and economic balance in the region, clearly demonstrate that these three Asia-Pacific powers define whether East Asia lives in peace or conflict. The disagreement, of course, arose with respect to Taiwan. China maintains that this is a domestic issue and is not a matter that is to be resolved by the three nations.

Q: Taiwan was a major difference? Were there other areas where there were differences?

WHITE: There was concern on the part of China with the renegotiation of the U.S.-Japan alliance. That has implications for China. On the other hand, Japan was very concerned with the growing military capability of the PLA (People's Liberation Army) of China. That was an unresolved issue. China maintains that the statistics that were, I think, published by the Rand Corporation, which showed a rather large growth in the PLA, were not accurate. In fact, their forces, China insists, are there purely for defense purposes and not for hegemony.

Q: Was the State Department involved in this?

WHITE: Not in these particular projects. We have had State Department involvement in some of our conferences. The Center co-sponsored with the Yomiuri Shimbun of Japan an eight nation conference annually in which we examined similar issues, military, security, trade, and economic. The State Department was involved in those sessions. We had the Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific and the Deputy Secretary participate in some of those conferences. Members of Congress also were involved. Those meetings alternated annually between Washington and Tokyo.

Q: What was your role in these conferences?

WHITE: My role was administrator, being responsible for organizing these conferences.

Q: Were there any particular issues that you had to deal with in that process?

WHITE: They were largely issues of ego when I had to tell some of the participants that their papers had to be cut down or they had to be modified. Then there were just the simple logistics issues of getting people to their locations. But I did not have any major issues.

Q: What do you think the impact of these workshops, seminars, and conferences was on relations among the countries and addressing these issues?

WHITE: I think that they had a very positive impact by bringing together people who normally would not have an opportunity to meet, to sit down and to communicate with one another. On those projects that were longitudinal, that went on over a period of years, a certain kind of cohesiveness began to develop among the participants. That, I think, has long range implications because we had people involved from China from some of the strategic institutes there, people who do play influential roles in military and security affairs. By bringing together these kinds of people in these settings, we were able to facilitate a clearer understanding among their counterparts and, I think, a greater understanding of personalities and individuals. I just think that overall this was very positive.

Q: What about some of the topics? Were they able to get some consensus going on some issues that would have eased some of the tensions that might have occurred from

misunderstandings?

WHITE: Yes. As an example, in regard to conditions on the Korean Peninsula, the participants agreed strongly on the need for the three powers to consult and cooperate closely together in order to avoid exacerbating the current difficult situation. They shared their assessments of the current situation, especially regarding conditions in North Korea, and shared their recommendations on appropriate responses by the three powers. While their assessments of North Korea's internal situation differed, there was substantial agreement that the U.S.-Japanese-Chinese responses to the current situation should be coordinated and should seek to stabilize North Korea.

Q: They're still going on, I assume?

WHITE: This particular project is now waiting for additional funding and hopefully will be continued.

Q: Who gives the funding?

WHITE: The U.S.-Japan Foundation was the principal funder for that project and the Japan Foundation is another possible contributor for a future project. We also had a conference which dealt with the Korean Peninsula. We brought over from North Korea eight participants from that government in April of 1996. This was the first time that such a high ranking delegation had been here in Washington, I think, in many years. That particular conference focused on economic issues vis-a-vis the Korean Peninsula and examined the long-term prospects for reunification of the two Koreas. I think it was a very successful conference.

Q: Good. Was there any other aspect of that work? You retired fairly recently from that.

WHITE: Yes, I did.

Observations on experience in domestic and international development

Q: You've had such a rich background of both domestic and international work and so on. What kind of lessons would you think come out of this in terms of working in the international setting, working with other countries, working in development? What kind of things come to mind as being important?

WHITE: I would say that certainly the kind of issues that one deals with in the international realm are very, very similar to what one would encounter on the domestic side. Basically, people have needs. Those needs have to be met and there are often factors which inhibit the meeting of those needs. So, one has to seek ways to resolve those problems, those issues. Whether you're on the domestic side or on the international side, those issues, I think, are basically the same. Human nature has not changed over time. If you go back to even biblical times, you're finding the same issues that continue to resurface.

