

BERMUDA

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VIRGINIA HAMILL BIDDLE Clerk/Typist (1946-1947)

Mrs. Biddle was born in Nebraska and raised in Missouri. She was educated at Briarcliff Manor Finishing School in Westchester County, New York. In 1930 she was married to Charles W. Biddle. Joining the Foreign Service in 1946, she began her long and interesting career as Clerk/Typist at the US Consulate in Bermuda. Subsequent foreign postings include Tangier, Paris, Bangkok, Palermo and Rome. Mrs. Biddle conducted her self interview in 1994.

Q: You called on the American consul in Bermuda. Did you know him?

BIDDLE: No, I'd never been to Bermuda, and I knew that when you go to a foreign country you call on the consul. You do that in any foreign country. It was habit.

Q: Right.

BIDDLE: Well, it was after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, you see. I was in the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Q: You were in Hawaii at that time?

BIDDLE: Oh, yes, I was living in Honolulu. Then we were bombed. So I left about...Oh, all of that's quite a story. I have a little book I wrote about it. Well, there's so much to tell you to give you a background of everything.

How it all happened was that I was living in Honolulu for about seven years. I loved the islands and that was one reason I went there, and I did know friends there. Then, of course, we were bombed. I had already booked passage, though, before the bombing because I had a feeling

something was going to happen from different angles, and so I thought, well, if there is anything serious, there'll be a stampede at the steamship office and I'd better book for the mainland and so I did, [book passage] on the "Coolidge" coming up from the Orient. December, I guess it must have been. This was, of course, back in 1941, wasn't it?

Q: Yes.

BIDDLE: Then, of course, we were bombed, and nobody knew what happened to the Coolidge because it had zigzagged down and around to the Philippines and then was late coming in.

Q: This was your ship, the "Coolidge," that you were going on.

BIDDLE: Yes.

Q: Oh, I see. All right.

BIDDLE: So I didn't know if they'd take me or not because I knew they'd take the wounded. I was prepared then to ask if they'd take me as a nurse's aide. Anyway, I was going home on the bus one evening when I...Oh, I've got it all written up. It's all written up in a little book about how I happened to...I was taking, in the springtime, Red Cross lessons. Then when the bombs fell, I saw two of my friends when I rushed out to buy a paper. They said, "Oh, our first aid station is being set up over at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel." So I rushed over to join the mobilization. The Royal Hawaiian was only a step from where I was living in my little house.

Do you know the island, Oahu?

Q: Yes, I lived in Honolulu for a while. Yes, I know exactly what you're talking about.

BIDDLE: Waikiki.

Q: Yes.

BIDDLE: You know where Gump's was. Well, I lived kitty-cornered from it. And it was a tiny little place I fixed up à la Tahitian after I'd come from Tahiti because that gave it a little cachet. [laughter] It's easier to talk now because you understand what I'm saying.

Q: Yes, and I was just in Hawaii last year.

BIDDLE: Oh, really!

Q: Yes, on Oahu and Maui.

BIDDLE: My dear, you like it, too, didn't you?

Q: Oh, yes!

BIDDLE: I loved it. Well, I rushed over to the Royal and signed up. They gave me an armband and said, "Come back at three o'clock." I had a job then at the newspaper office. Not that I was a newspaper woman, but I had a job in the cashier at the Star Bulletin.

I was trying to explain about that ship. I was coming home on the bus from my job and that ship came alongside. You know how it does. Everybody wondered what it was because it was all blacked out. I knew it. I knew it. I recognized it because I had gone to the Orient on her the year before. Anyway, I dashed down to the steamship office the next morning. When I walked in, before I said anything, the girl there said something about no space, only taking the wounded. "Anyway," she added, "I suggest you wait for the agent." Of course, I did; and he said, "Do you want your ticket?" And I said, "Do you mean to say I can have it?" And he said, "yes, board the ship; she sails without notice;" and handed me the ticket! So I rushed home. I was mostly packed; but then I realized my Japanese laundress hadn't returned my laundry. She always brought it to me, but they were rounding up all the people they feared were fifth column people, and she was afraid to come out! So I had to go and find her.

Well, I did, and I saw my laundry hanging on the line. I put it all in a paper bag and dashed to the ship. We went out in a convoy. I wrote it all up. What a sad, happy departure that was, so unlike any other from that lovely island famous for its sentimental strains of "Aloha" and fragrant leis. Nothing like that. Nobody allowed on the pier to wave goodbye. But I'll show you that little book I wrote, maybe.

I came to Washington because Mildred, my married sister, was living here in Georgetown, and plunged into war work. Then I was working for the Russians and taking Russian lessons as well as doing nurse's aid work in the evenings at the hospital.

Q: How did you happen to be working for the Russians?

BIDDLE: Well, it just happened to be a job. I just took anything that presented itself.

Q: Was that at the Russian embassy?

BIDDLE: Yes, I think it was. No. Purchasing Commission. That was it. It was the Russian Purchasing Commission, and we were working on the manifest. We were all palsy-walsy then, you know. Sending things, helping out.

After the war was over, my darling brother-in-law died. Jim Trimble, my sister's husband. He had cancer. In the meantime, I had several jobs really during that period; and one job was at a girls' boarding school down in Florida. Someone wanted to know if I'd like to go to Florida for the winter. There was a job opening [laughter] at a girls' boarding school in the old Rockefeller estate in Orlando. I went there for that period. Then when summer came I got a job up at Lake George, at a hotel. Oh, I'll never forget hearing Chopin being played on those tourist boats when I was getting news that my brother-in-law was dying. That was a sad period.

Finally, my sister called and said, "It's the end now." So I hurriedly came and he was then at the hospital that is now the Russian compound. It was St. Albans hospital before the Russians took it

over. Poor dear Jim. At first he didn't know I was there. Then Mildred and I kept saying, "Jim, Virginia's here." We tried to let him know that I was there. Finally, he just smiled a faint smile, "Oh, hello. How are you?" That was the last word he said. He died on his birthday, eighth of September 1945.

I was terribly sad about that because I adored my brother-in-law. Anyway, I stayed on. That was September, and I stayed on through January. Then on one very cold, snowy day, I booked passage for Bermuda because I missed the palm trees in Honolulu. So I thought, well, I'll go to Bermuda. So I got on a ship and went to Bermuda. I was armed, though, with a lot of letters of introduction.

So I called on the consul because I knew that was just what I should do, and he was a charming gentleman, Clay Merrill, a fatherly type in tweeds. I was just sitting there calmly chatting, and I just said very casually, "I think I'd like to find a job." And he said, "Can you type?" "Oh," I said, "Yes, I can type."

Then, I had a letter from my sister's father-in-law, who was the Honorable South Trimble, who was Clerk of the House for forty years and had written me a nice letter of recommendation if I ever wanted to look for a job. I said to Mr. Merrill, "I have a letter here from the Honorable South Trimble. Would you like to see it?" And he said yes; so he did. He looked at it and I thought he'd never look up again. He just pored over that letter, only a few lines, but they were nice things, you know. [laughter] Anyway, he finally said, "See my secretary". So I went in to see the secretary and she ironed out a salary for me, and I was launched then into the Foreign Service, of which I knew nothing, absolutely nothing! [laughter] But I had a job! I did have an offer of another job somewhere, but I thought, Oh, well, this one sounds like it might have a future. Little did I know! [laughter]

Anyway, I started by relieving the colored messenger boy as a receptionist! [laughter] I was staying in the lovely home of a Bermudian family and I wheeled down on my bicycle every morning with some violets which I put into the empty inkwell to cheer up the applicants when they came in. [laughter]

And then I pored over that manual, that great big, black manual, telling me what it was all about. Well, it was a small staff, and so I was then placed into the passport section occasionally, or the visa section, or whatever there was to do; so I got a general idea of the whole office. I was fascinated by the work and stayed late at night working very hard.

About a year and a half later, I think, I was due for a leave and went to America with one suitcase. When I walked into the State Department, these girls got up and said, "Why we thought you were in Quito!" I said, "Quito! Where's that?" And they said, "Well, your orders must have passed you on the way!" We were going by ship everywhere then. So I said, "Well, for goodness sakes!" [laughter] Then they said almost rapidly, "You'll have to take a test!" I said, "A test? Why?" They said, "Because of the altitude."