Q: What kind of issues should we be concerned about?

WHITE: Issues of meeting basic requirements of food, shelter, and clothing. Those are very basic. But then you've got all of the emotions that people deal with of greed, the seeking of power and control. Those are issues that transcend time and territory. We have to be creative in how we meet these issues and how we attempt to resolve them.

Q: Is there a particular approach or something that you find works when you try to deal with some of these tensions and emotions?

WHITE: I think that in approaching them, one has to try first to understand the setting from which these problems emerge. The individuals that you are dealing with, it's important to understand their origin, where they come from. Once you've gained a basic understanding of the individual and his or her culture, you can then begin to gain the confidence of the individual and it's possible, in my view, to then together begin to work out resolutions to the problems. It's not an easy process. It's not a process that occurs rapidly. But I think that it can be a very successful one. But the important thing is to establish rapport with the individual. I don't think that you can resolve a problem through force. I think that that has been one of the hard lessons that individuals and nations have yet to learn, if ever they will learn. To be able to gain the confidence of someone else, of another country, you have to understand the individual, the culture.

Q: Any tactics you use in trying to do that? What do you do?

WHITE: The first thing in trying to understand a person or a region or a country is to learn about it, to study it. I think that we certainly do that here in the United States. That's what the Foreign Service Institute is all about. I think also that I, at least, try to understand myself. I don't think that we focus enough on who we are and what makes us operate as we do. I think that as one begins to understand oneself, one is better equipped to understand others. From this juncture, you can then move on to gaining the confidence of the individual and move on to a resolution of the problems.

Q: Any other dimensions of your experience in terms of the lessons of working in managing different types of programs and so on?

WHITE: I think that patience is of great importance, is perhaps the paramount virtue in terms of working with other people. Recognizing that when you are attempting to bring about change in individuals, you are often working against tradition which has prevailed for generations. It is extremely difficult for people to change.

Q: How do you bring about change in the individual? It takes patience, but then what do you do?

WHITE: You have to demonstrate the benefits of the change. There are examples of what we've done in development along those lines. You just have to prove what you're trying

to get them to do has benefit and will produce better results for them than what they have previously been doing. Here again, patience is important. Sometimes, your demonstration may not be very convincing. So, you have to try again.

Q: Do you think those characteristics are evident in the foreign assistance programs you associated with?

WHITE: To some extent, they were. I think that the problem that we've had is that the individuals in the program itself have been well intentioned and have had the right attitudes. At the same time, we have to deal with a Congress that is very impatient and very politically oriented. People in development find themselves caught in this dilemma in which they've got to produce results in a finite period of time, which isn't always possible. As a consequence, in order to try to do this, they then begin to work against their best interests and the best interests of the people in the countries in which they're working. That's one of the basic dilemmas.

Q: What is your view of the overall effectiveness of the U.S. supported foreign assistance program as you've seen it over the years?

WHITE: Overall, I think it has been quite effective.

Q: How would you characterize that?

WHITE: In terms of the development itself that has taken place in countries around the world, going all the way back to the Marshall Plan, I think that we've seen the results of development. It's been scattered though. There are regions of the world in which, I think largely because of lack of adequate resources on our part, it has not worked as well. But I think that overall the foreign assistance program has proven successful. I think that we have been rather parsimonious in terms of what we have been willing to contribute as a portion of our national budget to foreign aid. I would like to see that change.

Q: Is there any particular aspect of the development business where you think foreign assistance has been especially effective?

WHITE: I think in general it has been effective certainly in agricultural development. I've seen evidence of that in various parts of the world. But I think overall that our assistance has worked well.

Q: How have you felt about your experience in working in foreign assistance programs?

WHITE: I feel very positive about my experience. I think probably when one makes a contribution to anything, one tends to receive more from that than what one has actually given. That certainly has been my experience. The cultural enrichment that I have received from interaction with people in various parts of the world, there is nothing that can equate with that in terms of my experience. I think I've been a great beneficiary of it.

Q: Do you have any other last comments at this point?

WHITE: Aside from having been honored to have had the opportunity to participate in the foreign assistance program and in this project itself, I think that perhaps that's about it.

Q: Good. This has been an excellent interview. Thank you very much.

End of interview