So I took the test, and they said I passed it, but I turned blue. So they said, "Now we're going to send you to a lovely place on the Mediterranean." I said, "Where's that?" The answer was

Tangier, Morocco. That sounded better. Mildred and I got down all the National Geographics of that other place, Quito; and I thought to myself, Well, I don't like all those women with derby hats on anyway! [laughter] Then we put those away and got down ones on Tangier that night. Then I said, "Well, I have to go back to Bermuda. I only came with one suitcase." They understood that and, of course, said yes.

So I went back. I kept waiting and waiting and waiting for my orders, and finally, I wrote a letter. And I thought, well, I had the nerve to do that at that early stage of my career. [laughter] I wrote directly to the girl in charge of personnel, I guess, and told her that I had been waiting some time and wondered if perhaps I could come to Washington and work at the State Department and be doing something there until I could get passage. Back came a telegraphic reply: Be on the "Mauritania" on such-and-such a date. So they had booked me immediately after they got my letter, on the "Mauritania." My goodness, that proved something!

Anyway, I got there and got on the "Mauritania" and found myself sitting at the same table with the Duke and Duchess de Richelieu. [laughter] My sister had come to see me off and introduced me to some senator or somebody. So after the ship sailed, sitting at dinner with the Duke and Duchess de Richelieu and another lady--I didn't know, of course, who they were at that moment. Then when this senator came over from the captain's table to introduce his wife to me, I had a few words with her and off she went. So I turned to this little man, the Duke, not knowing who he was, really, and I said, "I'm sorry I couldn't introduce you, but I didn't know your name." And he said, "Richelieu." "Oh," I said, "the Duke de Richelieu?" "Yes!" was his reply. And that was his wife. The woman sitting to my right, who happened to be called Mrs. Wolfe, sputtered away in French to him when she heard who he was. She hadn't know either because we were all just aboard. [interruption]

Well, anyway, dear, let me get on with this because I've got a lot to show you.

Q: I know you do. We have all afternoon.

BIDDLE: Well, that's good. I'd like to get the background clear.

Q: Yes.

BIDDLE: Now let me just try and get on with it.

Q: The woman was speaking in French to the Duke.

BIDDLE: Oh, yes. Yes, yes. The duchess then took me out on the deck after dinner and walked around and she explained to me why she sputtered French so excitedly to her husband. She said, her husband...

Q: Mrs. Wolfe's husband.

BIDDLE: ...had gone to see the Duke the night before he committed suicide. Mrs. Wolfe, of

course, never saw him again, and wondered what had transpired between her husband and the Duke. That's why she got so excited and wondered, then ... I guess she was asking him about that matter. I think there must have been something happening at that time. That was nineteen, oh, dear, forty-seven, I think. I don't know. I never heard anything more after that.

GEORGE S. VEST
Vice Consul
Hamilton (1947-1949)

Ambassador George Vest was born in Virginia in 1918. He graduated from the University of Virginia and served in the military during World War II. Ambassador Vest joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Bermuda, Ecuador, Canada, and Washington, DC. He was Deputy Chief of Mission and ambassador to the European Community, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and Director General of the Foreign Service. Ambassador Vest was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Well, your first post was you went to Hamilton, Bermuda. Is that right?

VEST: Yes.

Q: You were there from 1947 to '49. I'm going to concentrate more on the latter part of your career, but here was what might seem to be the ideal assignment. In fact, almost too ideal. I know when I came into the Foreign Service, somebody asked me what I'd like to be and I said, "Oh, I'd like to be an ambassador." But I was thinking underneath, "Consul general of Bermuda really sounds like a nice place to be." I didn't know anything about it. Was this a positive experience or not?

VEST: Stu, I'd have to say it was--I don't know how to describe it, but I'd have to just talk a little bit about it because it was one of the most important experiences I had in the Foreign Service.

My wife and I had only been married that June. We went there in September to Bermuda. The people were as friendly as could be, and then it's a beautiful place and all the rest. It's the only extremely disagreeable, difficult post I've ever had in my Foreign Service. Now, why? I show my prejudice here. I very much disliked the consul, and I think he deserved my dislike. Very firmly, without going into details, he was a man of another generation, so extraordinary that in our regular Foreign Service world, it could never have happened. This is the case of someone left over during a wartime. And, without going into details, he was very difficult.

Q: Could you give some illustration of what the problem was?

VEST: Okay, a couple of illustrations. He was very old school, and, for example, the secretaries were a group of nice, young women. And one day, for example, he came to the door of his

office--they were in a pool right there in front of him--and he said to me, "Mr. Vest, I can't think what's happening to the Foreign Service. Look at those young women. There is Olson, dumb Swede." Miss Olson was sitting there. "Geisweit, dirty German; Jerzack, stupid Pole." He went right on through, and every one of those young women could hear what he was saying about them. I mean, this is a very oddball. That just illustrates the kind of prejudice that went on inside that man.

This was still a period when black-white relationships were very sensitive and uncertain in our own country, and certainly very delicate in Bermuda. But his instructions were very clear. Never issue a visa to a black Bermudian without checking it out and getting the proper permission from the white Bermudian who really keeps an eye on him. But I didn't feel I could really live that way.

There were many, many things like that. This was an oddity of life. His wife was a former fortuneteller, and she would look at the stars in the night and tell him what he was to look out for the next morning. He would come in the morning and call me up and say, "Mr. Vest, I don't want to speak to any dirty foreigners today." Well, it's hard to be the consul general and not speak to foreigners. [Laughter] It was weird, and the office was just a hot bed of anxiety and hostility.

The secretaries did not speak to each other. He had managed to have his former secretary made into a vice consul, and he tended to try to run everything through her. He alienated her at some point, and then she was a very fair colleague for me as a new vice consul. He never gave me any instructions. He waited until each time I made a mistake and then he noted it down, and once a month at the beginning of the month, he sent in a confidential report on all of my inadequacies and mistakes. The reason I knew about it was this other vice consul, who had come to like me, quietly showed them to me. So once a month I knew that every mistake I made was being sent to the Department of State. [Chuckles] It was a totally hostile environment, and my wife and I had a challenge. We were not sure to what extent this was really like the Foreign Service.

Q: And you really didn't have much of a chance there. You were fairly isolated to compare people with other people.

VEST: We had no basis of comparison. In fact, a couple of senior Foreign Service officers came down and lived with the consul, who had a quarter of a million dollar official residence. They lived in the guest house and they came in to see me. They more or less said you're going to have to learn to do things the way the consul general wants them done, or you can never go ahead in the Foreign Service. Well, I wasn't about to do things the way the consul general wanted them. I hadn't fought World War II to live that way, nor had my wife and I, who had very strong backgrounds. My father was a minister and her father was a former Presbyterian missionary in China who had become the librarian at the University of Virginia and also taught at Princeton. I mean, our parents didn't raise us to give way on certain fundamental principles.

In the end, the situation exploded, and the director general--my first experience with the director general--one day got off the plane and refused to stay with the consul general, stayed in a hotel, interviewed every single person in the office. And at the end, told the consul general, "You will leave within two months to go to another post."

The consul general's unreality was shown in the fact he said, "I've always wanted to be ambassador to New Zealand." Then the word came, he was sent to be the consul in Gibraltar, with one person working for him. So, obviously, they'd gotten the picture of this man back in Washington, which later I learned from John Burns, a subsequent director general, who told me he had been working on British colonial possessions and they were very well aware that something was wrong, but they didn't know what.

I was then told I would leave later, and I stayed on for oh, maybe, five months more. And the director general said, "And you were not a positive factor in a very difficult situation"--which I think was quite true--"and you will be sent to a hardship post and we'll see what it is. Normally, we'd select you out, but under the rules, you're entitled to be reviewed and judged by another senior officer."

So then my wife and I were sent in '49 to Quito, Ecuador, which we loved. [Chuckles] That was our punishment. But the real thing was, we were terribly fortunate. Our difficult post was our first post. I had the kind of backing from her and we had the kind of background which made us survive it and be quite ready that we were going to live by our standards and what we thought someone should do when they represented our country regardless. And if you couldn't stay in the Foreign Service doing it that way, we'd get out. Well, it was sort of the first time when I was prepared to quit, and periodically in life, you have to be prepared to quit.

JOHN P. OWENS
Consul General
Hamilton (1980-1982)

John P. Owens was born in the District of Columbia in 1927. As a Foreign Service officer he served in Italy, Venezuela, Greece, Finland, Sweden, Bermuda and Washington. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: Then you went to Hamilton for your last two years?

OWENS: That's right. From '80 to '82. It didn't turn out to be a full two years because, after I'd been there about a year and a half, a congressional delegation came down led by a White House functionary by the name of Max Friedersdorf, who was the White House liaison to Congress, and he had been very instrumental in getting the AWAC purchase, the aircraft sale to Saudi Arabia.

Q: It's the Early Warning Airborne military aircraft?

OWENS: That's right, for the Saudis, which was considered very important for the administration, and for our defense interests in the Middle East. I remember one of the Congressional staffer saying: "Pay attention to this man. He's very important." And so, as one does with Congressional Delegates, wined and dined them, and made everything very pleasant for them. Had parties with the Premier and others. In any event, some months later I suddenly

got a call from Alan Holmes who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of EUR. "Oh, I've got some bad news. The White House has decided to politicize the Bermuda position and Max Friedersdorf wants it. The White House is going to announce it. "Well, how can that be? It's always been a career officer... I still have my tour to finish." "Well, sorry about that. We've argued against it, but the White House is adamant. We want to give you this advance notice, but we don't expect this imminently." Well, that afternoon I got a call from CBS saying: "What's your reaction? We heard that Max Friedersdorf is going to make this a political position." So I said: "Too painful to talk about. I don't want to talk about it." That evening on CBS, it stated that the present Consul General, John Owens, when told that he was leaving his fourteen acre estate, on the beach at Paget Bermuda, said that it was too painful to talk about. Someone in AFSA picked this up, and said, "How could you say this?" I certainly didn't say that it would be painful for me to be leaving this fourteen acre estate. I obviously did not want to dispute publicly the politicizing of that position. AFSA did make a weak protest, however. They were assured by the then Deputy Secretary that this was a one time affair because of the unique services that Max Friedersdorf had performed, that it would return to the career officer position in the future. Of course, that did not happen. As a matter of fact, the White House did a rather atrocious thing. After Friedersdorf had been there a year, he accepted a position as chief of international public relations for Pepsi Cola. But he said, "You know, this might not work out, so..." They kept the seat warm for him and sent a succession of Acting Principal Officers, none of whom could be actually certified as Consul General. It would be the British Government which would grant that since Bermuda is still a colony. So eventually after about a year and a half, it didn't work out with Pepsi Cola, and Friedersdorf came back for another year or so. And then after he left, it was given to another semi-political appointee, Jim Medas who was a California lawyer who had helped in the Bush campaign. And now, it is held by another political appointee, Ebenezer Gaines, a golfing companion of Dan Quayle. So, I suspect, unless the administrations change, it will never go back to the career officer position.

Q: What, while you were there for that short time, were your principal concerns?

OWENS: Well, the principal concerns were...And I found being Consul General in Bermuda rather, I could even say exciting. We have had and still have, a Naval Air Station which was very important in tracking Soviet submarines in the south Atlantic. There was a movement for Bermudan independence. You know we occupy that base because of our 1940 agreement.

Q: Destroyers for bases?

OWENS: Destroyers for bases. The lend lease agreement. The US considers that agreement will run till 2039, ninety-nine years of that agreement, but the Bermudans who are pushing for independence said, "No, we would want to negotiate." So, this movement was of considerable interest to us, which made it from a political point of view, an interesting post. The racial makeup of the island, unlike the Caribbean islands, is only 60% black and 40% white, and traditionally the power lead which had been mostly white. That changed and the change accelerated during my time there. The Premier became a black and most of the cabinet became black as well, the key positions, like the chief of the Bermudan regiment, the chief of police, etc. all were black. It was a fairly harmonious relationship, fairly harmonious, more so I would say than in the United States' black-white relations. So I would consider it a relatively successful

multi-racial society. The Bermudans used to speak of themselves as multi-racial, because they also have a large Portuguese colony there, from the Azores, who had originally come in as gardeners and then moved up the socio-economic ladder. It was an interesting make up. The base gave us a military defense aspect to our relationship in Bermuda. It was small enough, it's a small country of sixty-four thousand people. I enjoyed it.

Q: Did you have any problems with tourists?

OWENS: There were some assaults, some muggings, a few rapes. As you know, we have a pre-clearance, formal consular officer arrangement with the Bermudans, we had INS inspectors, and customs inspectors stationed in Bermuda, so we had a fairly large INS and Customs contingent. We had NASA stationed there. Bermuda, although nominally British, with a few British traditions, and a British legal system, is very American because something like 85% of the tourists who go there are Americans. The movement between the United States and Bermuda is tremendous. Most Bermudans spend some time in the United States, many are educated there. Every once in a while you see, because they don't need visas, many of them come, stay for an indefinite amount of time, go to universities here, do not bother to get student visas, and since they speak English perfectly, have no trouble being absorbed into the local community. I noticed that a Bermudan woman recently gave birth to quintuplets, or quadruplets in a Washington hospital. The thought occurred to me, "I guess the US is paying for this." In any case, our relations were excellent. We would have probably had to sign some sort of agreement, defense agreement with the Bermudans. That's the way it looked when I left in '82. Of course the changes in the Soviet Union have lessened the importance of that air station there, the monitoring of the Soviet submarines.

Q: A whole sub-business there. People looking around for some way to keep the sub-people and the anti-sub-people employed.

OWENS: That's right.

Q: And then you retired?

OWENS: No, not then, a year later.

MELVILLE BLAKE
Consul General
Hamilton (1985)

Melville Blake was born in Lexington, Mississippi in 1924. He attended Mississippi State College. He joined the army and served for four years and then attended Georgetown University where he studied in the school of Foreign Service. Following his graduation he worked as an editor in the CIA for a year and then went to Germany.

Q: All right, when 1985 came, you were then sent to Bermuda as acting Consul General, I believe. How did this move to Bermuda come about?

BLAKE: Bermuda had traditionally been sort of a retirement post in the State Department. In 1981, we had an officer there, John Owens. While he was there, a fellow named Max Friedersdorf, who was in the White House as a liaison to the Congress, took some Congressmen to a meeting on Bermuda. This is a meeting of American and British parliamentarians that is held every other year. Max was enchanted by Bermuda and persuaded President Reagan to name him as Consul General to Bermuda. The rationale for it was that the Consul General on Bermuda and, I believe, the Consul General in Hong Kong were the only two consular officers that reported directly to the Department. All other consular offices are constituent posts to embassies. It was argued that Bermuda was a quasi embassy and, hence, suitable for a political appointee. Max got the job.

Then, Max abruptly resigned in 1983 to take a position as Vice President of Government Affairs for Pepsi Cola. In that capacity, Max was really working on the re-election of Ronald Reagan in the 1984 elections. This cover was widely known on Bermuda. It was probably illegal, which made it interesting because Max, prior to his appointment to the White House, had been Vice Chairman of the Federal Elections Commission. I had met Max in Panama when he came down in that capacity to advise the Panamanian Government on the procedures for fair elections.

The Department detailed a succession of Foreign Service officers for two or three months to Bermuda, and I was asked by the European Bureau to go to Bermuda for a month in January 1985. Then, I was asked to stay for another month, then another. Then in April, Herb Cohen, who was head of Personnel and a Deputy to George Vest in the Director General's office, telephoned and said, "I want to let you know that tomorrow you will be paneled to be assigned for two years as Consul General to Bermuda." I protested on the ground that it was the least responsible job I had had in many years. He said, "Well, the White House is putting on a great deal of pressure to name a political appointee, but we are going to go to the mat with them. We intend to say that we have a senior officer in Bermuda." I replied, "Herb, the State Department never goes to the mat with anyone, least of all the White House."

Now, I didn't tell Herb that I had discovered a folder marked "Friedersdorf, Max, personal. Please hold pending return" in the back of the Consul General's safe. I knew what Max had in mind, and, sure enough, I was paneled, and in late August or September, I got a personal message from the Under Secretary for Management that there was an agreement between the State Department and the White House that Max Friedersdorf would be returning to Bermuda. So, I came out in November.

Q: That is really a low blow. Did you have any major problems during your months there?

BLAKE: No, although I found there was a lot to keep me amused and involved. For example, I discovered that we had never sent a person under the Exchange of Persons Program by United States Information Agency, from Bermuda to the United States. So, I sent a number of Bermudans to the United States under that program. The data for Bermuda show that each Bermudan takes 2.1 visits per year to the United States. Those are people with money, and there

are many people - for example, those in the opposition political party, which is basically a black and a working class party, and teachers and people of that sort - who had never been to the United States or certainly had never been recognized by the U.S. Government.

I also learned that, in the 1970s, we had initialed an agreement under which we would transfer land occupied but no longer required or used by the U.S. Navy to Bermuda in exchange for a plot of land the Navy wanted to expand facilities at the Naval Air Station. While the swap had been agreed to, it was never consummated. Further, an Assistant Secretary of the Navy planned a trip to Bermuda, and it coincided with a flap over atomic naval vessels making port calls to members of the Commonwealth. At that particular moment, Australia had refused to receive an atomic-powered vessel, and the Bermuda opposition was applying pressure to have the Bermuda Government take a similar position.

As the Bermuda Government was still interested in the land swap, it struck me that we could use the Assistant Secretary's visit to deflect attention from the atomic vessel issue by having him sign the agreement on the land swap. Funnily, the State Department had lost sight of the land swap agreement, and it had never been recorded by the British Foreign and Colonial Office. An officer who had worked for me in Costa Rica was on detail to the Pentagon, and he found the agreement in their files. He sent it to the Department, the Department got in touch with the Foreign and Colonial Office, the Bermuda Premier got in touch with London, and we were able to pull off the signing ceremony. The atomic issue never came up.

Q: Were there any problems with drugs at the time moving to the United States through Bermuda?

BLAKE: No, never. We never had that problem. Bermuda has one of the best police systems I have ever known anywhere. It is clear that they learned their lessons from the British well. Nor was there any money laundering through Bermuda. We had an informal arrangement to cover that. I would say that Bermudans combine the better qualities of the British and the Swiss: discretion, respect for law and order, the ability to work informally and with respect for confidentiality, and quite, good taste.

Q: How about visiting firemen? Did they cause you any difficulty?

BLAKE: No particular difficulty, and I had a number of people come from high positions in government. Secretary of State George Schultz visited once, as did Secretary of Commerce Baldrige. Jean Kirkpatrick visited Bermuda shortly after she left the United Nations. Alan Greenspan came as a consultant to one of the Bermuda banks before he became Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. We had a number of Members of Congress on the Island, most notably Senator Bob Packwood. The Consul General's residence had a separate guesthouse, and officials from the White House and a number from the Department had no hesitancy in inviting themselves to be our guests. Then, there were visitors from outside the Federal Government, for example, the Governor of New Jersey brought over about a hundred policemen who were being honored, the Hasty Pudding Club from Harvard, and so on. And then, we had several U.S. naval visits, in particular the Blue Angels flying team and the U.S.S. Eisenhower, an atomic-powered aircraft carrier.

I found that I could get mileage out of most of these visitors. To my surprise, at Bermuda I had a larger representational fund than the entire Embassy in Panama had while I was there. I found that I could use these visitors in representational functions. Two examples come to mind. It had been traditional for the Consul General to give a cocktail party, to which prominent Bermudans were invited, when the Hasty Pudding Club visited Bermuda. The logic was that a number of the guests would have gone to Harvard. I decided to invite a different group, namely, the class officers of the student body and the senior class of all the high schools on Bermuda, as well as Harvard graduates. And, the function was a noontime picnic with volleyball, etc. on the residence grounds near the beach. Although it was a bit cold at the time, the kids loved it.

For Secretary Baldrige, I gave a stag dinner and discovered that, by coincidence, one of the American guests had been a close friend of Baldrige while they were in college. This dinner took a perverse turn. In the after-dinner talk, Baldrige extensively criticized the State Department for never helping American businessmen abroad. This surprised the American guests as I hosted a monthly breakfast for the American business community for an exchange of views. Baldrige dropped his remarks when I suggested this was not the place to air any differences he had with State.

Funnily, three months later, Tish Baldrige, his sister, visited Bermuda. She had been Social Secretary to both Ambassador Claire Booth Luce in Rome and Jackie Kennedy when she was First Lady. We had a small party for her, and she was a gracious guest.

End of reader